

Shoreline Planning for Northern Ireland

Council for Nature Conservation and Countryside

Northern Ireland Environment Link



Welcome and Introduction

Patrick Casement (Chair, CNCC)

- Another coastal management conference – why? We seem to have a long history of not making progress in this area. But this conference is very timely because of:
 - Climate change issues and potential sea level rise – we are failing to plan for this.
 - The opportunity presented by major changes looming in the planning systems – LGR, new Marine Planning regime, SPPS.
- We want to explore how our coast works (and sometimes why it doesn't), and how that might change in the future. By hearing from some 'best practice' cases in GB, we want to set a clear direction for Shoreline Planning in NI.

How does the Northern Ireland Coast Work?

Professor Andrew Cooper, University of Ulster

- The coast is of value to many people in a variety of ways, for example: scenery; as an ecosystem; recreation.
- Northern Ireland is gifted with a highly variable coastline, which is the result of variation in geology and wave energy. In general, there is a decline in wave energy as we move from the North Coast into the Irish Sea.
- There are also a large range of materials that the waves are working with (soft post-glacial, basalt, chalk, sedimentary successions, beaches, dunes), producing the variable morphological response that we see around the coast.
- While every beach is different, they can be divided into a number of zones:
 1. North Coast – high energy environment, glacially derived sediment (from Scotland).
 2. Antrim coastline – medium energy environment, offshore and onshore movement, as well as longshore, sediment may be coming down from the glens behind, or may be marine derived.
 3. Down coastline – medium energy environment, offshore/onshore/longshore movement, on the Mourne plain the beaches rely on the erosion of the cliffs behind them.
 4. Loughs (Carlingford, Strangford, Belfast, Foyle) – lower energy environment.
- Cliffs can be active as well as beaches (on the scale of years to decades) – rocks falls are frequent in some areas (particularly the high-energy North Coast).
- In general, storms are effective in driving coastal change, while beaches are effective at absorbing the impact of storms. This natural system works well if it is not tampered with, but difficulties arise when we try to introduce infrastructure. When this happens, there are 3 response options:
 1. Hard defences – building sea walls / embankments to protect infrastructure and property

2. Soft defences – beach nourishment (adding sediment – but not a sustainable solution)
 3. Retreat – passive (erosion feeds beaches, but at the expense of infrastructure and property) or active (moving buildings back from the shoreline)
- What is wrong with hard defences? Essentially, when hard defences are in place we lose beaches in favour of property or infrastructure behind it (a choice between property, which might be in private interest, or the beach, which is in the interest of wider society). Sea walls will always need to be re-built – but dunes naturally adjust (they repair themselves, as such).
 - In Northern Ireland, we are in danger of covering our whole coastline in hard defences / armour – not because we have made an active choice to do this, but because we are not really thinking about the issue at all.
 - Sea walls are often completely unnecessary, but have been built because there is a poor understanding of how the coast works.
 - Climate change is not really a threat to beaches (though they do need us not to be in the way as they retreat) – infrastructure is a threat to beaches.
 - We need to learn to work with natural processes, and not against them. And this should be from an ecosystem perspective – essentially, giving the coast space to work/function as it naturally should. Coastal protection, therefore, should not be about protecting property, but about protecting the functioning ecosystem.

