

SLOUGH LOCAL ACCESS FORUM – 10<sup>TH</sup> SEPT 2009

**REPORT ON: DEFRA CONSULTATION ON COASTAL CHANGE POLICY AND NATURAL ENGLAND'S COASTAL PATHS AUDIT REPORT.**

**1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

To inform members about the above consultation sent to LAFs nationally and the coastal paths audit report.

**1. Coastal Change Policy**

1.1. On 11<sup>th</sup> August, Jacqui Wheeler and Margery Hitchman met to look through the Consultation on Coastal Change to highlight anything of relevance or interest to Slough Local Access Forum.

1.2 The document is 50 pages long and sets out Defra's ideas on how coastal communities can successfully adapt to the impacts of coastal change and the Government's role in supporting this.

“The Government is committed to effective management of flood and coastal erosion risk. They will defend where it is sustainable and affordable to do so. However, there will be some locations where it is not sustainable or desirable to either build new defence structures or maintain existing ones.”

1.3 The section on the Natural and Historic environment describes the importance of sustaining and enhancing the natural environment and enabling access and appreciation of it for all. Section 5.38 states:

“Natural England is working with others to develop ways of managing the coast that maintain and improve its ecological interest, amenity and landscape value while allowing for the inevitable and essential changes that coastal change brings. This includes ensuring that the Government's coastal access initiative is delivered in practical ways which allow the coastal access corridor to roll back as the coast erodes.”

1.4 The document asks for examples of good practice and ideas for coastal community involvement and consultation.

1.5 Slough Local Access Forum agrees with the Government's commitment as explained, however it is felt that the consultation is aimed mainly at coastal communities and LAFs in those areas.

**2. Coastal Paths Audit Report**

2.1 Natural England has worked with 53 coastal access authorities to complete a desk based audit of 4,422km (2748 miles) of English

coastline. This audit provides an indication of the current extent of a satisfactory, legally-secure coastal path and where there are gaps in such a satisfactory, legally-secure coastal path.

- 2.2 It shows that 66% of the coast currently has a satisfactory, legally-secure path along the coast. Of the remaining 34%, 48% has no path at all, whilst the rest is a mixture of permissive or de facto situations.
- 2.3 The findings of this national audit have been published by Natural England to show how much works will be needed once the Marine Bill provisions become law.
- 2.4 See extract below of Coastal Paths Audit Report showing the situation in the South East, which is similar to most other regions.

Coastal access: an audit of coastal paths in England 2008-09

The scale of the map limits the detail that can be displayed. Some shorter sections on the coast will not be evident.

