

Dynamic Coast

National Coastal Erosion Risk Assessment



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F.M.E Muir, M.D. Hurst, A.F. Rennie & J.D. Hansom



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The cover image shows: (Top) Storm waves reflecting and undermining artificial defences at Golspie, Highland. Copyright: A. MacDonald (2020). (Bottom left) coastal erosion of the beach crest adjacent to the World Heritage Site at Skara Brae, Bay of Skaill in Orkney. Copyright: A Rennie / NatureScot (2019). (Bottom right) an oblique aerial image of the Splash play park at Montrose looking north. In the 1980s the play park was set-back within the dune, due to the subsequent coastal erosion, now it is in a more exposed position relying on artificial coastal defences. Copyright: F. McCaw (2021).

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Statement of notation: Throughout this document the abbreviation ‘M’ denotes ‘million’ and ‘B’ denotes ‘billion’ (e.g. £1B = one billion pounds sterling). Lower case ‘m’ denotes the unit of distance metres.

Overview

A wide range of society's assets are at risk from coastal erosion in Scotland, with all coastal cells and asset types exposed to increasing risk associated with climate change. Scotland has around £20B of roads, rail and residential properties within 50m of MHWS; with £14.5B (74%) on soft shores (protected by natural defences) compared with £5B (26%) on artificial shores (protected by artificial defences). Under a high emissions scenario and assuming a 'do nothing' coastal management scenario £1.2B of buildings, roads and railways are at risk as well as extensive sections of water network infrastructure, alongside the cultural and natural heritage affected. Current artificial coastal defence structures protect around £5B of assets, alongside around £15B of assets protected by natural defences. Tideline positions, updated from Dynamic Coast research published in 2017, suggest that across the majority of Scotland's soft coast (i.e. all soft coast excluding salt marsh) around 46% are experiencing coastal erosion, with an average rate of 0.43m/yr. This is an increase above the 38% which were erosional from resampled 2017 Dynamic Coast research results. Whilst erosion rates are expected to quicken with rising relative sea level rise, our enhanced analysis here shows that the first decades where erosion is most commonly anticipated is the 2020-2030s. Thus, whilst our natural coastal defences still retain some capacity to cope, left unchecked accelerating coastal erosion and associated enhanced coastal flood risk, is expected to have an increasingly disruptive influence on society's coastal assets. It follows that society should start resilience and adaptation planning now. Fortunately, a large proportion of the assets identified at risk are clustered within a few Local Authority areas, and our improved mapping and analysis allows follow-up investigations and resources to be targeted on these key areas.

WS2 National Coastal Erosion Risk Assessment 2 (Technical Annex)

Context

Dynamic Coast modelling has modelled the shoreline changes anticipated under High Emissions, Medium and Low Emissions Scenarios, allowing these positions to be compared with the mapped location of society’s assets. We have used data comparable to SEPA’s National Flood Risk Assessment, to ensure a consistent approach across the Scottish Public Sector. It should be stressed that such an approach aims to be indicative at a national scale and, although we assume simplified management scenarios, such as ‘do nothing’ or ‘maintain existing defences’, we acknowledge that real-world decision making is complex and depends on uncertain future political, financial and environmental contexts. Nevertheless, such national assessments provide a valuable evidence base in support of more detailed planning.

Dynamic Coast (2017) undertook a Whole Coast Assessment ([link](#)) which was summarised within the National Overview ([link](#)). Using 2017 costs £13B of road, rail and residential property was identified within 50m of MHWS. This valuation is updated here, using improved residential property data (properties mapped by detailed polygons, rather than an imperfect dataset of the central location of properties which was used in 2017). An updated valuation for residential property has also been used. Table 1 updates the Whole Coast Assessment Valuations from 2017, for key asset types. Note residential property valuation reflects average property value and excludes adjacent assets (services etc). Road and Rail valuations were taken from 2017 Dynamic Coast research.

Table 1 Whole Coast Assessment update for numbers and value of assets within 50m of MHWS in Scotland.

