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LIVING with the sea

Coastal Habitat Management Plans:

An Interim Guide to Content and Structure

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Contents

Foreword

As a nation, we are fortunate in having a coastline that is of the highest value for wildlife. As a consequence, there are many internationally protected habitats along our shores that the Government is committed to protecting. There are many pressures on the coast, and we need to be vigilant to ensure that we fulfil our obligations towards these special habitats. In doing so, one of the greatest challenges is that of rising sea level.

In July 1998 I announced that flood and coastal defence funding arrangements would be changed to ensure that these sites receive the necessary protection from flooding and erosion. Within MAFF, arrangements are now in place, and I was recently able to approve funding for the first scheme to protect part of a Special Protection Area in North Norfolk. I am aware also that officials in MAFF, DETR, English Nature and the Environment Agency have been working together in setting up the Coastal Habitat Management Plan (CHaMP) initiative. This mechanism will allow us to identify the best approach for protecting those sites where matters are more complex.

The "Living with the Sea" project, which is being undertaken jointly by English Nature, the Environment Agency and the Centre for Coastal and Marine Sciences, will make a very important contribution. It is through this EU LIFE Nature funded project that the Coastal Habitat Management Plan (CHaMPs) initiative will be further developed. In particular, the project will involve the preparation of six CHaMPs, a best practice guidance on habitat creation, and a framwork for managing European habitats on changing coastlines. The CHaMPs will identify the likely losses and gains in wildlife habitats over the next 30-100 years, the flood and coastal defence works that need to be undertaken to maintain protected habitats, and the new habitat that will need to be created to offset losses.

In July last year I announced the issue of a consultation draft on preparing CHaMPs, and I am pleased that sufficient further progress has now been made to allow this guidance document to be published. I have been encouraged by the extent of interest and degree of support for CHaMPs. Publication of this document is an important step forward in assisting flood and coastal defence operating authorities in identifying the measures they will need to to take to protect our most important coastal habitats.

Elliot Morley
Minister for Fisheries and the Countryside

Coastal Habitat Management Plans:
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1 Introduction: The purpose of Coastal Habitat Management Plans and the role of this guide

Coastal Habitat Management Plans (CHaMPs) are intended to provide a framework for managing European and Ramsar sites that are located on or adjacent to dynamic coastlines. They will provide a way of fulfilling the UK Governments obligations under the Habitats and Birds Directives and the Ramsar Convention, to avoid damage and deterioration to Natura 2000 and Ramsar sites; particularly when developing Shoreline Management Plans (SMPs) and flood and coastal defence strategies, and planning maintenance and capital works. They will apply where the conservation of all the existing interests in situ is not possible due to natural or quasi-natural changes to shorelines. Their two primary functions are to act as an accounting system to record and predict losses and gains to habitat, and to set the direction for habitat conservation measures to address net losses. This will ensure that damage to Natura 2000 sites from the coastal defence response to natural changes to the coast is avoided or compensated for. The plans will therefore contribute to maintaining the overall coherence of the Natura 2000 and Ramsar site network.

English Nature, The Environment Agency and the Centre for Coastal and Marine Sciences have received funding from the European Union's LIFE Nature fund for a project ("Living with the Sea") to develop this initiative. The project has published this document as an interim model for CHaMP production following detailed consultation with key coastal interest groups. Though the Project a framework and best practice model for CHaMPs will be developed. The project will also lead to the preparation of six pilot plans in eastern and southeastern England.

The project runs from December 1999 to December 2003. The six pilot CHaMPs will be completed during 2000/2001 and the framework and best practice model will be published in 2003.

