

EMECS 7: Technical Session 'Co-management and community involvement:  
sustainability and awareness to environmental issues'

Abstract

Participation in ecological projects as a means of empowering communities to contribute to coastal management processes.

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The main objective of the project, which is part of the programme *The North Sea: A Sustainable Future*, is to empower people of northeast England (in the case of this project, those living in Blyth Valley in Northumberland), to participate in the sustainable use and management of their coastal heritage. Community groups, consisting of volunteers and students from local schools, were engaged in projects which were designed to provide information about locally-impacted sand dunes. They worked in collaboration with scientists and environmental managers (Blyth Valley Borough Council). The projects were primarily surveys of: wildlife; social, cultural and industrial use of the dunes; sand erosion/accretion in the dunes and on the adjacent shore; and local views on the value of the dunes. In addition each community group developed its own recommendations for the management of the dunes. The recommendations have been effective at three levels: (i) they have been incorporated into national coastal management plans; (ii) they have been considered in local planning processes by Blyth Valley Borough Council; and (iii) they have provided opportunities for further action at local community level. The recommendations have resulted in a number of specific outcomes. For example, the publication of a nature trail through the dunes, the erection of signage, habitat remedial action by local people in planting marram grass in 'blow-outs' in the dunes, and the establishment of dune monitoring programmes.