Scenarios for the NI coast in the 21st Century

Professor Julian Orford, Queen's University Belfast

- There have been studies to show that living near the coast has a positive impact on health and wellbeing. This is a 20th Century perspective. In the 21st Century, however, the opposite may well be true. Shoreline Planning is a potential way of managing/avoiding the worst of this change.
- First estimates, from 2013 Revised Draft PPS 15 Planning and Flood Risk (based on Defra's 2012 Climate Change Risk Assessment):
 - Para 1.4: Future trends in weather patterns predict **sea level rise**... Scientific evidence attributes this trend to global warming and climate change.
 - Para 2.4: The CC Risk Assessment indicates that **increased flooding and coastal erosion** affecting people, properties (including built heritage) and infrastructure: and **increased coastal squeeze and coastal evolution affecting beaches, intertidal areas, grazing marshes** etc. are potentially **significant threats** for Northern Ireland from a changing climate.
- Global sea level rise (SLR) – how are we doing so far? In the past 20 years, we have had approximately 3mm rise per year, and a rising rate of SLR is expected as we move forward.
- What about Northern Ireland? We have had, and are continuing to have, SLR – not much, but there has been rise over the past 20 years.
- The future – there are a lot of uncertainties around projections. But a conservative estimate is 30cm of SLR by 2100 (global, mediated by local conditions etc).

- NI will not be buffered by isostatic rebound anymore.
- Probably the biggest problem for NI is surge. The amount of water generated by storms will be unpredictable. Low tide combined with high surge is not a problem. But when high tides and high surges coincide, what will the extreme water level be? As sea level rises, the return period for extreme water levels falls.
- By 2100:
 - Portrush, based on a 20-year record, what is currently a 1 in 200 year event is projected to become a 1 in 10 year event.
 - Malin Head, based on a 50-year record, what is currently a 1 in 100 year event is projected to become a once-a-year event.
 - East coast, what is currently a 1 in 200 year event is projected to become a 1 in 12 year event.
 - Belfast Harbour, what is currently a 1 in 100 year event is projected to become a 1 in five year event.
- Vertical rise is of course not the direct problem, but rather the onshore reach caused by that rise. Movement of the beach onshore and upward. Rising sea level will mean the erosion of most beaches. 50% of NI coastline has a high likelihood of functional change by 2100. We need to plan for this.
- Serious implications for sediment pathways. Cells of sediment erosion and accretion. As sea level rises, these cells will change, cell proportions will decrease, resulting in 'coastal squeeze'. Currently, there is a lack of appreciation of sediment pathways in the planning system – reflected where there is development in areas of erosion. When erosion occurs and property comes under threat, whose responsibility is it to defend the property (private versus public interest)?
- National Trust Shifting Shores Programme – NI was largely excluded due to lack of coastline data. Strangford Lough – after 1m of SLR, significant loss of habitat (intertidal flats, salt marsh) at the northern end. Mount Stewart is under extreme pressure from sea level - realignment at Anne's Point is one isolated example of good practice in NI.
- Murlough – over the next century, over 400m of dune system could be lost to erosion (though there are large error bands on these kinds of projections).
- Recent development in Dundrum – for example, new apartments along the shore. These could be gone in a matter of decades, but the current planning system allowed them to be built. We have let people build on the coast without an understanding of coastal processes.
- Cost – estimates of upgrading current coastal defences based on 1m of SLR – Britain £6222M, Ireland £437M. So what are the options? Sustainability – retreat from the coastline, give natural processes the space to work – but how and where? Or 'hold the line' for the present, but this will need to give way to shoreline realignment as the next century progresses.
- Shoreline Planning is the major tool for mediating between society and future physical changes along the coast.

