

# NORFOLK'S COASTAL HERITAGE

Helping local communities manage the impact of coastal  
change on the historic environment

## PROJECT OUTLINE

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**August 2009 (revised January 2010)**



**na** NORFOLK Museums  
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# NORFOLK'S COASTAL HERITAGE

## Helping local communities manage the impact of coastal change on the historic environment

### Executive Summary

*'Norfolk's Coastal Heritage' will inform, engage and empower local communities, allowing them to take an active part in preparing for the impact coastal change will have on their heritage. The project will do this by supporting local communities to investigate their heritage and will involve public meetings, training sessions, publicity, a website, equipment and reports on its work. Initially the project will focus on Happisburgh, a single community where coastal change is currently having a significant impact. Additional communities involved in the second stage. The project will be an exemplar, with a methodology that will be applicable to coastal communities in the rest of England.*

### Project Background

Between June and September 2009 the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) consulted the public on coastal change policy. The consultation set out DEFRA's ideas for how coastal communities can successfully adapt to coastal change and the Government's role in supporting this. It forms part of a wider programme of work that looks at supporting communities adapting to increasing risks of both flooding and coastal erosion (DEFRA 2009, 7).

In parallel to the consultation on coastal change policy, DEFRA invited bids from local authorities interested in becoming 'Coastal Change Pathfinders'. Pathfinders will actively engage with local communities and explore DEFRA's ideas by piloting a new £11 million coastal change fund (DEFRA 2009, 7 and 18-21). This project outline forms part of North Norfolk District Council's Coastal Change Pathfinder Programme.

The Norfolk coast has very rich and diverse physical form, cultural heritage and natural environment. This includes historic towns and villages, historic buildings, archaeological features, cliff, sand dune, beach, marsh and fen environments and agricultural landscapes. Buildings, heritage assets and museum collections form part of or contribute to our knowledge and understanding of the current historic environment and these, combined with less tangible sources (such as local traditions and oral history) all contribute to the sense of place of coastal communities.

The area around Happisburgh is one of the most significant in heritage terms, with a wide range of important features located within the area expected to be affected by erosion by 2105 (Halcrow 2006, policy unit 3b12). These include an internationally significant Palaeolithic site, ring ditches (probably ploughed-out Bronze Age burial mounds), the buried remains of possible Saxon buildings, St Mary's church, a manor house built in 1900, the remnants of a

lighthouse and World War Two structures. The archaeological remains of the village of Eccles, lost to the sea in the early 17th century, are infrequently visible on the beach about 3km to the southeast of Happisburgh village.

The whole of the north Norfolk coast is subject to coastal change. With a rapid natural erosion rate, the stretch between Cromer and Happisburgh is one of the most active. The most recent Shoreline Management Plan indicates the continued defence of this section is not sustainable in the long-term and suggests the medium to long-term policy should be to allow coastal retreat (Halcrow 2006, 16-17). Issues relating to coastal change at Happisburgh have received considerable local and national media attention and are the focus for the Coastal Concern Action Group (CCAG) (Coastal Concern Action Group 2009).

### **Aims and Objectives**

The Government is committed to maintaining sustainable coastal communities. Where coastal change happens, all aspects of the affected communities need to be supported to help ensure they remain attractive places for people to live and visit and that the local economy continues to thrive. Local communities need to be informed, engaged and enabled to take an active part in deciding what happens locally (DEFRA 2009, 18).

The project aims to inform, engage and empower local communities, allowing them to take an active part in preparing for the impact coastal change will have on their heritage. By encouraging communities and individuals to actively investigate their heritage, it will provide practical support, helping them to adapt to coastal change now and in the future.

Initially the project will focus on Happisburgh, the community where coastal change is currently having a significant impact; an ideal candidate with its high profile in the media, its broad-ranging heritage assets and its important role in North Norfolk District Council's Pathfinder Programme. Part-way through, the project will widen its reach to other communities on the Norfolk coast.

The project's objectives are to:

1. To form an integral part of North Norfolk District Council's Pathfinder Programme (North Norfolk District Council 2009a and 2009b).
2. To design and deliver a local solution that will help coastal communities with the transitions associated with coastal change.
3. To increase the local communities' knowledge and understanding of their heritage<sup>1</sup>.
4. To help local communities prepare for the impact coastal change might have on their heritage.
5. To provide local communities with the skills and experience to record their heritage before and as it is affected by coastal change.

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<sup>1</sup> Building on existing knowledge and research, including the Norfolk Historic Environment Record and the work of local people, local historians/archaeologists, the National Mapping Programme and the Norfolk Rapid Coastal Zone Assessment Survey.

6. To give a voice to the people of Happisburgh, enabling them to tell their own story for posterity.
7. To help the community of Happisburgh interpret their heritage and key assets and make this available to visitors and others by a variety of means.
8. To inform future Shoreline Management Plans.
9. To support lifelong learning (a corporate objective of Norfolk County Council).
10. To develop and enhance understanding of Norfolk's cultural heritage and resources (a corporate objective of Norfolk County Council), including the Norfolk Historic Environment Record (NHER).
11. To develop a methodology that is applicable to the rest of England.
12. To write up the project showing the process followed, the results and the lessons learned.

