



DEVON COUNTY COUNCIL

Our Coast - *Our Common Asset*

Devon County Council's
Maritime Role and Action Programme

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Our Coast - Our Common Asset

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www.devon.gov.uk/coast

◆ ...about Devon County Council or 'Life in Devon', visit the 'Information Devon' website:

www.devon.gov.uk

◆ ...about Devon as a tourist destination visit the Discover Devon website:

www.discoverdevon.com

◆ ...other Devon County Council Role and Action Programmes:

Biodiversity
www.devon.gov.uk/biodiversity/biodiversity.pdf

Tourism
www.devon.gov.uk/environ/tourism/actionplan.pdf

Historic Environment
www.devon.gov.uk/historicenvironment/herop.pdf

◆ ...other important documents and websites:

Devon County Structure Plan
www.devon.gov.uk/structureplan

Devon Local Transport Plan
www.devon.gov.uk/devononthemove

Devon Strategic Partnership
www.devon.org.uk

Devon Foot and Mouth Recovery Plan
www.devon.gov.uk/dcc/about/findrecovery.pdf

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Our Coast - Our Common Asset

Devon County Council's Maritime Role and Action Programme

Foreword

For counties such as Devon with an extensive coastline, it is vitally important to ensure that we respect the value of the coast and the seas that surround it. Our history and culture have been greatly affected by the sea and we are recognising, increasingly the important role it plays in all our lives.

The sea and the influence that it has on the land have created a unique natural environment with richness in wildlife and geology. The marine environment, which is still only understood in a limited way, provides a fundamental part of the world's web of interconnected life.

The coast and seas around Devon provide vital economic opportunities for the people of Devon. We need to work together to ensure that these are optimised and that we keep a sound mixed economy and one that is sustainable in the long term. Tourism has long been the mainstay and there are other activities, which add to the diversity.

It is important that we protect our coast from pollution and provide a safe and inviting environment to visit. Improvements continue to be made in the quality of water that we discharge to the sea but here is a challenge to protect our coast from marine-borne pollutants such as oil and litter.

Devon County Council recognises the importance of the coast and seas around Devon to its communities. It is only by careful and informed planning and management that we will be able to use these environments to our benefit in the long term and not degrade them. We wish to support discussion, leading to action, with key players here in Devon and wider afield where these will underpin the viability of a rich, dynamic, diverse and productive maritime environment for the long-term.

Councillor Stuart Hughes
(Community Safety)

Councillor David Morrish
(Environment)

Councillor Derrick Spear
(Economic Regeneration)

Background

Devon County Council is preparing a series of Role and Action Programmes. These set out a strategy for delivering the statutory duties and discretionary services of the County Council under the themes of landscape, biodiversity, tourism, maritime and historic environments. They will establish five-year agendas and their action programmes will be reviewed on an annual basis. The planning and management of activity in the maritime environment is shared by many organisations and needs to take account of community and user needs, the sustainable economic development of the coast and environmental factors both natural and historic. Devon County Council has an important role to play. It is the purpose of this document to record this role, state the relevant policies and to commit the Council to a continued programme of action. Recognising the strength of partnership, there is much to be achieved by working with others.

The initial draft version of this document was produced in May 2002 and was circulated for public consultation to unitary and district authorities, parish councils, statutory organisations and interest groups. This final version has been amended in the light of these consultation responses.

Our Coast - Our Common Asset

Devon County Council's Maritime Role and Action Programme

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Blackpool Sands

I. Introduction

I.1 Our Coast - Our Common Asset

The coast of Devon and the influence of the marine environment are defining parts of the County's character. From prehistoric settlement to the sighting of the Armada and on through the D-Day practice landings to the present day we value the coast and sea for their historic interest, beauty, natural diversity and economy. The County and the sea are inextricably linked.

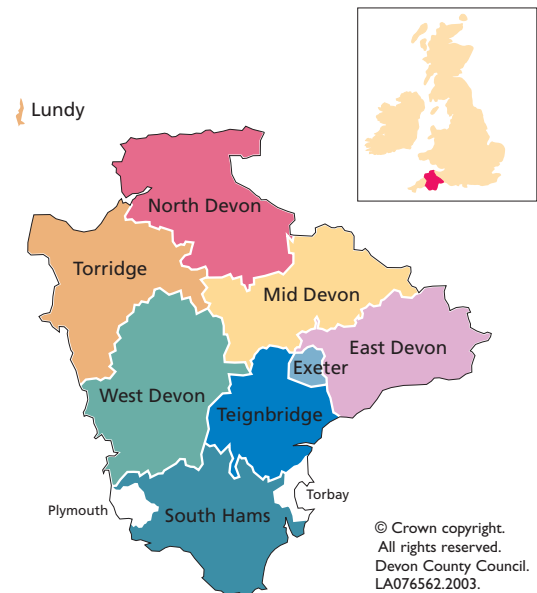
It is considered appropriate for the County Council to look at the coast and associated marine environment as a special case for attention as it is of such importance to the well being of the people of the County and its visitors. The coast represents some of the most spectacular scenery in the County, has some of the richest natural diversity and is the focus of much settlement and industry including tourism, fishing and ports. The seas that surround the County are rich in life and have influenced the lives of the people of Devon for centuries; their rich biodiversity is an integral part of the County's ecology.

This plan relates to the area administered by Devon County Council. It provides an introduction to the maritime environment and its value, and then sets out the role of the Council and the policies and actions it will pursue to protect and enhance this environment and its economy.

The data given in this document has been gathered for the area administered by Devon County Council and so excludes the Unitary Authorities of Plymouth and Torbay. The County Council recognises the advantage of co-operating with neighbouring Unitary Authorities in the "geographic" county of Devon along with other neighbouring councils and Devon District authorities. The County Council will seek to work in co-operation with relevant partners to ensure that any work affecting the maritime environment is carried out in the most effective way.

