

Coastal Schemes with Multiple Funders and Objectives FD2635

Case Study Report 6 Happisburgh Emergency Works



Image courtesy of Coastal Concern Action Group <http://www.happisburgh.org.uk/> 2010

This case study is one of 14 documents supporting the research project Coastal Schemes with Multiple Objectives and Funders - Case Studies FD2635, available from <http://tinyurl.com/6dzyusy>. This research was conducted in 2010/2011 by Maslen Environmental on behalf of Defra and the Environment Agency's Research and Development programme.

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1 Case Study: Happisburgh Emergency Works

1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 Description

North Norfolk District Council (NNDC) developed a scheme that provided emergency cliff protection to protect properties from erosion. This approach would not indefinitely protect these properties but would allow approximately 10 years for the community to adapt and prepare for coastal change. The scheme involved building a two-metre rock wall to break the pressure of the waves and keep the cliff secure from Cart Gap to the end of Beach Road and as far as the old lifeboat ramp. The scheme was completed in March 2007 at a cost of £250,000 joint funded by NNDC and donations raised by the Coastal Concern Action Group (CCAG) (a local community group) (see timeline on Figure 2).

1.2 Objective Setting

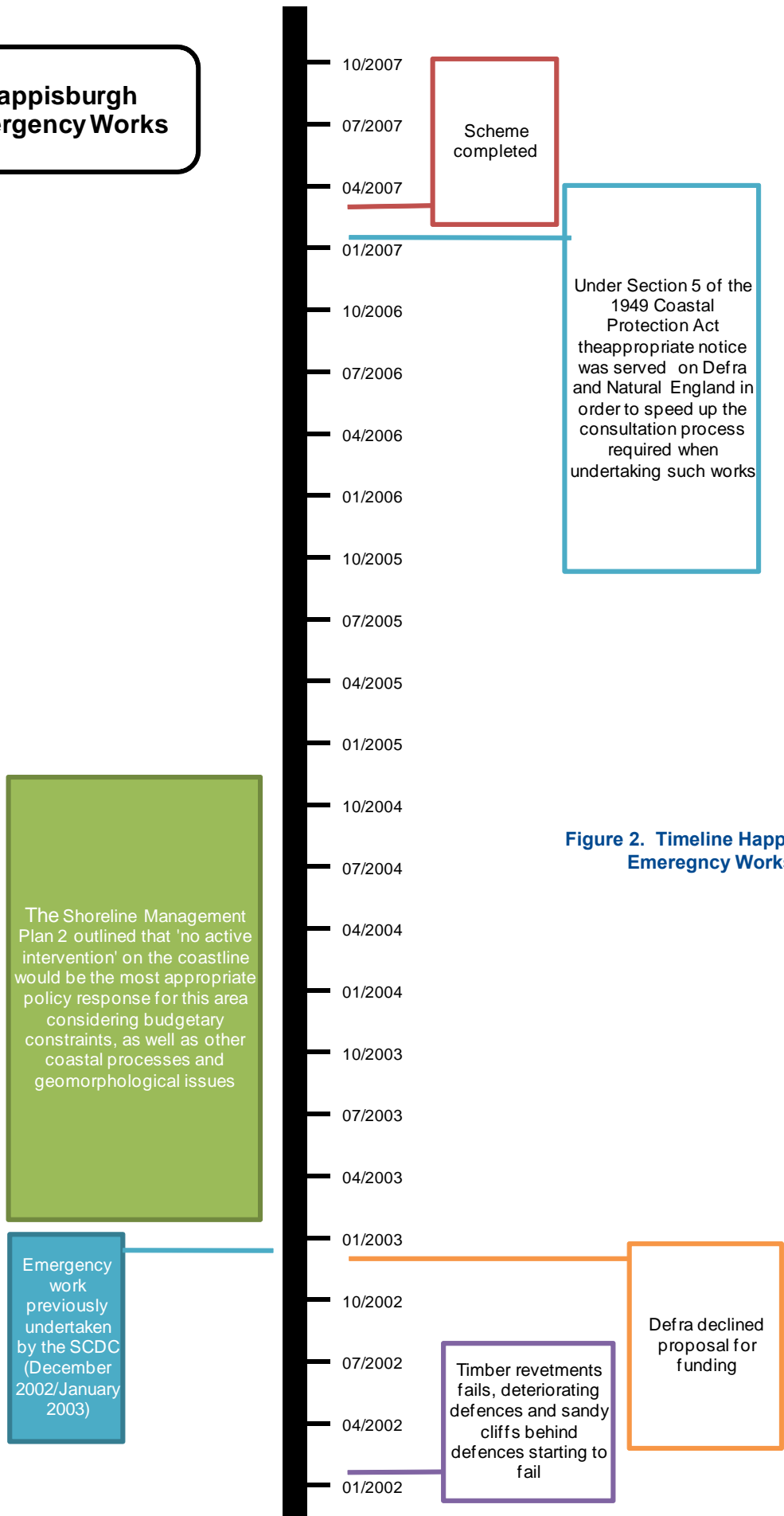
1.2.1 Project Drivers

The wooden timber revetment and groyne sea defences built by Smalburgh Rural District Council from 1959 and 1961 between Ostend to Cart Gap, at North Norfolk have been failing over the last few years, and large chunks of the sandy cliffs are regularly falling into the sea.



Figure 1. Timber revetment in fair condition. Photography courtesy of North Norfolk District Council

**Happisburgh
Emergency Works**



**Figure 2. Timeline Happisburgh
Emergency Works**



Figure 3. February 2002 - failed revetment. Photography courtesy of North Norfolk District Council



Figure 4. February 2002 - Eroding sandy cliffs behind failing defences. Photography courtesy of North Norfolk District Council

In 1996, the Shoreline Management Plan policy developed by NNDC for this area stated 'hold the line'. The Plan was jointly owned by all the authorities from Sheringham to Lowestoft. When the Shoreline Management Plan 2 was redraft it proposed that 'no active intervention' would be the most appropriate management policy for this frontage.

1.2.2 Partnership Objectives

All partners involved had the same high-level aim, to identify and provide time for the development of a process to retain the community in the longer-term. However, the details regarding the preferred options, timescale and costs were negotiated, with strong public and media pressure from CCAG. The local community through CCAG sought funding for coastal defences or compensation. It was important to slow down erosion rates whilst discussions could take place between the government and NNDC so that the community had more time to prepare.

CCAG argued that the strength and well-being of the local economy is dependent upon a robust certainty about the future of the community and its facilities, which is jeopardised and undermined by permitting unmanaged erosion to dictate timescales.

