

A comparative review of coastal conservation policies in France, and England and Wales

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Abstract. In Europe, Britain was relatively early in being aware of the necessity of conserving natural coastal sites, though not as early as The Netherlands. In the 1960s and 1970s, increasing economic and tourist pressures in Europe prompted measures geared to the protection of other coasts in Europe. The promptness of the British reaction was a result of a sensitive public opinion and of powerful private trusts (National Trust with Enterprise Neptune) rather than of a commitment by the Government. In France a specific organization, in part inspired by the British principle, was set up. However, the French system is based much more on a public authority, the *Conservatoire de l'Espace Littoral et des Rivages Lacustres* and on legislation (Coastal Law of 1986). Although very different in the beginning, French and British conservation politics today show many similarities, along with the similarities in the concerns of both countries.

Keywords: Administrative framework; Coastal management; Natural site.

Abbreviations: AONB = Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty; CELRL = Conservatoire de l'Espace Littoral et des Rivages Lacustres; MNR = Marine Nature Preserve; ONF = Office National des Forêts; POS = Plan d'Occupation du Sol; SSSI = Site of Special Scientific Interest; TDENS = Taxe départementale des Espaces Naturels Sensibles.

Introduction

Over the last 40 years, the coastal zone in industrialized countries has become a hotbed of competition between various, often incompatible, activities and forms of development: economic development, tourism, urbanization, exploitation of marine resources and coastal conservation. These multiple and ever increasing pressures, the impact of which is intensified by the limited space available in most coastal zones, are comparable on either side of the English Channel. The determination of proponents of each interest in their bid to impose their activities, and the ingenuity often deployed to circumvent legislation are probably

much the same in both France and the United-Kingdom. Natural coastal zones in both countries are thus ones equally prone to appropriation by groups having different interests and are equally threatened by these activities. In view of this competition that has developed insidiously all over Europe since the first half of this century, the French and the British have not protected their coastal natural sites against systematic development with the same diligence. The implementation of measures aimed at conserving natural coastal sites took rather different forms in the two neighbouring nations, each having its own system of statutes and power-sharing between stakeholders. Notwithstanding, after several decades of functioning with goals that are in the final analysis very similar, conservation policies and the action of conservation, increasingly tend to be very close. Mutual enrichment from past experiences, and from those of other industrialized countries in Europe and North America (Miossec 1993), has progressively led to a convergence of policy, while each nation has maintained specific treats proper to its history, culture and geographic situation

After The Netherlands, the United Kingdom was one of the first European countries where coastal conservation started. The first major British reactions against the potential threats to the coast were voiced by private organizations, as early as the 1930s. In France, awareness came much later. The first document laying the foundations for French coastal planning, the 'Rapport Piquard', was published only in 1974, and emanated directly from the State authorities. But, the delay incurred by France seems to have been overcome. Many British initiatives, like Heritage Coasts and the National Trust, have inspired French policy, notably in the foundation of the *Conservatoire de l'Espace Littoral et des Rivages Lacustres*, CELRL. Moreover, France has endowed itself with a battery of laws for the protection of the coastal zone which has no equivalent in England and Wales.

