

Adapting to climate change – local authority case study

Dorset County Council - Dorset and East Devon Coastal Change Pathfinder Project: Scenario planning



Overview:

As part of the Coastal Change Pathfinder Project for Dorset and East Devon, a scenario planning exercise was undertaken at the project's six case study communities of Sidmouth, Charmouth, Seatown, Preston Beach Rd (Weymouth), Ringstead and North Swanage.

Between September 2010 and April 2011 two workshops were run in each community with a total of 175 participants taking part including residents, elected representatives, local authority officers and voluntary groups. During the first workshop participants were asked to identify how coastal erosion might impact on their communities and, in the face of future uncertainty over funding for coastal defences, what options might be open to the community to adapt to limit the negative impacts of change and take advantage of any opportunities that might arise.

In the second workshop participants were asked to prioritise the options and, where possible, agree actions for how they could be carried forward within the communities.

Benefits:

The scenario planning process proved an effective tool for engaging communities in planning for future change. Following the exercise communities are now exploring a range of practical adaptation options for themselves including developing emergency response plans for dealing with sudden and catastrophic change, possible relocation of key infrastructure and in Swanage, the development of a community forum to raise awareness of how coastal change might impact on the town and develop adaptation strategies.



Challenges:

One of the most significant challenges faced has been trying to ensure engagement from all stakeholders in the case study communities. Various constraints, including timing of events, have posed a challenge to securing the attendance of key individuals at workshops. Another significant challenge has been dealing with varying awareness of coastal change within the communities and variation in willingness to consider adaptation instead of concentrating on securing funding for coastal defences.

Further thoughts:

It is clear that a prerequisite of the methodology used is attendance at workshops by stakeholders from as many sectors of the community as possible. Where the project has been successful in securing this attendance the exercise has fostered wide ranging discussion of how communities can adapt to coastal change, taking into account the interests of multiple sectors rather than focussing solely on impacts on individuals or certain sectors of the community.

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Relevant links:

Website: www.jurassiccoast.com/pathfinder

<http://www.defra.gov.uk/environment/flooding/manage/pathfinder/index.htm>