

EA - North Edge Box 4



ENVIRONMENT AGENCY

# Planning For The Rising Tides



THE HUMBER ESTUARY

**CONSULTATION ON MANAGED REALIGNMENT:  
INFORMATION FOR LANDOWNERS AND TENANTS**

June 2002



A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE FOR THE HUMBER ESTUARY

EA  
North East



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## MESSAGE FROM SIR JOHN HARMAN



Our work on the Humber is now reaching the point where we will shortly be making decisions about how we shall manage the estuary's flood defences for the next 50 years. These decisions will have major impacts on people living beside the estuary, particularly those with land near the defences. It is vitally important that we get them right, not only because of the effect on these people but also because we are setting a precedent that I hope will be followed everywhere else in the country where we are faced with similar issues.

This consultation with landowners and tenants is a crucial part of the decision-making process. I therefore urge you all to think carefully about what we say in this leaflet, ask us if you need any further information and tell us how you feel about our proposals. In this way you will help create a strategy that allows us to manage future flood risks as efficiently and effectively as possible while taking full account of the effect we will have on the local community.

The Humber Estuary is hugely important, both in economic and environmental terms. We must work as far as we can with, rather than against, the powerful forces operating within it. We now have a sound understanding of how the estuary is likely to develop in the future and are using this to work out how we can protect what needs to be protected while making best use of our resources and keeping the estuary's most important features intact. I am very pleased to see the progress that has been made and look forward to the day when we can move on from planning to doing.

My best wishes to you all.

**Sir John Harman**  
*Chairman, Environment Agency*



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## 1. WHAT IS THE AGENCY DOING

The Environment Agency is developing a long-term strategy for managing the flood defences surrounding the Humber Estuary, including the lower reaches of the tidal Ouse and Trent. Our initial findings were published in September 2000 in the *Humber Estuary Shoreline Management Plan*. The plan describes the issues we face, including the effects of sea level rise relative to the land, and sets out our proposed actions to address them.

The plan stresses the importance of keeping a system of defences around the estuary to protect the large number of people, the extensive commercial and industrial facilities and the large area of very productive agricultural land at risk from flooding. Beside much of the estuary the best approach is to keep the defences where they are now, even though this will lead to the loss of valuable wildlife habitat as sea levels rise. Moving the defences back in some places will however help to make the overall system more 'sustainable' – making the defences longer-lasting and providing more effective protection. *We are therefore looking for sites where we can move the defences and, as a result, both improve the estuary's defence system and provide new habitat to compensate for the predicted losses.*

We have drawn up a short-list of sites in different parts of the estuary that we believe are potentially suitable for this purpose. This is given in the table opposite and the sites are shown on the map in the middle of this leaflet. We understand you own or lease land in one of these sites and a more detailed map of this site is enclosed with the leaflet and covering letter.

Our next step is to find out more about each of the short-listed sites. *A key part of doing this is to contact all the owners and occupiers so we can discuss how you might be affected and whether you are interested in making land available to us, either by selling it or in some other way.*

### OUR SITE SELECTION APPROACH

When we started looking for possible setback sites we realised we would need to consider a wide range of potential impacts as we made our choice. In drawing up the shortlist we assessed each site's size and position in the estuary together with:-

### Shortlist of possible setback sites

<b>Outer estuary</b> (seaward of Hawkins Point/Grimsby)	
Site 1	339 ha
Site 2	372ha
Site S12	102 ha
<b>Middle estuary</b> (Hawkins Point/Grimsby to Humber Bridge)	
Site 3	146 ha
Site 4	98 ha
Site S11	95 ha
<b>Inner estuary</b> (Humber Bridge to Trent Falls)	
Site S9	390 ha
Site S10	93 ha
<b>Rivers</b> (Ouse and Trent combined)	
Site S5	116 ha
Site S6	81 ha
Site S7	42 ha
Site S8	334 ha
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2208 ha</b>

- the potential improvement to the estuary's defence system;
- impacts on owners, occupiers and the local community;
- the presence of homes, properties and industrial sites;
- important roads, railway lines and other facilities;
- features of historic or wildlife value;
- effects on estuary processes;
- area and quality of new habitat created;
- engineering feasibility; and
- likely costs.

