

# **Written evidence submitted by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (CWR0063)**

## **Introduction**

The government welcomes the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee's inquiry into climate and weather resilience. The following provides evidence for the Committee's call for evidence on coastal erosion and landslips.

Coastal erosion and landslips can have terrible consequences for people, businesses and the environment. Climate change is happening now, and we expect to see an increase in extreme weather in addition to sea level rise.

Defra has overall policy responsibility for flood and coastal erosion risk management in England. Defra does not have policy responsibility for landslips that occur in non-coastal areas or those caused by reasons other than flooding or coastal erosion. Individual departments hold responsibility for their sectors and understanding risk and impact, for example the Department for Transport for the road and rail sectors.

The government is committed to supporting coastal communities and ensuring flood and coastal erosion risk management is fit for the challenges we face now and in the future. Recognising the need to invest for the long-term, this government will invest more than £10.5 billion into our flood and coastal erosion defences by

The government's Coastal Transition Accelerator Programme (CTAP) is supporting communities and businesses at risk of coastal erosion to transition and adapt to a changing coast. We are investing £36 million supporting local authorities in East Riding of Yorkshire, North Norfolk, Cornwall and Dorset to explore innovative approaches in adapting to the effects of coastal erosion.

## **1. What is the scale and nature of the risks posed by coastal erosion and landslips to communities, the economy and the environment?**

Coastal erosion is a natural process which leads to the movement of land to the sea, it can be influenced by human activity and by climate change. A landslide is a mass movement of material down a slope when the force of gravity acting on a slope exceeds the resisting forces of a slope, the slope will fail and a landslide occurs.<sup>1</sup>

### National Coastal Erosion Risk Map

The new National Coastal Erosion Risk Map (NCERM), published in January 2025, provides the most up to date national picture of coastal erosion risk.<sup>2</sup> The update is informed by 10 years of further evidence on coastal processes compared to the original map. It accounts for the latest UK climate projections (UKCP18) which includes allowances for sea level rise.<sup>3</sup> NCERM is a publicly available dataset with areas at risk of coastal erosion viewable through the 'Shoreline Management Plan Explorer' portal.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> [Understanding landslides - British Geological Survey](#)

<sup>2</sup> [New national flood and coastal erosion risk information - GOV.UK](#)

<sup>3</sup> [UK climate projections \(UKCP18\)](#)

<sup>4</sup> [Shoreline Management Plan Explorer](#)

NCERM shows that 3,500 properties are in areas at risk of coastal erosion in the period up to 2055. This increases to about 10,100 properties in the period up to 2105. About half of these properties are residential. The other half are non-residential properties such as schools, hospitals, retail and leisure businesses.

The assessment of properties in areas at risk assumes implementation of all actions in Shoreline Management Plans (SMPs) for the coast are delivered. SMPs set out a planned approach to managing flood and coastal erosion risk around the coast of England to 2105. They are recognised internationally as one of the best examples of long-term coastal planning.

Between now and 2055 the largest proportion of properties at risk of coastal erosion are in Yorkshire and The Humber with around 32% of total properties at risk, the second highest is the Southwest with 27% of properties at risk and the third highest is the East of England with 25%.

NCERM also provides information on potential impacts if SMPs are not delivered and no future investment is made to manage coastal erosion. The numbers of properties in areas at risk increases significantly in the period up to 2055, reaching up to 32,800 properties.

At a national scale, the NCERM is providing the underpinning evidence to inform updates to the Environment Agency's Long Term Investment Scenarios (LTIS) which are due to be published in 2026. LTIS will produce detailed insights into future coastal risk, options for managing risk and an assessment of likely long-term costs. The new scenarios will provide important evidence for informing future policy and investment choices for improving resilience and adaptation to future climate risks.

### Impacts on the Environment

The coast is a significant cultural asset, 30% of Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and 55% of Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) are coastal and 33% of the English coastline is designated Heritage Coast some with United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) status. However, the coast is dynamically responsive to changing coastal processes.

