

English Coast Stays Abreast of Possible Perils of Global Warming

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Shoreline to the northeast of London has dispelled some of the concern caused by research that predicts that sea levels have risen and will continue to rise to a degree that will threaten human and wildlife communities. Evidence from a new study indicates that relatively little change in shoreline position has occurred since World War II. The study is published in the latest issue of *Journal of Coastal Research*.

The Dunwich-Sizewell coast is arguably one of the most scenically attractive and least spoiled in England. Reviewing its past and present coastal changes will serve to inform future management options if flood defenses and coast protection prove unsustainable.

In the past 2,000 years, the study area has experienced major changes with significant loss of land caused by marine erosion. The study, however, reports a decline in the rates of cliff erosion in certain parts. In the geologically recent past, the onshore area of eastern East Anglia has seen periods of relative uplift, probably because of block tilting and crust deformation caused by loading in the southern North Sea Basin.

At present, little scientific evidence supports a case for large-scale realignment of the defenses along this coast. Area-specific cases such as at the beach and frontal dunes of the northern end of the Minsmere Reserve Frontage are aligned too far seaward with respect to the rest of the shoreline and are eroding with the risk of wave overtopping.

If sea levels rise and increased storminess occurs as a result of global

warming, these effects might not be significant for at least 30 to 50 years, the study's researchers said. But in the future, realignment might be needed in local cases to achieve equilibrium even under present climatic and sea level conditions.

Source: Alliance Communications Group

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