

Coastal resilience requires a paradigm shift in public and political attitudes

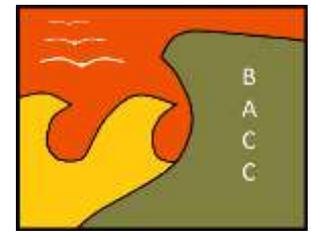
Roger Morris

Bright Angel Coastal Consultants



www.bacoastal.co.uk

UK Government policy



Making space for water

Taking forward a new Government strategy for flood and coastal erosion risk management in England

First Government response to the autumn 2004
Making space for water consultation exercise

March 2005



HM TREASURY

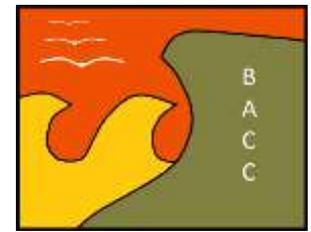


Office of the
Deputy Prime Minister
Creating sustainable communities

Department for
Transport



A strategic approach

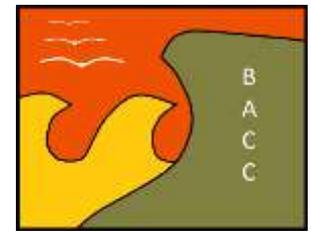


- Action to ensure adaptability to climate change becomes an integral part of all flood and coastal erosion management decisions.
- Adopt a whole catchment and whole shoreline approach.
- Stakeholders involved at all levels of risk management
- A better balance between the three pillars of sustainable development (economic, social and environmental) in our risk management activities.
- A risk-driven holistic approach.

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Science & Environment

Sea surrender plan to ease flood fears on south coast

By Matt McGrath
Environment correspondent, BBC News

4 November 2013 | Science & Environment



A stretch of coast is being returned to the sea to prevent future flooding, as Matt McGrath reports

Top Stories

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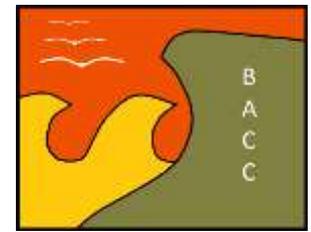
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England Regions Somerset

Somerset floods crisis: How the story unfolded

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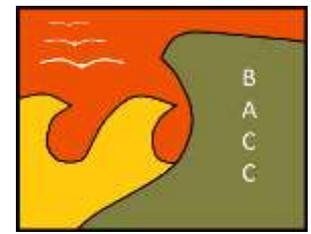
Large parts of the Somerset Levels spent much of the winter of 2013-14 under water.

Villages were isolated, homes evacuated, the farming community in disarray and the bad weather relentless.

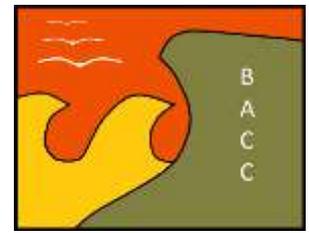
BBC News looks at how the area's flooding crisis unfolded.



Location map

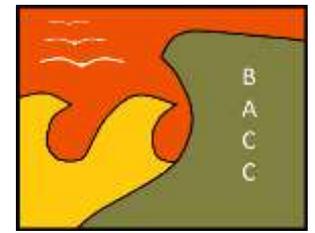


Headline figures



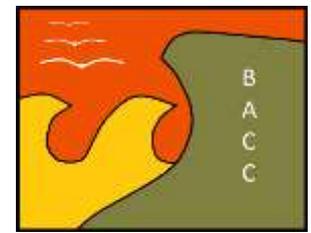
- 6,500 ha of land (~16,000 acres) of land flooded.
- Villages of North Moor, Salt Moor, Fordgate and Moorland affected (approximately 150 properties).
- About 40 properties actually flooded but many more people's lives significantly disrupted.

A knee-jerk political reaction



- Eric Pickles (Secretary of State) 09/02/14
“We made a mistake, there’s no doubt about that, we perhaps **relied too much on the Environment Agency’s advice**. I’ll apologise, I apologise unreservedly and I’m really sorry we took the advice of what we thought we were dealing with experts,”

The solution



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England Regions **Somerset**

Somerset Levels dredging 'making a real difference'

24 March 2016 · Somerset



Dredging took place on the Somerset Levels along the rivers Tone and Parrett at a cost of £6m.

Dredging on the Somerset Levels has made a "real difference" in preventing flooding, a campaign group has claimed.

Last year, the Environment Agency dredged five miles (8 km) of the rivers Parrett and Tone at a cost of £6m.

As a result, the river Parrett levels in Langport this winter dropped much faster than in previous years, the Levels and Moors Taskforce said.

But, academics have said other action is needed like sluice gates to stop silt from coastal tides building up.

Professor of water engineering, Roger Falconer from Cardiff University suggested a sluice gate being installed at Moorland would be effective.

Top Stories

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Footage emerges of migrants being thrown bags of food at a Hungarian camp near the border with Serbia, and criticism over their treatment.
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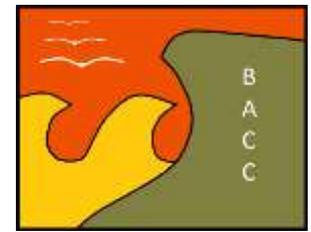
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Features

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A subscriber's lessons for living in a habitable

Was this the right decision?