*At this stage we have deliberately included more land than we think we are likely to require as we need to look at each site in some detail before we can decide which ones will provide the benefits we are looking for.* This will give us flexibility, so that if these detailed studies show that some of the sites are less suitable than others, we shall not need to look at them any further. It will also help us decide in





what order we should implement the schemes that are selected and when we are likely to need the land to be available. *We anticipate that we will eventually select approximately 1,000 hectares of land from this initial list.*

More information about the overall strategy and about the implications of setting back the defences at a site is given in the rest of this leaflet. It is not a completely new approach, but it has not yet been attempted at the scale we are proposing. A number of schemes have been carried out previously in other estuaries and we are currently undertaking one involving some 80 hectares of land at Thorngumbald, just east of Hull. We are also involved in a much larger scheme covering about 400 ha of land at Alkborough, near Trent Falls, which is one of the sites included on the shortlist.

## 2. WHY IS THERE A NEED FOR ACTION?

The main findings of the project are summarised below and set out in more detail in the Humber Estuary Shoreline Management Plan. Additional information is contained in the reference documents listed on page 14. Copies of these documents can be obtained from Philip Winn at the address on page 13.

### THE ESTUARY

The Humber is one of the country's main estuaries and drains more than one fifth of England's land area. Nearly 90,000 hectares of land around the estuary lies below the level of the highest tides and, although it is protected by defences, this 'flood plain' is still vulnerable to flooding during extreme tidal events. Most of this land is farmed and is amongst the most productive in the country. Over 300,000 people live on the flood plain. There is also much industry and commerce, and the area is historically important. The Humber has the country's largest ports complex, which with the associated industry, is of vital importance to the economy.

The Humber is also of international importance for nature conservation and is among the 10 most important European estuaries for wildfowl and wading birds. As a result there are legal safeguards preventing development that would affect the conservation value unless it is of over-riding public importance.

### THE CHALLENGE

The floodwalls and earth embankments around the Humber are generally in reasonable condition, although works are needed to maintain and repair them, to counter erosion and to increase the standard of protection. New inter-tidal habitat must be provided if these defence improvement works are likely to affect areas of high conservation value.

The standard of flood defence will reduce as sea levels rise. The predictions are that the average rate of rise over the next 50 years may be about six millimetres per year or about three times the rate measured over the last 100 years. This means sea levels will be 300 millimetres higher in 2050 than now, leading to a much higher risk of flooding. Furthermore, our studies indicate that the rise in sea levels will change the balance of erosion and accretion in the estuary, causing increased erosion in some places that may threaten the stability of the defences locally.

The studies also suggest that if sea levels rise as expected, about 450 hectares of inter-tidal habitat of outstanding value for wildlife will be lost through a process called 'coastal squeeze'. There is some uncertainty about this figure, however, partly because the modelling cannot give exact answers and partly because we cannot be sure what will happen in the future. We are therefore allowing for a loss of 850 hectares, which will have to be replaced if the estuary's conservation value is not to be affected.

### THE STRATEGY

The strategy set out in the *Humber Estuary Shoreline Management Plan* aims to provide a system of defences that gives protection where it is needed, looks after the area's important features and, overall, is more manageable than it would be if things stayed as they are. The strategy recognises the need to maintain the existing line around the major population and commercial centres of Hull, Grimsby and Cleethorpes. It also accepts that for the time being the same approach is appropriate between Grimsby and North Killingholme because of the extensive industrial development in the area even though the foreshore is rapidly eroding. In the longer-term, raising the defences along these lengths, and throughout much of the rest of the estuary, will be the best means for countering the effects of sea level rise and maintaining a good standard of protection.