Coastal erosion is a natural process and provides the source of sediment for natural landforms and habitats that protect land and infrastructure from wave damage and erosion. Effective solutions to the sustainable management of changing coastlines generally rely on the management of coastal sediment (e.g. mud, sand, gravels, etc). However there has been an historical decline in the availability of coastal sediment.

Maritime cliff and slope are ecologically diverse habitats in England, covering around 14,000 hectares. Most are impacted by stabilisation measures, limiting natural function. Losses to these habitats are expected because of climate change and sea level rise.

### Natural Capital and Ecosystem Assessment

UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) and Defra have funded a £14.8 million Resilient Coastal Communities and Seas (ReCCS) Programme. Defra's contribution is through the Natural Capital and Ecosystem Assessment (NCEA) programme, set up

to collect evidence on the extent, condition and change over time of the nation's ecosystems and natural capital, and benefits to society. Projects funded through ReCCS will enhance our knowledge of how to strengthen the resilience, health and wellbeing of UK coastal communities.

Particular attention will be given to addressing the legacy of historic coastal landfills at risk from coastal flooding and erosion, alongside exploring ways to actively involve communities in enhancing coastal resilience through co-designed interventions and increased civic participation.

ReCCS is also funding the Resilience of Anthropocene Coasts and Communities (RACC) project, which aims to foster cross-sector and interdisciplinary learning to strengthen coastal and marine resilience across the UK.

### Historical Coastal Landfill (HCL) Sites

Coastal Protection Authorities (CPAs) are district and unitary authorities in coastal areas and lead on coastal erosion risk management activities in their area. As local authorities, their responsibilities include managing HCL sites in cases where, as a result of the landfill on land, there is significant harm or significant pollution of controlled waters being caused or a significant possibility of such harm or pollution being caused.

CPAs have the responsibility of ensuring HCL sites are managed in a consistent and environmentally friendly way. For many of these sites the contents and the impacts, and therefore remediation cost/benefits, are not clear.

Previous research has suggested that circa 10% of HCL sites may be at risk of erosion by 2050, creating environmental and human health risks.<sup>5</sup> Understanding the severity of these risks, and how best to mitigate them, is becoming increasingly important due to the potential impacts of change along our coastline. Landfill erosion is already impacting a number of protected sites and the risks are growing.<sup>6</sup>

Defra recognises the complexity and challenge HCL sites bring for CPAs. We are taking action to fully understand the scale of the issue and where priority actions need to be taken to support those responsible to take forward appropriate mitigation effectively. The Environment Agency (EA) hold datasets on current landfill and historic with updates being made on a regular basis to move sites from current to historic status.<sup>7</sup>

The government has commissioned a project to provide a clear and up to date understanding of the scale of risks posed by HCL sites in England. This will include the potential consequences and impacts to people and the environment from the risk

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<sup>5</sup> [Eroding our future - pollution from historic landfills threatens our coastlines - Department of Geography and Environmental Science](#)

<sup>6</sup> Brand's 2018 assessment includes data on the risks of impacts to a range of sensitive areas [lying coasts and estuaries - Brand - 2018 - WIREs Water](#) - 51 % of Ramsar Sites, 46% of Special Protection Areas, 11% of Special Areas of Conservation, 32% of Bathing Waters, 120 SSSIs and 39% of Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North-East Atlantic (OSPAR) Marine Protected Areas.

<sup>7</sup> [Historic Landfill Sites](#)

of flooding and/or coastal erosion of these sites. This evidence will enable government to make future informed considerations regarding possible methodologies that can be used by local responsible authorities and partners to prioritise action and identify funding sources. This project is due to conclude by the end of 2025.

### Transport Infrastructure

Maritime sites (including ports), roads and railways are at risk from coastal erosion. NCERM estimates that over 10 km of major roads, over 173 km of minor roads and over 6 km of railways are at risk of coastal erosion between now and 2105.

Coastal erosion and landslips affecting transport infrastructure can take longer to recover from than other hazards, such as flooding. When transport infrastructure is affected by coastal erosion, there is a permanent loss of land (and therefore the associated infrastructure). Whilst infrastructure is relocated/reinstated there can be long-lasting service disruptions and communities face being cut off, or having to make lengthy detours.