1.2.3 Project Objectives

The overall objectives of this project were to:

- Slow down the rate of erosion of the sandy cliffs and the subsequent loss of properties to give the community time (at least 10 years) to adapt to changes along the coastline; and
- Provide time for NNDC, the community and Government to plan and discuss options for implementing adaptation measures to prepare for coastal change whilst preserving the identity of the community.

1.3 Partnerships

1.3.1 Building the Partnership

Following the publication of SMP2, in 1999 the community formed a Coastal Concern Action Group (CCAG) and a campaign group. The aim was to provide protection of the community from coastal erosion and to act independently from Central Government.

That prompted CCAG to create the registered charity in readiness to being able to work closely with the Local, Lead Authority (NNDC) in delivering a short term scheme whilst, the action group continued to pursue Central Government to come up with a sensible, workable, sustainable method and policy to manage the coast effectively.

CCAG spent considerable time researching all options in creating the charity and opted to go for a company limited by guarantee (Coastal Concern Ltd) as that method afforded maximum protection for those prepared to undertake the task of Trustee. They secured the services of local, highly regarded, businessmen. Whilst some Directors/Trustees are common to both organisations (CCAG Coastal Concern Ltd) and the make up of the charity is entirely different to that of the action group. However it is true to say that the charity 'grew out' of CCAG as did the National Voice for Coastal Communities (NVCC) which I formed in 2009.

A shared accountability formed between NNDC and CCAG and this was a key part of the partnership working arrangements. There was a recognition that by working together there was a better chance of some form of Central Government intervention.

CCAG and NNDC had worked together previous and had an open and effective two-way working relationship.

1.3.2 Partnership and Working Governance

NNDC elected members gave officers the approval to undertake the construction of the scheme using its revenue funds. In the absence of approval to undertake a scheme offering long-term protection, trust between the local community and NNDC was an important factor in gaining support this approach. Letters of support sent by the representatives of the community reinforced the joint approach. Jointly managed public meetings and newsletters strengthened the relationship between NNDC, CCAG and the wider community. The CCAG website provided extensive information and was very well read.

Simultaneously, NNDC began to develop a Coastal Management Plan¹ to involve people, businesses, local organisations, government agencies other stakeholders with knowledge of the local area and experience in resolving the complex issues. The aim was to establish a consensual vision and common objectives for the coast. The Plan identified a work programme including remedial works at Happisburgh (2007 to 2010); Work with the Department of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) and other organisations on the development of adaptation measures to address the consequences of blight and property loss in coastal settlements (2007 to 2008).