The County Council also recognises the benefit of co-operation at a wider scale. Key issues that are relevant at a regional scale are recorded in the report "The South West Coast: a Prospectus for the Future!". The "ecosystem approach", as put forward in the Government's "Safeguarding Our Seas" Marine Stewardship Report, is considered fundamental to establishing a sustainable approach to

Administrative Boundaries within Devon



management of our coasts and seas. The approach is supported in English Nature's "State of Nature – Maritime" report³. These initiatives follow on from the European Union's Recommendation on the integrated management of coastal zones⁴

I.2 Defining the "maritime environment"

There have been a number of attempts to define what is and what is not the "coast". All physical definitions, by their nature, draw boundaries, which inevitably are criticised later for including or excluding some element. The maritime environment will, therefore, not be defined on its inland boundary in this document but be taken as Mean Low Water for the limit of jurisdiction of the County Council on the seaward side. However, it is recognised that decisions taken for the terrestrial environment and its communities can have profound effects on the marine environment. The marine and terrestrial environments should be considered as influencing each other and not treated separately and therefore this document also embraces the marine environment. Devon is unique in the UK in having two separate coasts, north and south and measured at a scale of 1:10,000 its length at Mean Low Water is 422km (695km at Mean High Water.)

What is clear is that issues relating to the maritime environment are complex and, more often than not, do not respect administrative boundaries. In this

1 The South West Coast: A Prospectus for the Future. South West of England Regional Development Agency and partners, October 2002.

2 Safeguard Our Seas, A Strategy for the Conservation and Sustainable Development of Our Marine Environment. DEFRA May 2002.

3 State of Nature, Maritime - getting onto an even keel. English Nature, November 2002.

4 Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30th May 2002 concerning the implementation of Integrated Coastal Zone Management (2002/413/EC).

document Devon County Council is highlighting where it can make a difference in resolving issues that relate to this environment. However, it recognises that many other organisations have an interest and it looks forward to working with these organisations and across administrative boundaries in order to conserve and develop, in a sustainable way, the maritime environment for the future.

1.3 A Corporate Approach

The County Council has been active in coastal planning and management for many years. A key milestone was the establishment of the Coastal Preservation Area Policy in the County Structure Plan in 1966. The County Council has also long been active in oil spill contingency planning. The Council jointly established Heritage Coasts with the Countryside Commission in 1984⁵ and is supportive of many estuary management partnerships as well as hosting the South West Coast Path Partnership. In 1993 the Council hosted the Lyme Bay Coastal Forum at which the proposal to seek World Heritage Site status for the south Devon and Dorset coasts was proposed⁶. More recently the Council published the State of the Coast report⁷. In November 2001 the County Council hosted a Devon wide conference “Partnerships for Action” which examined the various examples of co-operation and best practice. It is within this context that this series of Role and Action Programmes is being prepared.



Teignmouth Back Beach



Walkers on the groyne - Dawlish Warren
(Photo: Adrian Evans)

1.4 Devon County Council - at a glance: a summary of involvement and services with a maritime dimension.

- Providing, with others, key strategic spatial planning policy protecting the coast.
- Providing, with others, policy for development and strategic transport planning for ports and coastal resorts.
- Providing a lead in contingency planning and emergency response to major shoreline oil pollution incidents.
- Supporting and promoting sustainable tourism activity on the coast.
- Hosting of and support for management partnerships on coasts and estuaries.
- Providing approximately 2.35 full time equivalent personnel to work on the coast⁸.
- Acting as “champion” for estuaries as part of the Devon BAP.
- Advising on and recording in the Sites and Monuments Register; historic features potentially affected by coastal erosion.
- Hosting and supporting the South West Coast Path team.
- Managing the South West Coast Path National Trail in Devon.
- Supporting partnerships in coastal defence, the Shoreline Management Plans and providing comment on schemes from the “operating authorities”.

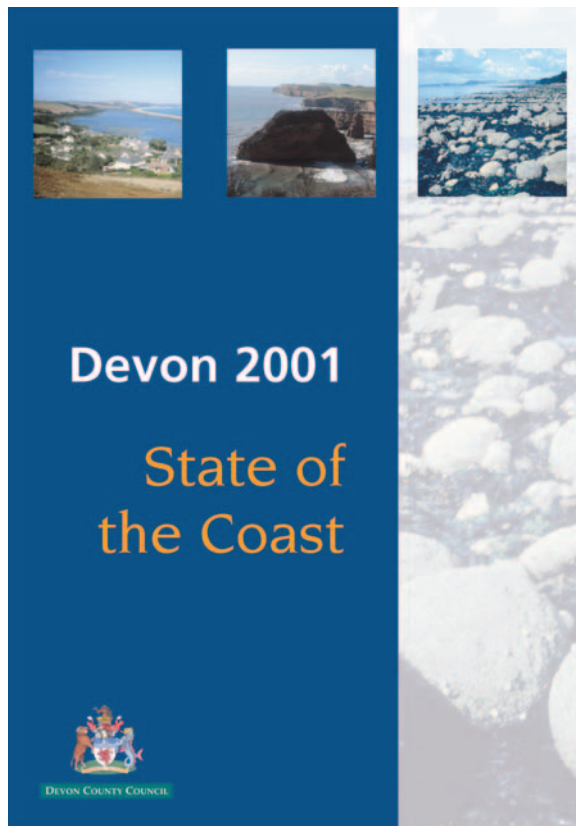
5 Now the Countryside Agency. East Devon Heritage Coast, 1984; South Devon Heritage Coast, 1986; Hartland (Devon) Heritage Coast 1990; Lundy Heritage Coast, 1990. North Devon Heritage Coast, 1992.

6 The Dorset and East Devon Coast World Heritage Site was “inscribed” in December 2001.

7 Devon 2001 – State of the Coast report. Devon County Council, 2001.

8 Devon Coastal Officer, 95% FTE, Emergency Planning Officer, 30% FTE. Emergency Planning Officer [Counter Pollution], 75% FTE. Emergency Planning Officer [Climate Change and COMAH], 30% FTE. Climate Change Officer, 5% FTE. Bridges Officer [Coastal Group, engineer representative], 0.05% FTE.

