

ON THE EDGE

A Coastal Strategy



**The Local Authority agenda
for England's coast**

Local 
Government
Association
Coastal Special
Interest Group



Foreword

The challenges for coastal communities and the Local Authorities representing them around the coast of England have never been greater. The role of our LGA Coastal Special Interest Group ("the SIG") in representing and informing our member authorities and communities as their champion has never been more important.

The current economic environment, where there are reduced financial and human resources for central government departments, for the delivery bodies such as the Environment Agency, and for Local Authorities in particular, has come at a time when issues affecting the coast have themselves become ever more complex and challenging.

Climate change issues especially affect our coast together with ever increasing expectations around wider environmental standards, these have led to the introduction of major new legislation, both from the UK government and from Europe, with more to come.

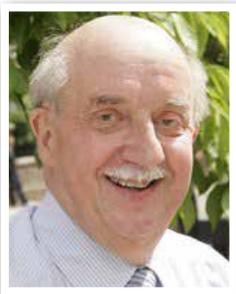
So the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009, the Flood and Water Management Act 2010, new and forthcoming European Directives and a raft of other measures present us with new duties and new topics like Marine Licensing and Planning, Coastal Access, new responsibilities for Lead Local Flood Authorities, issues around pollution, conservation and many others which we and our member councils must deal with.

The role of the SIG is to present an effective and consistent case on this wide range of topics in all the various forums, old and new - with reduced resources.

"On the Edge" was first published in 2001 with two modest updates subsequently. It was a key statement of intent from the "SIG" and has enabled the "SIG" to become: the voice of Local Authorities on coastal issues, recognised by government and its agencies as an important partner in policy and delivery, enabled views to be shared by Local Authorities and to position the SIG to be recognised as an important stakeholder for the coast.

This latest version "On the Edge" has now been updated looking to the future. It will equip the LGA Coastal SIG itself, and all our member councils in the light of your own local issues, priorities and expertise, to work more effectively in promoting the well-being of all our coastal communities.

We look forward to working with and to serving the interests of member authorities and their communities now and in the future.



A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Andy Smith". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Chairman, LGA Coastal Special Interest Group

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Local Authorities and our coast - what we do

Local government is at the heart of every local coastal community. We provide the services people rely on, while being directly accountable to our local electorate.

At any one time we are working to protect lives and property from the ever-present impact of the sea; helping communities to manage the consequences of economic change; planning for new forms of energy; balancing the pressures for development and the management of the special coastal environment.

Delivering each of these coastal services requires a complex mix of specialist skills, partnerships with business and community organisations which pose exciting opportunities and conversely also potential additional burdens.

Additionally, we must be prepared to deal with the special risks and hazards of our coastal location.

This ranges from natural risks of extreme weather, landslips and cliff falls, to man-made shipping accidents and pollution. Climate change poses particular problems and major risks, uncertainties on the coast.

Local government is already the most efficient, transparent and trusted part of the public sector when it comes to decisions over local services, 79% of people trust councils to make decisions about the future of local service. Public trust in central government to take decisions over local services is just 11% (IpsosMORI 2013).

Every day we work with local partners and residents to determine and deliver local priorities. With our broad range of statutory and non-statutory responsibilities, we play a pivotal role in the management of our coast.

The LGA estimates that councils provide over 700 separate services to the public, including services that are often unseen or are taken for granted.

Local Authorities can draw on a significant reservoir of in-house or community expertise and knowledge of dealing with these special challenges, delivering some of the highest standards in the world.

In summary, we are the front-line in the sustainable development of our coast - balancing the care and enhancement of the environment whilst seeking to protect and regenerate local economies and communities.

The LGA Coastal SIG - what it is

The Local Government Association Coastal Special Interest Group (the “LGA Coastal SIG”), a group of 50 plus Local Authorities from around the coast of England representing a total of over 13 million people (2011 census).

The LGA Coastal SIG is dedicated to helping Local Authorities manage contemporary demands and maintaining a seat at the top table when decisions affecting the future of the coast are made.

For nearly two decades the LGA Coastal SIG has pooled the extensive collective knowledge and expertise of coastal Local Authorities to help achieve an ambitious common vision for the coast of England:

A sustainable and important thriving coast - within a healthy functioning natural environment and where important cultural heritage and economic activity is enhanced.

