



Crowded Coasts at Studland

Introduction

Studland Beach, Bay and National Nature Reserve are one of the finest coastal habitats on the South Coast. The Reserve is home to many rare plants and animals and is a fine example of Lowland Heath habitat—a habitat which has suffered an 80% loss in area in the UK over the past 100 years.

It is also a classic example of a “**Crowded Coast**”

The beach and bay are an extremely popular tourist destination, with an estimated 25,000 visitors per day during the school summer holidays supporting the local economy. In recent years there has been a substantial loss of sand from the southern end of the beach and this loss appears to be both continuing and accelerating. The management of this is a considerable challenge and has given rise to a variety of different views locally and nationally

“There were a series of news reports recently about the erosion of Studland Beach and the impact the continuing process was having on the beach and the likely effects on the area for the future. The beach huts, for example, are a long way back from where they were a few years ago and the future of beach huts is in doubt as there is nowhere realistically they can go when the sea washes more beach away. The car park and visitor centre and toilets are all at risk eventually as well as the cafe further down the beach towards Studland village. The National Trust has come under a lot of criticism for doing nothing other than to decide to let nature take its course. To fight the inevitable it seems would cost far too much money, not to fight it will mean the economy of the area will be severely damaged. What should be done? Leave nature to take its course and adapt or install a series of groynes along the beach and pump in dredged sand to ‘top the beach up’?”

Our study will examine the impact that tourism has on the Nature Reserve, the conflicts between different user groups, map the various approaches that have been tried in the past to control the coastal erosion, together with assessing the implications of the current policy of “managed retreat”

Health and Safety

- 1 – Lone working. You must stay in your study groups at all times.
- 2 – Dunes. Be aware of the risk assessment for working in the dunes that will have been given to you during the briefing
- 3 – Weather. Ensure that you are dressed accordingly as Studland is a very exposed site with little shelter. This applies equally in the summer as the winter.
- 4 – Sea. Although the sea is very shallow in the bay, swimming and paddling are not permitted.
- 5 – Equipment. Use the field study equipment as per the safety guidelines at all times.

Fieldwork

Our fieldwork will attempt to answer the following questions

- 1 – How physical factors have created the coastal environment at Studland?
- 2 – How the environment changes through both natural and human processes / pressure?
- 3 – How are these changes to the environment being managed? How has this management changed over the past 20 or so years?
- 4 – What user / interest groups are present at Studland and how do they interact with each other and how are conflicts between the user groups managed?
- 5 – What are the economic benefits of tourism at Studland and how may this change in the future?