Asset Type	Source	Amount (# or km)	£ per unit	Total direct values (£)
Residential Property (Hard coast)	DC2	10,474	161,510	
Residential Property (Soft coast)	DC2	15,893		2.6B
Residential Property (Artificial coast)	DC2	10,444		1.7B
Roads (Hard)	DC1	733 km	6.5M/km	
Roads (Soft)	DC1	497 km		3.2B
Roads (Artificial)	DC1	107 km		0.7B
Rail (Hard)	DC1	27 km	150M/km	
Rail (Soft)	DC1	58 km		8.7B
Rail (Artificial)	DC1	18 km		2.7B
Total Road, Rail & Residential Property (£)				19.6B
Total (Soft) (£)				14.5B (74%)
Total (Artificial) (£)				5B (26%)

Methods

Anticipated coastal erosion has been modelled (using a modified Bruun method) where recent coastal changes are considered alongside recent relative sea level rise and projected forward using anticipated future relative sea level rise to influence future rates of change. An open coast and inner inlet approach was deployed (reflecting differing coastal gradients in such contexts) under the High, Medium and Low Emissions Scenarios (UKCP18 RCP 8.5 95th percentile, RCP4.6 50th percentile and RCP2.6 50th percentile). Anticipated coastal erosion areas were created by forming a polygon between the known modern (2020) shoreline and the anticipated 2050 and 2100 shorelines, respectively. This is the ‘Erosion Area’ (EA in Table 2) landward of MHWS today but expected to be seaward of MHWS

by 2050 or 2100. Similar to Dynamic Coast 1, a 10 m buffer was added to this area, termed Erosion Influence (EI in Table 2), to identify those adjacent areas that might be directly impacted by erosion events. Both of these Erosion Area and Erosion Influence areas are highly likely to be affected or damaged by erosion or wave thrown debris during storm events. A further buffer was also created a further 50m in land, termed here the Erosion Vicinity (EV, not presented in Table 2 for clarity but visible via the web-maps), to allow the identification of adjacent assets, which may be indirectly impacted by events, and flagged for further consideration by Local Authorities and asset managers etc. The net output of this process are time-series maps of the anticipated future shorelines positions each decade however, for simplicity, only the 2050 and 2100 results are presented here.

Positions of coastal assets were derived from OS and partner datasets (as points, lines and polygons) which were then 'selected by location (intersect)' with the EA, EI & EV areas generated above for 2050 and 2100. Where an asset straddled more than one of these erosion areas, we report only the greatest risk (most-seaward) asset or asset group. Although we present detail on the Erosion Area, Erosion Influence and Erosion Vicinity in the WS2 reports, the National Overview summary tables below only report the combined Erosion Area and Erosion Influence area results.

For the avoidance of doubt, these report the anticipated effect of future erosion under a 'do-nothing' coastal management scenario, where artificial and natural defences are not maintained. An example of the resulting output is shown in Figure 1 at a location where residential property, a roadway and a network water connection are all affected by anticipated erosion.



Figure 1 Exemplar location with buildings, road and associated infrastructure at risk from anticipated erosion. Grey line represents 2020 MHWS, pink lines are decadal anticipated MHWS positions from 2030 inland (right to left) with 2050 and 2100 marked in bold red. Anticipated retreat is under a high emission scenario and a 'do nothing' coastal management scenario. Indicative Results.

National Coastal Erosion Risk Assessment

The National Coastal Erosion Risk Assessment summarises the assets which are identified at risk by 2050, it is the coastal erosion equivalent to the National Flood Risk Assessment. It presents an intentionally conservative baseline where existing artificial and natural defences are not maintained. This then can be considered against alternative approaches where increasing levels of management are maintained / invested in. It should be noted that our analysis has been undertaken on soft shores and those where a beach lies in front of an artificial defence. Those shores where no natural landform exists and MHWS lies along the defence structure have not been included in our assessment. As such, the risk posed to heavily engineered shores are excluded from these assessments.

Under the ‘do nothing’ coastal management strategy and High Emission Scenario and where artificial and natural defences are not maintained coastal erosion is expected to affect at least £1.2B of assets in the next 30 years (Table 2). This includes up to 647 residential properties (£104M at 2020 prices), 4.95 km of railway (£743M) across 45 locations, and 55.6 km of road (£361M) across 1,022 locations.

If artificial defences are maintained but natural defences erode then £800M of assets are expected to be affected by erosion by 2050 (Table 2). This includes 269 residential properties at risk by 2050, 3.40 km of rail and 44.6 km of roads, all located behind natural shores. As such the maintenance (and enhancement) of natural coastal defences is critical in the coming decades. Together these figures reflect an increase over the number and value of the assets identified in the (2017) Dynamic Coast assessment (£340M of assets anticipated to be impacted). The increase reflects updated shoreline data (erosion is affecting more shores than in 2017) and improved modelling reflecting influence of rising relative sea level on beach retreat rates. Nevertheless, this Risk Assessment may underrepresent the wider risks (erosion can occur on defended and rocky shores, not included here) and the costs may be higher due to the associated impacts, beyond the individual asset costs.

