



### Our Coastline is changing

We live in a spectacular part of the country that has been shaped by natural coastal processes over time. This change is usually gradual but sometimes rapid and dramatic. This natural evolution of the coast has created the land and seascapes we love around our shorelines. But change also represents a threat to some coastal communities. In the past, attempts have been made to stop the effect of erosion or flooding. Rates of erosion and incidents of flooding are expected to increase by the end of this century, because of increasing storms and rising sea levels brought about by climate change. Protecting our coastal communities in traditional ways will become increasingly difficult.



Whitesands Beach at Sennen Cove

### What is an SMP?

The Shoreline Management Plan (SMP) provides a broad-scale assessment of the risks associated with coastal change. It sets out a long-term policy framework to manage these risks and acts as a strategic planning document that will guide decision making. The SMP seeks to find ways to manage the risks of coastal change in a way that does not tie future generations into costly and unsustainable approaches, while trying to balance potential conflicting interests along the coast.

### Why have they been reviewed?

The first SMPs for Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly were adopted by the Local Authorities in the late 1990s. Significant progress has since been made in the understanding of how climate change and sea level rise may affect the coast and there has been an important political shift towards longer term sustainable development and land use planning. Therefore all SMPs covering England and Wales have been reviewed.

### The area covered by this SMP

The Cornwall and Isles of Scilly SMP Review covers over 1,000km of open coast, estuaries and harbours from Rame Head in the south-east to Land's End and around to Hartland Point, North Devon. The Isles of Scilly, lying 45km to the south-west of Land's End are also included.



The Fal Estuary at Malpas, popular for sailing but also a fragile and important ecosystem

The coastline ranges from the rugged and sparsely-populated coastline of the North Cornish coast, to the sheltered and tranquil waters of the Fal and Helford estuaries. Key urban centres in the study area include Truro, Penzance, Newquay and Falmouth. The natural beauty of the area is reflected by the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) status, which covers the majority of the coastline on the mainland and the Isles of Scilly.



The Isles of Scilly, the only inhabited archipelago in England

Many coastal and estuarine areas are protected for their heritage, landscape, geological and biological value and include international, national and local designations, which are very important considerations for the SMP. Many of our coastal communities are clustered around harbours which have great heritage value and represent the historic fishing and mining industries.



Charlestown Harbour, historic legacy of the china clay industry

### The key SMP objectives for Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly

- Manage the risks to communities from flooding and erosion and support their adaptation
- Establish a long-term action plan which helps to minimise and reduce the reliance on defences in the future
- Support the diverse character of the landscape & seascape
- Allow natural evolution of the shoreline wherever possible
- Minimise impacts upon the historic environment
- Support nature conservation and minimise habitat impacts
- Support the viability and core values of coastal settlements
- Support tourism and recreational opportunities
- Support the adaptation and resilience of transport links

### What have we looked at?

This SMP Review aspires to sustainable future change, not locking future generations into costly obligations and taking the following aspects into consideration:

### Defences

The equivalent cost of providing a defence is likely to increase over the next century to between 2 and 4 times the present cost (excluding inflation or other factors) from £6 million up to £20 million. This means that either more money needs to be invested in coastal defence or expenditure has to be prioritised.



Coast defences, like this rock revetment at Marazion, will become increasingly expensive to maintain

### Socio-economics

Our coast is extremely important for recreation and leisure activities which contribute to quality of life, and bring tourism revenue to the area. Good quality beaches and access to the sea are vital to sustain commercial and industrial interests along the coast. Maintaining these sectors is essential to the economy of the region as a whole.

### The Natural Environment

Coastal management can have a significant impact on wildlife habitats, coastal landforms and heritage features. Future management of the coast must allow natural habitats and species to respond and adjust to change such as sea level rise. Where this is constrained through natural topography or man-made structures, 'coastal squeeze' can occur. The SMP must also comply with legislation relating to the important conservation designations protecting habitats in the SMP area. It must also take account of wider guidance such as the Shifting Shores policy from the National Trust, who is a major landowner in the study area.

### Land Use Planning

It is important that the SMP gives strong direction to the Land Use Planning System when development at the coast is being considered. Development which is unsustainable environmentally, technically or economically should be avoided, and it is important that both planners and the wider communities which they serve acknowledge that the funding for future coastal defence is likely to become ever more difficult to obtain.