Year	England and Wales	France
1895	Foundation of the National Trust.	
1907	Inalienability of the Nation Trust properties instituted by a special Act of Parliament. (A similar measure to be taken in France only in 1975, with the creation of the ' <i>Conservatoire de l'Espace Littoral et des Rivages Lacustres</i> ', CELRL.)	
1930		Law of May 2, concerning the protection of sites, instituting the ' <i>Site Classé</i> ' (classed site) and ' <i>Site Inscrit</i> ' (listed site). These terms are widely used to protect coastal sites; they impose numerous interdictions and limitations concerning utilization of coastal sites by their owners. (This kind of protection is close to certain British designations such as SSSI and AONB.)
1936	Publication of the first report on the pressure exerted on the coast and proposition of the main principles for coastal planning by the 'Council for the Preservation of Rural England'.	
1938	Foundation of the 'Coastal Preservation Committee' by several organizations, including the Council for the Protection of Rural England and the National Trust ; it extols the 'moral duty of each generation to preserve the precious heritage of the coast' (in Cullen 1984). (This notion of protecting the natural heritage for future generations will become a cornerstone principle of the French CELRL.)	
1943	Launching, at the initiative of the British Government, of a major operation of inventorying and classification of coastal sites to be preserved by the 'Ministry of Town and Country Planning' (Steers 1944).	
1947	Town and Country Planning Act, a milestone in British policy regarding land use regulation ; It spells the end of numerous abuses relative to constructions on the coast and marks an important phase of decentralization by conferring on local authorities (Councils and Districts) responsibility in matters of coastal planning. (French laws of decentralization empower only in 1983 local authorities, notably <i>Communes</i> , to take decisions regarding matters of land use.)	
1949	National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act: founding of the Nature Conservancy (later to become the Nature Conservancy Council) and of the National Park Commission (later replaced by the Countryside Commission). Institution of the Sites of Special Scientific Interest and the National Parks.	
1956	Institution of the Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty.	
1960		Institution of 'Parcs Nationaux' (National Parks).
1963	Circular of the British Government outlining the national policy on Coastal Preservation and Development. (The Directive on the Preservation and Management of the Coastal Zone, published by the French Government in 1979, looks like this British circular.)	
1965	The National Trust launches the 'Entreprise Neptune', a major save-the-coast operation.	
1966	Another circular of the British Government outlining the national policy on the Coast.	
1968	The National Parks Commission is replaced by the Countryside Commission as a governmental agency in charge of the conservation of natural landscapes for the enjoyment of the public. It will play a major role in future coastal conservation.	Institution of the ' <i>Redevance Départementale d'Espaces Verts</i> ' (Departmental green tax), a tax levied on constructions. It financially and legally empowered <i>Départements</i> to intervene substantially in favour of the protection of coastal sites. It is the first step for a <i>Département</i> to play a prominent role in a voluntary policy that is close to those of both the Heritage Coasts and the CELRL.

Fig. 1. Table summarising the main historical phases of conservation of natural coastal sites in France, England and Wales.

Year	England and Wales	France
1970	Two major reports are published by the Countryside Commission: 'Planning of the Coastline' and 'The Coastal Heritage'. They carry out an inventory of problems related to utilization of the coast and propose protective measures. These reports mark the beginnings of the policy of Heritage Coasts whose principle is to involve as much as possible local communities and which constitute one of the cornerstones of the protection of coasts in Britain. (Certain principles of the French <i>CELRL</i> are inspired by the policy of the Heritage Coasts, especially that of the participation of <i>Communes</i> and <i>Départements</i> in protection.)	
1973	Reorganization of the Nature Conservancy into the Nature Conservancy Council, whose mission consists of protecting natural ecosystems for their scientific value.	Two important Ministerial circulars deal with the limitation of the use of the coastal zone for development operations (Anon. 1975).
1974		Publication, at the initiative of the State authorities, of the Rapport Piquard, entitled ' <i>Perspectives pour l'aménagement du littoral français</i> ' (perspectives for the management of the French littoral zone); it is the first document laying the foundations for coastal planning.
1975		Foundation of the <i>Conservatoire de l'Espace Littoral et des Rivages Lacustres, CELRL</i> , a state body whose field of authority is specifically the coastal zone; it attempts to carry out the twin goals of protecting the beauty of landscapes and ecosystem diversity. This creation marks a significant turning point in the history of the conservation of French coastal sites.
1976		Law changing the <i>Redevance Départementale d'Espaces Verts</i> into the <i>Taxe Départementale d'Espace Vert</i> (Green Tax); reinforcing the role of the <i>Département</i> .
1977		Decree instituting impact studies for new developments in order to preserve the ecological balance. (<i>Journal Officiel</i> 13/10/1977).
1979		Publication of the ' <i>Directive de la Préservation et l'Aménagement du Zone Littoral</i> ' (Directive on the preservation and management of the coastal zone) by the French Government (<i>Journal Officiel</i> , 26/08/1979).
1985		Law changing the ' <i>Taxe d'Espaces Verts</i> ' (Green tax) into the <i>Taxe Départementale d'Espaces Naturels Sensibles</i> (Departmental tax on sensitive natural sites). It confirms again the competence of <i>Départements</i> in matters of coastal conservation.
1986		'Loi Littoral' (Coastal Law), relative to coastal management, protection and planning. It constitutes the basic text formalizing the doctrine of coastal management and marks a turning point (Becet & Le Morvan 1990). It aims not only at nature conservation but also at the reconciliation of the various coastal interests. It is the first legal text concerning the protection of natural coastal sites.
1989		Application Decree of the Coastal Law of 1986, specifying the ' <i>espaces remarquables</i> ' (special sites) to be protected because of their ecological value. These sites must be delimited in the ' <i>Plan d'Occupation des Sols</i> ' (Land Use Plan) of the <i>Communes</i> and should be under strict legal protection. This is presently under way. In certain <i>Communes</i> , where the pressure is strong and the interests are varied, negotiations between State agencies and local councillors may be very difficult. Since the law does not make a provision for compensation, <i>Communes</i> with large areas of 'protection-prone' natural sites, often consider themselves as disadvantaged compared to neighbouring <i>Communes</i> more free to encourage development.
1991	Reorganization of the Nature Conservancy Council into three distinct bodies: English Nature, Countryside Council for Wales and Scottish Natural Heritage, representing respectively England, Wales and Scotland, and a common committee, the Joint Nature Conservation Committee.	
1996	Reorganization of some local authorities (Unitary Authorities).	

