

Understanding the Processes for Community Adaptation Planning and Engagement (CAPE) on the Coast

Technical Summary: FD2624

Joint Defra / EA Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management R&D programme

Background to R&D project

This project was commissioned to provide; a technical report on Community Adaptation Planning and Engagement (CAPE) on the coast; and a guidance document on how to get started on CAPE.

The technical report and guidance aimed to provide support and accompany Defra's Coastal Change Policy, the consultation on which ran from June to September 2009. The consultation set out ideas for how coastal communities can adapt to the impacts of coastal change and Defra's role in supporting this and launched a new coastal change pathfinder programme.

The research project aimed to identify the key gaps, barriers, opportunities and synergies that affect community engagement in planning for adaptation to coastal change. The project was a response to the need to better involve communities in adaptation planning to help move towards greater consensus and manage divergent opinion where consensus proves difficult.

The research was undertaken through desk reviews, stakeholder interviews, five case studies with coastal communities, a national stakeholder workshop, plus the feedback and comments obtained during the consultation on Defra's Coastal Change policy. These tasks have informed the development of the CAPE guidance which is the main output of this project.

Results of R&D project

The key findings revolved around the significant communications and engagement gaps relating to current approaches; lack of awareness of the problem or starting point; and how to structure and integrate adaptation planning in the context of the many other coastal management and planning activities. A summary of the key findings is as follows:

Current approaches to community engagement on the coast:

The study found evidence that some coastal communities do not feel they have been meaningfully involved in consultation and decision-making which can lead to distrust in authorities/agencies. The main barrier is a perceived top-down decision-making structure.

For engagement to be adequately planned and carried out the right skills and resources are needed and more use of independent facilitators and brokers was highlighted.



Current awareness of climate change, coastal change and the need to adapt

Both across and within communities there is a range of awareness about coastal, climate change and adaptation issues which results in a number of different engagement situations and needs.

The need to 'adapt' or 'change' is not well understood at the local level and people are more likely to adapt if they have the awareness, knowledge, skills and experience to engage with the technical aspects of adaptation measures.

Who should lead in adaptation planning?

There are a large number of planning processes and strategies that affect the coast and various organisations with responsibilities. This complexity causes confusion in communities and potentially a lack of leadership on coastal issues. In terms of who should be the lead in adaptation planning there seems to be a consensus that local authorities should fulfil this role.

There also seems to be widespread agreement that existing structures and groups should be used to implement CAPE (rather than creating new governance structures or groups).

R&D Outputs and their Use

The CAPE Guidance provides a framework and roadmap for local authorities and other bodies (responsible for planning and delivering services to coastal communities including those at the 'coalface' of CLG's new practical policy, 'Duty to Involve') on how they might engage and work with their communities to develop a plan for adapting to coastal change as described in the Coastal Change Policy. Communities and voluntary bodies may also find it useful as it provides an indication of the opportunities for involvement and influence.

Many of the approaches to CAPE described in this guidance may also be relevant to other situations such as adapting to flood risk and developing specific plans and policies, for instance, Shoreline Management Plans (SMPs), wider Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) work and increasing community awareness of relevant scientific evidence and information.

This R&D Technical Summary relates to R&D Project FD2624 and the following R&D output:

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The above outputs may be downloaded from the Defra/EA Joint R&D FCERM Programme website (www.defra.gov.uk/environ/fcd/research)

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