A vibrant coast - for viable and healthy communities, where social exclusion and poverty are tackled and citizens have freedom of choice in the way they live.

A dynamic coast - where human activities and development work in harmony with natural processes; risks are managed by planning.

A democratic and informed coast - where local people understand the issues and have a strong voice.

The LGA Coastal SIG comprises both elected representatives and officers from our member authorities, with an enormous wealth of knowledge, experience and expertise on coastal issues.

The LGA Coastal SIG aims to:

- Support coastal councils in delivering sustainable development of England’s coast.
- Strengthen the capacity of coastal councils to deliver sustainable coastal management.
- Promote awareness of important role of local government on the coast.

Our Aims

▶ Support coastal councils in delivering sustainable development of England's coast:

- Commission research, prepare discussion and briefing papers on key areas of concern, including the identification and quantification of future additional burdens, duties and responsibilities faced by Local Authorities.
- Promote partnership working at all levels including with Government, Arm's Length Bodies, Town and Parish Councils, local communities and other interested parties.
- To actively work in partnership with agencies, the LGA, professional institutions, fellow Local Authorities and others on resolving shared coastal issues.

▶ Strengthen the capacity of coastal councils to deliver sustainable coastal management:

- Support capacity building programmes for local authority members and staff.
- Provide a strong coordinated voice for member councils in the discussions on relevant coastal issues through, for example, preparing common responses to consultations on coastal issues.
- Enable the sharing of knowledge, expertise, experience and resources between coastal Local Authorities and partners.
- Promote best practice and innovation, and produce guidance for Local Authorities on selected key areas based on best practice.
- Maintain effective communication with its members and through the website.
- Ensure the SIG continues to represent excellent value for money for its membership and promote and extend its membership.



► Achieve the recognition that England's coast deserves in policy and decision making and promote the important role of local government:

- Raise the profile of coastal issues and local government's role in them.
- Inform and influence the EU and UK Government on the formulation and implementation of policy including:
 - Secure the full involvement of local government in both policy formulation and implementation.
 - Bring pressure on the Government to achieve adequate and better targeted funding and development of coastal management.
 - Strongly oppose changes which take responsibility and decision-making powers out of the hands of local democratically elected representatives.
- Increase dialogue with MEPs and MPs on coastal issues
- Provide a coastal input to LGA policy through other Special Interest Groups, LGA Boards and the LGA Executive.
- Provide a forum for debate and engagement between Local Authorities and government, key agencies local community groups and other partners.
- Develop briefing material, organise events, engage with the press etc. to promote the aims, concerns and interests of the LGA Coastal SIG.



How we value our English coast

England's coast provides a spectacular, diverse landscape of immense cultural and ecological importance, with a myriad of benefits to society and opportunities for sustainable economic growth.

The coast, our definition

When we refer to the coast in this document we refer not only to the land adjoining the shoreline of our coast and estuaries with its complex mix of communities, human activities and natural habitats - but also inshore waters - which are the subject of an ever-increasing range of competing uses and demands.

The coast underpins our national identity as an 'island nation'. It promotes our health and well being, giving us valuable, natural open space to enjoy a wide variety of leisure activities. The coast provides a *raison d'être* for coastal communities who rely on it to sustain their distinctive identity: providing a valued place to live and work; supporting ports and harbours, tourism, agriculture and fishing.

The coast and coastal area provides an important national resource in terms of food production, aggregates, energy and its contributory ecosystem services, as well as its fundamental role in trade and commerce. It is also one of our most fragile and vulnerable environments.

English Local Authorities play a central role in promoting and protecting these values.

England's coast - facts and figures

Here are just a few of vital statistics that show the scale and context of our work.

- Total length of England's coast at the mean high water mark: 6,261 miles (10,077 km).
- The English coast is longer than the coasts of Spain, France or Italy.
- No one in England lives more than 75 miles from the coast - the most "maritime" population of any major country in Europe.