-
- Publishing of the “State of the Coast” report.
 - Co-promoting the Devon Living Coast conference.
 - Participating in the European Union’s Coastal Demonstration Programme.
 - Participating in the EU’s INTERREG IIc Programme⁹.



Devon 2001, State of the Coast report published by Devon County Council (Nov 2001)

⁹The LOSPAN project looked at spatial planning issues in coastal environments.

2. Devon's Maritime Environment

2.1 Geology and earth heritage

395 million years of Devon's history are reflected in the rocks that outcrop around its shores. The geology is varied and interesting and a diverse coastal topography has resulted from the action of climate and erosive wave energy. The contrasts from the rugged cliffs and large open sandy beaches of northern Devon to the sheltered bays of the southern coast give it universal appeal. With the exception of Dartmoor Granite and Tertiary Ball Clay deposits, all major rock types outcrop somewhere along the Devon Coast. International recognition comes from inscription of the Dorset and East Devon Coast on the World Heritage Site list. Much of this and the remainder of the coast are geological Sites of Special Scientific Interest.

2.2 Biodiversity

The coast of Devon and its associated marine environment has an extensive, varied and important range of wildlife habitats and species. Habitats include saltmarsh, dunes, cliffs and scree and intertidal areas. There is a rich marine biodiversity off the Devon coast. This is partially due to the meeting of warm southerly and cold northerly waters. Climate change is already influencing the marine ecology. The coast has international, European, national and local recognition of its importance for the natural environment. At an international level sites in Devon include designation of a site of Ramsar Convention status and a Biosphere Reserve. At a European level there are examples of European Marine Sites. These are candidate Special Areas of Conservation [under the "Habitats Directive"] and Special Protection Areas [under the "Birds Directive"]. At a national level Devon has the only designated Marine Nature Reserve in England, Lundy, plus 2 National Nature Reserves and many Sites of Special Scientific Interest. At a local level there are Local Nature Reserves and County Wildlife Sites and numerous sites owned by the RSPB, Devon Wildlife Trust and the Devon Birdwatching and Preservation Society. In total Devon has about 8,000 hectares of maritime habitat above mean low water.

2.3 Landscape¹⁰

Devon's landscape, coupled with its mild climate has made the County synonymous with "coast" through many generations. The Collins Atlas survey of 2002 gives Devon as England's "most scenic" area. The coast has a beautiful and distinctive landscape with most of the undeveloped coast being protected in some way. About 75% of the County's coast is designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Undeveloped parts of the Devon coast are

also protected as Coastal Preservation Areas designated in Local Plans. The National Trust owns about one-third of the land on the immediate coast.

2.4 Estuaries

Devon has twelve estuaries¹¹ and partly fronts the Tamar. It is undoubtedly the key county in the South West, if not in Britain for this important coastal feature. Estuaries are the foci for commerce, fishing, transportation, settlement, maritime biodiversity and recreation. All the estuaries are examples of local integrated management in that they have management partnerships with agreed management plans and many have officers dedicated to delivering these plans.

2.5 Buildings and settlements

The vulnerability of living near the sea limited the growth of coastal settlements in past, more troubled, times. Because of their more humble and later origins, the older buildings of coastal settlements tend to be small and simple. Earlier maritime settlements had to be substantial enough to defend themselves and those that survived are still the principal towns of today, maintaining the position that their mercantile wealth gave them, e.g. Exeter, Barnstaple and Dartmouth. The ports of Bideford, Appledore and Ilfracombe later joined these. The Napoleonic Wars prevented travel to Europe, forcing the well to do to look closer to home for their seaside leisure. The mild climate, the increasing wealth of the urban population, royal patronage and the greater availability of transport meant resort towns flourished. These included Sidmouth, Exmouth, Dawlish and Teignmouth. The income derived from tourism declined in the latter part of the 20th. Century, resulting in some dilapidation and loss of important buildings in the resorts.

2.6 Archaeology

The archaeological value of the coast and marine environment is unquestionable. It gives us a trail of evidence of maritime history, showing use, environment and vegetation of the coast and the means by which man has travelled to and from it. Devon coasts and seas have archaeological characteristics and potential that differs from those of inland areas. Key features include the "submerged forests" of probable Mesolithic date at Westward Ho! and Bigbury and the mediaeval waterfronts of Exeter Quay. The importances of maritime industry,

¹⁰ A full analysis of the value of Devon's landscape is given in "The Devon Landscape", Devon County Council, 2002.

¹¹ Tavy, Yealm, Erme, Avon, Salcombe-Kingsbridge, Dart, Teign, Exe, Otter, Sid, Axe and Taw-Torrridge estuaries.

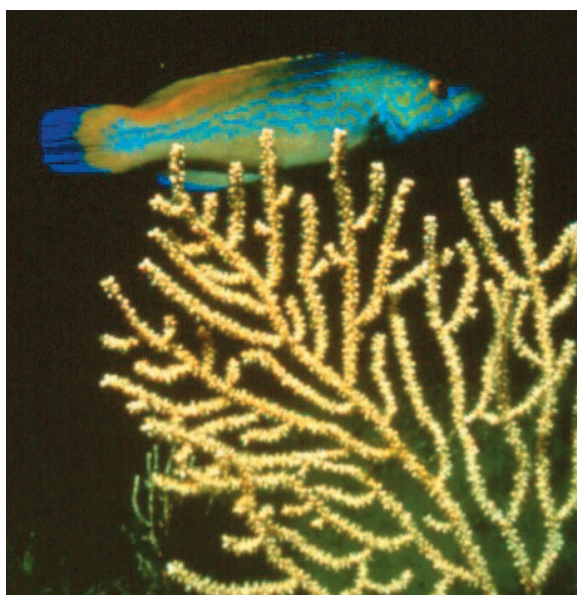
commerce and transport is demonstrated by a wealth of coastal and estuarine sites such as the saltworkings at Seaton, kelp burning sites, weirs, fishtraps on the Taw estuary, breakwaters, quays, shipyards, limekilns, jetties, slipways, silver-lead mines at Combe Martin and iron mines on the South Devon coast, sea-defences and wrecks. There are also key defensive sites, such as the Iron Age promontory fort at Bolt Tail, the fortifications from various dates at Dartmouth and the evidence of more recent conflicts from the 20th. Century. Recent legislation¹² has also reinforced the importance of the offshore archaeological record.

