

East Head Coastal Issues Advisory Group (EHCIAG) Frequently Asked Questions

Who and what is EHCIAG?

EHCIAG is a working group of stakeholders set up in response to the Pagham to East Head Coastal Defence Strategy adopted in 2009. The nature of the group is unique in its composition as so many organisations have been drawn together at one time to develop coastal management policy of East Head. EHCIAG consists of delegates from Chichester District Council, Environment Agency, Natural England, National Trust, West Wittering Parish Council, West Wittering Estate Plc, Woodger Trust, Cakeham Manor Estate Ltd. The purpose of EHCIAG is to monitor changes at East Head and to react to these changes. EHCIAG's role is purely advisory and seeks to ensure decisions taken by operating authorities are well informed and are based on the best available information.

What is Adaptive Management?

Adaptive Management is defined by East Head Coastal Issues Advisory Group (EHCIAG) as:-

“The aim of Adaptive Management will be to preserve the social, economic, environmental, navigation and amenity value of East Head to the community for the life of the strategy. The emphasis will not be on trying to lock the feature in its present size, shape and location nor should it be encouraging orientation in a pre-determined direction.”

The Strategy referred to, is the current “Pagham to East Head Coastal Defence Strategy” adopted in 2009. The strategy has no defined life period for review but will be subject to re-examination if material changes occur.

It must be stressed that this is a process not a once and for all solution. The commitment of all parties is essential to the success of adaptive management.

Why Adaptive Management?

The coastal operating authorities (CDC/ADC/EA) undertook a strategic assessment of coastal management during the period 1999-2009, producing the Pagham to East Head Coastal Defence Strategy (PEHCDS). The strategy considered four different policies for this frontage

- 1) Do nothing.
- 2) Advance the line.
- 3) Hold the line
- 4) Retreat the line.

It was realised that none of these policies were suitable for this dynamic frontage and a working group came to the conclusion that adaptive management offered the best long term approach.

What actions are the group proposing?

Initially the group intend to recycle shingle and sand from the northern end of the spit and place it immediately behind the hinge which will reinforce the similar operation carried out in 2009. This will provide additional material that may be used during future storm events to maintain access to the spit.

Who will fund these actions?

It is clear that we are unlikely to attract funding from central government in the absence of risk to properties. This does not preclude raising funds from other sources and the group is committed to raising funds for carrying out the works. Significant works will require a project manager who will supervise the works and be funded as part of the project.

Why are the defences being allowed to deteriorate?

The current hard defences (timber breastworks) are located in a position that causes lowering of the beach by reflected waves and create a discontinuity in the alignment of the coast. This results in the potential for scour to erode the neck of East Head, as happened in 2004. The group believe that a better alignment will reduce the risk of erosion.

Will the lack of hard defences result in a tidal breach being formed?

Independent expert advice is that a tidal breach is unlikely and that if it did form it would probably seal naturally. The group however, believe it is better to have in place plans to manage the beach and physically prevent a tidal breach.

When will the recycling take place?

It is intended that all work will be completed by winter 2015/16

What will happen to the footpath behind the breastworks?

During the initial period pedestrians will be directed to use the alternative route landward of the tamarisk. The group is committed to maintaining pedestrian access to the spit at all states of the tide.

What has happened to the geo-textile sill suggested in the Pagham to East Head Coastal Defence Strategy?

The group have considered this but felt the installation of such a structure at this time would cause unacceptable damage to the salt marsh. Nevertheless this does remain an option and may be reconsidered in future years as the beach alignment evolves.

What plans have you made for the groynes?

The groynes are vital to the stability of the beach at this time, the seaward end will be maintained in their current position to prevent landward migration of the deep water channel. The inner ends of the groynes, as the timber breastworks deteriorate may be either extended landward or reduced in height to prevent concentration of wave forces. This will be the subject of detailed monitoring as changes begin to take place which EHCIAG will react to in a timely manner..