

Scratby and California Coastal Pathfinder Planning Project - Community Report

The Planning Project element of this Coastal Pathfinder rested on the assumption that coastal defences were not going to be maintained in the future. It had three aims, (i) to define the Coastal Change Management Area (CCMA) that the Council needs to designate, (ii) to identify rollback areas for new buildings to replace those at risk, and (iii) to suggest draft policies for managing the rollback process.

It was clear from the start that the exercise should be driven by community aspirations and concerns rather than by technical issues surrounding coastal change. The task was to produce a clear statement that represented the views of the community on the issue of rollback development. This is to be presented to the Council as an input to its work on formal policies in the Local Development Framework. The Community Statement is on the reverse of this page.

Community engagement was a particular challenge. Coastal change can be divisive and earlier consultation had established substantial antagonism over the issue. It also looks ahead over a uniquely long period of time for a planning exercise stretching beyond the lifetime of most of those involved. Added to that was the age structure of the village - a high proportion of retired and elderly people - and the fact that the project had to be undertaken during the autumn and winter weather conditions of the Norfolk coast.

Two events were organised. The first was a one-day workshop of invited stakeholders including representatives from the community on November 2nd. This workshop established broad agreement on the things that mattered most to the community and how they should influence the form and operation of the roll-back process. The second was a Community Exhibition held across 26th and 27th November where the draft ideas from the workshop were presented for discussion and improvement. A copy of the draft was posted to every household in the area with an invitation to attend the Exhibition and a short comments sheet to record views and ideas.

The weather was truly awful and the numbers at the Exhibition were low - as had been expected. However, the level of endorsement of the proposed rollback areas and the policies for managing development within them was surprisingly high - which had not been expected.

- Over 80% of comments made were positive about the draft Community Statement
- The important aspects of the draft were all endorsed
- The roll back areas were refined and the process clarified
- The sea-front development idea was removed

Minor revisions were made to the Community Statement in line with suggested changes. The final version (overleaf) is taken as representing the view of those who took part. The very small scale of opposition to the proposals is unusual and confirms the general acceptance of the ideas. Because of this apparent level of support the Community Statement will form an important part of the information that the Borough Council has to review in deciding on the extent of the CCMA and the policies that will govern the roll back process.

We extend our thanks to all those who assisted with this project without whom it would not have been possible. Special acknowledgement should be made of the members of the Scratby Coastal Erosion Group who cooperated and contributed helpfully throughout the project even though it is at odds with their preferred solution which they are continuing to pursue.

We are confident that the Statement is a fair reflection of community views on how rollback ought to operate should it be required. However, that is not to be taken as suggesting that it represents the preference of the community on the question of rollback versus continued defence. That is a separate issue that did not fall within the brief of the Planning Project.