2.7 Population distribution

There is a continued increase in the population of Devon, with a projected growth of 14% between 1991 and 2011. The highest concentrations of population are within the southern coastal regions. The most recent figures indicate an overall Devon population of approximately 719,000, with 35% of these living in coastal towns¹³ and parishes. About 30% of coastal residents are over 60 years of age. This compares to the national figure of 20%.

2.8 Education and research

Coasts and seas provide a valuable resource for education purposes. Key themes include coastal processes and change; the impacts of change on coastal communities and sustainable management opportunities. The role of coasts and seas in the economy and impacts of tourism are studied. The fascinating geology of the hinterland is revealed on



Pink Sea Fan and Wrasse (Photo: DWT)

the coast. The existence of the shoreline as a boundary, the link to the sea as a route for invasion has resulted in a complex legacy of intriguing history. The biodiversity of coasts and seas provides a rich, living laboratory for the study of ecology.

Educational establishments at all levels and from locations throughout the UK use the Devon coast and associated sea for study purposes. Dedicated centres such as at Slapton, run by the Field Studies Council, specialise in the study of key elements of the coast using the important features of the area.

Devon has attracted marine naturalists and scientists for over 150 years. Victorians such as Philip Henry Gosse and Charles Kingsley opened-up the wonders of the seashore to a curious public. Places like Ilfracombe and Torquay became Meccas for those interested in marine natural history. Later, that fascination with the seashore developed a more scientific basis and, at the beginning of the 20th Century, detailed studies of places like Salcombe Harbour and the Exe estuary were undertaken. Now, the marine laboratories at Plymouth and the Universities at Exeter and Plymouth continue studies of the fauna and flora along the Devon coastline providing a basis against which to assess change and understand how human activities affect the coast. The establishment of voluntary marine conservation areas in North Devon and at Wembury provide a focus for developing educational programmes for the public.

The inscription of the Dorset and East Devon Coast as a World Heritage Site was in part achieved by the use of the area, over many generations, for educational purposes and to it featuring in textbooks.

2.9 Travel and transport

Devon is predominantly a rural County where the car is the main mode of transport, and this is likely to be the case for the foreseeable future. The travel and transport challenge is to accommodate the needs of tourism and recreation within the public transport system so as to give visitors a wider choice of modes. The Local Transport Plan aims to provide better transport choices and alternatives to the unnecessary use of the car. The Plan embraces walking, cycling, bus and rail travel. The nature and extent of the road network has a key effect on the distribution of visitors and the location of new developments, and this is accentuated on the coast. Tourism is a major seasonal activity concentrated principally on the coast. Maritime trade is of importance to the economy. The port of Teignmouth

¹² National Heritage Act (2002)

¹³ Parish and towns with a coastal or estuarine boundary. Figures exclude Exeter but include Barnstaple and Newton Abbot.

has regional importance. Ports such as Bideford, Barnstaple, Ilfracombe Exmouth and Salcombe have more specialised or locally important roles for commercial activities, tourism or leisure. The importance of sea port trade and the effect of associated traffic on the road network require adequate measures to be taken to ensure appropriate access and car parking provision. There are potential development opportunities within ports and potential for realising “short-sea-shipping” goals that support sustainable development. The County Council has participated in studies into water transportation on the Tamar through the Local Transport Plan.

2.10 Commerce

Commercial activity on Devon’s coast is focussed on the tourism industry. However, there are other significant coastal industries. These include ports including Teignmouth and Bideford which are key to the Ball Clay industry and other ports and estuaries which have shipbuilding, boat-building and repair interests, such as Appledore, the Exe and the Axe.

2.11 Tourism industry

In 2001 there were about 21.8 million tourist nights spent in Devon. To this can be added huge numbers of people who find the County of Devon an attractive place to day-visit. It is estimated that visitors spend over £673 million per year of which about 35% is retained as income directly in the County. Devon’s coasts and the visitors they attract remain one of the key economic assets of the County. A full analysis of the tourism industry and the County Council’s involvement is given in Devon County Council’s Role and Action Programme for Tourism¹⁴.

2.12 Commercial fishing and mariculture

Most of the commercial fishing activity within the County of Devon is associated with inshore fleets. The most important ports¹⁵ are those of Dartmouth, Salcombe and Kingswear, which concentrate on crab and lobster potting activity. Salcombe and Kingswear vessels land as much as 25% of the UK Brown Crab catch. Many estuaries have licensed beach seine fisheries for salmon and sea trout. Drift netting is popular for mullet and, when and where permitted bass are also taken. Many estuaries are now designated as Bass Nursery Areas. The Devon Sea Fisheries Committee regulates fisheries through its byelaws. The requirement on fishermen to reduce

catching effort due to the pressure of overfishing has been felt as much in Devon as elsewhere and this has a knock on effect for communities and associated industries. The need for sustainability is paramount. The Common Fisheries Policy has had a profound effect on the industry. There remains a need to establish sustainable fishing practice that will maintain fish stocks and permit a viable fishing industry. The key estuaries for mariculture in Devon are the Exe, Teign, Dart, Avon, Yealm and Taw-Torridge.

2.13 The defence industry

There are no large defence establishments on the Devon coast but there are a number of key, specialised units of national importance. Possibly the most significant are the Britannia Naval College at Dartmouth and the Royal Marine Commando base at Lymington. There is also the Royal Marines base at Chivenor and the amphibious warfare facility at Fremington.