Raising the defences is not necessarily the best approach everywhere however. Where they are threatened by erosion or could be exposed to large waves, for example, moving them away from the shoreline may make them longer-lasting and less expensive to maintain in the future. Shortening the length of the defence line can have the same effect, while our studies show that moving the line beside the River Ouse or the River Trent could lead to lower water levels during an extreme event. Provided all other impacts are acceptable, these results will deliver better value for money than leaving the defences where they are.

Accordingly, the plan recommends that opportunities for re-aligning the defences be sought wherever this might:-

- reduce the threat of erosion affecting their stability;
- lower extreme high water levels;
- create habitat to offset losses resulting from schemes or rising sea levels; and
- deliver better value for money.

We believe that, in strategic terms, the sites on the short-list offer the best opportunities for achieving these aims. They are not the only sites in the estuary where setting back the defences may be the best option; this option will need to be considered when a long-term strategy for defending the Easington and Kilnsea area is developed, for example. However setting back at such sites is unlikely to have a major impact on the rest of the estuary, either because of their size or their location, and therefore can be assessed simply on the basis of local considerations.

*The Shoreline Management Plan provides the broad strategy. We are now developing this strategy through technical studies and consultation with those involved. By the middle of 2003 we aim to have agreed where managed realignment will take place. We will then issue a refined Shoreline Management Plan setting out the long-term programme for investing in the Humber defences.*

### 3. WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

#### IN THE NEXT FEW MONTHS

This information leaflet is being sent to all the owners and occupiers of land lying within the short-listed potential setback sites. Over the next four to five months we aim to:-

- confirm that we have correctly identified and sent information packs to all those who might be affected;
- advise on where and how additional information and advice can be obtained;
- answer questions about the site selection process or any related issues that may arise;
- find out what impact setting back at the potential site is likely to have on those directly affected and help to identify opportunities that may arise; and
- open discussions to find out how a setback scheme at the site might be implemented.

At the same time we will continue the technical studies that will provide the more detailed information needed to make the final choice of sites. We will also prepare outline cost estimates and assess the impacts on the environment and the local community.

*During this period we wish to talk with you about your interests in the land and to fully explain our ambitions. By the autumn of this year we hope you will be in a position to have decided if you would be prepared to proceed into more detailed negotiations regarding those interests, if yours is one of the selected sites.*

#### IN THE NEXT 12 TO 18 MONTHS

*We will write to you again in the autumn of this year to update you on the progress we have made, to let you know if any sites have dropped from the list and to ask for your views on our proposals. We will then carry out our final review of the sites and select which ones we believe should be implemented. Once this has happened we will begin more detailed negotiations with the owners and users of those sites.*





During this period we will also work on the other aspects of the long-term plan that need to be addressed. These will be drawn together to produce a refined Shoreline Management Plan that will, among other things, summarise the likely need to set back the defences on strategic grounds during the next 50 years. It will identify the areas where realignment will take place, set out the other necessary non-setback defence improvements and provide a phased programme for implementing these schemes. The programme will define the order in which the setback schemes should take place and our best estimate, on the basis of current knowledge, of when each one should happen.

This refined plan will be circulated for consultation in the same way as the original plan, probably in mid-2003. The Coastal Habitats Management Plan covering the areas protected under the Habitats Regulations will also be refined and published at the same time.

## OVER THE NEXT FEW YEARS

We plan to begin implementing some of the setback sites fairly soon after the revised plan is published. Work on the other sites will be programmed to occur later, with the timing depending on the results of the early schemes and the observed rate of sea level rise and erosion at key points in the estuary. It will also of course depend on land availability. We will not necessarily be anxious to buy all of the sites we are interested in immediately – in some instances, if it suits both landowners and the Agency, purchase could be delayed for many years. In all cases we will keep in close contact with everybody involved.

If you own land in one of the sites finally selected for setback, we will want you to be able to make your own arrangements with our support, including obtaining any professional advice or assistance you may need, in good time and so minimise any unnecessary delays.

