

Shifting Shores in the South West

Changing Landscapes South Milton Sands

Today some visitors might be surprised to see magnificent sand dunes greeting them on the beach. Decades ago the late 1960s they were buried underneath a large 200 square car park.

The dunes were buried and built up over the years. A series of dunes were built up over the years. A series of dunes were built up over the years. A series of dunes were built up over the years.

Working with the dunes is a key part of the beach's management. The dunes are a key part of the beach's management. The dunes are a key part of the beach's management.

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National
Trust

Facing up to the impact of climate change

Shifting shores in the South West

Living with a changing coastline



We've woken up to coastal change: who else has?

In 2005 the National Trust published research into the long-term future of the coastline in our care, and the impact that climate change (through sea level rise, coastal flooding and increased erosion) was predicted to have on this coast over the next century. In the South West, 279 kilometres of National Trust coastline could be affected by erosion, along with 852 hectares of Trust coastal sites becoming at risk of tidal flooding.

So in 2005, responding to our discoveries and knowing that the scale of what the Trust is facing will be mirrored across much of the UK's coast, we began challenging all sectors of the UK to begin planning co-ordinated responses on how to adapt to the inevitability of sea level rise before it is forced upon us.

Since then our research has continued, using DEFRA and Environment Agency data and our own local knowledge to add much greater detail, identifying which coastal sites and features are most at risk within the next 20 years. Highlights from this work are contained in this document.

Now two years on, and despite growing evidence of coastal change over this period, we still have yet to see policy and decision-makers really wake up to the impact of coastal change on the coast. There have been some positive steps in the right direction, such

as the launch by DEFRA of Shoreline Management Plan guidance (SMP2) and the proposed review of PPS20 (coast), and we welcome the intention not to continue to defend the coast but to work with nature and adapt. A new role for the Environment Agency to take a strategic overview of coastal change has been put in place, but we have yet to see a real change in integrated, long-term planning at local level that would enable property at risk to relocate, and prevent any new building in areas at risk now or in the future.

The Trust welcomes the opportunities afforded by the draft Marine Bill and a proposed consultation on a Flood and Water Bill (2009) and we will seek to ensure that any new legislation underpins an innovative approach to the management of coastal change, through, for example, a system of marine spatial planning.

Our pledge

- To take the long-term view, working with natural processes and favouring coastal realignment wherever possible, only supporting interference where there are overriding benefits – often to buy time for an adaptive solution to be implemented.
- To conserve valued species, habitat or cultural features as far as is practical, accepting loss or change but ensuring we record features prior to loss, and offering opportunities for habitat migration.
- To raise people's awareness of coastal change and seek to ensure that vulnerable communities are helped to adapt cost-effectively.
- In all this we will continue to work in partnership with others.

Lessons already learnt

The National Trust's experience of caring for, managing and understanding our changing coast means we have learnt five key lessons that formed the basis of our Shifting Shores policy launched in 2005.

1 Long-term planning is essential

To adapt effectively to sea level rise and climate change we need to plan at least 50 to 100 years ahead. In many cases it will be necessary to relocate people, habitats and buildings and to do so cost-effectively requires early action. The future is inherently unpredictable, even more so with climate change and a dynamic coastal environment, so we need to allow flexibility in our management and planning.

2 Work with nature, not against it

Our experience has demonstrated that working with natural processes is the most sustainable approach. In some cases this will mean undoing past mistakes, taking out hard defences and letting the coast realign naturally. In others we will need to phase our approach, buying time with temporary solutions while finding space to allow natural defences to form.

3 Think and act in a wider context

The boundaries of the Trust's coastal sites take no account of the real boundaries of the 'coastal cells' in which coastal processes operate. In order to take a flexible and responsive approach to dealing with coastal change, we need to think and act in a much wider spatial context, managing our sites within freshwater catchments and coastal cells.

4 Solutions need partnership

We cannot operate in isolation as the decisions we make nearly always have an impact beyond the immediate site. Tackling the problems facing our sites also requires action by others, especially neighbouring coastal owners and managers. Finding mutually beneficial solutions such as large-scale realignment projects requires a strong partnership approach.

5 Involving the public is critical

Raising awareness of the impact on our coastal sites is vital to winning public confidence. Any form of realignment of the coast can create uncertainty and even hostility. Building consensus and providing information takes time and effort, but is crucial to finding sustainable solutions.

'We are working hard to engage with local authorities and agencies in planning for future management at a local level. Joint working is essential in managing the coast and there needs to be a real change of mindset to look to the long term.'