## **Deliverables**

The project will involve local communities actively investigating their heritage in a broad range of ways. Initially the project will focus on Happisburgh, before widening its scope to other coastal communities. A key to the project's success will be gaining the support of organisations, groups and individuals.

A Project Officer will arrange and support the majority of the investigations, with the local communities deciding themselves the activities they wish to be involved with. The activities will include:

- Public meetings where local heritage and coastal change are discussed. These will involve presentations by heritage professionals, local historians/archaeologists and opportunities for local communities to express their views.
- Stakeholder meetings with members of local communities and community groups to provide information and reassurance (for example, with landowners, parish councils, Coastal Concern Action Group, local historians/archaeologists, local societies and archaeological societies and at schools, job centres and caravan parks).
- Training sessions chosen by communities, involving and followed by related active investigations. Training sessions offered will include: field survey, building recording<sup>2</sup>, finds identification, the NHER, oral history, museum collections and coastal change. These sessions will equip members of the community with the necessary skills to monitor and record the heritage features, memories and reminiscences which are of most significance to them and at greatest risk from coastal change.
- Regular follow-up visits to provide advice and support to local communities in their recording and monitoring work.
- A website where interested members of the community can download resources (including recording forms), share ideas, describe their activities and record discoveries. The website would be hosted through

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<sup>2</sup> Building recording work could cover listed buildings, houses, agricultural buildings, caravan parks, military structures, sea defences and any other type of building or structure.

the Norfolk Heritage Explorer ([www.heritage.norfolk.gov.uk](http://www.heritage.norfolk.gov.uk)) and would form a repository for information gathered during the project.

- Leaflets, banners/posters and other interpretative materials explaining the project, local heritage and coastal change. Interested members of the community will be able to contribute to these.
- The provision of computer, survey and recording equipment, such as a laptop (housed at a local library, school, public house, church, village hall, community centre or caravan park), internet access, cameras, Global Positional Satellite (GPS) units, tapes, ranging rods, tape/video recorders, finds bags, toothbrushes, washing up bowls, storage boxes and packaging material.
- Project reports, available through the NHER, the project website and local libraries. These will detail the project's methodology, describe discoveries, analyse decisions, detail outcomes and provide guidance for future projects elsewhere in England.
- The dissemination of the project's work to local communities in informal ways, such as through the project website, the Norfolk Historic Environment Record, the Norfolk Heritage Explorer, the Portable Antiquities Scheme database, meetings, presentations, leaflets, displays, posters and CDs/DVDs containing oral history recordings.
- An event (such as a heritage fair and/or conference) to celebrate the heritage and future of Happisburgh.
- Advice and training to establish similar projects elsewhere in England.
- Ongoing support and advice to coastal communities.
- A project report outlining the project interventions and the process, highlighting key issues and identifying lessons learned.

### **Staffing and provisional timetable**

Successful Pathfinder Projects were announced by DEFRA on 1 December 2009. The successful bids included North Norfolk District Council's Pathfinder.

Following the announcement, work for this project will start immediately. With a lead-in-time of about three months, the project will be formally launched in February or March 2010. A provisional timetable is provided in Appendix 1.

The project will be set up managed and led by Norfolk Landscape Archaeology (NLA) under the banner of the North Norfolk Coastal Change Pathfinder Programme, with the expectation that community members will run and continue the project after a specified amount of time. NLA's lead role will last for 12-14 months, with a fixed completion date at the end of March 2011.

To undertake its lead role, NLA will appoint a dedicated Project Officer for 12-14 months. He/she will be recruited by NLA, with essential requirements including experience in outreach, community engagement and archaeological fieldwork. They will be based at NLA's offices at Gressenhall, with provision for travel to/from the coast as necessary.

It is expected that initially the project will focus on Happisburgh, where the majority of the public meetings and training sessions will be held. Although aimed at the chosen community's residents, the meetings and sessions will be open to all interested parties, including residents of other coastal communities, second home owners and visitors.

After nine months or so the project will widen its scope by holding public meetings and training sessions elsewhere on the Norfolk coast. The intention of this second stage of the project will be to encourage other coastal communities to follow a similar methodology to that of the initial community. The second stage communities will have significant heritage features and will be at high risk from coastal change. Sea Palling, Beeston Regis, Overstrand, Mundesley and Old Hunstanton are amongst the possible candidates. Local community members involved in the first stage of the project would be encouraged to take part in the last 3-5 months to pass on their skills and expertise.

NLA will offer advice and support to the ongoing project following the end of the lead role period. This would include maintaining the project website.

The methodology developed during the project will be applicable to communities elsewhere on the English coast. In the last few months of the project, the Project Officer will hold meetings outside Norfolk and publish articles in archaeological/historical magazines to publicise the methodology through Defra's national Coastal Change Pathfinder Programme. They will offer to organise training sessions in conjunction with interested local authorities.