Our fragile coast

- Approximately 44% of the England and Wales coast is defended to prevent or reduce flood risk and coastal erosion.
- Coastal erosion is relentlessly occurring on 30% of England's coastline. The rise in sea level relative to the land will be greater than the global average in southern and eastern England because the land is gradually sinking.
- For many parts of the coast, the increase in mean sea level during the 20th century is up to 20cm (IPCC 5th Report 2013), will have doubled the risk of flooding (Environment Agency 2011). It is anticipated that the number and frequency of intense storms and tidal surges is likely to increase significantly.
- It is projected that spending on coastal defences will need to double by 2080 (DEFRA) the use of managed realignment and other forms of soft coastal defence measures are likely to increase.



What is our coast worth?

- Over 50% of Grade 1 agricultural land is within the coastal plain.
- In 2010 UK ports handled 75% (by value) of all national imports and exports, directly employing 70,000 people. Growing freight traffic and increasing ship size is causing the reshaping of some of England's most historic ports and the infrastructure and services needed to support them. The UK port industry is the largest in Europe, reflecting our rich maritime history and sustaining a large number of UK industries. Ports provide infrastructure for defence and increasingly important are the services that ports provide for the offshore industries (in particular energy extraction and generation).
- About 40% of UK manufacturing industry is situated on or near the coast because access to ports increases the ease of importing and exporting.
- There are over 3,000 registered fishing vessels operating from English ports, over 80% under 10 metres in length. Landings into the UK and abroad by English registered fishing vessels amounted to nearly £250 million (Marine Management Organisation 2011).
- Seaside tourism was valued at £17 billion (National Ecosystem Assessment 2010).
- In 2013 it was estimated that 31% of all tourism expenditure is at the seaside - an increase of 3% p.a. for domestic visitors and 11% for overseas visitors (Tourism Alliance 2013).

An outstanding, and healthy environment

- More than 33% of the coastline of England is designated for its scenic or natural beauty. Nearly a third of the English Natura 2000, European designated sites (Special Protection Areas, SPA and Special Areas for Conservation, SAC) are at the coast or coastal waters.
- Around 31% of the coast is occupied by buildings, infrastructure and recreation facilities. Economic pressure for further expansion of these facilities is likely to increase in the future.
- Coastal ecosystems clean our water, purify our air and maintain our soils. These ecosystem services help regulate the climate, recycle nutrients and provide us with food and medicines. Costing these services is still in its infancy, but as an example the potential of the UK's saltmarsh (most of which is in England) to sequester CO₂ was valued in 2010 at £11.93 million/year, rising in 2060 to £63.22 million/year (National Ecosystem Assessment, 2010).
- The total value for a policy that halts UK marine biodiversity loss through the introduction of a UK Marine Conservation Zone network is estimated to be £1,714 million per annum (McVittae and Moran, 2010).
- There is increasing research evidence that an attractive English coast provides major benefits for physical and mental health for both residents and visitors (University of Exeter, European Centre for Environment and Human Health 2012).

Vulnerable coastal communities

“ If all coastal areas in England were to be ‘rolled up’ into a single region, the level of deprivation of this region would qualify the area for substantial EU and national regeneration funding. However, because of their size and location, many of the dispersed pockets of coastal deprivation fail to qualify for such support.” *Coastal Regeneration Handbook, CCA, 2010*

