

## Shore Line Management Plans & The Wash East

*Daniel Edge, Flood Risk Officer, Environment Agency*

*George Fuhrmann, Flood Risk Advisor, Environment Agency*

- Presentation (slides attached)

*Daniel Edge, Flood Risk Officer, Environment Agency*

- For the English coast, there are 20 [Shoreline Management Plans](#). Combined, these set out a planned approach to managing flood and coastal erosion risk around the coast of England.
- Local Authorities and the Environment Agency lead on the development of these plans, working with Coastal Groups. These Coastal Groups are split into 12 different areas.
- SMPs cover a period of 100 years (previously referred to as epochs). We are coming to the end of the first epoch/period.
- SMP 5 is split into three separate Policy Units.
- In 2020, a refresh of SMPs was initiated to capture changes in recent years and to check that action descriptions were appropriate. This remains ongoing.
- During the refresh process, it was recognised that SMPs have not been very accessible or transparent, outside of the Environment Agency and Coastal Groups. As a result, the [SMP Explorer](#) was developed. This is a website that enables everyone to access action descriptions and the original SMPs (dating back to 2011, in most cases). There is a hope that it will be used more broadly e.g. by Local Authorities for planning purposes.

*George Fuhrmann, Flood Risk Advisor, Environment Agency*

- SMP 4 covers 110km, from Gibraltar Point to Old Hunstanton.
- My area of work is in Policy Development Zone 2, which is from Wolferton Creek to South Hunstanton. Units A and B are managed by the Borough Council of King's Lynn & West Norfolk. Unit C is managed by the Environment Agency, but we work closely together when considering strategy.
- In terms of flood defences found in Policy Development Zone 2, the primary line of defences is made up of hard walls and natural dunes, and the secondary line is earth embankment. This presentation focuses on the sand dunes/shingle ridge.
- Sitting under the SMP is The Wash East Coast Management Strategy (WECMS). This was written in 2015 and sets out our management approach for delivering the SMP policy. This is supported by a Funding Group and Stakeholder Group.
- Our current SMP policy for Unit C is 'hold the line'. Looking ahead to future epochs, there is no selective SMP policy option, so all options are on the table.
- The three main approaches we've had on this stretch are: annual beach recycling, intermittent beach recharge, and ongoing beach monitoring.
- Challenge 1: Ridge mobility. The shingle ridge is a natural form of flood risk management. However, it is moving and evolving. In total, we have seen it move 10m landward and increase in size by 1m. Human activities, in response to these changes, are impacting the effectiveness of the ridge as a flood defence; as the dune starts to move, residents start digging into the ridge to protect their property. This is an understandable response to the threat of sand inundating properties, but the EA (as the flood risk regulator) has to consider the wider implications these activities have.
- Challenge 2: Beach recharge. There was supposed to be a mini recharge in 2025, but the EA were unable to secure a contractor to do the work. This is because there are a large number of risks to contractors, such as loss of material, environmental impacts etc.
- Considering the challenges, we've had to take a step back and reassess the situation across the Unit C frontage. The WECMS document identified certain triggers that, if met, would call for a change in management approach. These triggers include funding issues, environmental impacts,

and the frequency of flood evacuations. Whilst the beach state at Unit C is healthy, the economic trigger has been met; if a recharge is needed in future, we are not in a financial position to carry this out. Consequently, we need to do a full review of WECMS, which we hope to begin in April 2025, pending funding.

- Q&A

**KW:** Was the trouble securing contractors due to the need for a Habitats Regulation Assessment?

**GF:** It was a combination of factors, including a need for various licenses, working with the tides, bird seasons etc.