*We expect to begin buying land in 2004/2005.*

We will need to go through our normal project approval procedures for each scheme and undertake the detailed design. As part of this process we will finalise how the site will be developed after the setback has taken place and will welcome a strong involvement with the present landowners and occupiers, if they so wish. The type of opportunities that might arise, based on experience with other similar schemes, are discussed in the next section.

A wide variety of organisations and interests have been connected with the early preparation of the Shoreline Management Plan. These have included the local authorities, parish councils, Yorkshire Forward, the Humber Forum, English Nature, English Heritage, the Countryside Agency, Wildlife Trusts and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, industrial and agricultural interests. All of them will continue to work with us as the project moves into the implementation stage.

*Scheme construction work is likely to start around 2006/2007.*

## IN THE LONG TERM

*The Shoreline Management Plan aims to ensure we meet the changes that are taking place so we can continue to provide effective flood defences well into the future. In the current process we are looking to identify the strategic or large-scale managed realignment sites needed for at least the next 30 years, and possibly for the 50 year period we are ideally aiming for. In addition we may have to acquire relatively small areas of land for individual flood defence schemes. There are also possibilities that other organisations will be looking for land, for example to create nature reserves or to offset losses of inter-tidal habitat caused by port extensions or other development.*

We will monitor the new setback sites and continue to monitor the estuary generally to keep track of the changes that take place. The plan and the programme of work it contains will be reviewed every 5 years, making use of the information gained in the intervening period and taking into account any social, economic or other changes that may have occurred. In particular we will look for confirmation that the rate of sea level rise, on which the plan is based, is within the range expected.













## 4. HOW MIGHT YOU BE AFFECTED?

*You may be anticipating that the Agency is interested only in buying the land it needs to carry out its work. Purchase is one option, but there are others as well.*

This section discusses how you might be affected as a landowner or tenant if the proposed setback goes ahead and what you could do afterwards. We cannot be too specific, as the details will vary from site to site. We suggest you discuss any points you are concerned about with the contact officer for your area.



*Frontage at Thorngumbald*

### WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO THE LAND

Once the defences at a site have been re-aligned the land that is no longer defended will flood more frequently than it did before. What will happen to this land will depend mainly on its location in the estuary (whether it is close to the mouth or further inland towards the head) and on how frequently it is flooded. The latter will be controlled largely by the local ground levels and by the setback design, in particular the dimensions of the breach in the existing bank that will connect the site to the estuary. The subsequent site management will also have an effect, although it is more likely to influence the speed at which any changes will take place rather than the final site characteristics.

Sites in the main estuary will generally be designed to flood regularly. The lower areas of these sites will flood relatively frequently and so will tend to develop as mudflats. The higher areas (generally above Mean High Water) will tend to develop as saltmarsh in the estuary seaward of the Humber Bridge and as grassland or reedbed in the inner estuary.

Sites in the rivers may also be designed to flood regularly and so provide new inter-tidal habitats. Some of them, however, may be designed to flood only during major events and remain dry at other times. In this way they will provide flood storage during these events, to help to reduce flood levels in the river nearby but will not develop into inter-tidal habitats.

Many issues will need to be addressed during the evaluation and design of any of the setback schemes. These include:-

- the effect on the drainage of the surrounding area
- access arrangements for both the public along roads, footpaths or bridleways, and agricultural or commercial access to land or property that could be isolated by the site.
- the likely rate of sediment accumulation within the sites, which will be different at different points in the estuary.

### HOW YOU MIGHT KEEP AN INTEREST IN THE LAND

*We are assuming that the Environment Agency will generally buy the land where managed realignment will take place. You may wish to keep your current interest in the land, however, and there are a number of ways we could arrange this, including:-*

- *buying the land and leasing it back;*
- *paying the loss in value of the land taking the change of use into account;*
- *buying an easement to flood; or*
- *buying an option on the land to keep it available for setback in the future.*

We will be as flexible as we can in this, subject to the rules we have to follow.





