

EA Beach maintenance works - Best Practice Guide when dealing with the public and local businesses for: who needs to know what

Communicating the right message

1. The beach – a special place

Beaches are special places where both locals and visitors are drawn to. People use them for many different activities from having a walk, flying a kite, launching a kayak, building a sandcastle or just a being in a place to contemplate. The public are often unaware of the dynamic nature of the beach and that maintenance work is often essential if the beach is to remain in its current state. Any work with machinery is often seen as an invasion to their beach. **But** as care and maintenance works are often essential it is a necessity to communicate the right message. Below is an easy checklist to help the EA provide effective communication and details on best practice how this could be achieved.

Some reminders

- No two beach maintenance works will be exactly the same **therefore** the key messages will often be the same but the facts may be different
- Communication of the information might be different depending on who is your audience
- A risk assessment should be drawn up before any works are started
- Where large vehicles are to be used, extreme care should be taken to separate members of the public from the path of the vehicles
- The works site should be kept clean and tidy regardless of whether the site is a high amenity beach or not. All waste, debris and equipment should be left tidy and secure at the end of the working day.

2. Checklist

A blank copy is available on the last page to print and fill in

Key: E = essential, D = desirable, U = unnecessary

	What the EA needs to do	Linked to	Beach maintenance works
Before work starts	Prepare a full risk assessment – outline risks to public		E
	Liaise with other agencies involved	3a, 3b	E
	Produce leaflets, Information boards, maps	4a – 4l	E
	Produce material for press / radio / television	4a – 4l	E
	Produce information for web pages	4a – 4l	E
	'Door to door' communication	7	D
	Provide special consideration for businesses	8	E
	Liaise with local businesses	7,8	D
	Produce Clear 'on site' safety signage	9a,9b	E
When work started	Distribute leaflets to local businesses, shops etc		E
	Put up Information Board		E
	Put up safety information board		E
When Work is completed	Feedback on website, radio		D

3. Liaise with other agencies involved

a. Who else is involved in the work?

If the work is being carried out by the EA then this needs to be clear. If sub-contracted out, the name of the contractor and if possible an office contact of the contractor and website details.

b. Who is responsible for local beach management?

It should not be assumed that the public have a clear understanding who is responsible for beach management. It is an ideal opportunity to explain the role of the EA in relation to responsibility for flood and erosion management, the maintenance of sea walls, revetments groynes and rock armour etc.

N.b It may be necessary in some works to explain who the operating authority (usually the local authority) are and their responsibilities in relation to the work being carried out e.g culverts, traffic signage, litter, rodent control etc.

4. Produce leaflets, Information boards, maps

Simple leaflets are the best way to distribute information and these can be made into a large information board. Leaflets should be made available at local shops, post offices, cafes or nearby pubs. Where the exact location(s) of the proposed works may not be immediately obvious or where they spread over a number of areas, a simple location map would be helpful. Maps that indicate where the public can and cannot walk may also be useful.

Information the public and businesses want to know includes:

a. Who is the Environment Agency ?

Highly visible works present an excellent opportunity for the Agency to present itself in a positive way. Strap lines on all information boards and leaflets should be consistent:

'It's our job to look after your environment and make it a better place' or 'we are the lead organisation responsible for all flood and erosion risk management around the coastline of England'.

Suggested wording would be:

Who are the Environment Agency? The Environment Agency are an Executive Non-departmental Public Body responsible to the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra). Their principles aims are to protect and improve the environment, and to promote sustainable development. They are the lead organisation responsible for all flood and erosion risk management and coastal defence work around the coastline of England.

b. Who is paying for the works?

Simple statements such as; *'this work is funded by.....'* lets the public know who is paying for the work.

c. What work are the EA doing?

The bigger picture – putting the works into context is important. Perhaps linking with Shoreline Management Plans and the local Beach Management Plans.

When placing information on boards or producing text for leaflets or quotes for the press; a simple, one-sentence description of the works is very important

d. What are the benefits?

An explanation of the benefits of why the work are needed would be helpful as the public are less likely to be hostile and this will allow the EA to be more likely to build consensus and support, even where the works are potentially going to be disruptive, noisy or inconvenient to the public.

e.g By carrying out this work this beach will be safer and be more even

e. What access arrangements are being made?

Applicable if road or footpath access for the public has to be restricted. If restricted Access to individual properties is required, then EA Officers will have to negotiate with the property owner well in advance so that alternative arrangements can be made. Signage is important such as:

Pedestrians this way

f. What other organisations are involved?

