

For immediate release
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Great Yarmouth Borough Council's new initiative to help people adapt to coastal erosion in Hemsby

Great Yarmouth Borough Council has secured Government funding to develop a plan to help people whose homes are threatened by coastal erosion in Hemsby.

After agreeing a coastal adaptation policy last year, the council has now secured more than £1.6 million to develop innovative coastal adaptation plans for Hemsby and Winterton.

If approved by Cabinet at a meeting next week, the council would become the accountable body for the funding and associated work and the money will be used to create an adaption approach that enables people living in homes most threatened by erosion to relocate away from the immediate areas most at risk.

In what is seen as a step forward in the council's approach of delivering coastal management locally, the proposals would be developed in partnership with residents of the affected properties and other stakeholders in the area, such as Hemsby Parish Council and local businesses.

Councillor Carl Smith, leader of Great Yarmouth Borough Council, said: "As everyone is aware, our coast is on the frontline of erosion and the effects of climate change. To adapt to these changes, we are determined to find solutions which best help the people affected.

"Over the past few years, detailed independent research has shown that even if the vast amount of Government funding required for defences was available - and despite our repeated efforts it clearly isn't in the medium term - the huge structures that would be needed to have a meaningful impact would be largely ineffective and would, in fact, mean Hemsby beach would be vastly reduced in size.

"That means we have to think of creative ways to adapt to the inevitable. We think the money we have secured - used effectively - will provide choices for people that otherwise don't exist under the Government's current approach to coastal erosion.

"It is great to see Great Yarmouth at the forefront of developing future national policy - policy that could help thousands of people in the near future as the pace of coastal change increases across the UK."

The Government funding has been secured following the dissolution of Coastal Partnership East earlier this year. The partnership saw Great Yarmouth Borough Council, North Norfolk Council and East Suffolk Council working together to examine different ways to mitigate the effects of erosion along their coastlines.

Since then, GYBC's coastal team has been working with the Environment Agency to re-apportion part of the funding available to the partnership to formulate plans for adapting to erosion in the borough. The work has included looking at relocating staff, operational costs, equipment and innovative investment funding.

The team is also looking to develop a plan for a nature-based project that would see pockets of coastline being bought and then being used to maximise local amenities and natural and economic value during the lifetime of the land in a cost-effective way.

Councillor Smith said: "This funding would provide us with a unique opportunity to test and realise meaningful adaptation in Hemsby, including financially supporting and safely relocating residents at very high risk of coastal erosion.

"It would also mean we would retain the borough's net housing stock by seeking planning permission on purchased relocation land. And, subject to robust safeguards, the council will retain the proceeds to reinvest and repeat the initiative as required to effectively manage the changes we are seeing because of our changing climate."