2 Scope of Coastal Habitat Management Plans

Each CHaMP will cover a site complex. This will normally consist of either a single coastal SAC or SPA, or more commonly a complex of overlapping or contiguous coastal SACs and/or SPAs and Ramsar sites. However, in order to encompass areas where replacement habitats can be created and sustained, CHaMPs will often also have to take in areas immediately adjacent to those currently designated as European or other international sites; areas which could reasonably be predicted to serve a similar ecological function with appropriate management, such as a coastal or estuarine flood plain

It is not intended that CHaMPs should be prepared for every coastal site complex. They are intended to help resolve situations where predictable changes to the coastline make it impractical or unsustainable to maintain all the components of a European or other international site in situ, and to meet their conservation objectives. Such as dynamic coasts where habitats are no longer able to naturally respond to sea level rise. Under the Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food (MAFF) High Level Targets, Target 11a places an action on English Nature, the Environment Agency and other Operating Authorities to prepare a definitive list of site complexes in England for which a CHaMP is required, and a programme for their completion. Figure 1 explains how to determine if a CHaMP is needed, and a provisional list of site complexes for England is attached as Appendix 1.

Figure 2 explains how CHaMPs address the issue of dynamic change to Natura 2000 sites and their relationship to other management plans. MAFF's FCDPAG5 document provides guidance to operating authorities on CHaMPs and Habitat Regulations issues in general and will be an important reference during CHaMP development.

CHaMPs will provide a framework for managing site complexes over a long term period, it is anticipated that this would normally be between 30 and 100 years depending on the type of coastline involved. Habitat creation and other works should however be planned with a view to their sustainability for the foreseeable future.

3 Who should prepare and use Coastal Habitat Management Plans?

Management Plans should be prepared and owned by the operating authority (normally the Environment Agency) and English Nature, working together and in consultation with relevant stakeholders. Stakeholders need to be part of the CHaMP development and implementation process and also have ownership of the outcomes. English Nature and the Environment Agency will provide central guidance and support to local staff to ensure consistency of approach. The completed plans will be used by the operating authority to plan flood and coastal defence works and associated habitat recreation works within the plan areas. MAFF will

use them to assist in decisions on grant aid for capital flood and coastal defence and habitat creation works, and they will assist English Nature in reporting on site condition. Under their respective duties for flood and coastal defence, and Natura 2000 sites, both the operating authority (normally the Environment Agency) and English Nature must approve completed CHaMPs prior to submission to MAFF. Local planning authorities (LPAs) will need to use them in revising statutory development plans and land use designations, and they will assist LPAs in making decisions on planning applications for coastal defence schemes.

Stakeholders include all operating authorities, planning authorities, non-government organizations, landowners and local community or representative groups with an interest in the future management of the CHaMP area.

Generally the procedure for the completion of a plan will be:

Operating authority (normally the Environment Agency) writes to English Nature requesting approval of the plan. English Nature gives its approval and, with the operating authority, submits the document to MAFF. MAFF notifies agreement to the relevant operating authority and English Nature in writing. operating authority and English Nature adopt the CHaMP. This whole adoption procedure should be completed in a timely manner.

4 Outline content of Coastal Habitat Management Plans

CHaMPs will contain the following main sections:

4.1 Inventory of features

This inventory will show features of European or other international importance currently occurring within the sites. It will also list their attributes and where practical map the current extent and distribution of each feature. This includes Annex 1 (habitats), Annex II (species), bird populations relevant to the SPA designation and the components of sites listed under the Ramsar convention.

4.2 Conservation objectives

This will be a statement of the formal conservation objectives for all features of European significance. For marine sites these will appear in the Regulation 33 packages, land based sites will be addressed separately.

4.3 Predicted changes to the shoreline

A best guess methodology will be developed to identify the likely shoreline changes that will occur over the next 30 to 100 years. This will be informed by the review of coastal processes, information contained in the SMP, and information in any more detailed strategic plans for flood and coastal defences, but also building in other available data and expert opinion. This review of predicted changes to the shoreline will in turn inform the next revision of SMPs and any strategies produced subsequently. The aim will be to integrate CHaMPs into the shoreline planning process; ensuring Natura 2000 sites are accounted for when selecting sea and coastal defence options.

