

## The Future

The Agency is spending over £5million every year maintaining and improving flood defences along the coast. It has also made considerable improvements to its flood warning capabilities with over 15,000 residents in Sussex signed up to receive automated flood warning by telephone.

However, the concern remains that while inland Sussex at places such as Lewes, Uckfield and Robertsbridge suffered severe river flooding during the winter of 2000/01 coastal communities may not fully appreciate the potential risk they also face.

While the Agency is continuously striving to bring its sea defences in Sussex up to the highest possible standards obtaining the necessary funding remains a struggle. Unless the community at large recognises the risk and supports the Agency in its work one large storm could cause devastation and loss of life not seen in this country since the Second World War.



Environment Agency Sussex by the Sea

*"God gives all men all earth to love,  
But, since man's heart is small,  
Ordains for each one spot shall prove  
Beloved over all.*

*Each to his choice, and I rejoice  
The lot has fallen to me  
In a fair ground in a fair ground  
Yea, Sussex by the sea!"*



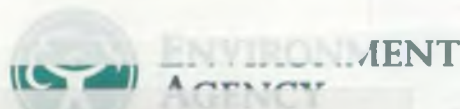
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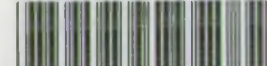
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Sussex by the Sea



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**ANNUAL COASTAL FLOOD DEFENCE COSTS £5MILLION**

<b>Sussex</b>	
Agency tidal defences	173km
Agency Sea defences	45km
Total Sussex coastline	145km
Properties at risk	85,000