For example, the winter of 2013/14 gave rise to significant and widespread coastal erosion to the UK, with accelerated landward recession that typically would be expected to occur over a 10-year period of 'normal' shoreline retreat. The severing of the Dawlish railway resulted in the most significant impacts, causing damage to approximately 80 metres of railway and the railway services west of Exeter to be suspended for two months.

### Looking Forward

Defra will publish a Coastal Monitoring and Historical Coastal Change report shortly that will detail how coastal erosion is impacting the natural environment, built environment, communities and the economy. The report includes a Rapid Evidence Assessment to review the evidence available on historic coastal change and consolidate this information in one place. It also summarises and ranks the various coastal monitoring techniques and technologies that are available to consider historical coastal change, and develops a methodology to document historical coastal change. The research will provide important evidence and inform future policy.

**2. What strategies are currently in place, or needed, to reduce the risks of landslips and coastal erosion, and what research gaps exist? What policies are in place nationally and locally, such as within the Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management (FCERM) Strategy, for mitigation of hazards associated with landslips and coastal erosion? How effective and well-resourced are they and what types of impacts are considered within the policy framework?**

### National

#### *Strategies and Frameworks*

The third National Adaptation Programme (NAP3) is our plan to combat climate change by improving the nation's resilience to future flood and coastal erosion risks. This aims to reduce the risk of harm to people, the environment and the economy.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> [NAP3 Annex 1: Climate risks and opportunities \(with correction slip\)](#)

The EA's National Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management (FCERM) Strategy sets out a long-term vision for a nation ready for, and resilient to, flooding and coastal change.<sup>9</sup>

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) requires local authorities to identify Coastal Change Management Areas (CCMAs) in areas likely to be affected by physical changes to the coast. Development in CCMAs is only appropriate where it is demonstrated that it will be safe over its planned lifetime and not have an unacceptable impact on coastal change. Local authorities should also make provision for development and infrastructure that needs to be relocated away from Coastal Change Management Areas.

### *Funding*

Recognising the need to invest for the long-term, the Government is providing certainty over the budget for flood and coastal erosion defences by committing £7.9 billion of capital (2026-27 to 2035-36) for a new 10-year floods and coastal erosion investment programme, benefitting around 840,000 properties by 2035-36.

Taking together the £2.65bn that will be invested by March 2026 and our £7.9 billion 10-year investment starting in 2026/27, this government will invest more than £10.5 billion into our flood and coastal erosion defences by 2035/36.

On 14 October 2025 the government confirmed the reforms that it is making to the flood and coastal erosion funding formula, following a public consultation over the summer. The reforms will make it quicker and easier to deliver the right defences in the right places by simplifying flood funding rules. The new approach is more agile, allowing the Environment Agency to respond to both current and future risk through its investment. The new rules will apply from the start of the new flood and coastal investment programme in April 2026.

Our new approach will prioritise projects based on all their benefits, including wider benefits delivered by coastal erosion projects.

### *Coastal Transition Accelerator Programme (CTAP)*

The CTAP is helping communities on the coast that cannot sustainably be defended from coastal erosion. It aims to support residents and businesses to prepare and plan for the long term, whilst also making some immediate adaptation actions to help support the long-term resilience of communities on the coast.

As part of CTAP, local areas are exploring the availability and role of financial products or services that can help people or businesses in communities most at risk of coastal erosion. Four projects are receiving funding through CTAP to work with communities on the coast that cannot sustainably be defended from coastal erosion: Changing Coast East Riding; Coastwise North Norfolk; Future Bude - Shaping our coastline; Future Coast Dorset.

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<sup>9</sup> [National Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management \(FCERM\) Strategy](#)

The projects are engaging with communities in areas which are experiencing coastal erosion issues. They are exploring a number of issues locally including how people can continue to access the coast and what the options are for buildings and community infrastructure in areas at risk of coastal erosion.

Working with the EA we will explore how we can take forward the current CTAP, building on lessons learned, and recognising the growing source of risk in this area from the latest NCERM data.

