

PART 1
INTRODUCTION

HALCROW



Bridgwater Bay to Bideford Bay Shoreline Management Plan

PART 1 : INTRODUCTION

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1 BACKGROUND

A Shoreline Management Plan (SMP) is a document which sets out a general strategy for coastal defence taking account of natural coastal processes and human and other environmental influences and needs. This is intended to provide a strategic framework for the management of coastal defences along this coastline in the future and a basis upon which future informed decision making and policy setting can be made.

A previous study of the coastline of England and Wales for the Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food (MAFF), established that coastal sediment movements occur within distinct boundaries, or cells, which are rarely coincident with administrative boundaries. Piecemeal coast protection schemes may not always be compatible with coastline needs elsewhere within the same sediment cell. Recognising this fact, the North Devon and Somerset Coastal Group decided to produce a SMP for the shoreline between Hartland Point (Devon) and Brean Down (Somerset), including the island of Lundy, (Figure 1.1) wherein all conflicting needs and constraints are identified and considered.

The Coastal Group comprise the following organisations:

Torrige District Council	North Devon District Council
West Somerset District Council	Sedgemoor District Council
Devon County Council	Somerset County Council
Environment Agency	English Nature
MAFF	

As Maritime District Councils under the Coast Protection Act 1949, the Local Authorities hold powers regarding coast protection issues within their respective boundaries. In general the responsibility for sea defences, which protect against flooding, is administered by the Environment Agency using powers under the Water Resources Act, 1991, and the Land Drainage Act, 1991.

Following an initial Scoping Study completed in 1995, the Coastal Group appointed Sir William Halcrow & Partners Ltd (Halcrow) in January 1997, to produce this Shoreline Management Plan based on the guidelines published in 1995 by MAFF.

2 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The aim of this Plan is to provide a framework for the development of sustainable coastal defence policies from Hartland Point to Brean Down. In accordance with the SMP guidelines issued by MAFF, the main objectives to be fulfilled through development of the Plan are:

- improve understanding of the coastal processes operating within the sediment cell;
- predict the likely future evolution of the coast;
- identify all the assets within the area covered by the Plan which are likely to be affected by coastal change;
- identify the need for regional or site specific research and investigations;
- facilitate consultation between those bodies with an interest in the shoreline;

whilst the main objectives of a completed Plan are to:

- assess a range of strategic coastal defence options and agree a preferred approach;
- outline future requirements for monitoring, management of data and research related to the shoreline;
- inform the statutory planning process and related coastal zone planning;
- identify opportunities for maintaining and enhancing the natural coastal environment, taking account of any specific targets set by legislation or any locally set targets;
- set out arrangements for continued consultation with interested parties.

3 THE SHORELINE MANAGEMENT PLAN

3.1 General

Shoreline Management Plans are 'non-statutory' as they are not required by law. The need to develop strategic management planning for the coastlines of England and Wales is, however, well recognised and in assessing proposed coastal defence works for grant aid, MAFF will require the existence of a SMP. For the purpose of any non-statutory document, such as this SMP, suggestions and strategies for the future must consider the existing statutory planning system. It is also vital that the SMP focuses on all of the issues relevant to the shoreline within the geographical area concerned. It can then operate as a stand alone document.

3.2 Development of the Shoreline Management Plan

Development of the SMP initially required the collation of existing information and the undertaking of studies to produce an assessment of the present situation, identifying the various needs and conflicts of interests. This has enabled Management Units to be defined against which the wide ranging and disparate issues have been presented. Each has its own distinct characteristics for management of the shoreline, although these are not coastal process units in their own right. Only available information was analysed at this stage, although the need for additional data necessary for the future development of the SMP was identified. The work undertaken for this initial phase was presented to the Coastal Group in June 1997 (Volumes 2 and 3). These provide detailed appendices to the SMP strategy, containing the background data and references used in its development.

In the next phase of development, the final strategy has been developed from the earlier studies, formalising the division of the shoreline into the Management Units and establishing appropriate management strategies for each. This is presented within this document (Volume 1).

The SMP is a working document which is designed to be updated over time. This will be achieved through a set review procedure. This concept of having a "living document" ensures that new information, new understanding of coastal processes and response, future changes in planning policy or environmental needs, can be incorporated into the SMP. Such an approach will re-confirm the existing coastal defence policy or advocate a change to a new policy.

It is essential that this first issue of the SMP is recognised for what it is, the foundation for shoreline management planning. It is not the definitive solution. This SMP is based upon the information that is available now and will need to evolve as future studies, such as those identified in this document, are undertaken to fill the gaps in existing knowledge. An important aspect of this first issue of the SMP is the identification of areas of uncertainty, to enable the prioritisation of future studies and monitoring. In this respect the aims of an SMP, as defined in the MAFF Guidance, should be re-iterated, that is "...to provide the basis for sustainable coastal defence policies....".

3.3 Format of the Strategy Document

The format of this SMP document has been created to act as a base document for shoreline management between Hartland Point and Brean Down (including Lundy Island). The intention is that the document is used as a whole, but individual sections (eg any particular Management Unit) can be easily extracted as a stand-alone statement. It is also important that future changes in planning policy, environmental characteristics, or knowledge of coastal processes, which may in turn result in changes to the developed strategy, can be integrated through revision to parts of the document rather than complete re-issue.

Part 2 of this document describes the framework of the SMP for future strategic management purposes along with guidance on how this document is to be used. General strategy requirements are contained within Part 3 along with recommendations for future monitoring, the need for further studies, and the procedure for future review of the plan, whilst Part 4 provides the detailed information on each Management Unit and the development of the management strategy.

3.4 Integration with Other Plans

The planning system is important in guiding the way in which the coast is developed and conserved. A range of statutory and non statutory plans play an important role in achieving this. The statutory plans are prepared against the background of national planning guidance, with non statutory plans providing further advice and guidance on the development or management of a particular location or "theme". There is great importance in ensuring that plans are integrated and each informs those related to it. The SMPs have been prepared in this environment and have attempted to complemented existing plans.

Of the relevant statutory plans the most significant are probably the County Structure Plans and the Local Plans. Their policies inform the planning process of the adoption of coastal defence policies within the SMP and conversely will inform the SMP decision making process.

Based on the EU Directive on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora parts of the coast have been designated as marine Special Areas of Conservation (SAC). There is a requirement to maintain "favourable conservation status" of these areas, which has led to the preparation of SAC Management Plans. The preparation of SMPs has taken account of this.

With regards the non statutory plans probably the most closely allied to the SMPs are the Local Environment Agency Plans (LEAPs), the successors to Catchment Management Plans. The LEAPs seek to draw together all of the interests associated with ensuring river catchments are managed in a sustainable way. Flood defence, a responsibility of the Environment Agency, is the aspect of greatest common interest between LEAPs and SMPs.

With growing awareness of the pressures on, and value of, the coastal zone there have been numerous plans aimed at 'integrated' management. These tend to be localised planning initiatives, particularly on estuaries and areas of

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the open coast such as Heritage Coast or Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. These non statutory plans seek to integrate the many interests of the coast including the natural and man-made, and develop a consensus view as to the way forward.

The Bridgwater Bay to Bideford Bay SMP is also to be part of the European Union Demonstration Programme on the Integrated Management of Coastal Zones. Throughout Devon and Cornwall the "Atlantic Living Coastlines" initiative, which is part of this programme, is to incorporate the SMP into the preparation of an integrated strategy for the coast.

These plans refer to each other, statutory and non statutory, for guidance on specific issues. Therefore, a process of informed advice takes place, limiting any duplication of planning effort.