

Date: November 26th 2012
Our ref: Winterton/ 1



Norfolk Land Management Team
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Mr Mike King
Marinet
79 California Avenue
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GREAT YARMOUTH
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Dear Mr King

Re: coastal erosion at Winterton-Horsey Dunes SSSI

Thank you for your letter of November 6th relating to recent erosion at Winterton-Horsey Dunes SSSI. We appreciate your interest in and concern for, what you rightly point out, is a very special site.

Firstly, we would like to clarify Natural England's (NE) role in relation to coastal management issues. The Environment Agency (EA) has the overall strategic responsibility before Government for coastal management policy and its implementation. In the specific case that you refer to at Winterton (south of Beach Road), Great Yarmouth Borough Council has the direct responsibility for coastal management as the relevant coast protection authority. As such, Natural England's role with respect to coastal management is as a statutory consultee in relation to the Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and its international designations.

All three organisations involved, irrespective of their particular role, are guided by the Kelling to Lowestoft Ness Shoreline Management Plan (SMP). The SMP was drawn up by local authorities including Great Yarmouth Borough, under the strategic overview of the Environment Agency, and following wide consultation with statutory organisations, individuals, and communities. The SMP sets out the over-arching policies and the approaches for specific sections of coastline. The SMP policy for the section south of Beach Road, Winterton is 'managed realignment', allowing for small scale measures aimed at local adaptation and change management.

Managed carefully, there are good reasons for taking this approach and allowing the coastal processes to function dynamically as far as possible. Significant intervention can lead to major impacts elsewhere and inadvertently create a more unsustainable and less resilient coast going forward. The ability of the dunes and foreshore to function properly and interact with these processes are part of what keeps the overall site healthy and able to respond to change. The changes seaward of the Great Valley are part of a wider dynamic system moving around the accretion and erosion of Winterton Ness over time. Whilst acknowledging that this approach will lead to local *in situ* loss of some coastal habitat and associated species in their current locations, new habitats will form elsewhere in the vicinity

as part of the dynamism of this process (such as the new fore dunes accreting around the Ness in its current location). Socio-economic considerations notwithstanding, in the long-term it would be more ecologically damaging to try and 'fix' the frontage. This has occurred to the north of Beach Road where the concrete wall runs to Cart Gap, and where the beach now has to be supplemented with sediment from off-shore.

Natural England arranged a meeting on July 24th 2012 with EA and the Borough Council to discuss the changes taking place at Winterton. Natural England supports the measures being proposed by the Borough Council and local community to undertake work associated with the gap that has developed in the dune frontage. This is consistent with the small scale measures promoted within the SMP. We are awaiting the details of this work in order to provide advice to the Borough Council.

Natural England recognises the importance of the Great Valley for public enjoyment. As such, we will continue to play our part in working with the local community and the organisations responsible for coastal management in adapting to the changes taking place.

As a point of clarification, the southern boundary of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) follows the Beach Road. Hence, the Great Valley falls outside of the AONB.

We hope that this clarifies Natural England's role and the approach being taken to coastal processes on this section of coastline. We would be grateful if any future correspondence relating to coastal management policy could be addressed to the appropriate organisation.

Yours sincerely



Adrian Gardiner
Lead adviser – SSSIs (Norfolk team)