## WHAT YOU COULD DO IF YOU DECIDE TO KEEP YOUR CURRENT INTEREST IN THE LAND

On sites designed to flood regularly you may be able to graze the land extensively if it is high enough to support saltmarsh or grassland and the stock are accustomed to grazing areas liable to regular flooding. You will only be able to store materials and equipment on the land or in

buildings if they can withstand regular flooding, except where the natural ground level is well above the normal tide level (and in practice is above the level of the existing banks). There may be opportunities for recreation or tourism, including wildfowling, bird watching or horse-riding. Our experience at Alkborough is that the local community identified more than 20 potential business opportunities arising from the proposal to set back the defences.

There is potential for funding and other support from various agri-environment schemes including Countryside Stewardship, run by the Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA). Stewardship includes a variety of schemes such as re-creation of saltmarsh and grazing payments or grants that could apply to setback sites. Other possibilities include Rural Enterprise or Vocational Training schemes and support from European Structural Fund programmes such as the Objective 2 and Single Regeneration Budget. Applications to European programmes are more likely to be successful if they are made in partnership with others (possibly including nature conservation organisations) so that a comprehensive package can be put together.

In the areas that would flood quite rarely, it may be possible to continue arable farming or intensive grazing and accept the occasional losses. This raises the possibility that other grants may be available, from DEFRA or elsewhere, such as the Countryside Stewardship schemes aimed at water level and crop management for nature conservation, the Organic Farming Conversion scheme and the England Rural Development Programme.

We will provide whatever assistance we can both in identifying these opportunities and in implementing them.



Setback site at  
Thornthorpe





## 5. WHAT ARE THE LAND PURCHASE ARRANGEMENTS?

In September 2001 DEFRA published a consultation document that sets out the Government's current position on the use of land purchase when existing flood defences are re-aligned (available on the DEFRA website - [www.defra.gov.uk](http://www.defra.gov.uk)). The document suggests land may be purchased where:-

- the work involved is justified because of the flood defence benefits that will result; or
- it is the most cost-effective way of providing new habitat to compensate for losses due to flood defence works.

The setback sites we select will fall into one or other of these categories so we expect to be able to buy the land needed to deliver our proposals.

We should point out that we will only be able to do this because we will be positively managing the process of setting back the defences to achieve a specific outcome. If the defences stay where they are then, unless they are maintained, they will deteriorate and eventually fail. No compensation would be available for any flood damage or loss of land in these circumstances. This is because under current legislation nobody, in general, has a right to be protected from flooding and so cannot expect to be compensated if the defences providing this protection are not maintained.

*The amount we can pay for any land we buy will be assessed under the Land Compensation Acts. These lay down guidelines covering both property owners (including landowners) and tenants which are aimed at ensuring that they are neither penalised by the process nor profit from it. Factors that will be taken into account when making the assessment include:-*

- the quality and current use of the land
- its likely use after setback has taken place
- any losses that may arise due to this change of use
- the significance of this change of use to the overall viability of the owner/occupier's commercial activities

We will be happy to help clarify the possible impact of our proposals on your land and activities. We want to work with everybody who might be affected and where possible agree on the package that is right for them. In doing this we will bear in mind the need to use public money appropriately and to be consistent in our treatment of all those who are affected.

*We will always prefer to proceed with the agreement of the people who will be affected by our final set back proposals and will try hard to achieve this. Where landowners are fundamentally opposed to our plans we will seek an alternative site that is equally effective. If we cannot find one we may need to fall back on the powers of compulsory purchase we have under the Water Resources Act 1991.*

We recognise that if we resort to compulsory purchase there may be a public inquiry and that the way sites have been selected may be subject to scrutiny. We have therefore adopted a straightforward and even-handed process involving the following steps:-

- the identification of areas around the estuary where setback would be inappropriate, either because of the property or infrastructure that would be affected or for some other reason;
- the selection of a long list of potential sites in the remaining areas around the estuary; and
- the screening of this long list to provide the short list of potential sites given in this leaflet.

Further details about the approach, the reasons why the short-listed sites were selected and the DEFRA compensation guidance can be obtained from the contact officers for the relevant sites.





