

Location reference: **Reculver Towers to Minnis Bay**

Policy Unit reference: **4a14**

SUMMARY OF THE PLAN AND JUSTIFICATION

Plan:

The frontage comprises a managed beach, which is predominantly backed by sparsely developed low lying land, which is of international nature and heritage conservation value. Under rising sea levels and a limited supply of contemporary beach building sediment, it is anticipated that it will become increasingly difficult to maintain a beach along this frontage. If the current alignment were to be held in the long-term, coastal squeeze together with a diminished supply of natural beach building sediment would lead to substantial hard defences and / or significant beach management. In addition, this site has been identified as one of the only locations where new saltwater habitats could be created to offset losses elsewhere without impinging on existing designated freshwater habitats and was therefore considered on balance, to be suitable for realignment for habitat creation purposes (subject to further more detailed studies).

The short term plan therefore is to continue protecting the assets, which include properties, local industries, footpaths, agricultural land and freshwater habitats. In the short term, it is imperative that a more sustainable approach to the intensive beach maintenance at Coldharbour is sought at the earliest opportunity. In the medium and long term the plan is to realign the defences east of Reculver Towers, allowing the shoreline to retreat in a controlled manner, under a policy of managed realignment.

No specific realignment 'line' has been defined but a maximum extent has been identified (see map). A realignment here could involve the loss of built assets; nominally residential properties, tourist facilities, local industries (oyster farm), agricultural land, saline lagoons, freshwater habitats and potentially unknown buried heritage. Realignment would however, create a coast that will not require ever increasing expenditure to maintain in the coming centuries, negate the effects of coastal squeeze and create important brackish and saline habitats. (The loss of the designated freshwater habitats and two saline lagoons would normally require mitigation measures to be implemented. An aspect which will require a detailed appraisal in the strategy study). It is anticipated that realignment along this stretch of the coast would involve the construction of secondary defences, to eliminate/reduce the risk of large scale flooding. Without defences, there would be significant flooding to the backing hinterland and therefore defences are required.

Reculver Towers and the small section of coast to the west would remain defended, due to the large scale flood risk and the international importance of the heritage assets. However, in the medium term the flood and erosion risks would need to be managed in conjunction with the neighbouring unit (4a13)

Preferred policies to implement Plan:

From present day: The present day policy for Reculver Towers to Minnis Bay is to continue providing protection to the backing hinterland, under a policy of **hold the line**. The current defences and management practises will need to be upgraded to achieve this. Maintaining the defences will continue to reduce the flooding risks to the low-lying hinterland and the assets it supports i.e. properties, local industries, agricultural land and freshwater habitats. However, in response to ongoing sea level rise and limited feed of beach building material, it is

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anticipated that the fronting beach will continue to narrow.

Medium-term: If the socio-economic, environmental and technical benefits are confirmed, then the medium term policy for Reculver Towers to Minnis Bay is to introduce a policy of **managed realignment**, along the majority of the frontage. Prior to implementation a suitable approach and secondary defence would need constructing or existing secondary walls would need to be upgraded to eliminate the risk of flood propagation to the hinterland (it is outside the scope of the SMP to determine either of these).

In implementing managed realignment along this section of the coast there is uncertainty regarding the shoreline's response. This is attributed to uncertainty regarding the scale of realignment, the amount of sea level rise and the future supply of sediment. There is also uncertainty regarding the impact on adjacent cells, with respect to sand sized sediment, which will require further study.

During this epoch, assets close to the current shoreline will undergo managed loss. Although no specific realignment line has been defined it is recommended that losses stop on the seaward side of the railway line.

It is envisaged that environmental transitions will be prominent during this epoch, as brackish and inter-tidal habitats replace some of the freshwater interests. This transition may require specific management intervention to maximise the environment benefits and limit potential habitat impacts.

At Reculver Towers and the small section of coast to the west, the plan is to continue managing the erosion and flood risks, under a policy of **hold the line**. This will maintain the international heritage assets and manage the risk of inundation.

Long-term: The long-term policy is to continue allowing the majority of this coastline to realign, albeit in a controlled manner, under a policy of **managed realignment**. This policy will allow a more flexible and sustainable approach to flood and erosion risk management. Reculver Towers will however, remain defended for as long as is technically and environmentally viable.

During this epoch it is envisaged that all defences will require periodic maintenance (and potential upgrading in response to sea level rise) and that the created brackish / saline habitats will become increasingly well-established during this epoch. Thus, under a scenario of accelerated sea level rise and limited natural feed, managed realignment is considered sustainable for the life time of the Shoreline Management Plan.

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