



Managing coastal realignment for benefits

Hill House Farm, B&B & Orwell View Barns

SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

A family farm and B&B business in a low lying coastal area, with experience of flooding: planning for future impacts by investigating breaching their sea wall to create new habitat and landscape and enhances their existing tourist business.

KEY MESSAGES

Recognising that change has happened in the past and will accelerate under climate change provides the context for new opportunities and managing your response.

“I have become more aware due to my involvement with the Essex & South Suffolk Shoreline Management Plan and the NFU/CLA Managing Coastal Change Group that we have to plan for future sea level rise and probable retreat from present defences. Also that our marshes are a man-made environment enclosed by an about 300 yr old defensive wall and that, as the present generation, we will have to accept changes to this environment.” Richard Wrinch, farmer

ABOUT THE ORGANISATION

Hill House Farm is a family farm on the Suffolk coast, with 520 acres of arable crops, 100 acres of SSSI (Site of Special Scientific Interest) marshland grazing, some woodland and a B&B business.

IN DETAIL

BUSINESS DRIVERS

The land has historically been subject to coastal change, including the great flood of 1953 and a previous inundation in 1874. Agricultural land is less likely to receive government-backed protection than settlements. At the same time, officially protected habitats such as the intertidal zone are also under threat from coastal change.

Turning these risks into opportunities – by breaching existing sea defences to flood land that is at risk anyway – could attract higher payments to the business under the Higher Level Stewardship (HLS) scheme, and develop new attractions and features for tourism, so benefiting the existing accommodation side of the business. They might also be able to develop niche business opportunities in the form of saltmarsh grazed lamb.

Taking a planned and proactive approach to change, while involving the loss of land, is preferable to waiting for the inevitable.

METHODS AND RESOURCES

The farm owners have investigated the potential changes and the opportunities for managed realignment, and held initial discussions with the Environment Agency and Natural England. They recognise the planning issues and timescales involved and anticipate this as a programme of work over the next 3–5 years.

The Environment Agency are being very pro-active and have been supporting the business in terms of planning for the breaching of the sea wall and the consequent necessary footpath realignment and application to change the HLS.

KEY PLAYERS

Through Richard's involvement in the Essex & South Suffolk Shoreline Management plan, he has been aware of the likely choice of the sea wall for managed realignment in the first époque (25 years) and have been receptive of their proposals for this site. Natural England have also been supportive and the NFU and CLA within the Managing Coastal Change project have also been very helpful.

OUTPUT

As yet, no specific changes in management practice have arisen from the proposed project. The majority of the area is in HLS as wet grassland.

FURTHER ACTION

The owners are redeveloping additional barns as tourist accommodation, with opportunities to benefit from existing birdwatching and walks in the area, as well as from new landscape and habitat features resulting from any planned coastal realignment and possible new developments, such as moorings.

CONSTRAINTS

Negotiating the planning system will involve considerable work, especially the complexities of diverting the current footpath along the sea wall to a route to be agreed by all parties. The business found the planning authorities less than helpful with the development of their barns.

ENABLERS

The farm and tourism enterprise is a family-run business, with a strong commitment to its long term sustainability and a recognition that change is a fact of life in this coastal area.

The Parish Council and local district councillors were fully supportive of the barn development.

TRANSFERABLE LESSONS LEARNED

That full consultation with all statutory bodies is essential at an early stage.

| CASE STUDY PROFILE | LOCATION | Shotley, Ipswich, Suffolk |
|--|---|---------------------------|
| SCOPE | Product/ service | |
| | Site | |
| SECTOR (BASED ON SIC 2007 CODE) | Agriculture | |
| | Accommodation | |
| DATE | 2009 | |
| BUSINESS AREAS | Markets | |
| RISK/ OPPORTUNITIES FOCUS? | Both | |
| CLIMATE CHANGE/ weather event focus | RISING SEA LEVELS | |
| | Flood | |
| BUILDING ADAPTIVE CAPACITY OR DELIVERING ADAPTATION ACTION | DAA | |
| CONTACT DETAILS | Richard and Hazel Wrinch 01473 787 318 hazel@wrinchfarmstay.co.uk | |
| REFERENCES, WEB LINKS ETC | http://www.wrinchfarmstay.co.uk/ | |
| | http://www.orwellviewbarns.co.uk/ | |

This case study combines information obtained from the company by UKCIP with information originally provided for a Climate East project in 2010, on adaptation to climate change by businesses in the East of England. For further information on the partnership see <http://www.climate-east.org.uk/>