2.14 Recreation



Angler - Exe Estuary, Cockwood (Photo: Adrian Evans)

The coasts and seas of Devon are a prime location for recreation. Water based recreation has grown in popularity and it is likely that demand will continue to increase. Marinas and sailing clubs play an important part in the provision of coastal recreation. Devon and the South West generally are hugely popular for board sports and diving and beaches such as Saunton Sands and Croyde Bay are as popular as any others nationally. It is important to ensure that the activity that is permitted and promoted is sympathetic to the vulnerability and value of the natural environment. The individuals engaged in these activities bring significant economic benefit to the County. The popularity of South West Coast Path National Trail is testimony to the ability to put appropriate recreation facilities in place. It is estimated that the Coast Path alone brings up to £15m into the South West’s economy. Recreational angling is also followed widely in Devon, either as beach fishing or by using ports and harbours for

¹⁴ Tourism, Everybody’s Business. Devon County Council, 2003.

¹⁵ Brixham in Torbay and Newlyn in Cornwall are key ports nationally for fishing, Plymouth and Weymouth are also important but are also outside of the area covered by this document.

starting offshore trips. Those participating in the activity generate income to the County through associated retail outlets and by boosting visitor numbers. Whilst no figure exists for Devon, it is estimated that £140 million is spent by anglers annually in England and Wales¹⁶.

2.15 Climate change and coastal defence



Storm at Torcross. Winter 1978/1979

The Devon coasts, with their variable topography and mixture of open, undeveloped coast and developed coastal resorts require a range of approaches to deal with climate change and coastal defence. It is estimated that sea level may rise by up to 30 cm. by 2050, presenting significant challenges for coastal defence engineers, planners and the conservation of the environment. Three “Shoreline Management Plans (SMP),” overseen by the “Coastal Groups,” set out a strategic approach to coastal defence for the Devon coasts. It is becoming increasingly important for spatial planning to take account of the pressures that climate change will bring. There is a need to maximise the effectiveness of the coastal defences that we are prepared to pay for and to identify those that we are not. Climate change will also put pressure on coastal habitats, the so-called “coastal squeeze” between the High Water Mark and the built environment. There is a need to look sufficiently far into the future and to plan infrastructure in a sustainable way. Future provision should support the needs of a vibrant coastal economy yet it should not require expensive works that will be frequently threatened by climate change and which may reduce biodiversity and reduce earth heritage interests. The need not to exacerbate flooding from combined fluvial and marine sources must be built into development plans and decisions. The opportunities presented by well thought through “managed realignment” need to be maximised.

2.16 Water quality

Investment since 1989 by South West Water has produced important benefits. Bathing water quality is improving rapidly and in 2002 standards were the

highest ever. Major coastal towns and cities in Devon have, for the first time, received tertiary standard sewage treatment works, including ultraviolet disinfecting of treated sewage. There have been recent improvements at Dawlish, Sidmouth, works to protect the Taw – Torridge Estuary and at Beer. The Environment Agency continues to address private and diffuse sources of pollution and take action on failing discharges. There is a need to look at pollution sources such as agriculture and roads and see what natural “background” bacterial effect there is from wildlife. Beaches are a major asset and so it is important for us to continue the improvement of the “Bathing Water Quality” and other European Directives. The quality of estuary and coastal waters also affects the shellfish industry and it is important to continue to strive for improvement.

2.17 Pollution and wildlife mortalities

Concerns over oil pollution and maritime waste continue. Despite a number of recent “near misses” the Devon coast has been spared major pollution from oil, although evidence of smaller spills continues to show up on beaches. The occurrence of marine borne litter from a number of sources continues to be detrimental to wildlife and to the quality of visits to our coasts. The County Council [and other local authorities] through a duty of care addresses the problems of various pollutants arriving on our beaches. There is a need to raise awareness of the detrimental effect pollutants have on the Devon coast. As with other coastal areas, Devon’s beaches often exhibit bird and cetacean deaths. There is a role for the County Council in expressing the concern of its communities to those who may be able to influence these matters.

2.18 Key organisations and groups

There are many interests that are represented when considering the planning, management and use of the coast. These interact, overlap in geographic area of influence and responsibility and occasionally compete. The key players include national government, government agencies, the Crown, Duchy of Cornwall, commercial interests including ports, fishing (commercial and recreational) and tourism, large and small landowners, local authorities, influential charities such as the National Trust, RSPB and Devon Wildlife Trust, chambers of commerce, community based groups, research and academic institutions including schools and many more.

¹⁶ State of Nature, Maritime – getting more onto an even keel. English Nature, November 2002.

3. The Strategic Context

3.1 Introduction

The planning and management of the Devon's maritime environment needs to be considered in the context of a number of other plans. These are outlined briefly below. Planning and management brings together the influences of a wide range of factors, including the many specific responsibilities of numerous organisations. In order to manage coasts and seas properly, by optimising their economic, social and environmental value it is fundamental that all influences are fully considered and balanced. This is the process often termed "Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM)." There are many plans that overlap and plans in neighbouring areas that affect Devon. It is essential to ensure that plans complement each other and to look for mechanisms to optimise the effectiveness of the efforts of all of those involved with planning and management.

3.2 European Recommendation

The European Union's "Recommendation" on integrated coastal zone management aims to achieve sustainable levels of activity on our coasts while protecting the coastal environment. It was adopted in May 2002. It sets out the requirement, at a national level, for an audit to analyse which stakeholders, laws and institutions influence the planning and management of the coast. Based on these results, a national coastal strategy will then be prepared.