4.4 Lists of features that can and cannot be maintained in situ, and sustainability criteria

Taking account of the information in sections 4.1-4.3 the next step is to draw up a list of significant European and other internationally important features that can and cannot be maintained by holding the existing line of defence.

Having regard to the terms of the Habitats and Birds Directives, for designated features landward of a sea defence, there will be a presumption in favour of maintaining the habitat in situ. Where this would be unsustainable or would cause damage to other features of conservation interest, the alternative option of habitat creation should then be considered. For features to landward, the sustainability of defences should normally be considered over the probable design-life of a structure: between 30 and 100 years depending on the type of scheme. In general, it will be sustainable to protect such features in situ where to do so would a) not result in an adverse effect on the integrity of the designated site or other conservation assets, and b) would work with rather than against coastal processes.

They must also be technically feasible and should not require excessive capital or maintenance costs disproportionate to the importance of the feature under threat. In regard to cost, where there is more than one technically and environmentally acceptable solution, the lowest cost method should be chosen. (See FCDPAG5)

In view of rising sea levels, for features seaward of sea defences managed retreat is likely to be the favoured option. Where it is decided that a sea defence cannot be retained on the existing line and new habitat must be created, the sustainability of the location of the new habitat must also be considered. This will involve consideration of the medium to long-term (30-100years) effect of coastal processes, and also of the resources required to ensure the development of suitable replacement habitat and its management (environmental, technical and economic).

4.5 Assessment of effect on site integrity

The list of features that cannot sustainably be maintained in situ will be used to inform an assessment of whether or not the scope and scale of habitat loss and/or change, has the potential to cause an adverse effect on site integrity. In the case of SPAs, a whole range of factors external to the site can influence bird populations. Because

of this, the basis for assessing losses to SPA features will normally be changes in the extent and/or quality of the habitats used by the birds that affect the ability of the site to support the bird populations for which it is classified.

4.6 Program of measures

Where it is predicted that an adverse effect on integrity would occur, the CHaMP would then go on to set out the targets to either avoid an adverse effect on integrity or to compensate for it. A program consisting of the measures considered essential to meet these targets would follow. These will include the review and testing of flood and coastal defence options and development of replacement habitats.

Habitat replacement measures should be located within or immediately adjacent to the site complex wherever possible, though it may sometimes be necessary to look more widely within the natural area. It is important that other environmental and social issues are taken into account when deciding where to establish any new habitats, such as planning and tourism. The CHaMP would also assist this part of the process by identifying potential sites for replacement habitat within rolling five to ten year time frames.

4.7 Monitoring

CHaMP will set out a monitoring program designed to keep track of actual losses and gains of habitats that can be compared with predicted losses and gains, and used to update or amend those predictions.

5 Details of methodology

5.1 The iterative nature of the plan

It is recognised that the targets for habitat replacement will initially be set on the basis of some fairly broad assumptions, both on the likely scale of habitat loss, and on the likely response. The plan will therefore need to be a living document. The figures for anticipated habitat loss, and the targets for habitat replacement derived from them, will need to be adjusted each time a scheme goes forward, after detailed consideration of the different options for that scheme, or as and when other new information becomes available. The CHaMP will need to identify the monitoring requirements to keep the inventory of habitat losses and gains current. The plan should be fully reviewed every 5 years.

5.2 Anticipatory replacement of habitat

Once plans have been prepared and agreed, it will be desirable to start to replace the habitats and the habitats of species of international importance in advance of predictable losses occurring. This can be achieved through the coastal and sea defence strategies and capital programs prepared by operating authorities. The ability to replace in advance also offers the pragmatic and ecological advantages of economies of scale that may be achieved by combining several smaller habitat replacement schemes. The plans will need to monitor the replacement of habitats and use a database for recording and linking habitat replacement schemes with operating authority strategy plans. This may link with Environment Agency databases used in reporting CHaMP progress against MAFF High Level Targets.

