

Coastal Communities Alliance

Coastal Economy Toolkit





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Introduction

This toolkit has been prepared to support coastal authorities and their partners in tuning economic development strategies to the unique challenges and opportunities of coastal economies.

The toolkit provides some pointers and practical tips that authorities and partners can adopt in order to 'coastal proof' economic development strategies.

Outputs from the Coastal Communities Alliance and the DEFRA Coastal Pathfinder Programme have informed the toolkit.

The Government's Launch of the Coastal Communities Fund acknowledges the unique potential and particular demands of coastal economies.

Launched in February 2012, the £23.7m Coastal Communities Fund aims to support the economic development of coastal communities by promoting sustainable economic growth and jobs.

Introducing the Fund, Communities Secretary Eric Pickles said:

'Seaside towns and coastal communities have huge potential for economic growth that we simply can't afford to waste – this fund can make all the difference to these places we all know and love.'

This is a great opportunity for long overlooked seaside towns, large and small, to grab a chance to grow through imaginative and innovative projects that create skilled workers, and provide year round jobs that build stronger local economies.'

A key lesson learnt during the urban regeneration boom of the 1990's & 2000's was that identikit regeneration strategies do not automatically translate across different urban contexts.

In 2012 the maxim for coastal economic development must be 'context is everything' and that any proposed solutions must be uniquely tailored to each individual area.

This toolkit provides some guidance on how to develop approaches built from the ground up, centred on the specific context of opportunity and challenge.

Structure of this Document

For ease of use we have divided the document into 3 broad sections. These are laid out sequentially but in reality Authorities will probably need to consider many of these things in parallel:

1. Understanding the Dynamics of the Coastal Economy
2. Identifying and Engaging With Business
3. Underpinning Data & Metrics

Section 1 Understanding the Dynamics of the Coastal Economy

The coastal economy is part of a wider local, regional and national economy. In this sense it is 'nested' within a wider economic context and this must be understood.

The work of the Lincolnshire Pathfinder showed that whilst having some unique characteristics the coastal economy, and the individual businesses within that economy, were heavily impacted by prevailing macroeconomic conditions.

The Pathfinder study divided the 'coastal economy' into two broad segments:

Businesses that wholly rely on the coast/seaside for their income – eg fishing, specific tourism businesses

Businesses that are on the coast but don't rely on the coast for their income – eg a solicitors practice in a coastal town

The study, through its survey work, also allowed businesses to self define whether they regarded themselves 'coastal' or not.

This revealed that many businesses which were regarded coastal by the Authority didn't think of themselves as coastal.

As a result many businesses on the coast didn't engage with any projects or schemes that were badged as 'coastal' as they didn't see it as being relevant to them.

The implications of this are that Authorities need to understand how their economies work and how the businesses, large and small, within that economy interoperate.

This will ensure that projects have a better chance of communicating their objectives to a wider audience and gaining large buy in.

Coastal Mapping & Value Chain Analysis

As part of an early stage data collection activity it is suggested that a mapping of businesses within the coastal area be undertaken.

Authorities need to understand how the coastal economy is working; what are the supply chains or value chains that operate within that economy.

In supporting the development of the coastal economy it is important to understand how these dynamics work, what impacts them, how innovative and how resilient these chains are to impacts.

The funding constraints that many Authorities find themselves under may mean that resources for this type of exercise are limited. The data gathering section of this report provides some pointers as to how to ensure that data gathering is cost effective.

All parts of a local authority need to be engaged in the economic development of an area and need to understand that this activity is important

Understanding the Future Coastal Business Landscape

The coastal economy of one area will be different to other areas. Some Authorities will be dominated by tourism, others will have a more diversified base.

Authorities need to examine the external trends impacting upon the dominant industries within their coastal area.

Then beyond that they need to examine the innovation that is occurring within each of these industries and their economy's engagement with this innovation.

This activity enables Authorities to start to identify risks and opportunities for coastal industries. This allows for more resilient future focussed strategies that have adaptability and innovation hard wired in.

Examples of Traditional Industries

Tourism
Visitor Attractions
Fishing
Agriculture

Examples of Emerging Industries

Aquaculture
Seaweed Farming
Fish Farming
Coastal Adventure Sports

Section 2 Identifying and Engaging with Business

The economic context that many coastal areas face is perhaps the most challenging in a generation. This provides economic development teams with additional challenges above and beyond the familiar

One of the key findings of the Pathfinder study was that public Authorities' engagement with businesses was not always carried out well, or that either side mistrusted one another.

The newly announced Coastal Communities Fund, in line with government policy, has a strong economic development agenda and business groups are permitted to take the lead on projects. Therefore, it is important that Authorities continue to work at engaging with the actors in the coastal economy.

Authorities Are A Brand

It has long been understood that consumers see their individual interactions with a particular brand outlet as a representation of that entire brand. So a bad experience in one outlet will impact the perception across all outlets

This holds true for local authorities as well as big brands. In the Pathfinder surveys businesses quite often spoke highly of economic development teams but were deeply critical of other departments in local authorities.

It was clear that individual businesses' perspectives of an Authority or another partner could be shaped by specific negative and positive experience, even if this was isolated.

To this end it is vital that all parts of a local authority are engaged in the economic development of an area and understand that this activity is important.

Authorities need to understand how the coastal economy is working, what are the supply chains or value chains that operate within that economy



The internal engagement within authorities around the coastal economy project is almost as important as the external engagement.

Mapping & Supporting Existing Business Groups

In most areas there are a wide range of business networks many of which have been established for some time.

There are long established groups such as Chambers of Commerce, CBI and Federation of Small Business that will host events and be active in most areas. In addition there may be sector specific groups which come together in a particular area eg Northern Offshore Federation.

Whilst no figures are readily available there is anecdotal evidence of a rise of business networking groups beyond the traditional, partly driven by a perceived gap in the market and by the use of social networking support tools.

Authorities and partners should identify and engage with these groups wherever possible.

The authorities should not, however, be drawn into 'formal' sponsorship of groups or confer some preferred status of one over another.

Establishing New Coastal Focussed Business Groups & Networks

As projects are developed there may be a requirement to establish new coastal focussed groups to drive forward specific projects or just to understand the dynamics and interactions within the coastal economy.

Some key principles should be used when forming these groups which most practitioners will be familiar with but are worth restating:

Groups should be as inclusive as possible

They should meet at convenient times and locations

All opinions should be respected and heard. No one voice should dominate

Groups should be open and transparent

Business groups can now be facilitated and supported very easily with freely available social media tools such as Facebook and LinkedIn, and these are also useful tools for recruiting people into groups as well as advertising events and meetings.

It is important to link groups and networks together wherever possible. Authorities should encourage co-operation and not competition amongst groups. Most coastal economy areas in the UK can not afford to waste valuable energy on internal competition.

The Challenge of Supporting 'Communities of One'

The social and economic landscape of the UK is arguably more fragmented and atomistic than ever before.

Whilst there maybe general trends within coastal business sentiment, each individual business will have its own specific needs and wants and probably has a specific 'wish list' for itself.

This is an ongoing challenge that Authorities should prepare for. Gaining consensus is not always easy and project teams will need to reinforce their message continuously.

Finally, not all businesses will engage with the process. There may be several reasons for this. Authorities just need to ensure that they are regularly reflecting and asking the question, "Are we doing everything we can to engage businesses in this project"?

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Section 3 Underpinning Data & Metrics

'Evidence-based policy making' endures as a fundamental principle within UK policymaking and economic development.

However, the nature of 'evidence' that must be gathered poses numerous challenges to the policymaker. For example:

- What is the evidence for?
- Where does evidence come from?
- Whose interpretation of the evidence is correct?
- How much evidence is enough?

Compiling accurate data to underpin any strategy is always a challenge and much time and effort can be used up in the pursuit of accurate and robust data.

Since the abolition of Regional Development Agencies and the introduction of austerity measures across the UK many data sets which may have been available or were collected have been discontinued or merged.

As a result, baselines have become redundant and resolution of insight eroded.

Subsequently Authorities find themselves with a disunited, asymmetric, and fragmentary data landscape requiring a new alchemy to derive the evidence base sought.

Existing Data

An extensive data record is available to those seeking to establish baseline and trend in a variety of socioeconomic and environmental dimensions along the coast.

Numerous well known and routinely applied datasets are available at little or no cost to Authorities and their partners.

Examples of key sources that could be used include:

Departmental archives and reports:	BIS CLG Defra DECC
Coastal specific organisations:	Coastal Communities Alliance North West Coastal Forum South East Coastal Communities
Centralised aggregators:	ONS Online UK Data Archive
Key named databases:	NOMIS Neighbourhood Statistics Business Register and Employment Survey (BRES) Annual Business Inquiry (ABI) Annual Business Survey (ABS)
Key data publications:	Social Trends Regional Trends Regional Accounts 2011 Census
Aggregation and innovation products of the opendata movement:	Data.gov.uk OS OpenData Cumbria Intelligence Observatory Lincolnshire Research Observatory
Commercial databases:	Mosaic UK ACORN (CACI) D&B

Many authorities have a knowledge base built from such datasets and this has underpinned the economic development strategy for an area.

However, this knowledge base faces a series of challenges:

The data record is being restructured; local baselines and trendlines suffer discontinuation and loss of resolution through merger

The internal capacity and resource available to authorities is threatened by efficiencies and cost cutting

An emerging agenda for hyperlocal, sub-ward strategy places higher

demands on the resolution of data and its analysis

The inherently 'out of date at point of publication' data record is found to be increasingly impotent during periods of flux and rapid change

Economic forecasts predating 2010 and the strategies utilising their scenarios are now critically flawed

Such challenges do not render the data record redundant; but resilient metrics strategies are required.

Generating New Data

Generating new data to support coastal development can be expensive and time consuming. Inevitably, compromises will need to be reached with regard to the data that you wish to collect.

Traditionally, the approaches open to Authorities in terms of generating new data are the running of specific coastal focussed business surveys and qualitative studies.

Businesses are heavily surveyed already and have many other issues they want to concentrate on. This results in business surveys either being short and superficial or expensive.

Data can also be collected qualitatively through focus groups, interviews etc. This can also be time consuming and has the drawback of not providing robust quantitative statistics.

One approach to reducing costs can be an 'action research' philosophy for a project whereby data is collected simultaneously with actual project delivery. In this sense project delivery agents also gather and capture valuable data.

Another way of collecting data at relatively low cost is through use of digital and social media tools. There are several online survey packages which can be used at little or no cost

(but of course still require knowledge of survey design and data coding). Similarly there are several tools available for carrying out analysis of social media or web data in a particular area.

Social Data & Data 2.0

The rise of social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and others provides a potentially valuable new source of insight (and engagement) with coastal businesses and organisations.

Social networks are rapidly becoming the norm for individuals and businesses alike and Authorities must be engaged in this agenda.

Used correctly social media provides a fantastic (and low cost) mechanism through which to communicate and engage with local business, organisations and individuals. Social media can be monitored in real time and can provide real dynamic insights on coastal issues.

Authorities should carry out a social media audit as part of the data collection phase of their project.

Evaluating & Developing Coastal Metrics

Ultimately, authorities will want to know whether their projects and interventions are making a difference.

Therefore it is important to develop a metrics base with indicators that are robust, measurable and reflect real change.

Some of the traditional metrics that are used are blunt instruments in that they do not operate at a suitable level of granularity for the coastal economy.

Metrics and evaluation approaches should be thought about at the early stage of the project but can be adapted over time.

Social networks are rapidly becoming the norm for individuals and businesses alike

Coastal Economy Checklist

- 1 **Make A Start!** – every journey begins with the smallest step
- 2 **Identify Partners** – who are your partners? Are they the usual partners? Do you have an opportunity to bring in different organisations? How well do you know your coastal economy landscape? Make sure you put in place structures by which partners can genuinely co-create solutions.
- 3 **Engage Business** – engagement is a two way process that requires trust building, time and dialogue. Too many people think that engagement is merely attending meetings or running surveys. Nothing could be further from the truth. Engagement needs to be intensive, granular and almost one-to-one. Authorities should adopt social media tools to support this.
- 4 **Engage Internally** – who in your organisation interfaces with the coastal economy on a regular basis? Who do you need to communicate your project to internally?
- 5 **Data Generation** – this is an ongoing process. How much data you need to gather before you move on is up to you. The key is make it relevant and actionable. Also don't mistake analysis for action.
- 6 **Innovate** – easier said than done. However, with less money, less resource and a bigger challenge new ways of delivery, achieving goals, engaging with business and moving forward the coastal economy need to be considered.
- 7 **Adapt & Co-Create** – it's okay to adapt plans as they develop. We are all familiar with the rigid nature of funding regimes so can you build some flexibility in? Co-create solutions with the businesses and organisations in your area, no one authority, person or organisation has all the answers.
- 8 **Support Your Local Economy** – Authorities can't on their own make a market but they can support a market. Many Authorities are looking at how their own procurement policies can be shaped to support local purchasing without falling into protectionism or anti-competition practices.

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Sources of Data & Support

Websites and Forums

Coastal Communities Alliance: a virtual alliance of local authorities and coastal organisations seeking to promote best practice in coastal regeneration and to inform policy and funding
<http://www.coastalcommunities.co.uk>

Local Government Improvement and Development: working with councils to develop good practice, including in coastal healthy communities
<http://www.idea.gov.uk/idk/core/page.do?pageId=16031069>

Communities and Local Government: Coastal Communities Fund
<http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/regeneration/coastalfundprospectus>

Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA): Coastal Change Pathfinder Review
<http://www.defra.gov.uk/publications/2012/03/09/pb13720-coastal-pathfinder-review/>

Coastal Economy Toolkit: website with online coastal toolkit resources and knowledge sharing forum
<http://www.coastaleconomytoolkit.com/>

SEACAMS: strategic development to integrate research and business opportunities in the marine sector
<http://www.seacams.ac.uk/>

British Destinations: one stop shop for information on UK tourist destinations
<http://www.britishdestinations.co.uk/>

Blue Flag: voluntary eco label for beaches and marinas promoting sustainable development through stringent award criteria
<http://www.blueflag.org/>

Keep Britain Tidy: environmental charity working towards cleaner, greener places
<http://www.keepbritaintidy.org/Programmes/Beaches/BlueFlag/Default.aspx/>

National Piers Society: promoting interest in the preservation and enjoyment of seaside piers
<http://www.piers.org.uk/>

UK Beach Management Forum: a forum for beach operators to share best practice
<http://www.ukbeach.org/>

Historic Environment Local Management: information and training from English Heritage & partners for decision makers in local authorities
<http://www.helm.org.uk/server/show/nav.00h013003005>

Coastal Action Zone: partnership dedicated to "building a sustainable future through realising the natural assets of an undervalued coast"
<http://www.coastal-rdpe.co.uk/>

Coast Radar: portal providing access to information for coastal holidays, and connecting tourists with coastal businesses
<http://www.coastradar.com/coastradar/advertise.php>

Seaside Business: bringing seaside investment to life <http://www.seasidebusiness.co.uk>

Coastal Social Media Directory

For a dynamic list of active twitter accounts with an interest in coastal regeneration and communities follow **Twitter @coastalfutures**

Lincolnshire
COUNTY COUNCIL



wood holmes