The Plan was used to bid for "Pathfinder" funds to identify ways to empower the community group to explore the range of opportunities that exist for adaptation and to develop medium and long-term sustainable options to meet both the needs of the community and the coastal area as a whole.

1.4 Approvals, Planning Context and Legislation

As an Operating Authority NNDC has powers under Section 5² of the 1949 Coastal Protection Act to undertake emergency works if it considers there is an immediate threat of life and property. The appropriate notice was served in 2007 on Defra and Natural England in order to speed up the consultation process required when undertaking such works. Using this approach left NNDC with significant risk that their expenditure might not be grant aided by Defra but the Council still proceeded. (Note: This work was in addition to emergency work previously undertaken by the Council in December 2002/January 2003.)



Figure 5. View of deteriorating defences prior to first placement of rock (February 2002). Photography courtesy of North Norfolk District Council

¹ Coastal Planning North Norfolk. Information Sheet No. 1 (May 2007)

² http://www.opsi.gov.uk/RevisedStatutes/Acts/ukpga/1949/cukpga_19490074_en_2#pt1-pb2-l1g6
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1.5 Funding Arrangements

The total cost of the completed 2007 project was £250,000. £200,000 was funded by NNDC's coastal maintenance budget, part of the Council's revenue budget. This is not the normal funding stream for significant major works as the revenue budget is usually relatively modest and used to undertake minor day-to-day maintenance work. Expenditure of this scale is usually undertaken as a capital FDGiA project.

CCAG set-up Coastal Concern Ltd to raise money for coastal protection of Happisburgh and to lobby government. The group published a leaflet³ seeking donations towards the cost of the scheme. £50,000 was raised through donations, events and sales of souvenirs to secure money for the purchase of extra rocks for the rock armouring. In addition, the Friends of Happisburgh Lighthouse made significant contributions.



Figure 6. Storm attack on defences and cliffs (February 2005). Photography courtesy of North Norfolk District Council

³ "Buy a Rock for Happisburgh" leaflet 2002
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Figure 7. View of dilapidated defences, post construction of rock revetment (2007). Photography courtesy of North Norfolk District Council



Figure 8. Rock revetment in place at southern end (2007). Photography courtesy of North Norfolk District Council

1.6 Summary of Key Issues

- The scheme was always marginal in economic terms. When a scheme to defend the properties was advertised it attracted objections which could not be resolved. By the time the objections had been dealt with time had eroded the coastline and the potential benefits and the opportunity to defend was lost;
- The main aim of the subsequent strategy was to slow down the rate of erosion, not to defend the properties;
- Community objectives remain fluid and change with increasing knowledge and understanding;
- The local community sought defences or compensation. The agreed aim was to slow things down while discussions could take place with the government and NNDC so that the community had more time to prepare;
- Slowing down the rate of erosion provided time for the NNDC and the community to work together to identify sources of funding and mechanisms for adaptation in response to predicted climate change.
- NNDC's decision to accept the financial risk in funding emergency works, without the certainty that grant-in-aid would be approved, engendered community support and trust;
- The Council used emergency powers under Section 5 of the 1949 Coastal Protection Act to undertake the works;
- The scheme was completed in 2007 at a cost of £250,000 jointly funded by NNDC and the Coastal Concern Action Group (local community and business group);
- Coastal Concern Action Group set-up Coastal Concern Ltd to raise money for coastal protection of Happisburgh so that CCAG could continue its charitable activities;
- The local community had to trust their council. NNDC describe how they received letters of acknowledgment from the community;

1.7 Lessons Learnt

- Communities need assistance to understand and appreciate the need to manage the coast in a sustainable manner;
- The NNDC Coastal Management Plan played an important role in assisting the community understand the needs for adaptation;
- The community accepted that erosion of undefended sandy cliffs at Happisburgh is inevitable;
- Intervention can slow down the rate of erosion;
- Removal of defences can lead to short-term increase in the rate of erosion;
- A return to natural processes requires investment to fund transitional management arrangements;
- Short-term engineering works can lead to false expectations of long-term defence;
- As the scheme involved moving 5,000 tons of rock using lorries the co-operation of local landowners is very important;
- Trust and an understanding were achieved between NNDC and the Coastal Concern Action Group;
- NNDC worked closely with the community and local parish council. NNDC continues to engage with the community and this arrangement sets a precedent for partnership working in the future;
- The government needs to recognise that with coastal change there needs to be time for adaptation;
- Action must continue on completion of any short-term works to maximise time available to develop longer-term solutions and proposals.

1.8 References

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