Coastline flooding and erosion issues

David Porter, Rivers Agency

- The Rivers Agency is the flood defence and drainage authority for NI.
- Policy context:
 - Rivers Agency document, 'Living with Rivers and the Sea'.
 - As part of the Marine Bill, there was a recommendation that the Rivers Agency would have a role in coastal flood protection. This has not really progressed due to the current economic climate. An opportunity for Shoreline Planning.
 - Drainage (NI) Order, 1973, gave Rivers Agency its powers related to sea defence. "Sea defence works" means any work of construction, reconstruction, alternation, improvement, repair, maintenance, demolition or removal for the purposes of **protection against flooding by the sea of any land**, and includes the sowing or planting of vegetation for that purpose. 'Protection' in this legislation does not include erosion.
 - EU Floods Directive has been a driver in the Rivers Agency producing a preliminary flood risk assessment (2011), flood hazard risk maps (due in December 2013), flood risk management plans (due in December 2015). Such flood risk management plans require stakeholder buy-in down to community level. A need to integrate these efforts with progress in Shoreline Planning in NI.
- Currently, major towns in NI are all identified as at flood risk.
- Belfast spill area 1 animation shown – flooding of docks and York street area during an extreme surge event. Sea level wall doesn't allow flood waters back out to permit flood waters to subside.
- Challenges:
 - Managed retreat – has to be by agreement. Where designated defences are already in place, there has to be a process completed to undesignated them.
 - Managed retreat may not be useful everywhere – need to be mindful of what is landward.
 - Some infrastructure needs to be protected – key roads, etc.
 - Climate change – how do we communicate it to the public? The public can miss the point that Belfast is at very significant flood risk today, not simply in the future.
 - Coastal erosion – assessment of risk areas needed, better communication of risk.

Shoreline Planning from a GB Perspective

Shoreline Management Planning in England – lessons from the first 20 years

Tim Collins, Natural England

- Coastlines change. They have changed historically (demonstrably), and it makes sense that they will change in the future. Coastal environments are very dynamic, change can be rapid. How do we decide what to do about that change? Manage and protect assets or let them go?
- Some of our poorest communities are living in coastal areas in the UK. How can we support them? How do economically depressed communities deal with coastal retreat?
- What is a Shoreline Management Plan (SMP)? A policy document for coastal flood and erosion risk management planning. It can inform strategies for land use planning, but only sets policy (doesn't determine how it is implemented).
- 20 years on in England, we are in the 2nd generation of SMP. SMP2 looks 100 years into the future and accepts that an understanding of coastal processes is crucial to planning at the shoreline. SMP2 encourages people to be realistic, given legislation and economic restraints. It fosters greater stakeholder engagement. There have been cases where buildings have been demolished and compensation given to the property owners.
- Helping stakeholders to understand change is difficult. Who decides whether to defend a property or not to?
- We need to invest in the long term, sustainable future.
- Conclusions:
 - SMPs have been a key element in providing a strategic framework for the management of England's coastline.
 - The SMP process helps to develop and evolve the understanding of all stakeholders.
 - SMP assists in budgeting and targeting of flood and coastal risk management funding.
 - SMP enables us to manage changes in the mosaic of coastal habitats.
 - The value of the SMP process will increase as climate change impacts bite.

One Local Authority's Experience of engagement over the past 20 years

David Lowsley, Chichester District Council

- Housing and infrastructure puts pressure on a local authority – this is their remit to be involved in Shoreline Management Planning.
- Shoreline Plans are translated more locally into strategies for delivery – more detail, technical, environmental/social/economic considerations.
- At East Head, a working group was formed to do this, significant investment of time into public consultation for different coastal schemes. Information on coastal processes is critical to bringing people on board – evidence needs to be presented to stakeholders.

- Public meetings can be very contentious, and are perhaps not the best method of stakeholder engagement – rather, small workshops, one-to-one meetings.
- Think about language when communicating Shoreline Planning issues – for example, people are uncomfortable with the word ‘retreat’. ‘Managed realignment’ is better, and ‘adaptive management’ is better still. Adaptive management implies flexibility.
- There needs to be a co-ordinated, science based approach to managing our coastlines.
- By studying coastal processes, presenting evidence to the public and given the time and resources to engage properly we can reach agreement with the public on the best way to proceed.
- Threats:
 - lack of resources
 - uncertainty about how schemes will be progressed
 - public contributions
- Above all consultation must be meaningful, seek out people’s views and address their worries.
- Local Authorities have a vital role to play, sometimes as “intermediaries” between communities and potentially bureaucratic organisations that are responsible for managing the risks.