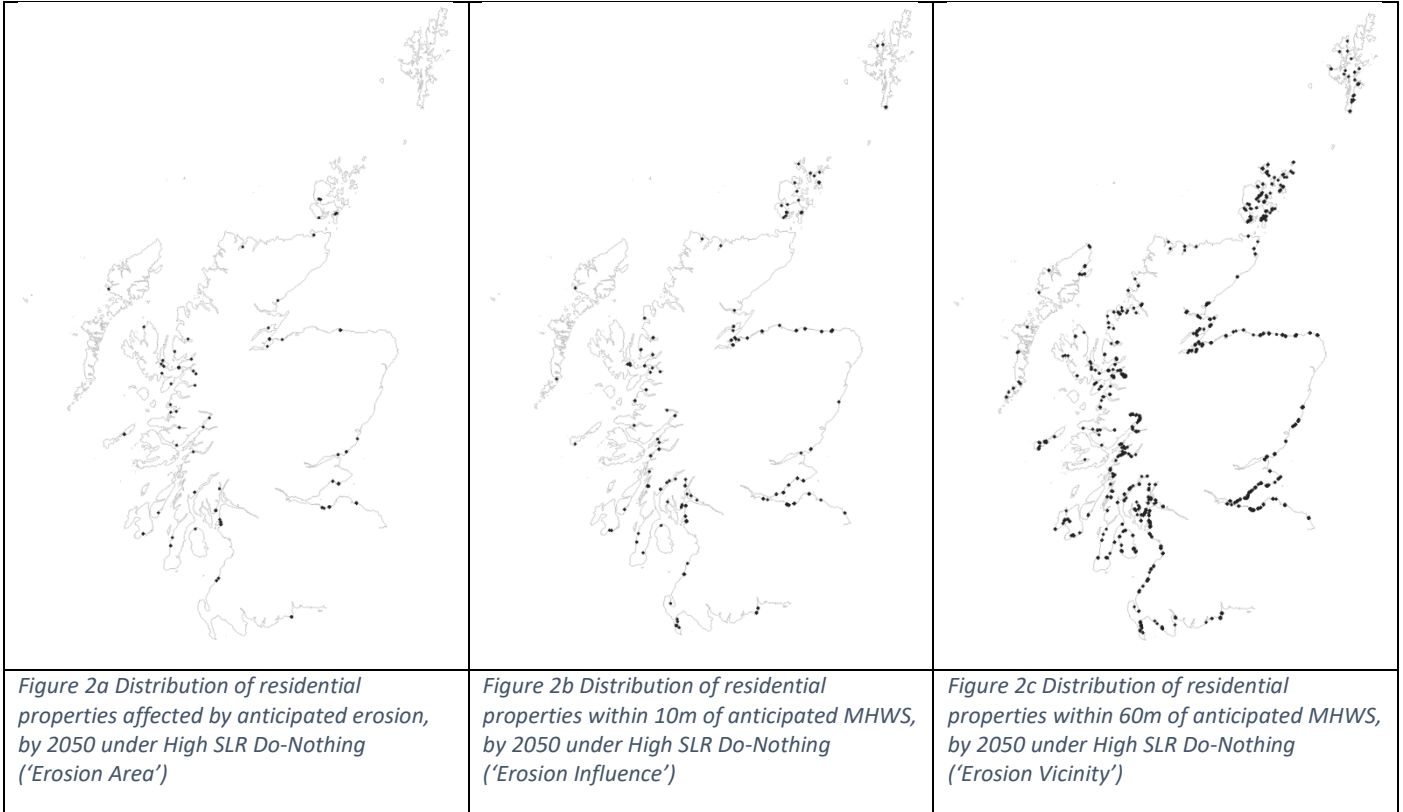
Table 2 National Coastal Erosion Risk Assessment headline figures for the assets at risk by 2050 under a high emission scenario and a ‘do nothing’ coastal management strategy. Any associated minimum replacement costs where known are indicated. Erosion Area (EA) is the eroded land seaward of the 2050 MHWS position, Erosion Influence (EI) is a 10m buffer landward of the anticipate position of MHWS in 2050. Assets within both EA and EI are expected to be ‘affected’ by erosion.