Helen Mann,
National Trust West Dorset Property Manager

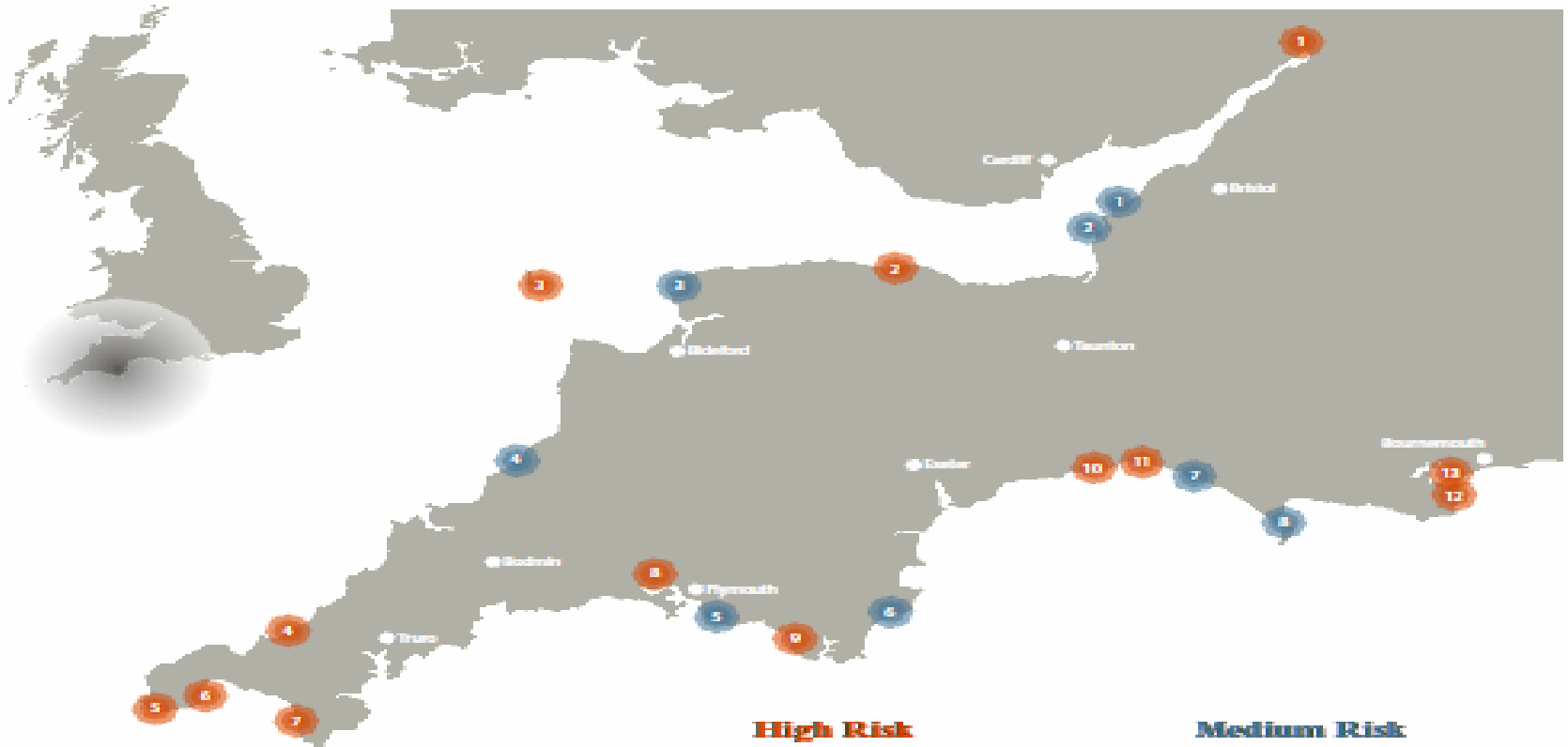
279km

of National Trust coastline
threatened by erosion



Right
Saltmarsh habitat developing
at Porlock Bay in Somerset after
the breach of a shingle bar

The threat to the South West



High Risk

- 1 Westbury Court Garden
- 2 Bossington
- 3 Lundy Access Road
- 4 Godrevy
- 5 Penberth
- 6 St Michael's Mount
- 7 Mullion Harbour
- 8 Cotehele Quay
- 9 South Milton Sands
- 10 Black Ven/Lyme Regis
- 11 Golden Cap
- 12 Studland
- 13 Brownsea

Medium Risk

- 1 Middlehope & Sandpoint
- 2 Brean Down
- 3 Woolacombe
- 4 Boscastle Harbour
- 5 Wembury
- 6 Greenway Quay
- 7 Burton Bradstock
- 8 Portland House

South Milton Sands: The Problem



1. The timber sea defences were in a dangerous condition
2. The continued maintenance of these defences presented a serious resource implication to the National Trust
3. The provision of a car park on its own should not dictate what is right for the beach and wider environment
4. However, the National Trust also recognised that the beach was a valuable resource and source of income. It was important to improve access to it, provide a reasonable parking provision and allow opportunities to develop our visitor experience at the beach

South Milton Sands: The Solution



‘To deliver a soft and flexible sand dune system that would ‘flex’ and ‘adapt’ to sea level change’

South Milton Sands: 2011 (36 months on...)

1. We have removed much of our previous liability and now have a beach landscape that requires minimal time and management input
2. South Milton Sands is a much more attractive and safer beach to visit.
3. This has allowed us to develop our visitor offer and income through beach concessions
4. A new concession at our café, significantly improved food offer and structural modifications to the café itself have enabled it to become a year-round venue, and as a result the beach a destination location
5. Improved local relationships have meant we are able to have well informed and open debates as to the future management and evolution of the beach



South Milton Sands: Summary

1. Long term planning is essential
2. Work with nature not against it
3. Think and act in the wider context
4. Solutions need partnerships
5. Involving the public is critical



For further information contact the National Trust on 01548562344

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