

## **'RESPONSE' (RESPONDING TO THE RISKS FROM CLIMATE CHANGE) PROJECT**

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The Isle of Wight Council's Centre for the Coastal Environment has led a three year study investigating the impact of climate change on Europe's coastlines. A four day international conference entitled 'Landslides and Climate Change' will be held in May 2007 at Ventnor, Isle of Wight.

The results of the £1m project 'Response' (Responding to the Risks from Climate Change) have been launched in Brussels. Financial support for the project came from the European Union's LIFE Environment Programme (L'Instrument Financier de L'Environnement), with partners in the UK, France, Italy and Poland.

Project Director, Dr Robin McInnes OBE, Isle of Wight Council's Coastal Manager, said: "The 'Response' project has provided a framework for understanding and preparing for the impacts of climate change around Europe's dynamic and varied coastlines". He added: "Through a detailed examination of five European study areas (two in the UK, two in France and one in Italy), we have developed a technique to assess the current and future impacts of climate change on a wide range of coastal landforms".

In the UK the study examined coastline areas of north-east England and central southern England, including the Isle of Wight. The 'Response' project assessed the impacts of climate change from both physical and economic standpoints. The research work developed a methodology for preparing coastal evolution, hazard and risk maps to inform the planning process and guide new development away from areas exposed to increasing risks from climate change. The new methodology has been welcomed by Philip Owen, the Head of DG Environment's LIFE Unit, who attended the Brussels project launch.

The study involved France's major public institution in the Geosciences field BRGM (Bureau de Recherches Géologiques et Minières) and the Italian National Research Centre for Hydrogeological Hazards (IRPI). 'Response' has attracted significant interest from the international and European scientific communities. Outputs from the project include a Training Pack on map preparation, an 80 page 'Good Practice Guide' about managing coastal risks, a 15 minute DVD and a 1,000 page technical report ([www.coastalwight.gov.uk/response](http://www.coastalwight.gov.uk/response)). The information has been published in English, French and Italian.

Following the project launch a wide-ranging dissemination programme will take place in 2007. Dr McInnes advised: "This includes a four day international conference on the subject of 'Landslides and Climate Change', to be held at Ventnor from 21-24 May ([www.coastalwight.gov.uk/conference](http://www.coastalwight.gov.uk/conference)).

The Conference will be opened by Dr Pedro Basabe from the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction headquarters in Geneva. The event is expected to attract up to 200 worldwide experts from over 30 countries." He added: "The 'Response' project is one of a number of ways which the Isle of Wight Council is addressing the issue of climate change. The impact on coastal communities is a major consideration for the Island."

Councillor Ian Ward, Isle of Wight Council's Cabinet Member for Environment and Transport, congratulates Dr McInnes and his team for their excellent work and adds: "The 'Response' project will enable us to be better informed, plan more accurately for the future and has firmly put the Isle of Wight on the worldwide stage as a major contributor in dealing with international climate change issues".

Latest Government forecasts on sea level rises over the next 100 years require an allowance of one metre to be included in coastal defence planning. This is a considerable increase over previous estimates and could have significant implications for coastal defence structures, coastal towns and villages and low lying areas. In addition extensive areas of environmentally important inter-tidal habitats will be lost.

The Isle of Wight Council, and other UK Coastal Protection Authorities, have been leading the preparation of a series of Coastal Defence Strategy Studies to examine coastal defence options up to 2100. A study spanning 100 years has been completed for the Island's north-east coast. Ongoing studies of Sandown Bay, the Undercliff and the West Wight coastlines are expected to be completed in the summer of 2007, with further studies of the East Yar Valley and Bembridge Harbour in progress.

Work has started on bringing together the Council's full range of initiatives that contribute to managing the impact of climate change. This includes a review of the Shoreline Management Plan which will provide information on coastal defence planning. Later in 2007 the Isle of Wight Council is aiming to sign up to the Nottingham Declaration on Climate Change ([www.nottinghamdeclaration.org.uk](http://www.nottinghamdeclaration.org.uk)).