Fig. 1. (continued)

Main stakeholders and conservation statutes

In England and Wales, as in France, the multiplicity of stakeholders and statutes aimed at conservation of natural coastal sites create a rather complicated situation (Fig. 2). The State, local authorities, organizations and private landowners interact to varying degrees, depending on their political weight, their financial resources and their different regulatory powers. Conservation statutes are also numerous and disparate and their applications varied. Some have a regulatory power defined by the law whereas others are simply indicative (Meur 1993).

State activities

France

In both countries, the State wields legislative power that enables implementation of regulations relating to coastal conservation. The State also acts through the agency of various administrative services of different Ministries (Public Works, Environment, Agriculture, Sea, Defence ...) or Secretaries of State (England, Wales, Scotland ...) involved in coastal management. It also participates in various activities such as protection of the coast against erosion, water pollution and water quality, conservation of the natural and coordination of the various coast-based activities. The actions carried out by the various Ministries are inscribed in a much larger framework than that of simply protecting natural coastal sites. The services concerned do not specialise in a single domain. Certain governmental bodies have more specific competence.

The *Conservatoire de l'espace littoral et des rivages lacustres* is affiliated to the Ministry of the Environment. It is commissioned by the State to conserve, rehabilitate and open to the public the most significant coastal sites. In this regard, it carries out, in collaboration with local authorities, a policy of conservation of coastal estates. The estates thus acquired become inalienable and came under permanent protection, like those of the National Trust.

The *CELRL* is presently the most important estate owner in France, after the State itself. By January 1995 it possessed 49000 ha (including lake shores), i.e. 650 km of marine coastline or about 12 % of the French shoreline. The *CELRL* has both administrative and financial autonomy, both of which are guaranteed by state subvention (to the tune of 100 million FRF a year) and by private donors which may be firms or individuals. Although a guarantor of the smooth functioning of the conservation of its estates, the *CELRL* does not

carry out their day-to-day running. This is done by the local authorities or by specialized agencies (nature conservation groups, public agencies empowered to do this, and mixed liability groups). The *CELRL* is a body specialized in the conservation of natural coastal sites. Although its creation found inspiration from several British agencies, it does not have an identical British counterpart.

The *Office National des Forêts* (National Forests Office) is another governmental body involved in the conservation of coastal sites. Its actions are limited to the specific case of sites submitted to a 'forestry statute'. The *ONF* does not restrict its intervention to the coastal zone and is financially autonomous. It is a profit-making concern, income coming from the sale of timber from estates and from dues it collects from local authorities whose forests it patrols and upkeep.

On the coast, forests are rarely productive because of site constraints. To obviate this coastal problem of profitability, the State traditionally allocated funds to the *ONF* in exchange for its conservation and maintenance services. Currently, this funding has been restricted and the *ONF* finds itself increasingly unable to balance its costs in many forested coastal sites. The *ONF* is traditionally responsible for dune stabilization, especially in Aquitaine. Moreover, certain forested domains that are particularly rich in terms of species may be classed as *Réserves Biologiques Domaniales* (Biological Reserves). The preservation process is, in such cases, elaborated by the *ONF*. Once classed as such, the domains are liable to greater protection (including, in some cases, closure to the public) and strict limitation of forestry activities. This designation is sometimes applied to coastal sites such as the dune fields of Merlimont in the Région Nord-Pas de Calais and to certain sites on the Mediterranean coast.

