

## **Coastal conference reveals value of data providing an insight into the South West's changing coastline**

A decade of data estimated to be worth more than £500 million is providing a valuable graphic and technical illustration of changes to 2,000km of coastline around the South West of England, it has been revealed.

During a talk at COAST South West 2016, scientist Emerald Siggery, leader of the coastal process team at the Plymouth Coastal Observatory says that the bank of high quality information has been compiled by mapping, measuring, monitoring and photographing key points around the South West coast at regular intervals each year since 2006.

The information is gathered as part of the South West Regional Coastal Monitoring Programme (SWRCMP) and is used by Defra and the Environment Agency, as well as local authorities, engineers, architects, academics, surfers, fishermen, harbourmasters, Network Rail and many other groups and individuals connected with the coast. It is available free of charge via a website: [southwest.coastalmonitoring.org](http://southwest.coastalmonitoring.org)

Prior to the creation of the SWRCMP in 2006 data gathering was ad hoc; collected in a variety of ways, normally for a specific purpose and not stored centrally.

Emerald explained: "Using standard and repeatable methods of gathering data, every year for 10 years, the programme has revealed the bigger picture of how the South West coast is changing as well as the finer detail which is so useful for so many people and organisations.

"We estimate that the programme has provided £526,932,000 worth of data over the last 10 years. That's how much it would have cost people to gather the information they've received from us – for nothing – if they'd had to do all the work themselves."

The PCO team use topographic surveys, LiDAR, bathymetry, aerial photography, habitat mapping, wave buoys and tide gauges to gather data.

Emerald Siggery was one of the speakers at Coast South West 2016, an event held at Plymouth University to mark 10 years of data gathered by the PCO for the SWRCMP. Guest speaker was broadcaster Miranda Krestovnikoff, who reports on natural history and the marine environment for the BBC's Coast series, who reflected on how precious the coast is to so many people.

Other speakers included Tony Flux, from the National Trust, which owns 480 km of the South West coast. Explaining that it costs around £3,000 for the Trust to maintain just one mile of coast, he spoke about the Shifting Shores report, detailing the organisation's strategies for future coastal adaptation.

Alex Bellisario, from CITIZAN, explained the work the new organisation is doing training volunteers to record, monitor and highlight threatened archaeological sites around the coast.

Professor Gerd Masselink, from Plymouth University, spoke about how changing weather patterns had affected coastal erosion and accretion, and Dr Tom Howard, from the Met Office, explained how forecasters were modelling future climate and sea level changes around the world.

Philip Rees, from the South West Regional Flood and Coastal Committee, said: "We want to make certain that we have all the information we need and that it is right up to date.

"The Plymouth Coastal Observatory's surveys mean we can design schemes with the latest information to hand."

The PCO was set up as the data management arm of the South West Regional Coastal Monitoring Programme, which covers more than 2,000km of coastline in the South West peninsula from Portland Bay in West Dorset to Beachley Point in Gloucestershire. The Programme is funded by the Department for Environment Food & Rural Affairs and is led by Teignbridge District Council on behalf of the Environment Agency and the region's maritime local authorities.