



RTPI

mediation of space · making of place

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Dear Sir/Madam,

RESPONSE TO: Consultation paper on a new planning policy on development and coastal change

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the above. The Royal Town Planning Institute is a membership organisation representing over 22,000 spatial planners. It exists to advance the science and art of town planning for the benefit of the public.

This document responds to the consultation paper on a new planning policy on development and coastal change, issued by CLG.

The response has been formed drawing on the expertise of members including the RTPI Environmental Planning and Protection Network and the RTPI Marine Spatial Planning Task Group.

If you require any further assistance, please contact Nicola Gough, Network Manager, on 020 7929 9494 or email network.manager@rtpi.org.uk

Yours faithfully,

Matt Thomson
Acting Director Policy and Partnerships
Enc.

Question 1: The new policy and supporting practice guide promotes a strategic risk-based approach to managing future physical changes to the coastline to meet the Government objectives set out in the proposed policy so that long-term adaptation of communities can be planned. It allows necessary development that is appropriate and safe whilst avoiding inappropriate development in areas at risk from coastal change. Do you agree with this approach? If not, what alterations in approach do you suggest?

We agree with this approach in principle. In terms of new development this is a common sense approach and is similar to that advocated for flood risk. However, we think it important that the approach is based upon sound evidence, and recommend Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) as a key piece of evidence in the strategic risk-based approach to managing future physical changes to the coastline.

A definition of appropriate and inappropriate development is required.

Question 2: Policy DCC1 sets out the requirements for evidence on the current and predicted impacts of physical changes to the coast to support plan-making and planning decisions. Do you agree that SMPs, complemented by other plans and information set out in the policy, provide an adequate supporting evidence base? If not, what other sources of information should RPBs and LPAs take into account?

We believe that Shoreline Management Plans (SMPs) do not, in their present state, provide a sufficient and adequate supporting evidence base. The purpose of an SMP is to inform policy, to fund flood and coastal erosion defences, and to deal with issues such as feasibility and funding of defences, biodiversity and protected areas. SMPs do not take into account future development or regeneration; nor do they take social and economic changes into account. Also, as the period of use for SMPs expires in 2010, we would query how this fits in with LDFs and RSS timetables.

As stated above, we believe SFRA, including policy guidance, should be seen as an equally important source of evidence.

We welcome further information on use of SMPs in Companion Guide to this document.

Question 3: It is proposed that coastal change should be taken into account at all stages of the planning process (i.e. regional, local and site specific level) to determine the level of impact and the regional and local spatial responses that might be required. Does the policy in DCC2 and DCC3 on the regional and local planning approach to plan making, and the policy in DCC4 to DCC6 on development management facilitate this? If not, how might it be improved?

Joint working in coastal areas is important, but cross-boundary issues may mean that the sub-regional or county level may be more appropriate. We also recommend improved cross-local authority working.

The RTPI believes it is vital that regional spatial responses are informed by the scientific assessment of the impacts and processes that will bring about coastal change and by a proper consideration of the associated risks.

We do not believe that the document sufficiently takes into account the development of the marine spatial planning system. Although it is recognised in the companion guide, mention of the forthcoming Marine Bill or emerging marine policy statement is omitted from the main document – we believe these linkages should be stated explicitly. The document is very focused on terrestrial level and needs better integration with high level marine objectives.

Question 4: Policy DCC3.2 requires that, where development and infrastructure need to be relocated outside CCMA, LPAs allocate sufficient land for this beyond CCMA. Planning constraints (e.g. landscape

designations) or wider constraints (e.g. coastal communities' acceptance of the need to change) might make this difficult. Do you have any examples of the impact of constraints on the relocation of development affected by coastal change and how constraints can be overcome? Do you have any experience of using planning tools or other mechanisms to facilitate the relocation of development inland over time?

We are unsure about the use of CCMA's, which have the potential to blight areas. We believe that other pre-existing mechanisms should be used to look at coastal management; for example, Area Action Plans.

Question 5: The practice guide framework sets out the proposed structure of the practice guide. Do you agree that the structure of the practice guide is right, and that it will cover all the relevant topics? If not, what is missing, and why?

In general terms, we support the structure of the practice guide. However, we question whether SFRA has been afforded enough importance as a source of evidence.

In addition, the document needs to include explicit links to forthcoming National Policy Statements, and as identified above, the Marine Bill should be cross-referenced in the main document.

It would be helpful for it to be outlined on what role the Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) is going to have in relation to the development plan process. Is this going to be a statutory document? What level of priority will be given to an ICZM?