The Value and Problems of Shoreline Planning for Local Stakeholders – perspectives from the National Trust

Phil Dyke, National Trust

- The National Trust (NT) is a major coastal stakeholder – it owns approximately 15% of the NI coastline (includes every different coastal typology: dune, saltmarsh, soft cliff, hard cliff etc., as well as villages, infrastructure, harbours).
- NT Coastal Change Hotspots defined through NT Coastal Risk Assessment – 5 identified in NI.
- Problem – our traditional responses to coastal threats are outmoded – hard engineering will not be effective in the future. There is still a ‘head in the sand’ mentality, even in England and Wales where SMPs have been in place.
- NT advocates for an adaptive response where communities are empowered to act.
- The ‘Shifting Shores’ study opened a discussion around the key issues (work with not against nature, public involvement is critical, solutions need partnership, think & act in wider context, long-term planning essential). Builds adaptation into the response process – thus, over different ‘epochs’, policy will evolve. We should plan for that kind of stepped response now.
- How does the NT get involved in SMP? Through a commitment to the long-term development of plans.
- SMP is not a panacea – it sits within a hierarchy of plans.
- Value of continued and resources monitoring programmes – a background of sound geomorphological information.
- The episodic/threshold behaviour of cliffs can take communities and authorities by surprise.

- NT is carrying out a lot of awareness raising exercises about coastal retreat with the wider public (including, for example, public art). Important to engage with the stakeholders as much as with the science.
- Marine Spatial Planning –EU Directive forthcoming in 2014 – good opportunity for NI with Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM).
- There is a real danger that we put off decisions for so long that we transfer even bigger problems to the next generation – idea of intergenerational equity.
- Conclusions – SMP can deliver:
 - Good Public Engagement on complex and often counter intuitive issues of coastal adaptation.
 - A framework for disparate interests to work together informed by sound science.
 - Integration (not duplication) of plans – if ICZM principles are followed.
 - The right developments in the right place at the coast.
 - Space for people and nature at today's coast and on tomorrow's coast.

Panel Discussion

- As we build higher and more elaborate defences, the consequences of failure increase. We need a process of warning and informing in NI – engaging with the public in a programme of risk and expectations as well as the programme of physical works. Raising public awareness of risk is crucial.
- The cross border area has implications for Shoreline Planning.
- EU Floods Directive requires cooperation between member states. River Agency regularly liaises with OPW. There are 2 joint flood risk strategies with NI and RoI input.
- There needs to be public participation at different stages of the Shoreline Planning process.
- Stakeholder perception – ecological versus economic sustainability of the coast. There are legal obligations to protect certain habitats. These concerns should be addressed with stakeholder input to find solutions – protecting communities and habitat in parallel. Experience has shown that relying heavily on consultation and public engagement can ensure public understanding of the perceived ecological/economic tensions.
- How coastline is evolving as an ecosystem will need consideration by planners as part of Shoreline Planning. Engineers have previously been more concerned with the terrestrial side, but we need to conserve the functioning of the ecosystem.
- What we value now, we may not value in the future. We might lose fresh water habitat, but gain an estuary. How we manage nature from a designated sites perspective is going to have to change.
- Major changes to planning coming with LGR – potentially a bigger gap in planners' understanding, lack of knowledge/expertise. How will this be filtered downward to the new local government structures?

- Planners don't understand coastal processes – there is a clear need for capacity building, direction to be given to planners. Even when we provide this aid, we cannot anticipate how it will be translated at local level.
- Area Plans can do a lot to protect the coast. We need to know the areas that are at most risk within the lifetime of those plans. Sometimes we need lines on maps.
- Through the Coastal Forum there have been requests for PPS on coastal areas. PPS 20 never appeared. In the current SPPS SEA scoping study, the coast is considered under 'other' – this is certainly not ideal.
- Insurance industry – social impact of flooding. Where is the voice of the insurance industry? We cannot insure for coastal erosion. This issue should be dealt with during conveyancing.
- Recent study identified erosion as an EU-wide problem. The Dutch focus is entirely on Coastal Sediment Management Plans, sediment pathways and dynamics. Is this appropriate for NI? The Dutch situation is unique. In a natural system like NI, sediment will take care of itself if the coastal system is allowed to operate as it should.
- Joint estuary / coast needs to be considered for Shoreline Planning in an NI analysis. Reluctant /cautious about using other sources of sediment. Re-nourishment is ultimately unsustainable, and very expensive.
- Planning has a role to play in all of this – but it is not a silver bullet. We need to be realistic about what planners can do. Where will responsibility lie in an NI context?

