

PROJECT SPECIFICATION

Adapting to Coastal Erosion: Evaluation of rollback and leaseback schemes in Coastal Change Pathfinder projects

Background to the Research Project

The Coastal Change Pathfinders were established in 2009 to explore new ways in which coastal communities could adapt to coastal change where coastal defences were not affordable or appropriate. The five largest Pathfinders trialled innovative property and land use planning schemes, known as “roll back” and “buy and leaseback” schemes. The Pathfinders (as pilot schemes) were evaluated by Regeneris Consulting in 2011¹.

However, in the case of rollback schemes in particular, implementation was only at the early stages when the main evaluation was conducted. In the 2011 Evaluation of the Pathfinder Projects the Waveney and North Norfolk approaches to rollback were identified as models which could be replicated on a larger scale. Planning policy was highlighted as a potential barrier to rollback schemes and this should be further investigated as a barrier in the project.

Of the five pathfinder authorities the following have undertaken rollback schemes since the 2011 evaluation of the pathfinder project: Waveney District Council, East Riding of Yorkshire Council, Scarborough Borough Council and North Norfolk District Council. This project will revisit the five largest Pathfinders, to collate the latest evidence on the feasibility and economy of these approaches and gather lessons learned.

Project Aim

To gather updated and more definitive evidence from Local Authorities in England on the feasibility of “rollback” and “buy and leaseback” schemes.

Project Objectives

The work will provide Defra and others with further clarity as to whether rollback and buy/leaseback are feasible and desirable options for Local Authorities affected by coastal change where traditional coastal defences are not deemed appropriate or affordable. This will provide useful evidence for Local Authorities working through their options and, if such schemes are found to be feasible and replicable, could provide authorities with new approaches to adapting to coastal change.

Research Questions

These are as follows:

1. Have the “Big Five” Pathfinders (North Norfolk, Waveney, Scarborough, Tendring and East Riding) proceeded with the rollback schemes they identified in the main phase of the Pathfinder programme²?
2. If not, why not? What significant barriers to implementing roll-back and buy/leaseback schemes have Local Authorities faced?
3. If schemes have proceeded, what were the objectives of each scheme and have these schemes met their objectives. What are stakeholder and authority views as to the desirability and replicability of schemes? “What problems, if any, were encountered and how were these addressed?”

¹ Regeneris Consulting, 2011

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/69509/pb13721-coastal-pathfinder-evaluation.pdf

² Beach Road, Happisburgh; Trimmingham Village Hall; Knipe Point; Jaywick; ???

4. To what extent have rollback schemes turned out to be financially viable and potentially self-sustaining without public funds (particularly that in North Norfolk which involved an innovative approach to creating development rights to enhance viability? What are the financial flows in schemes, between local authorities, homeowners, developers and others?
5. What is the updated view of the economic case of rollback schemes, to “UK plc” and the Exchequer?
6. Has the interim view that “buy and leaseback” schemes are not viable changed, based on any further work on such schemes since 2011?

Methodology / Programme of work

We have set out our proposed methodology below. However, contractors are free to suggest alternative approaches and to make refinements to the proposed methodology where there is a rationale to do so.

We expect the majority of the research questions above to be answered through case study work where roll-back and leaseback have been put into practice.

1. Desk review of key documents including: planning policy documents relating Coastal Change, such the National Planning Policy Framework; Coastal Change pathfinder evaluation documents; legal documents, such as documents relating to housing regulations. The final list of documents to be reviewed will need to be agreed by Defra.
2. Case studies. Fieldwork visits to selected Pathfinder sites to interview Local Authority staff, individuals and other key stakeholders. Following a recent communication with Defra, four of the “Big Five” have confirmed that they have undertaken rollback. Contractors will need to confirm with the fifth Pathfinder (Tendring) what work has taken place and whether they should also be included in the case study work. Contractors should therefore cost for 4-5 case study visits, and to be aware that Defra may also wish to attend.

The visits should focus on addressing the research questions above, collecting data to allow the financial and economic analysis to be carried out, interviews to capture social, environmental and other impacts, as well as the experience and perceptions of those involved. A key focus will be to gather sound financial data to allow a robust economic assessment to be made (details set out in point 4 below). We are also interested in comparing the approaches taken by Pathfinders and how far specific approaches could be replicated in other locations.

In addition to Local Authority staff, we would like to include interviews with other key stakeholders. These would include Local Authority planners and where possible householders and developers benefitting from the schemes. It may be possible to arrange these interviews as part of the fieldwork visits, however it may be necessary to carry out these as a follow-on to fieldwork visits, potentially using telephone interviews.

3. Financial and economic analysis, the latter building on that by Regeneris by revisiting key assumptions and data in the light of experience since 2011. Development of the initial framework to consider more fully the costs and benefits of creating development rights in North Norfolk and the extent to which these would have arisen under the existing North Norfolk District Council “EN12 planning policy” for the Relocation and Replacement of Development Affected by Coastal Erosion Risk without the rollback scheme - will also be required. Similar methodological development may be required for the other Pathfinders to capture adequately the economic impacts of these often complex property interventions.

The project will need to be conducted using the principles of HM Government's "Magenta Book" on evaluation. All economic analysis will need to be consistent with the HM Treasury "Green Book" (*Appraisal and Evaluation in Central Government*) and the Environment Agency's Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Appraisal Guidance (FCERM-AG).

Deliverables

We would require monthly progress updates on the status of the work. A final report is required, including a draft final report for comment by Defra and the steering group. A summary report detailing the context and main findings of the work is also required.

Audience

The audiences for this work are Defra (policy / evidence colleagues), Department for Communities and Local Government, Local Government Association, Local Authorities affected by coastal change, Flood and Coastal Group Chairs, and the Environment Agency.

Timetable

We expect the project to take around 6 months to complete. We would like the project to start in July and to finish around December.

Project management

Defra will nominate a project manager who will be responsible for the day-to-day management of the contract. The successful tenderer will be expected to appoint a Project Manager who will act as the principal point of contact for Defra and who will be responsible for the day-to-day management of the project. The successful tenderer will be required to regularly update the nominated Defra project manager on project progress.

A Steering Group made up of policy and analytical staff and key stakeholders will guide the project. The Steering Group will monitor progress and provide advice, support and guidance on project scope, methodology, policy focus and research outputs. Tenderers should cost (half days) for up to four meetings, including an inception meeting and further meetings to coincide with key project outputs (eg interim and final reporting stage). The meetings will usually be held in Defra offices in central London.

Dissemination

The work will need to be disseminated to Local Authorities affected by Coastal Change. This can be achieved through a series of workshops and presentations using pre-existing coastal groups such as the Flood and Coastal Group Chairs meetings for example. Contractors should include one dissemination event in their proposals.

Peer Review

Defra will require the outputs from this project to be peer reviewed by an external reviewer/s. Defra will identify and co-ordinate the peer review but contractors will be expected to respond to comments and revise outputs accordingly.