However, bearing in mind the uncertainties surrounding the prediction of future changes, and the need for an iterative approach within CHaMPs, it is proposed that the loss predictions and the habitat replacement targets should as far as possible be profiled within the 30 to 100 year life of the plan. Advance habitat replacement should then normally be limited to that predicted as necessary within a rolling five to ten year time horizon, though this limit will need to be applied with a considerable degree of flexibility so as not to preclude otherwise sensible and economic solutions.

Habitat recreation proposals resulting from other plans, such as mitigation/compensation for port development, should complement and support habitat replacement measures proposed to offset the results of shoreline change. However, they are to remain distinct from and additional to any measures recommended by CHaMPs.

5.3 Legal basis for the Coastal Habitat Management Plan

At the broadest level, it is proposed that a CHaMP constitutes a management plan as mentioned in Article 6.1 of the Habitats Directive. More specifically, however, a CHaMP is seen as a particular aid in the application of The Conservation (Natural Habitats &c.) Regulations 1994, for the management of coastal European sites. CHaMPs will often cover several different sites of European and International importance, thus considering the wider impacts of schemes of management in the coastal cell.

Where, however, a CHaMP overlaps with a European marine site, the relevant authorities in preparing or updating the management scheme for the European marine site must use the information contained in the CHaMP. This is in order to comply with the Regulation 34(2) of The Conservation (Natural Habitats &c.) Regulations 1994, so that only a single scheme of management is prepared for each European marine site. CHaMPs will not replace a “scheme of management”.

In addition, it is envisaged that CHaMPs will be particularly helpful in making decisions required by the Habitats Regulations in relation to the assessments of impacts in combination with other plans and projects and in relation to whether there will be an adverse effect on the integrity of a site. It must be stressed that a CHaMP does not offer an alternative regulatory

pathway to the Habitats Regulations, but will provide a qualitative reference in the assessment. See Figure.1.

5.4 Management of site boundaries

CHaMPs will need to include a procedure for safeguarding habitat replacement sites outside the formally designated boundaries of the European sites making up the site complex. This is necessary to ensure that the provisions of the Directive are complied with, and that areas of recreated habitat receive legal protection against development and other man-made threats. New habitat sites should first be designated a SSSI. Formal adjustment of European boundaries will then follow, although there is no adjustment mechanism for SACs at present. The plan will however need to identify at the outset a comprehensive Site Envelope within which habitat replacement works are likely to be required during the lifetime of the plan. Local Authorities will need to be given a policy steer to integrate the management plan and the implications for these Site Envelopes, in structure and local plan land use designations.

5.5 Consultative approach to plan preparation

Successful implementation of a CHaMP will require the active co-operation of the local authorities, the landowners and the wider local community. Such co-operation is only likely to be forthcoming if these stakeholders feel some ownership of the issues and the proposed solution. Consultation and awareness raising therefore needs to be regarded as an integral part of plan preparation, with sufficient time allowed for it at all stages in the process, including its inception. Mechanisms for acquiring land and managing new habitats should be explored with landowners at an early stage; this will help the development of a program for habitat replacement measures.

6 Feed back to the Project

To assist the development of the framework for maintaining European features and the production of best practice guidance, feedback on the CHaMP process is welcomed. Any ideas on how the initiative can be improved, other projects or schemes delivering habitat creation or furthering the aims of “Living with the Sea” can be referred to the Project Manager at English Nature. The Project will also be raising awareness of this initiative in Europe, and seeking clarity and common understanding of the Habitat and Birds Directive. More project information will be available via the English Nature web site and associated links.