The current policy position for NI coastal planning

Brenda Cunning, DoE Marine Division

- The Terrestrial Planning system extends to the low water mark.
- Northern Ireland Marine Plan – strategic view of inshore & offshore, from high water mark. Authorisation & enforcement decisions must be taken in accordance with the marine plan.
- Marine licensing – from high water mark. Certain activities require licence (or exemption) including construction & dredging.
- What is happening on the coast must inform the marine plan & licensing decisions.
- The EU Water Framework Directive requires the achievement of 'good ecological status' to a distance of one nautical mile. This implemented through River Basin Management Plans & Programmes of Measures. The Directive includes a requirement to have in place controls on physical changes to the coast to ensure ecological status / potential is achieved.
- Other relevant policy areas:
 - Marine Strategy Framework, Birds & Habitats Directives
 - Floods Directive (Rivers Agency)
 - Port development plans (DRD)
 - Renewable energy & tourism (DETI)
 - Climate change
 - Integrated coastal zone management (much wider than coastal erosion & flood risk)
- What's missing?:

- Legislation in place for the coastal area, both in terms of terrestrial & marine.
- This legislation enables strategic planning, and control of activities which affect the coast.
- Existing requirement to achieve good ecological status.
- Existing requirement to address flood risks.

Workshops

Existing Issues

- Presumption in favour of development underpins the current planning system.
- Planning functions moving to local councils (but not currently on the agenda of local councillors).
- Impact of development in one council area on another area – can this be controlled?
- Current division of responsibilities within government (chopped up, not joined up).
- Current imbalance – designated sites / structures will be protected, houses won't necessarily receive protection.
- Communicating climate change / ecosystem services to public and to policy makers.
- Very little strategic planning in NI at the moment.
- Political / administrative / natural boundaries do not match up.
- Still gaps in knowledge – need for further research around coastline to inform policy.
- Public information gaps – who is responsible for what, and when?
- Tension around tourism and economic development versus landscape conservation.
- Existing infrastructure is aging.
- Land ownership and management issues.
- No PPS for the coastal environment.

Policy context

- Both shoreline management planning and the Floods Directive (FD) require flood risk hazard maps so it is to our advantage that the FD mapping has already begun.
- We need to be able to identify the areas where we need to gather data to inform our decisions.
- Greater liaison is required between marine and terrestrial planners. E.g. if permission is granted to remove marine aggregates this offshore action can have a direct impact onshore so is a marine/ terrestrial planning issue.
- Environmental Impact Assessment Directive and PPS15 Planning and flood Risk need to be added to the list of existing policies and legislation that influence the management of the coast.
- Currently no European Directive asks for mapping of potential coastal erosion sites.
- Any significant coastal defence development would require an EIA.