### Working in Partnership

The SMP Review has been completed on behalf of Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly Coastal Advisory Group (CISCAG). Members of CISCAG formed the SMP **Client Steering Group**, including representatives from the Local Authorities, Environment Agency, Natural England, English Heritage and the National Trust, who have overseen and guided the production of this plan. In addition, **Elected Members Forums** were established for both Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly Councils. These each comprised a number of elected councillors and provided guidance and representation of the local wards and Town and Parish Councils. They have also acted to formally endorse the plan and recommend its adoption to the Full Councils.

CISCAG commissioned consultant engineers Royal Haskoning to prepare the SMP and undertake the technical assessments. Coast and Country Projects Ltd were commissioned to undertake project management of the work. Funding has been provided by the Government through the Department of Food and Rural Affairs (Defra).

### The Action Plan

The Action Plan aims to capture all intended actions necessary, on a policy unit basis, to deliver the objectives at a local level. It should also help to prioritise flood and coastal risk management medium and long-term planning budgets. A number of the actions are representative of ongoing commitments across the SMP area.



### Further information

The final completed SMP Review document is available to view at the principal offices of Cornwall Council and the offices of the Council of the Isles of Scilly on St Mary's. It is also available to view or download at the Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Coastal Advisory Group - [www.cornwall.gov.uk/smp](http://www.cornwall.gov.uk/smp)

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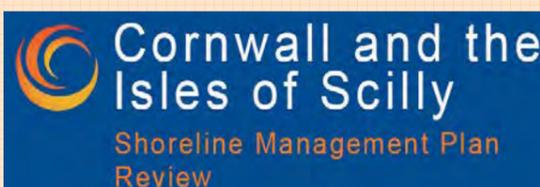
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## Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly Shoreline Management Plan Review

Final Plan Summary  
February 2011

Rame Head to Land's End to Hartland  
Point and the Isles of Scilly

[www.cornwall.gov.uk/smp](http://www.cornwall.gov.uk/smp)





**Perranporth**

Flooding from storm waves at Perranporth is a significant risk to the community and substantial flooding was experienced here in March 2008. It is a driving issue which dictates that following a period of **hold the line** for the first 20 years, **managed realignment** should be introduced for the 50 and 100 year time horizons. This will allow for adaptation of the frontage to be made (following a period of further study and planning), to prevent a significant worsening of the risks to people and their property. A number of other north coast locations can similarly be affected by wave action, including Mawgan Porth, Polzeath and Portreath and a similar policy and preferred plan intent have been adopted at those locations.

**Godrevy**



At Godrevy, cliff erosion threatens access to the large National Trust car parks. Protected dune areas behind the access road mean that realignment of the route is not an option. The Trust supports the SMP policy of **no active intervention** along this frontage, to ensure that natural coastal processes can occur uninhibited. However eventual loss of the access road will mean loss of the largest recreational car parking resource in West Cornwall.

**St Mary's**

St Mary's, particularly Hugh Town, is extremely vulnerable to wave overtopping and inundation during storms. Erosion is also a problem around parts of the island. In addition, rising sea levels threaten the fresh water supply on St Mary's and also on the other inhabited islands. A continuous **hold the line** policy is in place around Hugh Town harbour. A **managed realignment** approach is preferred at Porthcressa to provide flexibility. The overall intent of the plan is significant adaptation of the entire Hugh Town settlement in the longer term due to sea level rise and climate change impacts.



**Widemouth Dunes**

The dunes at Widemouth are in a poor and degraded condition. A policy of **managed realignment** has been established for all three time periods to assist with ongoing efforts to restore the dune area to a more pristine condition, whilst at the same time helping to manage the wider erosion risk which exists at the northern end Widemouth beach. Dunes all around the SMP coast are proposed for careful management under similar **managed realignment** approaches where the intent is to protect and improve their status as UK Biodiversity Action Plan habitats.