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Appendix 1:
A Provisional List of Site Complexes that are likely to require a Coastal Habitat Management Plan in England

Site Complex	Names of Sites in Complex
Humber	Humber Flats, Marshes and Coast SPA/Ramsar
Wash and North Norfolk	Gibraltar Point SPA/Ramsar The Wash SPA/Ramsar The Wash and N.Norfolk cSAC North Norfolk Coast SPA/Ramsar North Norfolk Coast and Gibraltar Point Dunes cSAC
Winterton and North Dunes	Winterton-Horsey Dunes cSAC Great Yarmouth North Dunes SPA
Suffolk Coast and Estuaries	Benacre to Easton Bavents Lagoons cSAC Benacre to Easton Bavents SPA Minsmere-Walberswick SPA/Ramsar Minsmere-Walberswick Heath and Marshes cSAC Orfordness-Havergate SPA/Ramsar Orfordness-Shingle Street cSAC Alde-Ore Estuary SPA/Ramsar Deben Estuary SPA/Ramsar Stour and Orwell SPA/Ramsar
Essex Coast	Essex Estuaries cSAC Hamford Water SPA/Ramsar Colne Estuary SPA/Ramsar Blackwater Estuary SPA/Ramsar Dengie SPA/Ramsar Crouch & Roach Estuaries SPA/Ramsar Foulness SPA/RAMSAR Benfleet and Southend Marshes SPA/Ramsar
North Kent Estuaries and Marshes	Thames Estuary and Marshes pSPA and pRamsar Medway Eastbury and Marshes SPA/Ramsar The Swale SPA/Ramsar
Sandwich Bay and Thanet	Thanet Coast and Sandwich Bay SPA and Ramsar Thanet Coast cSAC Sandwich Bay cSAC
Dungeness and Pett Levels	Dungeness cSAC Dungeness and Pett Level pSPA and pRamsar
West Sussex and The Solent	Pagham Harbour SPA/Ramsar Chichester and Langstone Harbours SPA/Ramsar Portsmouth Harbour SPA/Ramsar Solent and Southampton Water pSPA/Ramsar Solent and Isle of Wight Lagoons cSAC Solent Maritime cSAC
Poole and Studland	Poole Harbour pSPA/pRamsar Dorset Heaths and Studland cSAC
The Severn Estuary	The Severn Estuary SPA/Ramsar
Sefton and the Ribble	Alt Estuary SPA/Ramsar Sefton Coast cSAC Ribble Estuary SPA/Ramsar Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA/Ramsar
Morecambe Bay	Morecambe Bay SPA/Ramsar Morecambe Bay cSAC
Cumbria Coast	Duddon Estuary pSPA Drigg Coast cSAC
Solway Estuary	Solway Flats and Marshes SPA/Ramsar Upper Solway Flats and Marshes SPA/Ramsar Rockliffe Marsh SPA/Ramsar Solway Firth cSAC