Item	Unit	Amount	Source / version
Number of Residential Properties in Scotland	#	2.6M	link
Number of Residential Properties within 1km of MHWS	#	594,031	Coastal_RPs_Poly.shp
Number of Residential Properties within 50m of MHWS	#	36,811	
Length of coastal defences	km	612	DC2_Defences_Scot.shp
Number of properties within 50m of MHWS & Defences	#	15,951	Coastal_RPs_Poly.shp
Number of properties up to 25m behind defences	#	6,923	ResProp Defended
Value of properties up to 25m behind defences	£	1.1B	2020 Ave. house (link) £161,510 x 6,923
Number of <i>properties</i> modelled	#	29,285	Select by Loc, WS2_200m buff Flat ended buffer
Number of <i>defended properties</i> modelled	#	1,516	ResProp Defended within 200m flat buff of WS2_2020_MHWS
Number of <i>properties</i> expected to erode by 2050	#	217	(EA) total Eroded.shp QA Pass

based on a High Emissions Scenario, and if both artificial and natural defences are not maintained , in locations modelled		430 647	(EI) (EA+EI)	
Number of <i>properties</i> expected to erode by 2050, based on a High Emissions Scenario, and if those artificial defences are maintained (100% effective) but natural defences aren't maintained , in locations modelled	#	70 199 269	(EA) (EI) (EA+EI)	Eroded.shp where Defended_25m = No (i.e. defences work so remove these props from total)
Number of <i>properties</i> otherwise at risk of erosion, which remain protected by 2050 if artificial defences are maintained (100% effective)	#	147 231 378	(EA) (EI) (EA+EI)	Eroded.shp where Defended_25m = Yes
Length of <i>rail</i> affected by erosion by 2050 (where both artificial and natural defences are not maintained)	km	1.22 3.74 4.95	(EA) (EI) (EA+EI)	
Length of <i>rail</i> affected by erosion by 2050, excluding those defended (i.e. defences are 100% effective)	km	1.06 2.34 3.40	(EA) (EI) (EA+EI)	Defended_25m = No
Length of <i>road</i> affected by erosion by 2050 (where both artificial and natural defences are not maintained)	km	19.2 36.4 55.6	(EA) (EI) (EA+EI)	
Length of <i>road</i> affected by erosion by 2050, excluding those defended (i.e. defences are 100% effective)	km	15.1 29.5 44.6	(EA) (EI) (EA+EI)	Defended_25m = No
Value of modelled <i>property</i> at risk under a High Emissions Strategy by 2050 where both artificial and natural defences are not maintained .	£	35M 64M 104M	(EA) (EI) (EA+EI)	2020 Ave. house (link) £161,510 x 647
Value of <i>properties</i> expected to erode, excluding those defended (i.e. defences are 100% effective)	£	11M 32M 43M	(EA) (EI) (EA+EI)	2020 Ave. house (link) £161,510 x 269 Defended_25m = No
Value of <i>rail</i> affected by erosion by 2050 (where both artificial and natural defences are not maintained)	£	182M 561M 743M	(EA) (EI) (EA+EI)	£150M/km x 4.95
Value of <i>rail</i> affected by erosion by 2050 excluding those defended (i.e. defences are 100% effective)	£	159M 351M 511M	(EA) (EI) (EA+EI)	£150M/km x 3.40 Defended_25m = No
Value of <i>road</i> affected by erosion by 2050 (where both artificial and natural defences are not maintained)	£	125M 236M 361M	(EA) (EI) (EA+EI)	£6.5M/km x 55.6
Value of <i>road</i> affected by erosion by 2050 excluding those defended (i.e. defences are 100% effective)	£	98M 192M 290M	(EA) (EI) (EA+EI)	£6.5M/km x 44.6
Total minimum value of <i>Road, Rail & Residential Properties</i> at risk by 2050 under a 'do nothing coastal management' strategy, where both artificial and natural defences aren't maintained	£		1.2B	104 + 743 + 361 = £1,208M
Total minimum value of <i>Road, Rail & Residential Properties</i> at risk by 2050 if artificial defences are maintained, but natural defences are not maintained	£		0.8B	43 + 511 + 290 = £844M

Figure 2a–c provides an impression of the distribution of residential properties, being affected by erosion by 2050 under a High Emissions Scenario and where artificial and natural defences are not maintained. Erosion Area (EA) is the eroded land seaward of the 2050 MHWS position, Erosion Influence (EI) is a 10m buffer landward of the

anticipate position of MHWS in 2050. Assets within both EA and EI are expected to be ‘affected’ by erosion. Erosion Vicinity (EV) considers the adjacent assets a further 50m from the Erosion Influence, these assets are not expected to be affected by erosion and are identified for awareness raising and future planning.



