



Lyme Regis is a small coastal town of around 4,000 people. It finds itself in the heart of the World Heritage Jurassic Coastline, famous for its fossilised remains. However, in recent years, the rapidly shrinking coastline surrounding the town have become unstable, gradually being eroded by the strong south-westerly wind and waves. This retreat of the foreshore has led to existing inadequate defences being breached repeatedly, culminating in the need for a rapid action plan – the **Lyme Regis Environmental Improvement Scheme**, set up by West Dorset District Council in the early 1990s.

In more detail... the coastal composition of Lyme Regis

Lyme Regis is particularly vulnerable as it lies on slipped land made up of **soft, unstable clays and sands** which **slide over the top of stronger limestone and clay rocks** down towards the sea, which at the same time is eating away at the base of the cliffs inland, with the only natural coastal defenses being the **eroded beach offering little protection from the elements**.

As a result, some buildings are being damaged or subsiding as and when landslides occur, notably in **2008, when about 400m of cliff slipped, exposing a hazardous old landfill site**.

Management has been split into **4 Phases** – at a total cost of **over £35M to secure homes, roads, and infrastructure**, although **Phase 3** (from 'The Cobb' westwards) was shelved owing to a poor cost-benefit analysis as few people lived there.

Phase 1: Construction of a new sea wall and promenade with Rock Armor was completed in 1995, and a further emergency cliff stabilization scheme had to be conducted in 2003/4.

Phase 2: Involved from 2005 – 2007 for £17 M the protection of the sea front and stabilization of the town immediately behind it. Wooden groynes replaced with stronger stone and sand was imported from France to build up and 'renourish' the beach, along with smaller soil nailing and drainage improvements to limit the impact of physical weathering.

Phase 4: Between 2013 and 2015, a northerly new sea-wall was built to provide protection to the coastal paths surrounding the town, and more cliff stabilization aimed to protect 480 homes from collapse.



The figure above shows a segment of the most recently built sea wall

Additional Recommended Viewing:

[Is erosion good or bad for Lyme Regis?](#)

Scheme Successes:

- Long-term protection against destructive coastal erosion and landslips, both hard and soft engineering.
- More sand and shingle on the enlarged beach benefits tourism.
- A new promenade along the seafront. It will be possible to walk along the whole beach even at high tide. Improvements to infrastructure and a more secure future for residents and businesses.

Scheme Drawbacks:

- Ultimately costly and like all management only really viable in the short and medium term.
- Huge costs associated for only 4,000 residents on a huge variety of different schemes, one of which was scrapped.
- Some see the new promenade as unaesthetically pleasing and damaging the natural atmosphere.