



Save Our Selsey
(Campaign for Coastal Protection)
www.saveourselsey.org

SOS Bulletin No 6 – August 2008

COASTAL DEFENCES - RESPONSE to the Environment Agency's PAGHAM to EAST HEAD STRATEGY

Deadline for public response 29 August 2008

Save Our Selsey – Overriding policy

Our overriding policy for coastal defences anywhere in the UK is 'Hold the Line' SUSTAIN where homes, businesses and farms are at risk. We believe that any realignment of the UK coastline inland is dangerous and will be difficult, maybe even impossible, to reverse.

Selsey's Urban Frontages – East Beach, West Beach and Selsey Bill

SOS welcomes the decisions in the draft strategy to combine all 3 'frontages' into a single unit and to adopt the policy of **Hold the Line - Sustain**. However we believe that the beach from the Coastguard Tower to Bunn Leisure, known as 'The Medmerry Cliffs', should be included as part of the urban frontages. A policy of 'no active intervention' here would lead to continued erosion along the bank resulting in the loss of the coastal footpath, increased threat to the Coastguard Cottages and houses on West Street and ultimately the rest of Selsey. By protecting this area, the Site of Special Scientific Interest is also saved for the future. **BUT government funding is unlikely** – keep an eye open for the SOS Petition urging government to fund our sea defences.

Medmerry

Despite public opinion expressed during the consultation period and the wishes of SOS, Selsey is now likely to get the cheapest option for Medmerry. Albeit managed realignment attracts the maximum "points" – and thus funding - it is not what is best for the Peninsula. The conclusions reached only highlight the inadequacies of government policies for coastal management. We are extremely concerned that the EA's current summary document "Planning for the Future" makes no reference to the loss of houses (9 under the preferred option for Medmerry realignment and 5 under Medmerry Cliffs' "no active intervention") with **no compensation**. We expect government to pay for top specifications for our navy, army and airforce procurements for defence but we get the cheapest option for coastal defence. We urge the EA to report this failure to Government. We still doubt that realignment creating a supposedly stable tidal inlet will work, given the ferocity of the seas at Medmerry during a south westerly storm. Alternative schemes seem to have been dismissed after casual consideration, on vague assumptions that they may have detrimental effects. Even the recent "Going Dutch II" recommendations have all but been ignored despite the £10,000 of public money used to fund the event. The realignment of Medmerry could add another 6 to 8 km to the coastline which will need monitoring and maintaining. It is predicted there will be a world-wide shortage of food in the near future with an ever increasing pressure on farmland for crop production. Now is not the time to abandon farmland to the sea.

However, the reality is that to try and adopt a different policy which would not attract government funding would simply mean Medmerry defences are left to erode further and introduce uncontrolled flooding of the surrounding area. SOS therefore could be encouraged to support realignment at Medmerry if, and **ONLY IF**, the landowners and the community agree with it, are fully compensated for any loss of land/property, are involved in the design of the defences and assured of their long

term maintenance. The EA **MUST** look closely at its procurement costs for coastal defence materials as recent discussions have shown some current costs to be unacceptably and unnecessarily high. The community must also be allowed freedom of access to the area when realignment is complete.

Funding

It is clear that the key issue for the future is MONEY and where it comes from. We have already commented on the funding for 'managed realignment' at Medmerry. We are appalled by the conclusion that central government funding for Selsey's urban frontages is deemed 'unlikely'. As citizens of the UK we fully accept that our taxes have been used to protect and develop other regions of the country. As residents of the Chichester district we accept that local taxes raised from individuals and businesses are used in other parts of the district. We do NOT accept central government's policy of abandoning the defence of coastal communities such as Selsey. Defending and defining the coastline of Great Britain is a national issue which must attract national funding. Selsey and the surrounding area have a massive part to play in 'UK PLC' and therefore there should be a nationally funded programme of coast defence.

The present government policy that is likely to grant money to the realignment of Medmerry because of habitat creation but unlikely to grant money to sustain the urban frontages of Selsey indicates that wildlife habitats are still more important in government circles than communities with their people, homes and businesses. This is wrong. It is vital that there is comprehensive community involvement in the discussions over future funding of Selsey's coastal defences and SOS looks forward to participating, along with other local associations and councils.

It is also very important that Chichester District Council increases its funding for coastal defence maintenance as the urban frontages are now showing signs of deterioration and must be suitably maintained in the interim period prior to the new Coast Defence Strategy coming into force.

Community Consultation

A clear message that came out of the recent 'Going Dutch II' event was that 'a plan that does not have the approval of the community is not a good plan'. The 1450 members of SOS certainly felt that not only was this true but the community had not really been consulted in the first stage of the Coast Defence Strategy! However in the second stage the consultation and dialogue have been much more effective and constructive. Certainly approval does not as yet and may never exist but as we move into the scheme stage SOS would expect the dialogue and consultation to continue and looks forward to participating.

Conclusion

We believe that central government needs to reconnect with commonsense by properly funding the coast defence of Selsey and the Manhood Peninsula.

THE PEOPLE DESERVE IT.

The **deadline for YOU to have your say is 29 August 2008**. Please write to:

Pagham to East Head Draft Strategy Consultation 2008

Environment Agency Guildbourne House

Chatsworth Road

Worthing West Sussex BN11 1LD

or email them at pehcads@environment-agency.gov.uk

To join the growing numbers of SOS supporters, simply complete the forms available with the SOS boxes at Compton's Farm Shop (Chichester Road), Selsey Town Council's office and "In Stitches", 89 Selsey High Street or on our website www.saveourselsey.org where you will also find more comprehensive information. Donations are always welcome, too! Cheques should be made payable to "Save Our Selsey" – thank you!