### *Transport*

The third Climate Change Risk Assessment (CCRA3) includes risk to transport infrastructure services from coastal flooding and erosion. The Department for Transport (DfT) set out plans on how we will address our transport climate risks in NAP3.<sup>10</sup> This includes working through national forums, regional strategic groups and local resilience forums (LRFs) to promote engagement on joint programmes, data gathering and associated research.

Coastal railways and road networks are often protected by sea defences or other beach protection measures. Specific measures are taken by transport operators to reduce the risks. These include measures by Network Rail to identify sites prone to landslips to keep passengers and engineers safe.<sup>11</sup> Initiatives are also taken by transport operators such as Network Rail partnering with the environmental consultant WSP to improve planning for – and response to – flooding and coastal erosion.<sup>12</sup>

Network Rail has also developed a range of measures to enable it to anticipate and mitigate disruption to the rail network caused by extreme weather, which are contained in its Weather Resilience and Climate Change Adaptation Plan.<sup>13</sup>

Network Rail, as the infrastructure manager of Britain's railways, has the main responsibility for maintaining the integrity and safety of the rail network from landslips. To this end, Network Rail has allocated £2.8 billion during 2024-2029 to be invested on activities and technology to improve system wide resilience to extreme weather and climate change, including landslips. These activities include both preventative and reactive measures, including reinforcing embankments, enhancing drainage systems, stabilising slopes, and using remote sensing and real-time monitoring to predict and monitor slope movements to enable early intervention.

### Local

#### *Shoreline Management Plans (SMPs)*

SMPs are developed and owned by local authorities and CPAs. These provide long-term strategic plans which identify approaches for managing the flood and coastal erosion risks at every stretch of coastline. SMPs guide decisions over a 100-year horizon. These plans offer four policy options: hold the line, advance the line, managed realignment, and no active intervention.

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<sup>10</sup> [Third National Adaptation Programme \(NAP3\) - GOV.UK](#)

<sup>11</sup> [Landslips - Network Rail](#)

<sup>12</sup> [Network Rail partners with WSP to improve planning for - and response to - flooding and coastal erosion](#)

<sup>13</sup> [Climate change adaptation - Network Rail](#)

The CPAs are best placed to understand their coastline and to develop the most appropriate approaches to manage risk through SMPs and their local planning policies.

A £2m investment enabled the EA to support CPAs to update and strengthen SMPs to ensure they are up to date, are using the best evidence in their recommendations and focus attention on priority areas for investment and adaptation. This project also included the development of the SMP Explorer digital on-line tool to improve access, understanding and use of SMPs, which was launched on 30 January 2024.

SMPs need to align with Regional Strategic Plans and Local Nature Recovery Strategies and be clearly embedded in Local Plans to provide space for nature to support the transition of areas at risk.

### *Funding*

Local authorities receive revenue funding for coastal erosion and landslip risk management through the Local Government Finance Settlement (LGFS). For 2025-26, the government has delivered a LGFS that provides a 6.8% cash terms increase in councils 'Core Spending Power', making available over £69 billion for local government - including £2 billion of new grant. The majority of local government funding is un-ringfenced, recognising that local authorities are best placed to decide how to meet the rising service pressures in their local areas, including on coastal erosion risk management.

In June, the government launched a consultation on proposals to update and reform the funding system through the 2026-27 Local Government Finance Settlement. This builds on the local authority funding reform: objectives and principles consultation.

### **3. What are the social, economic, and psychological impacts of landslips and coastal erosion on affected communities? And how can these be addressed?**

Landslips and coastal erosion have wide-ranging social, economic, and psychological impacts on affected communities. The destruction of property and infrastructure often leads to displacement, financial hardship, and mental health problems. The Government is addressing these complex issues through robust evidence and community-based solutions.

#### Social impacts

Landslips and coastal erosion can force residents to abandon their homes and land. This forced displacement results in the loss of sense of community and the deep connections among people. Displacement and the loss of shared physical spaces can cause significant strain on social cohesion and interpersonal relationships.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> [fairbourne-coastal-risk-management-learning-project.pdf](#)

Alongside this, damage to infrastructure like roads, railways, and bridges can cut off communities from essential services.<sup>15</sup> This isolation affects access to healthcare, schools, and supplies, and can also hamper emergency response efforts.

