

Coastal Partners Position Statement: Northney Farm to Chichester Road: January 2025 (Optional Development Unit (ODU) 3 of the Hayling Island Coastal Management Strategy)

Following the deterioration of the coastal defences between Northney Farm and Chichester Road, Havant; Coastal Partners has summarised the position of the different authorities involved in flood and erosion risk management. The aim is to help clarify the roles and responsibilities of these organisations, the landowners, and the wider community.

Roles & Responsibilities

Northney Farm to Chichester Road landowners

The coastal defences and land behind are privately owned. Maintenance of these defences will be at the discretion of the private landowner.

Environment Agency

The Environment Agency (EA) is responsible for the strategic overview of the management of all sources of flooding and coastal erosion in England. They are tasked with administering grant funds on behalf of DEFRA. They are a Risk Management Authority (RMA) and have permissive powers to undertake defence works (where there is a wider public benefit, clear economic benefit, and an achievable solution), but there is no legal obligation for the EA to undertake any works to protect property from flooding or erosion.

The EA also has the powers to carry out work to maintain river channels, flood defence assets and structures under their permissive powers and they are provided with funding from government to carry out this maintenance work. The purpose of the EA's works is to reduce the risk of flooding to communities from main rivers and the sea. Investment in flood and coastal risk management works is prioritised according to Government Policy.

The EA has not been maintaining the embankments and their associated assets at Northney, at least since the North Solent Shoreline Management Plan (SMP), link below, was signed off in 2010. The maintenance of these assets has been undertaken by the landowners since before 2010.

<https://www.northsolentsmp.co.uk/>

The watercourse that runs to the south of the site, just north of Chichester Road is categorised as 'Main River' and therefore the EA has powers to carry out maintenance, improvement, or construction work on this Main River to manage flood risk, where they have the resources and funding to do so.

Havant Borough Council

Havant Borough Council (HBC) is also a RMA and has permissive powers to undertake works (where there is a wider public benefit, clear economic benefit, and an achievable solution) under The Coast Protection Act 1949 and Land Drainage Act 1991. These are permissive powers and not a legal obligation or responsibility on the Council to undertake any works (maintenance or new defences) to protect property from flooding or erosion. Therefore HBC does not have responsibility or any legal obligation to maintain private defences.

HBC's current position is to continue to provide advice and support where it can to the private landowners, and the Council's emergency planning team are aware that there is potentially an increased flood risk to the wider community as a result of the deteriorating defences.

The Hayling Island Coastal Management Strategy (HICMS), link below, was recently adopted by HBC and the leading option for this coastal unit (ODU3), is 'adapting to the tides' via managed realignment. This strategic intent looks to balance the agricultural use of land with identifying opportunities to create intertidal habitat, to both maintain viability of the agricultural use and meet the legal requirement for restoration and compensation of habitats within Chichester Harbour. This would be a complex project and require construction of a new set-back defence in phases, and a blended management approach in close collaboration with all partners and will help to reduce flood risk to properties in Northney village over the next 100 years.

[Hayling Island Coastal Management Strategy — Coastal Partners](#)

Because there is a longer-term flood risk to the community at this location, alongside opportunity for the creation of new intertidal habitats, HBC has been liaising with the landowners, the EA and Natural England to consider future Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management (FCERM) options at this site, in line with the adopted Hayling Island Coastal Management Strategy policy of Managed Realignment (Sustain). Any future FCERM works would be subject to landowner agreement, environmental acceptability, and a clear economic case to unlock funding.

HBC are hopeful that a sustainable solution for this site can be found, with the aim of unlocking the multiple benefits of improved flood protection to the community, an improved environment through realising the habitat creation opportunity, and appropriate remuneration to landowners, if a managed realignment scheme is taken forward.

Natural England

The Chichester Harbour Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) is currently assessed as being in unfavourable declining condition due to 'coastal squeeze' and 'inappropriate coastal management' resulting in the loss of almost half of its saltmarsh since designation and a continuing loss of 2.5ha of saltmarsh per year.

Coastal Partners and the EA are working with Natural England (NE) to identify opportunities to allow a more natural evolution of the Harbour's coastline by providing space for the recovery of saltmarsh and the environmental, social, and economic benefits it provides. The Northney Farm to Chichester Road coastal frontage is contributing to 'coastal squeeze,' resulting from the fixed coastal defences. Due to the elevation of the land behind, this location provides a significant opportunity for saltmarsh to recover, under a managed realignment project.

SSSI consent is required from NE, for any coastal defence maintenance works adjacent to, or within the SSSI.

Other Private Landowners and homeowners

Private Landowners have ultimate responsibility for protecting their own property from flooding and erosion but must act within statutory planning regulations and other applicable legislation e.g., Coast Protection Consent.

Coastal Partners have compiled practical advice about management of flood risk here:
[Protecting Yourself Against Flooding — Coastal Partners](#)