See the link below for an interactive web-map of the results:

Browser link
www.dynamiccoast.com/webmaps.html

Table 3 National Coastal Erosion Risk Assessment summary table highlighting the infrastructural assets at risk under a low (RCP2.6) and high (RCP8.5) emission scenario and a 'do nothing' coastal management strategy. Any associated minimum replacement costs where known are indicated. Assets within both EA and EI are expected to be 'affected' by erosion.

Asset	Unit	RCP2.6	RCP2.6	RCP8.5	RCP8.5	RCP2.5	RCP8.5
		2050 EA	2050 EI	2050 EA	2050 EI	EA+EI £M	EA+EI £M
Residential Property	#	173	279	217	430	73	104
Non Residential Property	#	51	103	70	151		
Roads (Trunk & non Trunk)	m	12,773	26,499	19,215	36,362	256	361
Roads (Trunk & non Trunk) (EA+EI)	#	591	n/a	727	n/a		
Rail	m	457	2,776	1,216	3,737	485	743
Rail (EA+EI)	#	54	n/a	63	n/a		
Community Services	#	1	0	1	0		
Utilities	#	3	2	3	3		
Runways	m2	8,994	4,479	9,587	4,597		
Runways	#	6	6	6	7		
Total						£814M	£1,209M

It is acknowledged that whilst some of the assets can be readily costed (Residential Property for example), non-residential property and the associated utility networks are harder to cost but are likely to increase the total value of assets at risk (although we have established the total numbers and lengths involved). Table 3 estimates the value of roads, rail and residential property at risk under a Low Emissions scenario and Do Nothing Coastal Management Strategy is £814M; compared with the equivalent High Emissions Scenario is £1.209B. Thus, the minimum avoided damaged costs of a Low emissions future compared with a High Emissions Scenario is ca. £395M by 2050. It is noted that there are substantial assets which remain un-costed within Table 4, Table 5 and Table 6. Further analysis can be undertaken by partner organisations. An example of collaboration with Scottish Water is shown below in Table 4, informing the differential impacts of a 'do nothing' coastal management strategy for either a Low Emissions or High Emissions future, by 2050.

Table 4 National Coastal Erosion Risk Assessment summary table highlighting the wastewater assets at risk under a low (RCP2.6) and high (RCP8.5) emission scenario and a 'do nothing' coastal management strategy. Assets within both EA and EI are expected to be 'affected' by erosion. Network assets refer to pumping stations, combined sewer overflows and sewer network tanks, and treatment assets refer to treatment works and outfalls.

Asset	Unit	RCP2.6	RCP2.6	RCP8.5	RCP8.5
		2050 EA	2050 EI	2050 EA	2050 EI
Rising Mains	m	3,204	7,172	7,165	10,197
Rising Mains	#	113	166	146	206
Gravity Pipes	m	8,022	11,292	12,185	15,128
Gravity Pipes	#	676	942	849	1196
Wastewater Network Assets	#	47	59	58	69
Wastewater Treatment Assets	#	162	114	149	119

Table 5 provides a similar breakdown for green spaces, cultural and natural heritage interests assuming a 'do nothing' coastal management strategy for either a Low Emissions or High Emissions future, by 2050.

Table 5 National Coastal Erosion Risk Assessment summary table highlighting the cultural and natural heritage assets at risk under a low (RCP2.6) and high (RCP8.5) emission scenario and a 'do nothing' coastal management strategy. Assets within both EA and EI are expected to be impacted by erosion.