- **Yes** – it provided short-term political respite.
- **No** – prior to the floods, the cost-benefit assessment for the dredging varied between 0.8 to 1 and 1.4 to 1. i.e. It was not economically viable.

IMPLICATIONS

- Cost £6m.
- Will have to be regularly repeated.
- Deflected funding away from places more deserving cases.

A Dutch solution?



- The British public think that the Dutch solution is dredging, bigger pumps and bigger sea walls. Yet it is much more.
- In particular, it makes provision for periodic flooding of indefensible lands – as with the Somerset levels!

Home / News & Events / News / British media 'inundates' Holland in search for latest flood...

News

British media 'inundates' Holland in search for latest flood protection measures

Posted on 5 February 2014

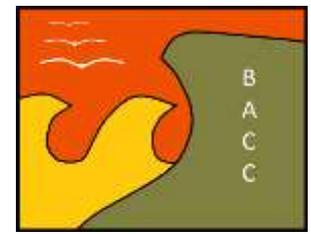


Several British media crews visited the Netherlands in the last couple of days, looking for innovative flood protection measures.

The media coverage is a result of recent flooding of the Somerset Levels in South West England.

Large parts of this low level coastal plain flooded early January because of excessive rain fall and several extreme high tides at sea. Some 45 square kilometres of land are under water for over a month now.

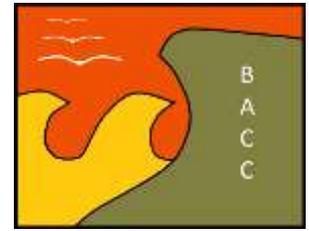
Negative publicity



- The pro-dredging lobby highlighted the costs of managed realignment and reinforced the idea that it was solely needed for wildlife conservation.

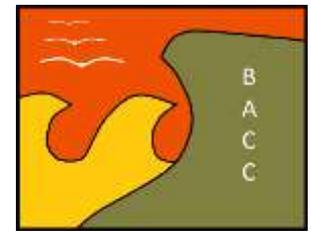
The screenshot shows a news article on the Guardian website. The article is titled "£20m salt marsh to create wildlife habitat and fight erosion from sea" and is categorized under "Flooding". The author is Steven Morris, and it was published on Monday 5 September 2016 at 11:58 BST. The article features a photograph of a salt marsh at sunset. The text of the article is partially visible, mentioning that the Somerset scheme is set to absorb high tides and waves but critics say money should have gone on flood defences for residents. A small caption below the photo states: "The salt marsh is designed to protect local communities from erosion. Photograph: WWF".

The lessons



- There is limited public understanding of flooding – why it happens, when it happens and what can be done to prevent it.
- Eric Pickles was not properly briefed and, perhaps naively, accepted the arguments made by campaigners who pushed for dredging.
- Major events can seriously undermine long-established strategies.

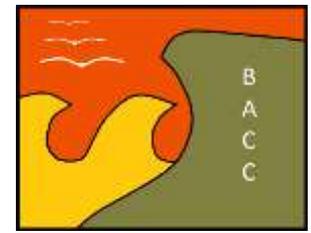
Implications for realignments



- Considerable negative publicity.
- Reinforced public antipathy towards realignment.
- Loss of political support for realignment.

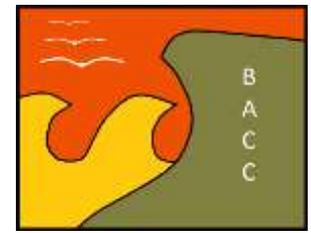


What is the problem?



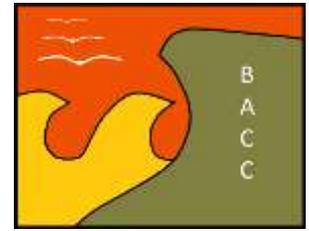
- The implications of sea level rise and increased storminess are poorly understood.
- The major advocates of managed realignment are wildlife bodies.
- The main driver for this 'habitat creation' is the 'Habitats Directive'.
- The profile of messages about coastal resilience are not given sufficient profile.
- Wildlife is very low on the list of priorities.

A paradigm change?



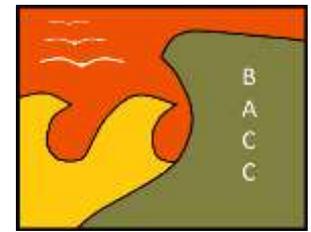
- Needs a re-think on why-where to realign the coast.
- Should the priority be immediate relevant habitat creation?
- Should soft engineering focus much more on the hydraulic benefits of realignment? In which case the locations might need to change.

Advocacy



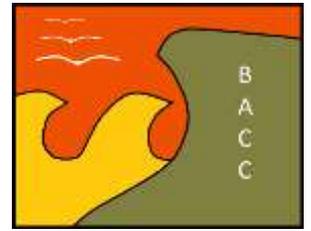
- The essential message must be about adaptation in the face of rising sea levels.
- The linkage to climate change is not helpful – a majority of the population does not believe in climate change.
- A narrative that will convince the sceptics is needed.

Education



- Television? The programme 'Coast' has been immensely successful, but it has as yet missed the opportunity to look at coastal processes in a meaningful way.
- Positive advocacy of realignments to improve resilience to flood risk. A role for consultancies as well as Government agencies.
- Training programmes for politicians – lack of CPD on critical strategic issues.

Food for thought!



Thank you for listening