Disadvantaged coastal communities also often experience an out-migration of younger people and an inward migration of older or retired residents.<sup>16</sup> This can strain public services and lead to a more seasonal and transient population.

### Economic impacts

Landslips and coastal erosion cause catastrophic damage to homes, businesses, and public infrastructure, resulting in significant repair or replacement costs. Critical transportation networks, including roads and railways, can also be severely disrupted. In the 2013 winter alone, sea storms caused around £320 million of damages to infrastructure.<sup>17</sup>

Coastal communities often rely on coastal and marine activities such as fishing and tourism. Coastal erosion can destroy beaches and marine habitats, undermining these industries and causing job losses. The loss of agricultural land due to erosion and saltwater intrusion also impacts farmers. On average, per capita income in England's coastal councils is about half the national average.<sup>18</sup>

The unpredictable nature of these events can deter long-term investment in vulnerable areas, further impacting the local economy. Local authorities may also have limited resources to invest in regeneration or resilience measures. In addition, properties in areas at imminent risk from erosion or landslips often see a dramatic drop in value. Beyond direct damages, indirect economic costs, such as lost business revenue, reduced tourism, and decreases in productivity, can often exceed direct costs.

### Ways we are addressing the impacts

The government uses a range of tools to address the challenges created by the risk of coastal erosion and landslips. These include an effective planning system, developing SMPs, early warning of sea storms, incident management and emergency response, programs that encourage community resilience and support for vulnerable residents. The government is also investing to protect coastal communities from flooding and sea level rise and fostering innovation through the Coastal Transition Accelerator Programme to support coastal communities.

The EA is undertaking research to improve our knowledge of how communities experience flood and coastal erosion recovery. This will provide insights which can be used to plan future services more effectively. This research is near completion, and the EA hopes to start sharing findings towards the end of the year.

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<sup>15</sup> Winter, Mike; Shearer, Barbara; Palmer, Derek; Peeling, David; Harmer, Clare; and Sharpe, Jonathan. (2016). "*The Economic Impact of Landslides and Floods on the Road Network*". *Procedia Engineering*. 143. Pages 1425-1434.

<sup>16</sup> [Impacts of climate change on disadvantaged UK coastal communities.](#)

<sup>17</sup> [Estimating the economic costs of the 2015 to 2016 winter floods](#)

<sup>18</sup> [Regional gross domestic product: local authorities - Office for National Statistics](#)

**4. Is there sufficient support available to those who have sustained damage or loss of property due to landslips or coastal erosion, and are items such as financial compensation, relocation assistance, and wellbeing services considered in this support?**

In the immediate aftermath of a coastal landslip local authorities and emergency service will act to evacuate and provide immediate shelter and welfare to affected households if this is needed. Local authorities will also clear debris and make dangerous buildings safe (though this does not include making them habitable).

The Coastal Erosion Assistance Grant (CEAG) provides £6,000 per property to assist local authorities with the demolition and removal costs associated with homes at imminent risk from coastal erosion. The EA administer the CEAG on behalf of Defra.

Local authorities may be able to apply for government financial support for the immediate actions they take to protect life and property. Subject to ministerial decision.

In areas where coastal erosion and landslips are a common risk local authorities may undertake a range of routine actions including warning and informing residents and visitors (e.g. via websites, signage) and periodic inspections of unstable cliffs. They can also implement strategic actions to reduce the risks of coastal erosion and landslip (often working in partnership with EA, other local authorities, landowners including environmental organisations) and may have dedicated teams to support residents and manage actions being taken to respond to and mitigate the impacts.

**5. Are emergency services and local authorities sufficiently resourced and trained to respond to the increasing risks of landslips and coastal erosion linked to extreme weather events, particularly in rural, coastal and hard-to-reach areas?**

Local authorities lead, with other first responders, on emergency response to coastal erosion through their role as CPAs. As category 1 responders, local authorities are at the centre of a response by coordinating emergency services, healthcare, and voluntary services, evacuation centres, maintaining essential services, public information and support. Funding for local authority emergency response is included in the LGFS, details of which can be found in the response to question 2.