3.3 UK Coastal Strategy

The UK Government is to prepare separate strategies for England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. It is likely that the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, who have the responsibility for co-ordinating the preparation of the UK strategy, will wish to consult local stakeholders in order to prepare the strategy. The entire process has to be reported back to the European Union by March 2006, with the stock taking being completed in the first year. The Government has published its first Marine Stewardship Report called "Safeguarding Our Seas"¹⁷. It sets out the Government's vision for clean, healthy, safe, productive and biologically diverse oceans and seas through an ecosystem based approach. A consultation process has begun with the publication of a discussion paper "Seas of Change"¹⁸. English Nature has recently published the State of Nature, Maritime¹⁹ report. This sets out the fundamental issues that relate to the degradation of the marine environment and advocates the ecosystem-based approach.

3.4 On the edge - the coastal strategy²⁰

The Local Government Association has published a formative document with regards management of the coast. It sets out for the first time a position statement on coastal matters from the perspective of local authorities. It supports the idea that local authorities are central to the role of good governance on the coast. It recognises the importance of locally based projects that are frontline in the delivery of actions. It also points to the value of a co-ordinated approach at national level.

3.5 Regional Coastal Prospectus

Following the establishment of a regional coastal issue group by the South West of England Regional Development Agency, the need for a prospectus for the South West coast was identified. The document, now published²¹, identifies the value of the coast, the key regional issues and it proposes a framework for addressing these issues. The prospectus development has the support of a wide group of organisations, including County and Unitary authorities and key national and regional organisations including SWERDA, Government Office for the South West, the Regional Assembly, the Environment Agency, the Countryside Agency and English Heritage. The prospectus proposes a regional coastal forum.

3.6 The statutory planning system

The Planning Acts confer certain responsibilities on local authorities to prepare plans that govern development. These plans can only affect the planning and control of development above the Mean Low Water Mark. Below this the system is passed directly to government departments and the Crown. The Devon Structure Plan and the District Local Plans provide for this in Devon. The key Structure Plan policies that affect the coast are: C2, Landscape Character and Local Distinctiveness, C7, The Coast, C24, Protecting Water Resources, T16 Freight and T20 Ports and Airports. However, it should be remembered that many of the policies have a general effect on the coast and the hinterland, whilst not being specifically coastal in outlook.

¹⁷ Safeguarding Our Seas, DEFRA, May 2002.

¹⁸ Seas of Change, DEFRA, November 2002.

¹⁹ State of Nature, Maritime – getting on an even keel. English Nature November 2002.

²⁰ On the Edge - the Coastal Strategy. Local Government Association, 2001.

²¹ The South West Coast: a Prospectus for the Future. SWERDA 2002.

3.7 Shoreline Management Plans

The Shoreline Management Plans, prepared by the “Coastal Groups”, who represent those responsible for coastal defence, are strategic coastal cell based plans. The plans establish the overall agreed intent with regards to coastal defence and are to be reviewed after April 2003. This has started in certain pilot areas nationally. There are three Shoreline Management Plans relevant to Devon²².

3.8 Devon 2001 State of the Coast

In November 2001 Devon County Council published the “Devon 2001 – State of the Coast” report. This is a comprehensive review of the value of the Devon coast (including Plymouth and Torbay.) It sets out the principal issues associated with the coast and acts as a snapshot of the state of this key environment

3.9 Estuary plans

At a local and sub regional level, management partnerships have been established in order to co-ordinate effort and aspirations. These are generally based on estuaries. They have established agreed management plans and have illustrated the value of consensus building, community participation and co-working.

²² Lands End to Hartland Point, Bideford Bay to Bridgwater Bay and Lyme Bay and South Devon Shoreline Management Plans.

4. Devon County Council's Role and Functions

4.1 Introduction

Devon County Council is involved in a wide range of coastal activity and commits significant resources to the well being of this valuable asset. The work on the coast takes different forms and is basically divided into three categories.

- work that the County Council undertakes due to legislation,
- work that the County Council carries out under discretionary powers because it considers it valuable, and
- work that the County Council is able to influence and facilitate through its position as a representative of the community of Devon.

It is estimated that that the County Council spends about £300,000 annually on work directly attributed to the coast and deploys approximately 2.3 Full Time Equivalent posts. This will be supplemented by expenditure that also supports other areas of work e.g. budgets supporting AONB management.

4.2 What we must do:

The County Council is required to:

- Prepare the Devon Structure Plan jointly with Unitary Authorities and in accordance with Town and Country Planning Act, Countryside and Rights of Way Act, Coast Protection Act, and the "Conservation" regulations.
- Regulate coastal planning in relation to mineral extraction and waste management above mean low water.
- Manage redundant waste disposal sites as the Waste Disposal Authority. This includes issues resulting from coastal erosion and climate change.
- Take account of PPG20 in consideration of any activities on the coast.
- Adhere to the Local Transport Plan, strategies 15 [sustainable distribution] and 19, Ports and Waterways, under the Town & Country Planning Act the County Council.
- Follow guidance within PPG13 with regard to Structure Plan policies T16 on freight transport and T20 relating to Ports.
- Maintain the Sites and Monuments Register and to record coastal sites above Mean Low Water.
- Take account of PPG 15 and 16 in considering any action it may take regarding the historic environment on the coast.

- Contribute to the cost of coast protection works in conjunction with the lead "operating authority" usually the relevant District Council.
- Maintain roads affected by coastal erosion and to maintain Public Rights of Way, including the South West Coast Path as Highway Authority.
- Contribute to the cost of approved coast protection schemes under the Coast Protection Act.
- Apply Structure Plan Policy E5: Tourism development in resorts.

4.3 Key discretionary activity

The County Council has discretionary powers that are undertaken to deliver the corporate policy of the Authority.

Economic Development

- The County Council works with other organisations to promote the economy. The main area of activity is within the tourism industry. Here the role is²³:
 - Influencing South West Tourism, the Regional Development Agency, Regional Assembly and the Countryside Agency to ensure that the needs of Devon are recognised.
 - Stimulating the flow of investment and expenditure into Devon tourism.
 - Advising on major tourism development
 - Promoting sustainable development of tourism.
 - Participating in sustainable tourism partnerships, including Dorset and East Devon Coast World Heritage Site, Exmoor Area Tourism and South Devon Green Tourism Project.