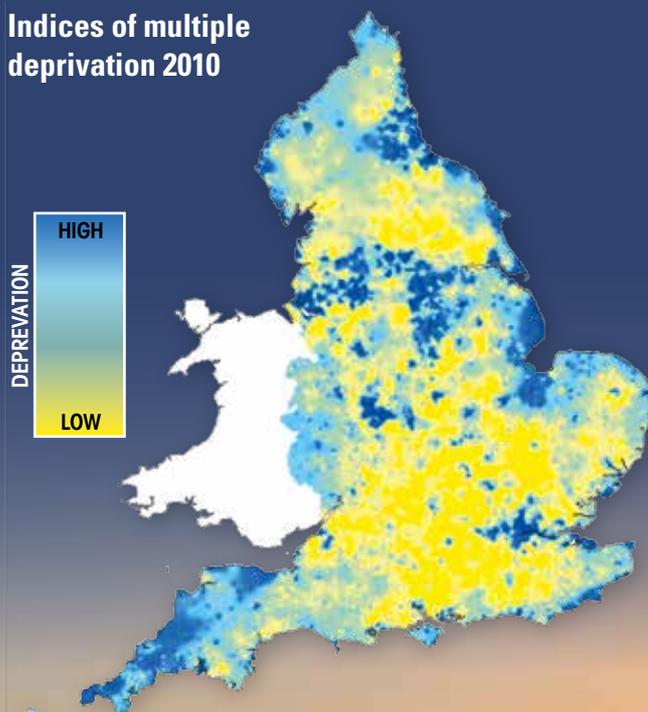
Health impacts of flooding

Local authority preparedness, response to and recovery from a flooding event is vital to reduce the impact on public health. There are both direct and indirect impacts during a flood event and it is also recognised that there are potential health issues that arise during the recovery phase. Local Authorities are working (including through the SIG) with partners such as Public Health England and the Environment Agency to seek to minimise the impact of such events.

Multiple deprivation

The map below illustrates the strikingly high levels of multiple deprivation around the coast, with East Jaywick on the Essex coast listed as the most deprived area in the country in 2011.

Indices of multiple deprivation 2010



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Ordnance Survey 100025370.

Many coastal communities are characterised by youth out-migration and inward migration of older people, high proportions of retirees and benefit claimants, transitory populations, physical isolation, poor-quality housing, over-reliance on tourism, seasonal employment, low incomes and pressure on services during the summer months.

- During 2007 around 10% of all working age adults in coastal resorts claimed the former incapacity benefit (now the Employment and Support Allowance - ESA).
- All but one of the Local Authorities with the largest percentage of over-65s (34–41%) are located on the coast.
- In 2013 the top four towns in England with the highest individual bankruptcy rates are all coastal towns (Torbay, Scarborough, Blackpool and Hull). Coastal towns make up 19 of the top 40 areas in personal bankruptcy, *“highlighting the speed at which coastal towns are falling behind the rest of the economy”*

(Wilkins Kennedy LLP).

Our future challenges

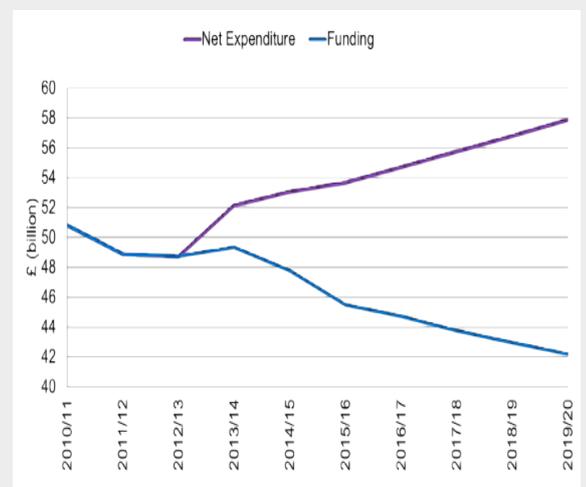
As if predicting and working with the ever-changing and relentless forces of nature on the coast were not enough, we must also work in a dynamic and challenging economic and policy environment. In this section we highlight some of the key drivers, key themes, and the most important challenge we face in coming years.

Climate change

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Fifth Assessment Report, 2013 concluded that the warming of our climate is “unequivocal”, and that, “the rise in global temperatures is causing changes in all geographical regions: the atmosphere and oceans are warming, the extent and volume of snow and ice are diminishing, sea levels are rising and weather patterns are changing. Many changes are unprecedented over decades to millennia”. Coastal communities are amongst the most vulnerable to extreme weather events and the long-term impacts of these changes. Coastal Local Authorities are already key players in helping those communities adapt, and ensuring resilience. To maintain this role, increased resources will be essential - as shown by the extreme weather events of the winter of 2013-14.

The reality of austerity - Local Authority funding

- A £15.6billion budget gap by 2019/20 (post-settlement consultation)
- A £2.2billion average increase in the gap per year, but £2.9billion gap in 2015/16
- A 43% reduction in Government grants (2010/11 - 2015/16)



Projected funding gap 2013 - 2020 (Source: LGA)

The exact impact on the delivery of coastal services of expenditure cuts on this scale is challenging to detail, and will vary from area to area according to local circumstances. However, it is obvious from the above that a considerable funding gap is rapidly developing which will not only reduce the overall ability of Local Authorities to meet the special challenges on the coast, it will also rewrite the way those services are delivered. Very difficult choices will need to be made for the foreseeable future.