Asset	Unit	RCP2.6	RCP2.6	RCP8.5	RCP8.5
		2050 EA	2050 EI	2050 EA	2050 EI
Properties in Care	ha	0.3	0.9	0.6	0.9
Properties in Care	#	6	5	6	5
Scheduled Monuments	ha	61	7	67	9
Scheduled Monuments	#	52	68	59	74
Gardens & Designed Landscape	ha	29	21	37	26
Gardens & Designed Landscape	#	29	30	30	32
Battlefields	ha	2	1	2	2
Battlefields	#	3	3	3	3
Golf Courses	ha	40	25	54	31
Golf Courses	#	45	54	48	61
Greenspace (incl. Golf Courses)	ha	57	0	73	43
Greenspace (incl. Golf Courses)	#	182	237	265	255
National Nature Reserves	ha	31	4	35	5
National Nature Reserves	#	5	5	6	6
Special Areas of Conservation	ha	310	109	403	125
Special Areas of Conservation	#	53	52	53	52
Special Protection Areas	ha	362	143	483	169
Special Protection Areas	#	55	55	57	56
Sites of Special Scientific Interest	ha	601	248	776	292
Sites of Special Scientific Interest	#	200	198	204	202
Nature Conserv. Marine Protected Areas	ha	0.7	0.7	1.4	1.0
Nature Conserv. Marine Protected Areas	#	8.0	7.0	8.0	7.0

Local Authority Risk Assessment Results

The GIS-based analysis with Dynamic Coast also enables a more detailed and regional appraisal of the spatial data, for example, based on Local Authority areas and Coastal Cells. A coastal cells approach, based on the nature of sediment exchanges, would be a preferred scientific approach to coastal management however, the reality is that coastal management is delivered by Local Authorities (LA) and so a breakdown by LA is depicted below in Table 3. The asset data was aggregated into points (e.g. utilities), lines (e.g. road lengths) and polygons (e.g. nature reserve) datasets and intersected or 'selected by location' with the EA, EI & EV areas noted above. Where assets straddled more than one of these erosion areas, the greatest risk (most-seaward) group was reported. Although the detail in the WS2 reports presents all three areas of Erosion Area, Erosion Influence and Erosion Vicinity (see Annex), the summary in Table 3 below reports only the combined Erosion Area and Erosion Influence area results, i.e. those directly affected by future

erosion, under a ‘do-nothing’ high-emissions scenario and a ‘do nothing’ coastal management scenario. The table below also report the ‘number of linear features’ affected by erosion.

Table 6 National Coastal Erosion Risk Assessment Local Authority summary table highlighting the assets at risk under a High Emission Scenario and a ‘do nothing’ coastal management scenario, which assumes that artificial and natural defences are not maintained, and where present erosion impacts landward assets.

Local Authority	Residential Property		Non-Residential Property		Roads (all)				Rail			
	2050 EA	2050 EI	2050 EA	2050 EI	2050 EA	2050 EA	2050 EI	2050 EI	2050 EA	2050 EA	2050 EI	2050 EI
	#	#	#	#	km	#	km	#	km	#	km	#
Aberdeenshire		37		19	0.1	6	0.9	13				
Angus	1	2	1	1				2				1
Argyll & Bute	25	35	12	28	3.6	59	10.9	145				3
City of Edinburgh	2	17	1	1		1	0.1	2				
CnES					0.2	4	0.7	10				
Dumfries & Galloway	11	25	2	8	0.9	11	2.5	33				
Dundee City	2	1		3				1	0.1	1		1
East Lothian	33	51	10	5	1.0	11	0.7	12				
Falkirk		13			0.1	1	0.2	2				
Fife	41	21	7	12	1.5	13	0.5	22	0.2	4	1.0	12
Highland	21	43	14	31	6.7	99	11.1	214	1.0	24	2.7	65
Moray	19	26	3	5	0.3	11	0.1	6				
North Ayrshire	13	79	1	6	1.0	13	2.1	39				
Orkney Island	8	26	11	21	1.7	20	4.5	58				
Scottish Borders		2		4								
Shetland Islands		3	1	3	0.2	7	1.4	21				
South Ayrshire	41	30	5	4	1.8	25	0.6	29				
West Lothian		1	2		0.1	2		2				
Scotland	217	412	70	151	19.2	283	36.3	611	1.3	29	3.7	82

Table 6 demonstrates a clustering of anticipated impacts within a handful of Scottish Local Authority areas. For example, around half of the residential properties across Scotland that are expected to be affected by erosion, under a do-nothing high emissions scenario, are located in the Highland Council, East Lothian and North Ayrshire Council areas. A similar pattern exists for Non-Residential Property, and an even greater clustering is anticipated for road (trunk and non-trunk) network where half of the erosion affected road length is found between Highland and Argyll & Bute Council areas.

Whilst care should be taken in the over interpretation of these results, namely they should not be used for property level protection, the analysis herein provides decadal-level anticipated impacts. These data have been made available for Local Authorities and Public Sector Partners in support of their statutory duties.

End.