England and Wales

In England, two groups of government agencies, the Countryside Commission and English Nature, play major roles in the conservation of natural coastal sites, although their responsibility is not limited to the coast. The Countryside Commission is an autonomous government agency whose mission is to conserve the natural beauty of landscapes and to encourage informal open-air recreation in a spirit of conservation.

This Commission instituted three types of conservation sites: National Parks (comparable to the French National Parks), Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) and Heritage Coasts. AONBs are sites of national importance whose natural landscapes are of 'exceptional beauty'. This designation, which is not specific to the coast, dates back to 1956. Recently

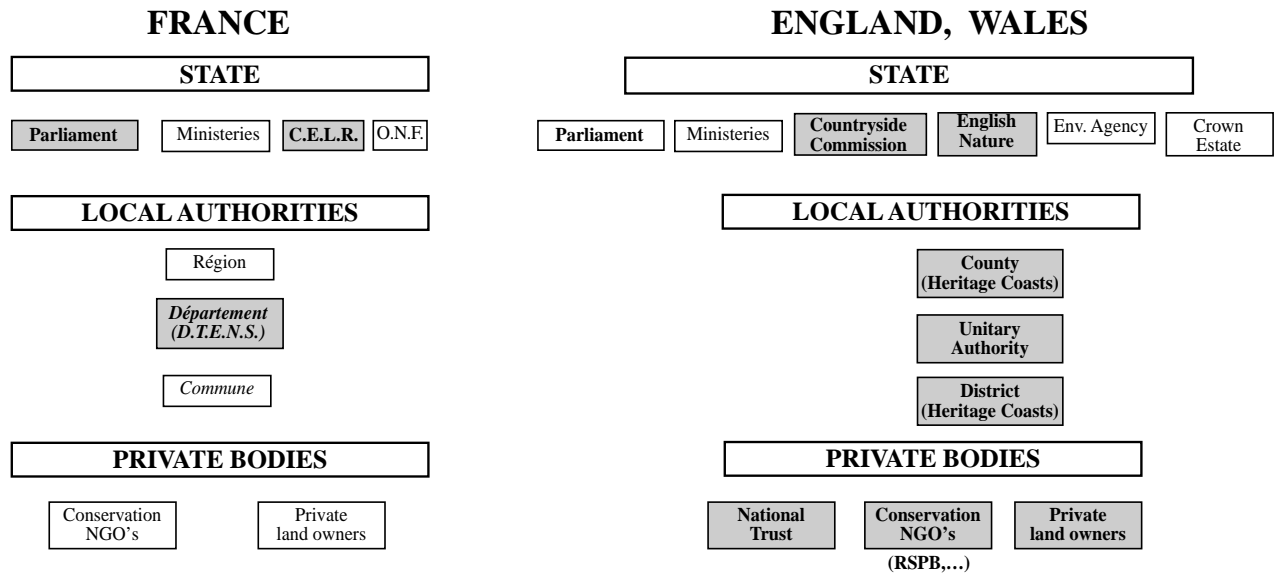


Fig. 2. Main stakeholders in the conservation of natural coastal sites in France, England and Wales. Shaded = the most important stakeholders

reinforced rules limit major development projects on such sites. The statutes of AONBs and the regulations they involve are very similar to those of 'Classed Sites' in France; however, AONBs are much more numerous and more extensive. 35% of the English coast falls under the influence of AONBs. The Heritage Coast label differs from the former in that it applies specifically to the coast. It involves association between state bodies (mainly the Countryside Commission) and local authorities. It is one of the cornerstones of the policy of conservation of natural coastal sites in Britain.

The second kind of body, English Nature, is commissioned to forewarn and advise the government on matters of ecosystem protection. It promotes the conservation of wildlife and of the natural morphology of landscapes considered as national wealth and as part of the international heritage. English Nature selects, establishes and manages National Nature Reserves (comparable to the French Natural Reserves) and Marine Nature Reserves (involved in the protection of marine fauna and flora in territorial waters). They also identify and enlist Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). Although this label exists since 1949, it only acquired legal value in 1981. These sites of ecological, geological and geomorphical interest are brought to the attention of the local authorities in order to take account of these significant interests in their land use plans. This system of conservation is based on cooperation between landowners, tenants, English Nature and local authorities. The status of an SSSI is similar to

that of a 'Listed Site' and a 'Classed Site' in France but their vocation is specifically that of conserving the ecological heritage, and not of being open to the public. About 6 % of the area of England is protected by this status. SSSI are the basis of the British policy of protection of ecosystems.