Figure 1:
CHaMP Production, and Plans and Projects Routing

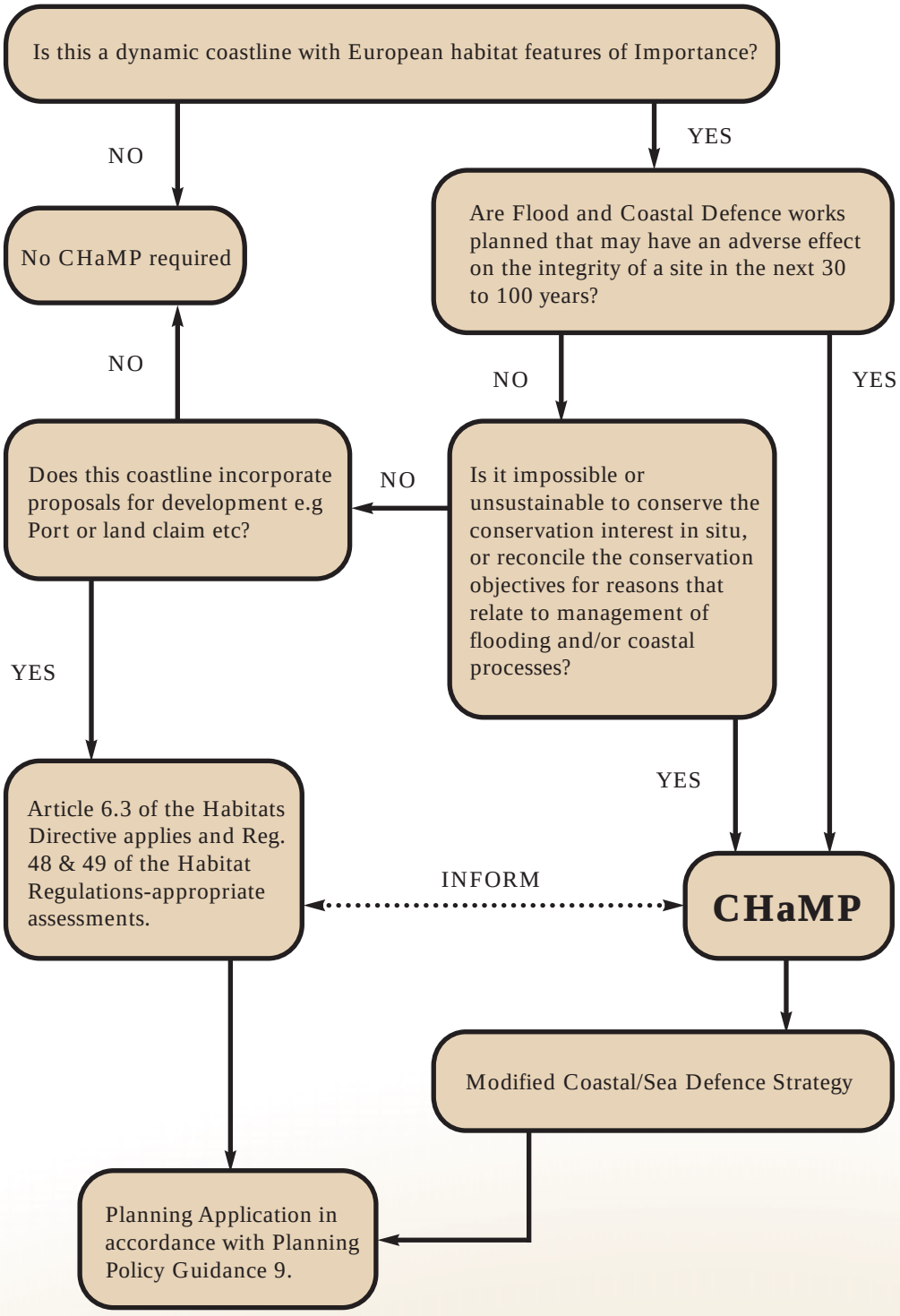
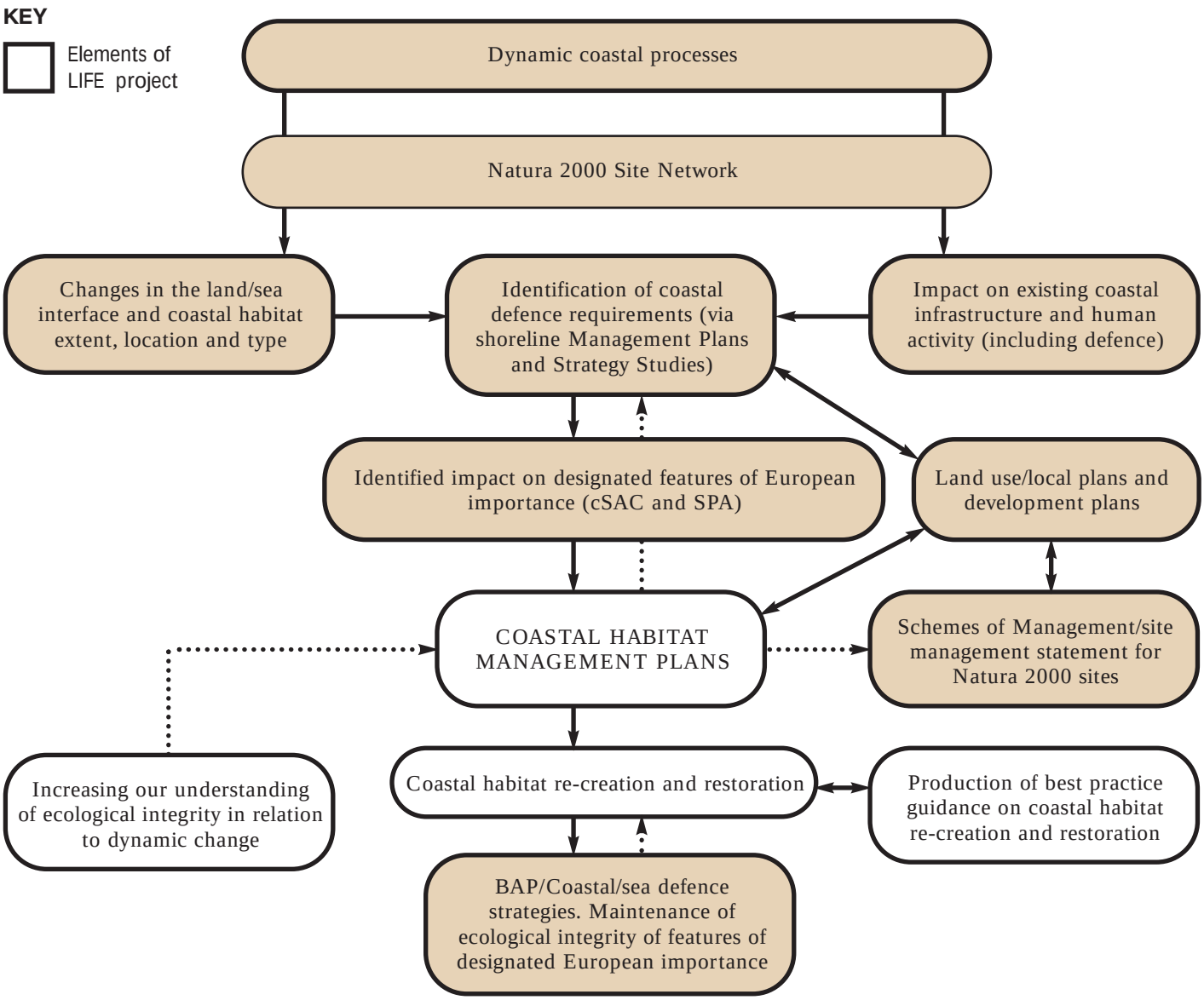