## CONTACT ARRANGEMENTS

### GENERAL ENQUIRIES

Further general information about this document, about the Humber Estuary Shoreline Management Plan and any related issues can be obtained from the Project Executive, Philip Winn, or the Project Manager, Richard Young, at the following address:-

Environment Agency, Phoenix House,  
Global Avenue, Leeds LS11 8PG

Philip Winn  
Telephone: 0113 2134792  
e-mail: philip.winn@environment-agency.gov.uk

Richard Young  
Telephone: 01342 835365  
e-mail: youngr@ryeconsult.demon.co.uk

### SITE-SPECIFIC ENQUIRIES

Detailed enquiries about specific sites (by owners, occupiers, their agents or others with a direct interest only, please) should be directed initially to our Humber Estuary Setback Site Team at the address given below. All contacts will be logged and the details forwarded to the appropriate contact officer who will get in touch as soon as possible, preferably by telephone but by e-mail or letter if no telephone number has been given or if there is no reply when a call is made. If you have not heard within 48 hours of making a telephone or e-mail contact please get in touch again.

Humber Estuary Setback Site Team  
Environment Agency, Phoenix House,  
Global Avenue, Leeds LS11 8PG

Telephone: **0845 1220560**  
e-mail: humber.project@environment-agency.gov.uk

#### Contact Officers

Sites S1 to S4	Graham Wilson (Willerby Office)
Sites S5, S10	Chris Owens (Leeds Office)
Site S6	Keith Slaney (Leeds Office)
Sites S7, S8	Bill Tyas (Gainsborough Office)
Site S9	John Pygott (Leeds Office)
Sites S11, S12	Chris Noble (Manby Office)



Humber Bridge





## Reference Documents

Humber Estuary Management Strategy, HEMS Partnership, 1997

Lincolnshire Shoreline Management Plan, Environment Agency, 1997

Humber Estuary Action Plan, Environment Agency, 1998

Humber Estuary Coastal Authorities Group (HECAG) Shoreline Management Plan, East Riding of Yorkshire Council, 1998

Humber Estuary Environmental Baseline Study, Environment Agency, 1999

Humber Estuary Geomorphology Review, Environment Agency, 1999

Humber Estuary Shoreline Management Plan **Planning for the Rising Tides** A Strategy for Flood Defence, Environment Agency, April 1999

Humber Estuary Shoreline Management Plan **Habitat Migration Study**, Environment Agency, August 1999

Humber Estuary Shoreline Management Plan **Planning for the Rising Tides** Options Consultation Document, Environment Agency, November 1999

Humber Estuary State of the Environment Report, Environment Agency, 1999

Humber Tidal Database Joint Probability Analysis of Large Waves and High Water Levels Environment Agency, 1999

Humber Estuary Geomorphological Studies - Stage 2, Final Report, Environment Agency, 2000

Humber Estuary Shoreline Management Plan "Planning for the Rising Tides" Shoreline Management Plan, Environment Agency, September 2000

Humber Estuary Shoreline Management Plan **Historic Environment Baseline Study**, Environment Agency, March 2001