This might include other utility companies, the local authority and sub-contractors. For works, it is normal for a site description board to be erected and this should include a list (and logos) for all parties involved in the works. Clarification of specific areas of responsibility (e.g. traffic lights, road sweeping, cones etc) should be defined well before works are commenced

g. What will it cost?

If costs are available on the work being carried out this information is often welcomed although not essential.

h. Why is it necessary / is it really necessary?

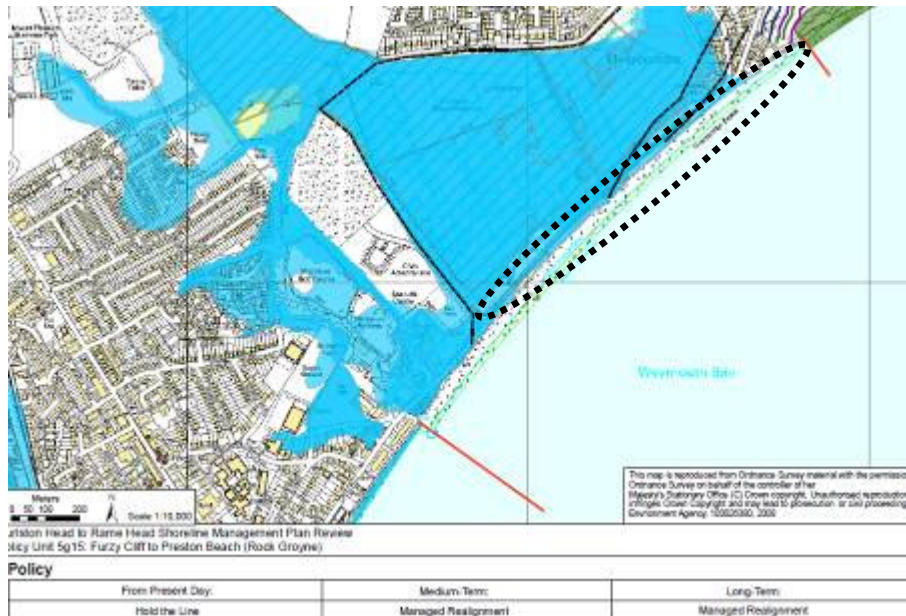
Information on why the work needs to be carried needs to be clear e.g 'for essential maintenance work' or 'for the protection of the road'.

An Example would be:

‘in order to maintain a satisfactory level of protection for the beach wall and promenade, it is important that shingle that has moved in recent months is put back in its original position’.

i. Where the work is taking place?

A short description of the site affected by the works is needed. A clear map would also be extremely useful



Example map showing Overcombe Beach and the area subject to shingle relocation works

j. Where can I find out more?

Material that is too detailed and technical should be avoided because most people will not require it nor absorb it however it is useful for those wishing to find out more to be prepared and a more detailed information sheet on the actual beach management of the proposed area may be of use to send out. Diagrams and maps may be useful when providing more detail. This extra information may be best on the EA website and linked to more localised sites such as ‘Dorsetforyou’ (www.dorsetforyou.gov.uk) or the Dorset Coast Forum website (www.dorsetcoast.com).

k. When are you proposing to start / finish?

This information should be publicised in the leaflet, the local press, to local businesses and made available through local radio stations. Local post offices and businesses (including cafes) are an excellent way of informing a large majority of the public

Work due to start: Monday 1st March 2010
Works due to complete: Friday 12th March 2010

Any proposed road closure dates are essential if closures or heavy plant crossings are necessary.

I. A thank you from the EA – the public will appreciate this

Suggested text:

The Environment Agency apologises for any disruption to your enjoyment of Preston Beach whilst these essential works are carried out and appreciate your patience

An example of a leaflet with key information

Beach Maintenance at Preston Beach

Beach Maintenance is currently taking place at Preston Beach to reposition beach material and reshape the profile of the beach.

Why? This work is essential and is being done to provide the maximum standard of protection along Preston Beach using the material available between the rock groynes at Greenhill and Bowlease Cove.

Who? The work is being contracted by The Environment Agency to *INSERT CONTRACTOR*. This contractor is working on Preston Beach on behalf of the Environment Agency.



Who are the Environment Agency? The Environment Agency is an Executive Non-departmental Public Body responsible to the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra). Their principles aims are to protect and improve the environment, and to promote sustainable development. They are the lead organisation responsible for all flood and erosion risk management and coastal defence work around the coastline of England.