**Selsey**

Area of risk (Ha)	1200
Population at risk	200
Property at risk	80
Cost	£3.1m

**Felpham**

Area of risk (Ha)	0.50
Population at risk	480
Property at risk	212
Cost	£3.2m

**Elmer**

Area of risk (Ha)	1
Population at risk	370
Property at risk	151
Cost	£5.7m

**Shoreham and Lancing**

Area of risk (Ha)	190
Population at risk	2800
Property at risk	1165
Cost	£14m

**Seaford Beach Renourishment**

Area of risk (Ha)	60
Population at risk	1040
Property at risk	414
Cost	£1.6m

**Pevensey Bay**

Area of risk (Ha)	5000
Population at risk	5200
Property at risk	2600
Cost	£33.2m

**Bulverhythe Sea Defences**

Area of risk (Ha)	550
Population at risk	1000
Property at risk	400
Cost	£2.7m



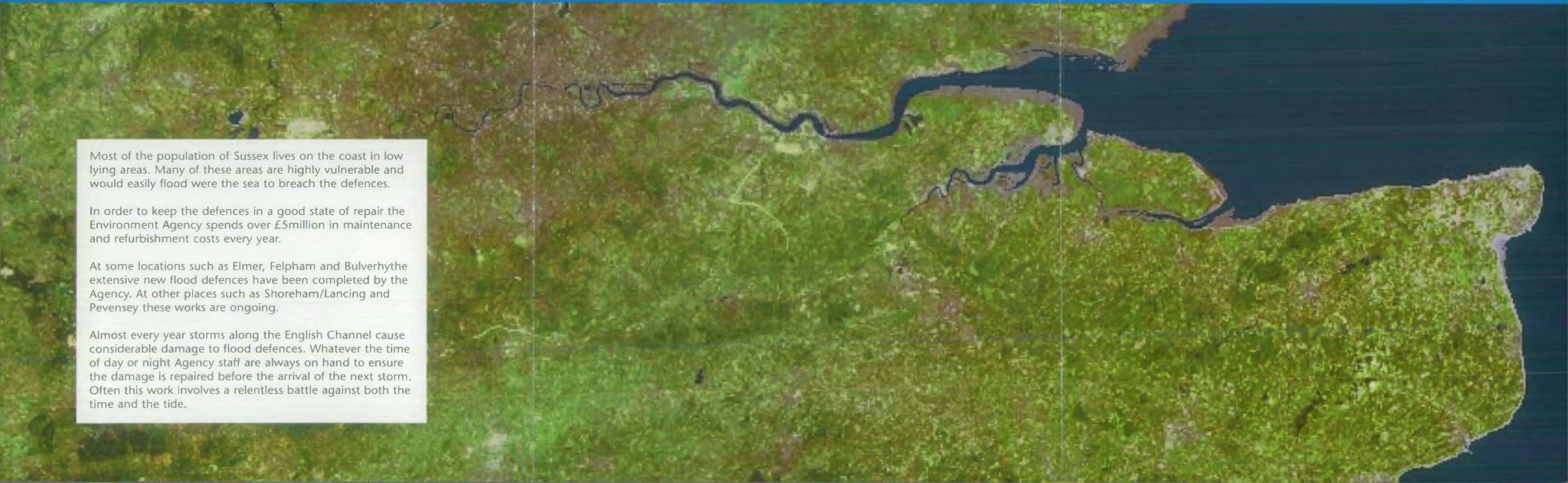
# Sussex by the Sea

Most of the population of Sussex lives on the coast in low lying areas. Many of these areas are highly vulnerable and would easily flood were the sea to breach the defences.

In order to keep the defences in a good state of repair the Environment Agency spends over £5million in maintenance and refurbishment costs every year.

At some locations such as Elmer, Felpham and Bulverhythe extensive new flood defences have been completed by the Agency. At other places such as Shoreham/Lancing and Pevensey these works are ongoing.

Almost every year storms along the English Channel cause considerable damage to flood defences. Whatever the time of day or night Agency staff are always on hand to ensure the damage is repaired before the arrival of the next storm. Often this work involves a relentless battle against both the time and the tide.





## Sussex by the Sea



In the eighteenth century, long before Kipling wrote his famous poem "Sussex by the Sea", the Prince Regent made living on the Sussex coast fashionable. He was able to live in a Palace which today is known as Brighton's Royal Pavilion. Many of today's seaside towns and villages began life as wooden shacks or converted railway carriages perched precariously on beaches and were homes for Londoners fleeing the smog for the fresh sea air.

Most of the wooden shacks have now disappeared and in their place are thousands of modern homes. Because their development began before modern planning controls were in place many are built on coastal flood plains and some are even on the top of natural sea defences.

A very high proportion are occupied by pensioners who would be particularly vulnerable if there were to be a breach in the sea defences.

The Agency alone maintains 45km of sea defences along the coast with local authorities responsible for a further 100km. Most were originally constructed by the Victorians but many are coming to the end of their natural life. In addition climate change and increased storminess is putting further pressure on the defences.

## The Threat

The vulnerability of these defences and those that live behind them was graphically illustrated on the night of Christmas Eve 1999 when a severe storm swept up the English Channel. Homes were evacuated in Pevensey and Selsey as Agency experts tracked the path and severity of the storm. Just two hours before it was due to hit the storm veered to the South and swept through France where it killed 90 people and brought down 450 million trees. This compares with the 15 million trees felled by the "Hurricane" of 1987. Had the storm hit the Sussex coast it is highly likely there would have been dozens of deaths as the sea flooded several miles inland at several locations.



Although this storm was potentially the worse there have been several others along the Sussex coast in the past decade. During some of them over 100,000 tonnes of shingle was washed from beaches at Selsey and Pevensey during a single night.

The last storm when there was a widespread breach of coastal defences was as far back as 1910. Since that time there has been a great deal of development along the Sussex coast and statistically a storm of the severity of the 1910 experience is overdue. The potential for large scale loss of life and billions of pounds worth of damage remains and climate change may be adding to and increasing the risk.

## The Agency's Sea Defences

Along the whole of the Sussex coastline the Agency together with its local authority partners maintains a complex network of flood defences.

These defences protect the homes of 85,000 people and billions of pounds worth of property.

At Pevensey for example over 5,000 people in 2,600 homes are at risk from the sea. Further along the coast at Shoreham a further 3,000 people and 1,000 properties are at risk. At both of these locations as elsewhere in Sussex the Agency has an ongoing programme for the repair and replacement of the defences. A severe storm of the magnitude of the one seen in the Channel in 1999 could overwhelm even the best defences with catastrophic consequences.