NLA staff to be involved in the project will include:

- Project Officer.
- David Gurney, County Archaeologist – advice and support.
- Andrew Rogerson, Senior Landscape Archaeologist, Finds Identification and Recording Service – advice and finds identification.
- Alice Cattermole, Historic Environment Record Officer – advice, support and training.
- Ken Hamilton, Head of Archaeological Planning – budgetary management.
- David Robertson, Historic Environment Countryside Adviser – project management, advice, support and training.
- Erica Darch, Finds Liaison Officer, Portable Antiquities Scheme – advice, support, training and finds identification.

Additional staff and other organisations likely to be involved in the project include:

- Cultural Services IT, Norfolk County Council.
- Computer engineers at Exegesis (the company who would host and maintain the project website).
- Curator of Archaeology, Norwich Castle Museum and Art Gallery.

- Norfolk Museums and Archaeology Service (NM&AS) Learning Officers at Cromer Museum, Time and Tide Museum and Gressenhall Farm and Workhouse.
- Coastal Officer, Natural England.

### **Potential partners**

North Norfolk District Council, as well as managing the overall Coastal Change Pathfinder Programme, will be a key partner in this project. NLA will actively seek a range of additional partners to assist with delivery of the project. The following bodies and individuals are amongst those who will be approached:

- Happisburgh Parish Council.
- St Mary's Church
- The Stalham and Happing Partnership
- Lord of the Manor, Happisburgh (owner of Happisburgh beach).
- Mary Trett, local historian, Happisburgh.
- Portable Antiquities Scheme.
- Norwich Castle Museum and Art Gallery – to help in the provision of finds identification training.
- Cromer Museum, Time and Tide Museum and Gressenhall Farm and Workhouse – to provide oral history and reminiscence training.
- Environment Section, Norfolk County Council.
- Happisburgh Primary School.
- Stalham High School.
- Stalham Library.
- Ancient Human Occupation of Britain Project (who have been excavating on Happisburgh Beach since 2004).
- English Heritage
- Natural England (any fieldwork on Happisburgh beach/cliffs will require Site of Special Scientific Interest consent).
- National Trust.
- Environment Agency.
- The Museums, Libraries and Archives Council.
- Borough Council of King's Lynn and West Norfolk (when the project extends its reach).
- Great Yarmouth Borough Council (when the project extends its reach).
- Crown Estates (owners of much of Norfolk's inter-tidal zone).
- North Norfolk Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.
- Norfolk Biodiversity Information Service.
- Norfolk Biodiversity Partnership.
- Norfolk Geodiversity Partnership.
- Norfolk Rural Communities Council.
- Great Yarmouth and District Archaeological Society.
- Blakeney Historical Society.
- West Norfolk and King's Lynn Archaeological Society.
- Manor Caravan Park, Happisburgh.
- Anchor Park, Eccles on Sea (caravan park).

## Acknowledgements

During the preparation of this document advice and support was provided by:

- David Gurney, Ken Hamilton, Alice Cattermole, Erica Darch and James Albone (Norfolk Landscape Archaeology).
- Senior Management Team, Norfolk Museums and Archaeology Service.
- Rob Young, North Norfolk District Council.
- North Norfolk District Council's Coastal Change Pathfinder Steering Group.
- Tim Pestell, Curator of Archaeology, Norwich Castle Museum and Art Gallery.

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## Glossary

### *Norfolk Historic Environment Record (NHER)*

The NHER exists to provide a record of all areas of known archaeological activity, sites, finds, cropmarks, earthworks, industrial remains, defensive structures and historic buildings in the county. The record is held on a computerised, searchable database with integrated digital mapping. Alongside this are further, more detailed, paper records for many of the sites. These records are used for education, landscape management, local history, monument protection, planning advice and research, and are open to all by appointment. The NHER database is also available online at [www.heritage.norfolk.gov.uk](http://www.heritage.norfolk.gov.uk).



*Norfolk Museums and Archaeology Service (NM&AS)*

NM&AS is a joint service of Norfolk's county and district councils. It collects, safeguards and makes available, to the highest possible standards, sites, artefacts, specimens and information from and about Norfolk, together with other material which places the heritage of Norfolk in a national and international context. NMAS comprises 12 museums, two collections study centres and countywide services relating to archaeology and education.

*Norfolk Landscape Archaeology (NLA)*

NLA is part of NM&S. Responsible for safeguarding the County's historic environment and archaeological heritage, NLA collates, maintains and provides access to the NHER and the Norfolk Air Photography Library, provides advice on the archaeological implications of development and land management, identifies and records artefacts and undertakes research.

## Appendix 1: Provisional timetable

Task	2009	2010											2011			
	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M
Recruit and appoint Project Officer																
Website set-up																
MILESTONE 1 Website-launch																
Meetings with potential partners																
MILESTONE 2 Initial public meeting																
Initial private meetings																
Training sessions for Happisburgh residents																
Submission of data to website by members of public																
Completion of Happisburgh's sessions																
MILESTONE 3 Event to celebrate Happisburgh's heritage and future																
Installation of computer equipment in local community																
Training sessions elsewhere on Norfolk coast																
MILESTONE 4 Completion of Norfolk sessions																

Task	2009	2010											2011			
	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M
Meetings and training sessions elsewhere in England																
Project reports																
MILESTONE 5 Submission of project report to DEFRA																