



## Hurst Spit to Lymington Project

### Frequently Asked Questions

#### 1. What is the project?

The Environment Agency are working in partnership with New Forest District Council, Hampshire County Council and Natural England and with our environmental engineering experts, JBA Consulting to explore a sustainable future for the coastal frontage between Hurst Spit and Lymington in relation to flood and coastal erosion risk management.

The aim of the project is to investigate if and how to respond to the significant challenges facing this area of coastline now and into the future. We know sea levels are rising, erosion of Hurst Spit is increasing, natural habitats are threatened, and existing defences are deteriorating.

We will explore how to better manage the risk posed to local communities, property and infrastructure from flooding and coastal erosion, whilst at the same time ensuring that we protect and enhance the natural environment and local wildlife. At every stage we will work with our stakeholders to develop options which maintain and enhance the social, recreation, commercial and cultural characteristics of the area.

We are also actively engaging with several local groups and interested parties including the New Forest National Park Authority and English Heritage to gain specific knowledge to help inform the early stages of this work. We have been working with a range of local stakeholder representatives to develop a project vision. The project vision is:

*A sustainable future for the Hurst Spit to Lymington frontage up to 2130: Enabling communities, the environment, wildlife, heritage, recreation, tourism and business to adapt to climate change and sea level rise.*

#### 2. What is the study area?

The project area includes Hurst Spit and extends from the Spit to the town of Lymington, running through Keyhaven and Pennington. It also covers sections of the east bank of the Lymington River. Please see map below.

The predominant flood risk in this study area is from the sea; however risk of river flooding is also present, as well as surface water flood risk in the more built up areas. Flood risk from all sources will be considered as part of the project.

This area is also heavily designated from a nature conservation perspective with Special Areas of Conservation (SAC), Special Protected Areas (SPA) and Sites of Special Scientific Interest. These, along with other designations, will be a key consideration as part of the project.



### 3. What is the potential impact with climate change?

Climate change is resulting in the long-term warming of the Earth's climate system. This in turn is causing the ice caps to melt, leading to an increase in the volume of water in the world's oceans, resulting in higher mean sea levels. Coupled with this, the rise in global temperatures causes thermal expansion of the oceans, further increasing sea levels.

Locally we are likely to experience:

- Increased storminess, similar to the Valentine's Day Storm in 2014
- Increased risk of Hurst Spit lowering and over-washing
- Increased loss of beach material from Hurst Spit, reducing its stability
- Increased risk of sea defences overtopping or failing
- Increased flood risk to people, property and infrastructure
- Increased loss of habitat in front of the sea wall through coastal squeeze e.g. saltmarsh
- Increased damage to habitats behind the seawall as overtopping becomes more commonplace
- Potential loss of access along the coast and inland.
- Loss of breeding Black Headed Gull and Tern colonies from the coastal saltmarsh

Although outside the scope of the project, the recent collapse of Hurst Castle's east wing clearly shows the destructive power that the sea can have. Change is happening to this coastline and this project is an opportunity to explore how to be better prepared for these changes and how we can adapt to build a more resilient coastline in the future.

### 4. What are the options to manage these potential changes?

We are yet to make a decision on which option is best.

The project team have begun to explore a long list of options. The formal Government requirements for funding these projects means that it will be several years of consultation, engagement and technical investigations before a final detailed proposal can be developed and put forward.

We will be exploring all possible options from “Do Nothing”, walking away from the coastline, right through to building higher seawalls or working with natural process and allowing some areas to ‘roll back’ naturally. The length of this coastline and its geographical uniqueness does make this a challenging project. It is likely that a suite of options will be required rather than a single option applied in all locations.

#### **5. How will the scheme be funded?**

It is too early to say specifically what the cost of any option would be however from experience and engineering knowledge it is probable a scheme of this nature could cost in the region of £80-100m.

We will seek central government funding where possible, however for a scheme to go ahead significant funding and investment must be sourced from other organisations that benefit from the scheme. Without external funding beyond central government, it is likely that no scheme will go ahead.

#### **6. What are the next steps / timelines?**

The project is in its very early stages and it will take around 7 to 10 years to develop ideas and options through consultation and engagement before any final scheme is proposed. It takes this long due to the staged funding approval that Government requires, as well as the detailed engineering investigations and options assessment work that needs to be done, together with appropriate engagement with local residents and organisations. We know people are keen for us to progress rapidly – which we are doing – at the same time we recognise the need to get this project right in the early development stages so that we don’t face delays later.

The first key step is to submit the initial Business case to be approved. The purpose of this initial step is to show we have a plausible project and to seek additional funding to explore options in detail. It is hoped to submit this business case in November 2021 and receive approval by March 2022. If approved, this will release funding to allow us to undertake more detailed investigations and engineering assessments on the options, moving us towards being able to define the best option and secure funding for it.

#### **7. How will the risks be managed in the interim?**

It is acknowledged that, whilst future scheme options are being developed, risks will still remain in the interim. In particular, there is concern around Hurst Spit and the potential for future storm damage.

Separately, New Forest District Council, as the current maintainer, is continuing (with key stakeholders) to explore options to maintain the spit and is actively seeking funding to undertake this work. It is important to recognise ongoing pressures on local budgets, therefore, funding is not always guaranteed.

As a project team we are also exploring all the risks that could materialise, what the action would be required and who would be responsible. This does not mean that these risks will be for this project to manage, but will ensure the relevant Authorities and organisations are aware of the risks that remain.

**8. How will the project affect me?**

It is too early to say which options may be taken forward and what the implications of these would be on the local area. The aim is to ensure a sustainable future for the coastline and those who live, work and spend leisure time here. This means that we need, amongst other things, to seek to reduce the flood risk for the majority of people and properties in the project area (where funding rules allow).

As the projects develops, it is likely we will identify specific areas of land where we would like to explore scenarios for change. As and when this happens we will make direct contact with those who own and manage this land.

If you have concerns that you will be directly impacted by the scheme, then feel free to email us at [hurstspit2lymington@environment-agency.gov.uk](mailto:hurstspit2lymington@environment-agency.gov.uk).

**9. Will there be walls and embankments, or are you considering letting the sea advance in places?**

It is too early to know what the best options are. This is why we are applying for money to investigate what the technical options are, how they would perform, and whether they could be funded or not. All the options listed above are possible, and because the coastal frontage is complex it's likely a variety of options could be needed. We will know more as investigations proceed – we don't want to pre-empt the technical assessments.

**10. Where do I go for more information about the project?**

The project has a webpage where regular updates will be provided. We would suggest this is the first port of call for information. The webpage can be reached via the following link: <https://bit.ly/36FJY8b>. We also have a distribution list for our e-newsletters which will be issued periodically when we have updates we want to share.

If you have any specific questions or wish to be added to the mailing list for the project e-newsletter please email us at [hurstspit2lymington@environment-agency.gov.uk](mailto:hurstspit2lymington@environment-agency.gov.uk). We would recommend you add this email address to your safe senders list so future communication reaches your inbox without any problems.

If you require this document in a different format, please email: - [enquiries@environment-agency.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@environment-agency.gov.uk) or call 03708 506 506