Figure 2:
Diagram showing the contribution of CHaMPS in addressing dynamic change to coastal Natura 2000 sites and their relationship to other management plans



Glossary

Annex I (Habitats) & Annex II (Species)	Habitats and species of Community interest listed in the Habitats Directive.
BAP	Biodiversity Action Plans
CHaMPs	Coastal Habitat Management Plans
Coastal squeeze	habitats caught between rising sea level, and fixed sea defences or high ground
Coastal/Sea Defence Strategy	schemes resulting from a SMP
cSAC	candidate SAC (treat as SAC)
Dynamic coastline	one that is eroding and accreting
EA	Environment Agency, Government funded environmental protection Agency for England and Wales. Operating authority for flood defence.
EN	English Nature, Government funded conservation Agency for England
FCDPAG5	MAFF Project Appraisal Guidance for flood and coastal defence schemes
High Level Targets	Set by MAFF for Operating Authorities
LIFE Nature	European Union fund
MAFF	Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, responsible for Grant Aiding flood and coastal defence works
Natura 2000	SAC/SPAs around the United Kingdom
NGO	non-governmental organisation
Operating authority	the Environment Agency or local authority
PPG 9	Planning Policy Guidance on Nature Conservation
Ramsar	International agreement on endangered habitats
Regulation 33	conservation objectives for marine SACs
SAC	Special Area of Conservation (Habitats and Species Directive)
Scheme of Management	single management scheme set for SACs under Reg. 34 of The Conservation (Natural Habitats) Regulations 1994
SMP	Shoreline Management Plans
SPA	Special Protection Area (Birds Directive)
SSSI	Site of Special Scientific Interest

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