

COAST CONFERENCE BRINGS CASH DIVIDEND

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Networking at the recent international conference on 'Landslides and Climate change', held in Ventnor last month, is already generating potential finances to assist the Island with its coastal and geotechnical studies and investigations.

Italian delegates who came to the conference were so impressed that they wish to contribute 200,000 euros (approximately 140,000 pounds) towards a new project proposed by the Council's Centre for the Coastal Environment on adapting to and mitigating the impacts of climate change on the coast.

The three year study proposal could be funded by the new Interreg 4 Programme starting next spring and would involve the universities of Bologna and Ferrara, the Regions of Marche and Emilia-Romagna together with the Italian National Research Council.

Professor Francesco Marabini of the University of Bologna said, "We are delighted to have the opportunity of further collaboration with the Isle of Wight Council on a new project proposal. Projects such as this which are focussed more on practical advice and guidance and rather less on theory will be of maximum benefit to countries such as Italy which are affected seriously by problems of landsliding, coastal erosion and flooding."

Councillor Tim Hunter-Henderson, IW Council Cabinet Member for the Environment and Transport said, "Not only did the conference enhance our status as world leaders in this field, it has generated the additional spin-off of cash-support for the work we are doing.

"This is evidence that being innovative and bold about what we do well on the Island brings clear dividends.

"We must continue to be proactive in championing our successes. The conference put us in the international spotlight and we must continue to capitalise on our unique status."

Dr Robin McInnes, IW Council coastal manager, said, "Following our recent conference and the launch of our LIFE project 'Response' (Responding to the risks from climate change) we have identified where increasing levels of hazard and risk will be experienced around our coastlines over the next 100 years.'

"We now need to develop advice and methodologies explaining how we can adapt to these changing conditions and how to mitigate some of the impacts. By working with our Italian partners and other experts from across Europe we hope to be able to obtain financial support of up to 70 percent for a one million pound project which could commence next summer. Working on developing the proposal will be Senior Geomorphologist Jenny Jakeways and Senior Coastal Scientist Helen Fairbank who are recognised as experts of European standing in these fields."