How? *INSERT CONTRACTOR AND CHECK EQUIPMENT DESCRIPTION CORRECT IN THIS SECTION* is using dump trucks, caterpillar diggers and bulldozers to carry out the work, along with various support vehicles and a "Bundie Bowser" to supply fuel to the machinery. The equipment being used is bigger than that used in previous years so that the maintenance work can be carried out more quickly and efficiently.

How can I stay safe? The heavy machinery used to carry out this work is dangerous therefore workers will be wearing hard hats and visible jackets. Please act responsibly when work is being carried out by keeping dogs under control, keeping a close eye on children and keeping a safe distance from machinery.

When will the work start/finish? The work will start on *INSERT DATE* and is due to be completed on *INSERT DATE*.

Where can I find out more? If you would like to speak to someone at the Environment Agency about the work being done please call: 08708 506 506 or email: enquiries@environment-agency.gov.uk

The Environment Agency apologises for any disruption to your enjoyment of Preston Beach whilst these essential works are carried out and appreciate your patience.



ENVIRONMENT
AGENCY

Dorset Coast Forum is a partnership of marine and coastal organisations promoting sustainable management of the Dorset coast.

5. Produce material for press / radio / television

A press release needs to be prepared before works are to commence (approx 2-3 weeks). Details need to be tailored to the actual works being undertaken although most works still need to answer the points in section 3 a – k detailed above. The local press are also likely to follow the story as work progresses, therefore a person to contact from the outset would be important. Use some quotes from and the EA Project Officer as this adds an important ‘personal touch’ that local people will appreciate. There is essentially no cost to the Agency when using this communications route.

For radio the information from section 3 a – k will be required. Radio requires repetition in order that a large listening audience is reached, therefore very simple sentences are needed. Listing ‘who’, ‘why’, ‘where’ and ‘when’ is often enough. Spokesperson interviews with the EA can generate goodwill and can explain the finer details of the project (if necessary).

6. Produce information for web pages

It is recommended that the same basic information is available on the EA website. If further information is available this is the place to put this information. An advantage of using the Website is that it can be easily updated if project circumstances change.

7. ‘Door to door’ communication

This approach need only be considered where there are specific (and possible sensitive) negotiations needed with individual householders. This might involve access over private land, or where the disruption caused by the proposed works is going to be particularly intrusive. Early contact is essential.

8. Provide special consideration for businesses

Many businesses will have business interruption insurance but this is unlikely to be valid for minor works and annual maintenance activities. The agency should be aware that any beach intervention works **could** minimise or halt trade. Cafes, restaurants and beach shops are particularly likely to suffer due to the noise, dirt, access or even visual intrusion caused by the work. It is therefore important that businesses are kept fully informed prior to the works starting. A simple leaflet, letter or factsheet detailing the points in section 3 is often all that is required. This letter, leaflet or visit needs to be 2-3 weeks prior to work commencing as this allows businesses to sort out any issues that maybe affected by the works.

It is also important that the site supervisor maintains a positive working relationship with the business proprietors during the works phase and deals promptly with any problems that may arise. This should be fed to the EA to enable all parties to be kept informed.

Local businesses can also assist the EA by acting as advocates for any works being carried out.

9. Produce Clear ‘on site’ safety signage

a. What are the safety issues?

There are always safety issues to consider and H&S compliance is non-negotiable. The EA need to demonstrate they have considered the publics safety and short key messages will be the most effective way to put this across:

Suggested text:

How can I stay safe? The heavy machinery used to carry out this work is dangerous therefore workers will be wearing hard hats and visible jackets.

Please act responsibly when work is being carried out by:

- Keeping a close eye on children
- Keeping a safe distance from machinery
- Keeping dogs under control

9. FINALLY - The main points to remember:

S safety issues and signage are essential
T timeliness of information released to the public
O open approach to public concerns and queries
P purpose of the works should be made known well in advance

EA Checklist for beach maintenance works

Project name:
 Date:
 Lead Officer

	What the EA needs to do	Beach Maintenance Works	Tick
Before work starts	Prepare a full risk assessment – outline risks to public	E	
	Liaise with other agencies involved	E	
	Produce leaflets, Information boards, maps	E	
	Produce material for press / radio / television	E	
	Produce information for web pages	E	
	‘Door to door’ communication	D	
	Provide special consideration for businesses	E	
	Liaise with local businesses	D	
	Produce Clear ‘on site’ safety signage	E	
When work started	Distribute leaflets to local businesses, shops etc	E	
	Put up Information Board	E	
	Put up safety information board	E	
When Work is completed	Feedback on website, radio	D	

Any further comments: