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The Rt Hon George Eustice MP
Secretary of State for Environment,
Food and Rural Affairs,
House of Commons
London
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Please ask for:

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Our Ref: Cliff1
Date: 26 January 2021

Dear Mr Eustice

Coastal Erosion – Isle of Sheppey, Kent

You may be aware of the historical coastal erosion issues along the unprotected northern coastline of the Isle of Sheppey, running from the eastern end of Minster-on-Sea to the coastal defences at Leysdown, and in particular the cliff collapses which occurred in May 2020, resulting in the loss of a residential property and placing several nearby properties at imminent risk of collapse.

For some time, we as elected Members of Swale Borough Council have been campaigning for positive action to be taken along this section of coastline to protect properties at risk from erosion. However, due to the current Shoreline Management Plan Policy for this coastal unit of “No Active Intervention” we are advised by the Environment Agency that funding cannot be accessed through DEFRA for any works to mitigate against further erosion. For information, this section of coastline falls under Policy Units 4a04 and 4a05 of the SMP 10 Isle of Grain to South Foreland.

At Swale’s Full Council Meeting on Wednesday, 11th November 2020, Members passed the following motion on the current coastal policy and we are therefore writing to you in this respect on a subject that has received substantial media coverage since the events of May 2020:-

“In view of impact of climate change accelerating the rate of the erosion on the Sheppey cliffs, this Council wishes to change Government policy to prevent further unsustainable erosion, thereby protect the existing, expanding, and future population of Sheppey. Swale Borough Council undertakes to seek the removal of the government coastal policy of non-intervention, with its serious social and commercial implications, and replace that policy with a policy of protection of the coastline.”

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The resident group that have raised the issues has also informed the collapse has impacted the National Coastal Footpath route which we would also appreciate an update on.

We look forward to discussing this issue with yourself and would like to thank you in advance for your time in this matter.

Yours sincerely

Cllr Tim Valentine
Cabinet Member for the Environment



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