- We need to decide what is strategically important in relation to flooding and erosion risk for example agricultural crops grass, willow, arable etc. With land use planning we can decide which areas of land are used for what purpose. But there is a danger that this will be location specific rather than strategically assessed. Can a land-use strategy materially affect investment decisions?
- Flood risk is fairly well modelled and mapped so we can plan for these eventualities. However in terms of erosion little or no data to model from.
- The regional development Strategy should cover the planning context and should give land-use direction.
- The question was posed do we need shoreline management planning? Do we not already have suitable structures in place post RPA, e.g. local Council development plans need to be signed off by DOE so checks and balances will exist.
- Post-RPA will councillors/ councils have expertise in coastal erosion? It is not just a local but also a strategic issue as may affect neighbouring council areas.
- In terms of marine/ freshwater flooding the key issue is the movement of sediment and water.
- We cannot expect government, planners and others to plan for coastal erosion if we do not have the data to prove it is an issue and how we need to respond to it!
- An evidence base needs to take account of future erosion predictions. Need to have a policy in place that is flexible, adaptable to deal with problems in the future.
- Need for a pilot study of Shoreline Planning on a section of coastline?
- Need to demonstrate the value of this approach to the Executive.

SWOT analysis

- Strengths
 - Two universities with expertise and potential role in developing the approach.
 - Potential political will / support.
 - We have been shielded from coastal threats to a great extent (so far).
- Weaknesses
 - Non-involvement of key bodies (thus far) – for example, Crown Estate.
 - How to involve landowners (85% of NI coast not owned by NT).
 - Lack of modelling information (cells of sedimentary behaviour).
 - No baseline information, or lack of access?
 - Where will responsibility lie (local gov., central gov., public)?
 - Resource availability.
 - Communication of available information – re-education.
- Opportunities
 - Research / job opportunities in developing Shoreline Planning in NI.
 - Issues can be highlighted early to transition committees of new councils.
 - Re-education to raise awareness of coastal processes.
- Threats
 - Non-management of the coast

- Compensation / conflict between landowners.
- Climate change.
- Flooding of inhabited areas / commercial areas.
- Lack of political will / commitment.
- Potential for inconsistent approach of local councils.

Stakeholder engagement

- Definite preference for bottom-up. A top-down approach was initially adopted in England but this didn't work; important to have people on board from the very beginning.
- Prior to consulting local people it is important to have data, which they were fortunate to have in England.
- Need to challenge to encourage people to look beyond private/narrow interests.
- In England they worked through the existing democratic structures – parish councils, this generated ownership but potential for usual suspects to dominate and provide their personal views and not necessarily the views of their Parish.
- Important to have an independent chairperson to provide an impartial overview.
- Vital to provide basic information and present this information in a way that allows people to engage. Perhaps using images.
- Lack of data on coastal processes in NI – can't engage public until we have data base.
- Prior to consultation there is a public expectation of delivery – will local authorities be able to deliver?
- Big Question – who is going to take the lead on this? - Councils/planning service. Will take joint-working between a number of stakeholders, but ultimately need to have one organisation with overall responsibility, who is given the powers to make it happen and to ensure clear lines of accountability.
- Even if we engage with stakeholders there is potential for people to 'do their own thing' and not buy into the vision that is developed. For example, a landowner may build his own wall. Perhaps need to be cautious of presenting too many scare stories.
- Translink has 20km of sea defences in NI – safety is their priority and keeping the line open. Therefore on certain stretches managed retreat/realignment wouldn't be an option.
- Important not to raise stakeholder expectations.
- Economy is ultimately the biggest driver. Ultimately every sea wall carries the seeds of its own destruction.
- Need a twin track approach - develop awareness/educate people about the dynamic coast – 'a dynamic coast programme', while at the same time there need to be higher level discussion behind the scene about the key issues/decisions. Once these high level discussions are complete, you will have a more informed public who are better able to engage in consultation/engagement. Need to create the condition for effective engagement – an educated public will be better able to understand whatever approach is proposed.
- Mediating the public/private interests – through compensation – no compensation in England as it would create a precedent.