**Mount's Bay**

The communities which make up the Mount's Bay frontage – Marazion, Longrock, Penzance, Wherry Town and Newlyn, together with the Marazion Marsh frontage present a difficult management challenge. A range of important objectives need to be satisfied. Whilst the frontage is extremely pressurised and demands a flexible **managed realignment** approach to manage risks from flooding and erosion, issues such as the European Birds Directive designated Marazion Marsh, and presence of important harbours at Newlyn and Penzance, necessitate sections of continued **hold the line**. Important transport infrastructure (A30, railway, Heliport and Ferry terminal) introduce further long term considerations for adaptation of the frontage.



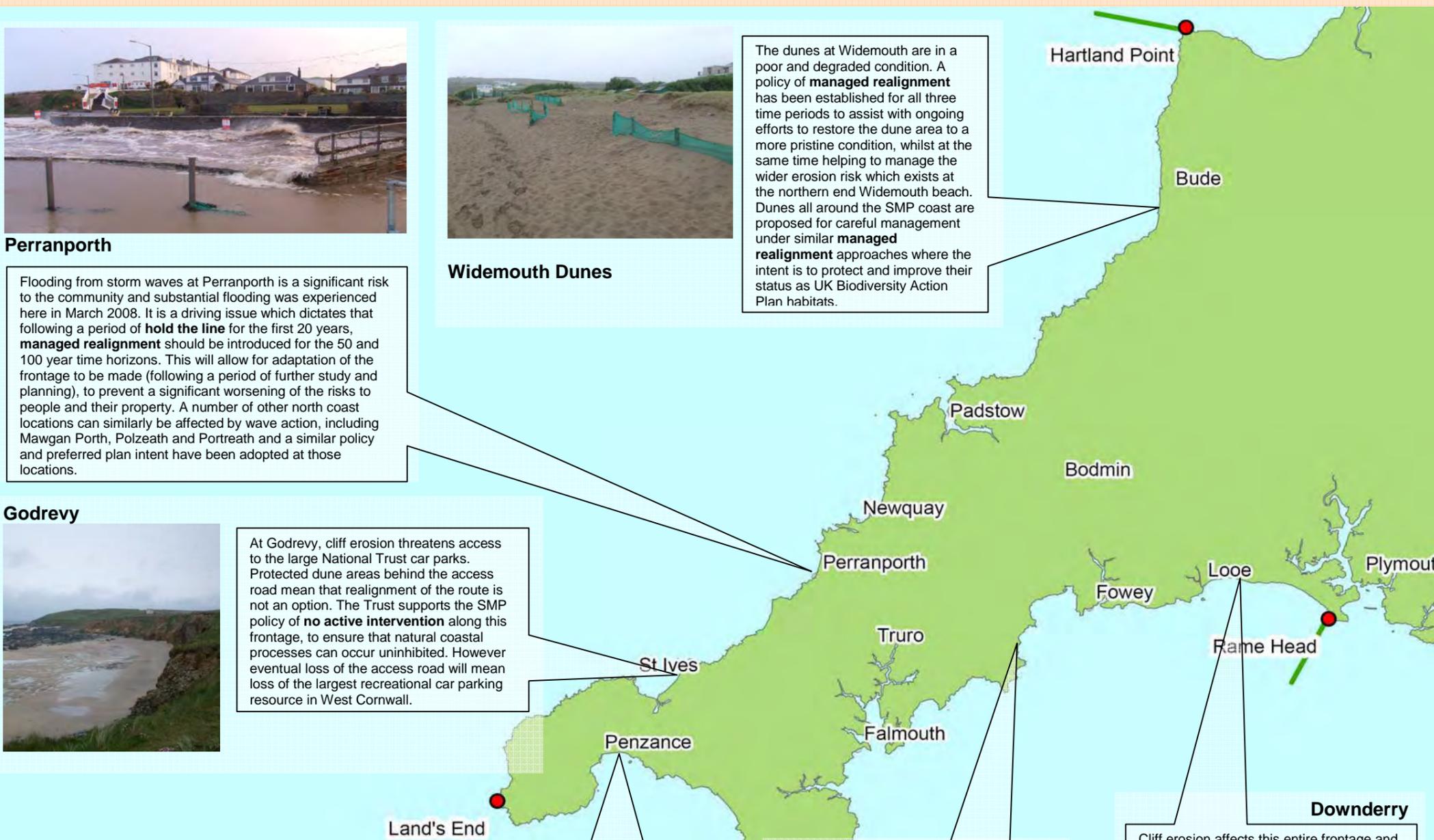
**Mevagissey**

Mevagissey's historic harbour area is extremely vulnerable to high sea levels and future sea level rise may mean that high spring tides bring significant flooding to this iconic fishing village several times each year. Because flexible adaptation of the community needs to be matched with careful management and improvement of defences, the preferred policy is a joint **hold the line / managed realignment** approach in the short and medium term. This mirrors other SMP locations where localised managed realignment will be beneficial within areas where most existing defences will be held.