The EA support local authorities in their coastal protection function and also act as Category 1 emergency responder under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004. As Category 1 responders, the EA undertake key operational duties such as warning and informing communities, preparing for and assessing the risk of emergencies, putting in place emergency plans and sharing information with responders to enhance coordination.

Local Resilience Forums (LRF) link together organisations such as emergency services, local authorities, health bodies, the EA and others through a multi-agency partnership established under the Civil Contingencies Act. Together LRFs work to assess risks and plan and prepare responses to emergencies like flooding, landslips, pandemics, or industrial accidents.

HM Coastguard coordinate all maritime search and rescue operations in the UK and are the co-ordinating authority for maritime emergencies and major incidents. Coastguard do not have specific training for volunteer or full-time officers focused on landslips or coastal erosion however, training for all front-line Coastguard staff and volunteers include risk assessment for rescue intervention.

Coastguard technical rescue skills and equipment are designed to be used on unstable ground, and some elements of capability are focused on soft ground (such as landslide debris, quicksand and sand hole collapse). Coastguard Rescue Service teams are equipped to assess and report cliff falls and other coastal instabilities and can take action to cordon off areas if required. A variety of other organisations might also be involved in the emergency response to landslips, the Mining Remediation Authority, including Mountain Rescue teams, Cave Rescue teams and other voluntary organisations

The Natural Hazards Partnership publish daily UK-wide multi-hazard assessment providing an at-a-glance summary of the risk from a range of natural hazards, including landslips, over the next five days.<sup>19</sup> The British Geological Survey (BGS) also maintain a National Landslide Database with digital maps showing areas susceptible to landslips as well as locations of previous mass movements.<sup>20</sup>

Many transport service operators across all modes of transport are Category 2 responders under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004.<sup>21</sup> Regulation 4 of the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 (Contingency Planning) Regulations 2005 requires cooperation and sharing information with other Category 1 and Category 2 responders for the purposes of resilience and emergency response planning. Transport service operators are also encouraged to ensure effective join up in the recently published Resilience Action Plan<sup>22</sup>.

## **6. To what extent is the protection of and access to significant natural landscapes and heritage sites being undermined due to coastal erosion or landslips, what are the impacts of this, and how could this be addressed?**

### Natural Landscapes

While coastal erosion and landslide processes can have devastating impacts on the built environment, they can also be integral to the formation and maintenance of many important habitats, geological exposures and landscapes of high value.

Coastal erosion is fundamental to the functioning of coastal protected sites and high value landscapes, and there is increased understanding of the wide-ranging impacts that hard engineering can have on the coastal environment. Engineered coastal protection can inhibit natural processes hampering sediment supply to natural features such as spits and beaches which themselves provide some natural protection. A balance is needed to enable natural processes such as erosion to

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<sup>19</sup> [The Natural Hazards Partnership \(NHP\) - Met Office](#)

<sup>20</sup> [National Landslide Database - British Geological Survey](#)

<sup>21</sup> [Civil Contingencies Act 2004](#)

<sup>22</sup> [Resilience Action Plan](#)

function where practical as this supports the dynamic habitats and transitional zones that are critical for biodiversity, climate adaptation, and flood resilience.

However, coastal erosion can compromise legal protection that SSSIs have under Part II of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. As SSSI boundaries are static, their interest features are at risk of rolling outside the designated SSSI boundary as the coastline erodes. In these cases, even if the interest features of the SSSI may technically be in a healthy state they would be assessed as 'Unfavourable'.<sup>23</sup> NE is exploring the extent to which these changes can be implemented and managed within the current framework.

NE has launched a project to update the Maritime Cliff and Slope Priority Habitat Inventory in the light of the effects of erosion. This will inform potential SSSI boundary revisions and enhance resilience. Following 2019 coastal SSSI guidelines, the project advocates for adaptive site designations that accommodate natural change over 20–50 years.<sup>24</sup>

### Access

The Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 places a duty on the Defra Secretary of State and NE to secure a long-distance walking trail around the open coast of England, the King Charles III England Coast Path, together with public access rights to a wider area of land along the way for people to enjoy. The result is a well way-marked walking route around the whole of the English coast securing legal rights of public access for the first time to typical coastal land including foreshore, beaches, dunes and cliffs.