- Full scale study of NI coastline required to identify areas that are more appropriate for managed retreat and those that require hard defences. Combination of approaches will be required. Such a study would require engagement with people/communities at a regional//local level to assess what they value – what assets are most important and need to be armoured, as well as cost-benefit analysis to identify what approach is most financially viable in the medium long-term.
- Option for the local authority to buy a piece of land and carry out managed realignment on that land.
- Dynamic Coast Education – councils and councillors need to take the lead perhaps with central government funding – however, potential for councillors to get bogged down in parochial issues – protecting the interests of one landowner at the expense of the wider public interest.
- Important to recognise that agricultural land has a value and is likely to become increasingly valuable in the future and this also needs to be protected.
- Role for scenarios? This process is essentially planning for the future. Difficult for people to comprehend the future and what the coastline could look like. Therefore developing imagery/modelling through scenarios can give people a better idea of what the future may look like – this approach could allow people to give a more informed view of what the decisions that should be taken today.

Physical environment

- What do we know / not know that would be essential for Shoreline Planning?
- Some places we understand very well, some very little.
- Not well studied – Antrim Glens coastline (understanding where sediment comes from, etc.), outer Ards.
- Current status of the coast – how much is armoured, how much is functioning naturally?
- LiDaR elevation mapping would provide excellent baseline data.
- Need for monitoring programme – communities could be involved in this kind of activity.
- Need to understand future change and the potential impact of SLR on landward movement.
- DoE Marine Division did commission a ‘Shifting Sands 2’ (in 2008), which has remained unpublished. Marine Division should move forward with this now. Some work required to bring it up to date, but this should not delayed its publication.
- Furthering understanding of sediment cells/pathways could be taken forward quite easily. Need for erosion/accretion maps from this kind of work. Erosion risk maps.
- How far does sediment move from the coast? We know, for example, that sediment can be very active at 20m water depth.
- Need for data on lough shorelines – profiling, sediments, and historical changes. There is a presumption that the interior of loughs are more protected, but this is not necessarily so.
- Absence of understanding of the particular set of problems – though a lot of planners were once geographers, they are not anymore.
- Onus should be on developers to show that their development will not have an impact on the functioning of natural systems at the coast. The economic situation has caused the

pendulum to swing away from the precautionary approach. Planning is ultimately a development-orientated process.

- Need for a manual of coastal processes that is understandable to planners.
- Can this knowledge deficit be address at training/degree level?
- Two planning regimes – Marine and Terrestrial. An unbiased body of expertise is important in mediated/advising. A planner can feel pushed into making decisions that work against expert advice.
- Funding gap around information – who has responsibility to take this forward?
- Who becomes statutory consultee for the physical environment at the shoreline?
- Could there be a coastal award for intact, high quality coastline? Designation could be seen as such, but local people rather see it as a regulatory tool.

Concluding remarks

Patrick Casement (Chair, CNCC)

- Sea level rise is likely to be a real problem in the coming century. In NI, we have (until now) been shielded from SLR by isostatic rebound. Going forward, this will no longer be the case. Major threats associated with increased erosion rates and storm surge water.
- We have failed to plan for coastal change so far in NI – we have either built hard defences or done nothing. But there has not been a strategic, planned response.
- There is a danger that if we keep putting off making decisions that we will end up in crisis. These issues are facing us right now, and we need to act.
- SMPs helped to inform the process in GB, but they are just part of a process in producing a policy framework that is required to successfully manage our coastlines.
- Stakeholder engagement is likely to be a huge issue in NI.
- Intergenerational equity is a key point – we have not done this successfully so far.
- Workshops have reinforced that, before we get to Shoreline Plans for Northern Ireland, we need a comprehensive evidence base, a basis for understanding and predictive modelling.
- We also need continued and resourced monitoring of the coast.
- Strategic versus local interests. NI has a strong tradition in protecting the interests of individuals. We need to shift away from this, increases education and awareness of what is in the wider public interest in NI.
- We need strong leadership at all levels.
- We need resources to implement all of this. CNCC will advise the Minister on how to take Shoreline Planning for NI forward in terms of bringing together an evidence base. Shoreline Planning itself will then be a key tool in the management of our coastlines in the face of the threats we have been considering.