Emergency Planning

- Devon County Council leads, in partnership with the Emergency Services, Agencies, District Councils and major utilities, in the development and maintenance of:-
 - The Devon Flood Warning and Response Plan, which contains flood warning and response arrangements for most of the larger coastal towns in Devon.
 - The Devon Coastal Pollution Response Plan, which includes estuary booming and beach clean up strategies, for the joint response to major oil pollution incidents, etc.
 - The County Council also leads, in partnership

²³ A full analysis is contained in "Tourism – Everybody's Business. Devon County Council's Role and Action Programme." Devon County Council, 2002.

with rural District Councils, in a scheme to provide emergency planning advice to Parishes in Devon.

- Where appropriate, the County Council also leads in the provision of suitable training.

Local Management Partnerships

Devon County Council is a partner in a number of successful local management partnerships that provide co-ordination and management services for areas that include, or are dedicated solely to coastal areas. These partnerships include: Tamar Estuaries Consultative Forum, Exe Estuary Management Partnership, Dart Estuary Environmental Management and Teign Estuary Partnerships. The County Council acts as lead organisation and host for some of these partnerships.

Biodiversity Action Plan

Devon County Council is a partner in the Devon Biodiversity Action Plan²⁴. This sets out an overview of Devon's wildlife and geology; it identifies conservation priorities and contains a suite of 37 detailed action plans. Devon County Council is the nominated "champion" for estuaries. Devon County Council has also set itself further objectives and policies in relation to biodiversity,²⁵ which will, when achieved and implemented, have a significant effect on the conservation of Devon's maritime wildlife.

Earth Heritage Conservation

Under the UNESCO World Heritage Site Convention there is a protocol for care of World Heritage Sites that the County Council has committed itself to for the Dorset & East Devon World Heritage Site.

4.4 Areas of Influence

Devon County Council as a democratically accountable body with responsibility demonstrating community leadership is able to act as a host for discussion on a wide range of issues relating to the coast. Through its membership it is accountable to the people of Devon and so is able to act on their behalf on a wide range of topics that are of concern to people. These may be: promoting Devon's voice in tourism promotion; representing Devon in debate at regional, national or European level; focussing on specific issues such as cetacean deaths, which become evident on Devon's beaches.

Some of the activities that the County Council has an influence on are given below.

- Devon County Council (as do some Unitary and some District Councils) provides a home for

coastal management partnerships. It is the ability to connect with people that result in the Council being the appropriate home for these partnerships, which tackle a wide variety of coastal issues.

- Devon County Council has led and co-promoted the "Devon Living Coast" conference with its partner the University of Plymouth. The conference provides an annual event for those who work on and those who study the coast to meet and to update each other. Information is a key to good management and this conference provides a means of communication.
- Devon County Council has been successful in attracting European funding to the coast. Participation in the European Union's Demonstration Programme on the Integrated Management of Coastal Zones and also in the "Life" and INTERREG programmes have attracted valuable funds and partnerships. The County Council led the successful Local Spatial Planning (LOSPAN) INTERREG IIc project.



The Great Western Railway promoting Devon's coast before WWII

24 The Nature of Devon: A Biodiversity Action Plan. Devon Biodiversity Partnership, 1998

25 A Better Future for Biodiversity. Devon County Council's Role and Action Programme.

5. Strategic Role, Policy and Actions

5.1 Devon County Council's vision for the coasts and seas of Devon.

"We should strive for the coast of Devon and the seas that surround it to be a rich and diverse natural, historic, cultural and economic environment that provides a place to live and work and an escape from the busy world, for its communities and visitors, today and in the future."

5.2 Devon County Council's strategic role on the coast

The County Council is able to fulfil the role of facilitator of integrated planning and management of the coast at the Devon wide level. It acts as a lead organisation, co-ordinates activity, supports key initiatives and provides advice at a strategic level. It works to ensure that all those with an interest in the coast have a voice. The County Council has a role as champion for the community of Devon on key strategic issues that affect the coast.

5.3 Devon County Council's policies and actions for the maritime environment

The Five-year Priorities for Action are listed below under the relevant Strategic Goal of the County Council and the proposed Coastal Policy

Goal: A prosperous Devon

Maritime Policy 1 – Commerce

We will support measures that favour development of those industries dependent on a coastal location such as ports, mariculture, fishing, shipbuilding etc. provided they are environmentally sustainable.

Maritime Policy 2 – Towns

We will support initiatives to re-generate coastal towns.

Tourism

Please refer to the Devon County Council role, policy and action programme for tourism "Tourism, Everybody's Business."

The objective of these policies is: to realise a prosperous and competitive coastal economy that is inclusive of all.

The five-year priorities for action are:

- 1 Audit, assess and study the potential of all significant, maritime economic activities and identify priorities, given the need for environmental sustainability, and support investment.
- 2 Support the Market and Coastal Towns initiative.

To implement these actions the County Council will:

- Engage key players and where appropriate facilitate a process of audit and analysis to assign priorities.
- Undertake action planning with partners and delivery of appropriate actions.

Goal: A safe Devon

Maritime Policy 3 – Emergency Planning

We will support proposals that strengthen and resource the County Council's strategic role in oil spill contingency planning and its ability to respond in an emergency.

The objective of this policy is: to strengthen the effectiveness of oil contingency planning and emergency response by the County Council.

The five-year priorities for action are:

- 3 Revise and maintain the Coastal Pollution Plan and provide suitable training
- 4 Revise and maintain the Devon Flood Warning and Response Plan and provide suitable training
- 5 Continue to provide support to Parishes for local emergency contingency planning.

To implement these actions the County Council will rehearse scenarios with key players and revise or formulate contingency plans.

Goal: Improving transport in Devon

Maritime Policy 4 – Transportation (congestion)

We will assume the view, when devising transportation policy, that coastal areas require special treatment because of seasonal congestion and that the provision of real choices of transport mode is fundamental.