A continuous and sustainable trail cannot follow the same fixed route year after year on parts of coast that are changing significantly. Statutory provision is made in NE's proposals to the Secretary of State to enable the trail to be moved inland as the coast changes. This provision is called 'roll back' and applies to areas subject to significant coastal erosion or physical change. This may be due to geomorphological processes, such as landslip; or significant encroachment by the sea, such as occurs in the case of a natural or deliberate breach of existing sea defences.

This legal provision has the combined benefit of solving long-standing issues with maintaining a coast path on an eroding coast, protecting a national asset with the associated social and economic benefits that it brings, and ensuring the public can continue to access significant natural landscapes.

### Heritage Site

Heritage assets vary in size and scale, from individual buildings to whole landscapes. Those assets within Historic England's (HE's) remit include but are not limited to historic buildings and structures, collections, landscapes, buried archaeology, marine landscapes, and wrecks.

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<sup>23</sup> [Ocean & Coastal Management | Journal | ScienceDirect.com by Elsevier](#)

<sup>24</sup> [SSSI Guidelines. Chapter 1a: Coastlands \(coastal saltmarsh, sand dune, machair, shingle, and maritime cliff and slopes, habitats\) | JNCC Resource Hub](#)

Previous research found that of over 400 properties, 54 sites are within the coastal zone. Of these 54 sites, 70% (13% of the total portfolio) are at risk of being affected by coastal erosion.<sup>25</sup>

There are currently at least 31 scheduled monuments on HE's Heritage at Risk Register listed as At Risk and with coastal erosion as their principal vulnerability although not all may be actively eroding. Landslip risk may also be exacerbated by climate change hazards, such as changing rainfall patterns and coastal erosion.

The NAP3 details Government plans to protect cultural heritage from climate change, including a specific risk related to coastal heritage. In 2024, HE published its Climate Change Adaptation Report in response to the Government's Fourth Adaptation Reporting Power (ARP4) call under the Climate Change Act 2008. In the report HE provided an overview of the work it is doing to mitigate the impact of coastal erosion on heritage in response to the action within NAP3.<sup>26</sup>

HE is undertaking or about to start a number of projects to further understand the full scale of risk to designated heritage assets, and to identify potential solutions. The newly started 'A Matter of Time & Tide' project will use the EA's recently published NCERM datasets to quantify the number of one particular class of protected heritage asset (scheduled monuments) that are currently at risk or are likely to become at risk over the next 80 years, and on what timeframe.

The Coastal erosion multi-criteria analysis project, led by HE, aims to establish a framework for assessing adaptation options for historic buildings and structures at risk from coastal erosion multi-criteria decision analysis.<sup>27</sup> The project will examine five case study sites to identify adaptation options (including loss), to understand potential constraints impacting different options and to aid future decision-making processes for adaptation, grant-making, etc.

The CTAP is developing ways of helping coastal communities that cannot be defended from coastal erosion. Of the two major projects, HE staff are on the Steering Group of Changing Coasts East Riding and supporting Coastwise in North Norfolk with advice on heritage policy.<sup>28 29</sup>

The need for the heritage sector to consider ways to manage climate-driven loss was highlighted CCRA3. In response, HE has committed to develop a decision-making framework and toolkit to help owners and managers prepare for and manage climate-change driven impacts to heritage sites, including the unavoidable loss of heritage assets from risks including coastal erosion or increasing ground instability.

HE also provide advice on emergency planning, response and recovery. Although landslip events are not specifically covered in current advice, the guidance and training we deliver for salvage may be applicable in certain scenarios.

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<sup>25</sup> [English Heritage Coastal Estate Risk Assessment](#) (2011)

<sup>26</sup> Historic England & English Heritage Trust (2024), Climate Change Adaptation Report 2024. <https://historicengland.org.uk/research/results/reports/70-2024>

<sup>27</sup> [multi-criteria decision analysis](#)

<sup>28</sup> [Changing Coasts East Riding](#)

<sup>29</sup> [Coastwise](#)