Rewiring public services

The Localism Act of 2011 is devolving more decision-making powers from central government back into the hands of individuals, communities and councils, power should be exercised at the lowest practical level. One of its stated aims is to enable Local Authorities to innovate and deliver better value for taxpayers' money.

Against this background the LGA have launched the Rewiring Public Services campaign with the objectives of transforming public services through local leadership by rebuilding democratic participation, fixing public services and revitalising the economy.

“The current model we have for local government set in the context of a highly centralised national state will not see us through for very much longer.”

Councillor Sir Merrick Cockell, Chairman, Local Government Association.

The campaign is a recognition that the scale of the funding gap has already gone well beyond ‘trimming back’ and that - along with the changing public expectations of public services - to merely continue with the way things are, everything has to change. In short, today's model of public services is unsustainable. The status quo is not an option.

By seeking fairness in the allocation of public finances, Rewiring Public Services seeks to transform service delivery with the objective of enhancing the quality of life of everyone in England by:

- Rejuvenating democracy and giving back to people real reasons to participate in civic life and their communities.
- Transforming public services so they prevent problems instead of just picking up the pieces.
- Boosting economic growth in a way that offers prosperity to every place.



The coastal paradox

- more centralism in the time of 'localism'

Coastal Local Authorities have shown their ability to innovate and, in particular, to support and drive partnership working at the local level, but we face very special and additional challenges.

Our difficult spending choices and service transformation must recognise the specificities of our coastal environment with its unique:

- Risks and dangers to the community from extreme natural forces exacerbated by climate change.
- Risks and dangers to the community and the economy from ever-increasing and complex human activity in the coastal and marine environment.
- Economic and social vulnerability of demographic change through ageing and deprived communities.
- Competition for coastal and marine resources, for coastal locations and the immense economic opportunities they offer.

These risks and dangers, the competition for resources, the ageing populations and deprivation will all increase significantly in intensity and scale over the next decade, and are no respecters of austerity and may be exacerbated by such a fiscal environment. Some of the responsibilities for responding to these

threats are shared with other agencies and the private sector - but to remove Local Authorities with their expertise, skills and technical resources from the equation is to pose a real threat to the well-being and safety of the communities we are elected to represent.

The Marine and Coastal Access Act (2009) and Flood and Water Management Act (2010) have seen Government take a more formalised role in co-ordinating the strategic planning of the coastal zone - the Marine Management Organisation for marine spatial planning, the Environment Agency's overarching responsibility for coastal flood and erosion risk, and the role of Natural England in implementing improved access to the coast.

There have been an increasing number of EU Directives, covering a wide range of topics, which directly affect the coast, and thereby introducing additional potential policy conflicts and challenges to coastal management. The SIG seeks to influence policy by making representations both nationally and internationally to ensure future legislation and policy is supportive and does not add additional burdens to Local Authorities.

Conversely therefore, whilst the Localism Act is intended to devolve decision-making to the local level, other recent legislation on coastal matters has in fact centralised decision-making to central government and its agencies.



Position statements - where we stand on the issues and what we seek

Achieving our vision for the coast requires action across a wide range of issues in which Local Authorities play a key role. We have prepared a range of position statements to set out our vision, highlight what we seek to achieve and what we, as the LGA Coastal SIG will do. These are available on our website.

Action plan - what we will do next

We have a comprehensive and strategic action plan to support, strengthen and promote the delivery of a well-managed coast by Local Authorities. The action plan is live, continuously reviewed and available on the website.

www.lgacoastalsig.com

The Local Government Association supports the formation of Special Interest Groups where 10 or more Local Authorities have common features, interests or concerns. Each year the SIGs report to the LGA Leadership Board. SIGs are able to make representations direct to Government and others but must not undermine LGA policy as a whole or damage the interests of other member authorities.

The 'On the Edge Strategy' has been produced by the membership of the LGA Coastal SIG, with additional support from Brian Shipman. This represents the views of the SIG as a whole however, individual Local Authorities may hold different perspectives on any individual matter. If you would like more information on the LGA Coastal SIG including membership, leadership and contact details please see **www.lgacoastalsig.com**