**Downderry**

Cliff erosion affects this entire frontage and with an ad hoc variety of coastal defences in place, management of the risk is complex. There is a need for community adaptation in the longer term in order to respond to the changes which erosion will bring to the coastline. The preferred policy at Downderry is an initial **hold the line** approach up to 2025. In epochs 2 & 3 the intent is to move to a more flexible **managed realignment** approach to allow an appropriate level of community adaptation to occur. Continued monitoring of the rates of cliff erosion and of foreshore levels is an essential aspect of managing the complex Downderry shoreline into the future.



**Policy Development**

The SMP Review provides a long-term policy framework over the next 20, 50 and 100 years to guide the management of the coast. The policy can change between these time periods (called epochs) to give communities time to adapt to coastal change. It is important to note that the implementation of these policies through specific actions is dependent on funding being available (not necessarily through the public purse) and the necessary planning and consents being in place. The SMP area is divided into 259 individual policy units, each with a preferred policy option for each of the three time periods up to the year 2105.

**SMP Policy Options**

There are four management policies that can be considered by the SMP (these are set out in Defra's SMP guidance, March 2006).

<b>No active intervention (NAI):</b>	A decision not to invest in providing or maintaining built defences or the natural coastline.
<b>Hold the line (HTL):</b>	Actively maintain or upgrade the level of protection provided by built defences or the natural coastline.
<b>Managed realignment (MR):</b>	Manage the coastal processes to realign the 'natural' coastline configuration, either seaward or landward.
<b>Advance the line (ATL):</b>	Build new defences seaward of the existing defence line where significant land reclamation is considered.

**Headline issues**

Around the SMP coast there are a number of recurring issues which affect our communities, beaches, cliffs and natural habitats. Principally these are: cliff erosion; direct wave driven flooding on the open coast at exposed locations; still water flooding from high tides and storm surge at sheltered locations; coastal squeeze and loss of beaches where defences are present; degradation and loss of dune areas; degradation and loss of historic sites; loss of roads and highways.

Storm waves at Rinsey Head, November 2009



Often, one dominant issue affects a particular location - the SMP policy is then principally driven by that specific problem. At some locations however, a number of issues combine to make the risks more complex and we then have to meet a number of different objectives, which sometimes means compromise is necessary. The main location map to the left identifies a number of example locations which demonstrate these key issues and describes the rationale behind the policies. Because this SMP covers a large geographical area it is not possible in this summary to provide an overview of all policy units - for this the main SMP report should be consulted. However a *Summary Document* for the SMP has been produced which provides some additional details on policy and management approach at the key locations.

**Consultation**

Seeking the views of the coastal communities and the key stakeholders (organisations like the National Trust, the Duchy of Cornwall, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds and Wildlife Trusts) has been essential in selecting appropriate policy in each location. We have also consulted closely with elected councillors across the SMP area through **Elected Members Forums**. Throughout the review, a large number of local meetings, road show drop-in events and tailored presentations have been undertaken. The SMP Coastal Group website - [www.cornwall.gov.uk/smp](http://www.cornwall.gov.uk/smp) - will now host the full set of completed SMP Review reports.

**Monitoring**

Ongoing monitoring of the coastal environment, including measuring sand levels on beaches, rates of cliff erosion and changes in the wave climate is essential to further develop our understanding of the coast and how it is responding to climate change and sea level rise. The South West Regional Coastal Monitoring Programme has since 2006 provided a very useful information resource for all coastal practitioners working in Cornwall. This programme covers the entire South West peninsula, including Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly, covering the open coast and the estuaries up to their normal tidal limit. It is intended this programme will continue and be improved and refined for priority areas.