Question 6: Policy DCC3 requires LPAs to define a coastal change management area (CCMA). The draft practice guide sets out how the CCMA should be defined, and the role of stakeholders. Do you agree with this? If not, what alternative ways of defining a CCMA do you suggest?

It is clear that there is a direct link between the SMP and the definition of the CCMA. However as stated above, we caution the use of CCMA's (and the creation of another level of process), when other mechanisms are already available to deal with coastal management.

Question 7: It is proposed to allow certain types of development in CCMA's when appropriate. Are the criteria set out in the practice guide the correct ones by which to judge what is appropriate? If not, what should these be?

The RTP1 is generally happy with the proposals made.

We suggest that the potential for overall environmental benefits of development are considered; e.g. connection cables for off shore windfarms, which would contribute to overall carbon reduction.

Question 8: Policy DCC6.2 is that LPAs should set a time-limit for developments permitted in a CCMA, and the practice guide advises on operating time-limited developments. Would the proposal to use time-limited permissions be sufficient to manage and control development within a CCMA to ensure buildings and infrastructure remain safe during their planned lifetime? If not, what alternative approach do you propose? Are the arrangements for operating time-limited developments in the practice guide appropriate and sufficient? If not, what arrangements would you suggest? Do you have any examples of time-limited planning permissions and/or relevant planning conditions and obligations?

Time-limited permissions are well-established – e.g. wind energy; minerals extraction inc. marine-dredged aggregates; temporary accommodation e.g. caravans – and are useful in allowing review.

However, we are concerned that time-limited developments in the medium to long-term risk areas may result in poor quality design or lack of development/investment on viability grounds, which may inadvertently result in the decline of coastal areas.

Question 9: Policy DCC5.1 requires that an assessment of the vulnerability of the proposed development to coastal change and its impact on coastal change accompany planning applications in the CCMA. The practice guide advises on the scope of vulnerability assessments. Is the scope of vulnerability assessments and the criteria set out in the practice guide appropriate? If not, what should these be?

The RTPI is generally supportive with what is proposed. However, we suggest a 'traffic light' approach to risk levels i.e. short or medium/long-term, which will ensure a clear framework within which to work for both Local Authorities and developers.

Question 10: We are seeking views on whether there is need to extend the Environment Agency's statutory consultee role in relation to planning applications in areas that are vulnerable to coastal change (i.e CCMA). Do you agree with the approach set out in section 4 of Part 1 of this consultation document? If not, why?

We are generally happy with what is proposed. However, if the role is extended it is important that adequate training is provided to ensure continuity of advice across the Environment Agency (EA) regions.

Question 11: Do you agree that the current arrangements for referring planning applications in CCMA for consideration by the Secretary of State set out in section 5 of Part 1 of the consultation document are adequate? If not, why?

We believe there is a need for continuity across Government Offices regions in terms of advice provided.

Question 12: We are seeking views on the appropriateness of advising planning authorities to consider removing some permitted development rights for developments in areas in the CCMA that are identified as at risk from coastal change within a short-term period (i.e. the next 20 years). Do you agree with the approach to this set out in section 6 of Part 1 of the consultation document? If not, why?

Referring back to comment earlier about CCMA, the RTPI believe that LPAs need to look at existing tools at their disposal and we suggest that Article 4(1) Direction would be perfectly adequate for this purpose.

Question 13: The consultation stage impact assessment sets out the likely benefits and costs of the draft new policy. Do you agree with the assumptions made? If not, or if you think it is incomplete, please tell us why and provide any quantifiable evidence available to you on benefits and costs.

N/A

Question 14: The impact assessment in Part 4 asks the following question with regards to the cost of carrying out vulnerability assessments (see DCC5.1). What would you consider to be the range of costs of such an assessment, how would this vary with the time taken to do such an assessment and how many assessments do you think might be needed each year?

We are concerned about the viability of this approach, and query who will manage both the initial assessment and monitoring. For SFRAs, the EA currently takes the quality assurance role. Would the EA also manage vulnerability

assessments?

In terms of their usefulness, we believe that if they are kept relatively simple, they may be of benefit to LPAs that lack in technical experience in this area.

General Comments

The RTPI is generally in support of this document. However, we would point out that CLG seems very isolated from DEFRA in terms of coordination between related documents; e.g. the recently published consultation on Coastal Change Policy, which does not mention this PPS at any point. We believe there is an overall need for better communication between DEFRA and CLG on working policies.