Maritime Policy 5 – Transportation (ports)

We will support proposals that unlock the potential of ports, rail links and infrastructure that are environmentally sustainable.

The objective of these policies is: to maintain an efficient, effective and integrated transport system that meets the needs of Devon, its coastal communities and visitors

The five-year priorities for action are:

- 6 Support the Trans European Networks initiative.
- 7 Prepare an action plan for public transport on the coast.
- 8 Develop public transport opportunities for coastal communities and visitors.
- 9 Continue to improve the walking, cycling and horse riding networks on the coast.
- 10 Support measures that will realise the full potential of short-sea-shipping, ports and rail links.

To implement these actions the County Council will:

- Engage key partners in the process.
- Plan with long term sustainability as the key.

Goal: Looking after Devon’s environment, culture and heritage

Maritime Policy 6 – Spatial Planning (coast)

We will assume the view, when devising spatial planning policy, that the coast is an invaluable resource that must only be developed in such a way that the ability of future generations to make choices regarding it is not compromised.

Maritime Policy 7 – Spatial Planning (marine)

We will ensure that when devising spatial planning policy, that the long-term sustainability of a healthy marine environment is not compromised.

Maritime Policy 8 - Partnerships

We will continue to support, and where appropriate participate in, management partnerships that demonstrate that their action helps to achieve the strategic goals of the County Council.

Maritime Policy 9 - Biodiversity

We will value the unique biodiversity of the coast and marine environment and consider our actions that affect it carefully against its conservation.

Maritime Policy 10 – Earth Heritage Conservation

We will value the unique and dynamic geology of the coast and consider our actions on the coast carefully against its conservation.

Maritime Policy 11 - Archaeology

We will undertake, when considering any action of the County Council, to preserve in situ, where feasible, the coastal archaeological resource. Where in situ preservation is not feasible, we will undertake to record the archaeological resource in accordance with best practice as provided by the guidelines given in PPG15 and PPG 16.

Maritime Policy 12 – Coastal Processes

When considering our views or actions that affect coastal processes we will start from the premise that natural processes should not be interfered with, unless there is a clear cost benefit and an overriding social gain in the long term and that any environmental damage can be mitigated.

Maritime Policy 13 – Knowledge, Awareness, Networking and Exchange of Good Practice

We will consider participating in initiatives that increase the knowledge base, public awareness and that promote dialogue, discussion and exchange of good practice on issues relating to the maritime environment at a local, regional, national and European level.

Maritime Policy 14 - Funding

We will pursue actively relevant external funding sources that can be shown to assist in the delivery of the action programme for the coast.

Maritime Policy 15 – Capacity and Competence

We will continue to build capacity and competence to an appropriate level in order to deliver our coastal commitments.

Landscape

Landscape policy for the coast is covered by Devon Structure Plan policy C7, “The Coast”. The County Council is also publishing an Action Programme for Landscape entitled “The Devon Landscape”.

The objectives of these policies are:

- to secure spatial planning policy that supports sustainable development of the coast.
- to ensure the best use of resources through partnership working wherever possible,
- to conserve the natural, cultural and historic environments,
- to help deliver a sustainable and strategic approach to activity that might affect coastal processes,

- to provide the County Council with the knowledge, information and access to good practice it requires to be able implement its actions
- to ensure that European, national, regional and local policy frameworks reflect the needs of Devon’s coast,
- to secure additional funding which will support the County Council’s coastal role,
- to give the County Council the capacity and competence it requires to deliver its actions on the coast

The five-year priorities for action are:

Development Plans

- 11 Provide comment on coastal Local Plans commensurate with achieving County Council coastal policy.

Partnerships

- 12 Convene a Devon coastal “Roundtable” at appropriate times.
- 13 Participate in European, national, regional and local partnerships where a clear benefit to Devon’s coast and surrounding seas and where value for money can be demonstrated.
- 14 Review membership of, and any contributions to, partnerships regularly and consider new partnership arrangements as they arise.
- 15 Review its role with regard to safeguarding and management of estuaries.

Natural, cultural and historic environments

- 16 Fulfil the role of estuary “champion” in the Devon Biodiversity Action Plan.
- 17 Support a programme of coastal assessments of the archaeological resource, to ascertain the current extent and nature of the HE capital.
- 18 Provide advice and maintain a record to ensure the character and integrity of the historic environment is conserved.
- 19 Support the implementation of the Management Plan for the Dorset and East Devon Coast World Heritage Site.
- 20 Support the northern Devon Biosphere Reserve.
- 21 Make representations to appropriate bodies on behalf of the Devon community on matters that affect the Devon coast e.g. cetacean deaths or shoreline litter.

Coastal Processes and Defence

- 22 Attend relevant “Coastal Group” meetings and contribute to any review of Shoreline Management Plans.
- 23 Provide comment to operating authorities on coastal defence schemes where required.

Knowledge, Networking, Awareness and Exchange of Good Practice

- 24 Maintain an active contact with those responsible for European, national, regional and local policy that affects the maritime environment and review current proposals.
- 25 Participate in the preparation of policy documents, programmes, plans, reports etc. that will show a benefit to the planning and management of activity on Devon’s coasts and seas.
- 26 Support and participate in knowledge, awareness raising and data-based partnerships.

Funding

- 27 Audit potential funding sources.
- 28 Apply to European, national, regional and local funding sources to support the County Council’s work on the coast

Capacity and Competence

- 29 Review regularly the resources available to the County Council to deliver the Action Programme and seek new resources when appropriate

To implement these actions the County Council will

- Engage in the policy development process.
- Review regularly commitments and support active and effective partnerships.
- Review and support relevant plans and strategies and seek implementation mechanisms.
- Support further development of strategic approaches to coastal defence.
- Adopt Structure Plan policies that lead to sustainable coastal defence activity.
- Maximise benefit from appropriate external funding sources.





*Ladram Bay to Sidmouth, Dorset and East
Devon Coast World Heritage Site
(Photo: Richard Edmonds)*



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