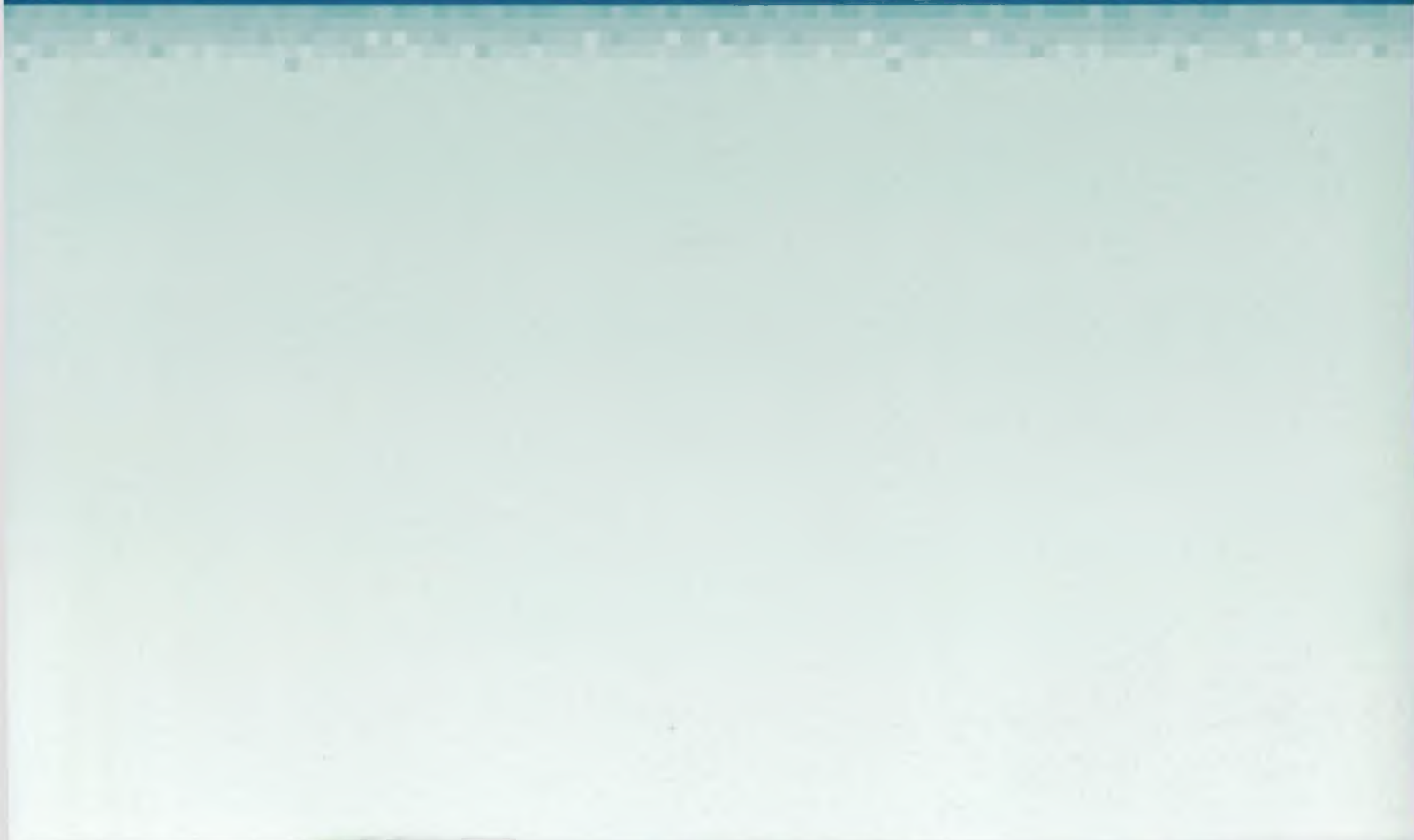
Humber Estuary Shoreline Management Plan **Coastal Habitat Management Plan**, Environment Agency, April 2001

Humber Newsletter "TidesNews 1", Environment Agency, July 2001

Humber Newsletter "TidesNews 2", Environment Agency, December 2001







*Orplands setback site*





## CONTACTS:

### THE ENVIRONMENT AGENCY HEAD OFFICE

Rio House, Waterside Drive, Aztec West, Almondsbury, Bristol BS32 4UD.  
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[www.environment-agency.gov.uk](http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk)  
[www.environment-agency.wales.gov.uk](http://www.environment-agency.wales.gov.uk)

### ENVIRONMENT AGENCY REGIONAL OFFICES

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Guildbourne House  
Chatsworth Road  
Worthing  
West Sussex BN11 1LD  
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Fax: 01903 821 832

#### MIDLANDS

Sapphire East  
550 Streetsbrook Road  
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Fax: 0121 711 5824

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