In Wales, a single organization, the Countryside Council for Wales, undertakes the roles of English Nature and of the Countryside Commission.

The Environment Agency and the Crown Estate, two other State bodies, are also involved in matters relating to British coastal sites but they are not specifically geared to nature conservation. Created in April 1996, the new Environment Agency for England and Wales combines the regulation of land, air and water. It is the result of the merger of the former National River Authority, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Pollution, the Waste Regulation Authority and several smaller units from the Department of Environment. Among several other missions, the Environmental Agency is responsible for controlling and improving the quality of natural water resources and for planning their utilization. Its functions are wide-ranging and include protection against floods, water quality and pollution control, water resource management, environmental conservation for fishing and leisure activities, and nature conservation. In this field, its action includes river waters, estuaries and the coasts (up to 5 km offshore) of England and Wales. Its multiple responsibilities confer on it a global vision of coastal problems, but nature conservationists sometimes re-

proached the former National River Authority for its rather particular reliance on hard engineering structures in the fight against coastal erosion, often to the detriment of ecosystem preservation (in Houston et al. 1990). Will the approach of the new Environmental Agency be different ?

The Crown Estate is a body that is completely apart and specific to Britain in that it concerns estates of the Crown. For historical reasons, the Crown, and not the Sovereign himself or herself, possesses farmlands, forests and also the seabed of all U.K. territorial water (12 miles). This normally includes the intertidal zone, except in a few cases (for instance in Cornwall where it is the Duchy of Cornwall, Estate of the Prince of Wales, who is responsible for this zone). The Crown Estate Commission manages its estates as a profit-making concern. It gives aggregate extraction concessions to private enterprises and leases sites for aquaculture. Moreover, as U.K. planning legislation stops at the high water mark, interventions below are at the discretion of the Crown Estate Commission. Several environmental defence organizations and individuals reproach this body for placing emphasis on profit-making before environmental considerations, and consider that, unlike the State, the Crown Estate Commission cannot be an impartial body in nature conservation because it is directly involved in exploitation.

Local authorities

France

In France, local authorities are involved at three territorial levels in the conservation of natural coastal sites: the *Région*, the *Département* and the *Commune*. In England and Wales, some changes have taken place over the last few years regarding local authorities. Formerly, two levels were particularly important in delivering local government: the County (which may be compared in its size and functions to a unit somewhat between the French *Région* and *Département*) and the District (similar in size to French *Cantons*, but whose responsibilities are much more important, and somewhere between the French *Département* and *Commune*). In 1992, a review was started with the recommendation from the central government that the two tier system of local government should progressively be simplified in a single level system (Unitary Authorities should combine all the functions of both District and Council). The review took three years and caused considerable amount of concern amongst the District and County Councils as it was unclear how the recommendation would affect them. The suggestions

were different from place to place, depending on the size of local authorities, population levels and particular problems. At the end, in 1996, only a few specific changes are being implemented in England; in most places outside the major conurbations, the former County and District structure survives. But matters have changed more profoundly in Wales where 37 District and eight County Councils have been abolished and replaced by 22 Unitary Authorities in April 1996. These Unitary Authorities decide on broad policy structure plans and local authorities plans.

In both countries, the principle of decentralization has conferred important powers and means of action on local authorities, especially regarding coastal conservation. Moreover, the liberty of action of these stakeholders create important disparities in local policies.

The French *Région* is particularly a distributor of grants for the conservation of coastal sites. In certain cases, it acts as a coordinator of Departmental policies as in the Nord-Pas de Calais for example. In addition, the *Région* is responsible for initiating and managing Natural Regional Parks in France. It may also co-sign, with the State, State-Region Plans that may have environmental bearings. The *Région* is also empowered to make decisions concerning the policy of the *Conservatoire de L'Espace Littoral et des Rivages Lacustres*.

The *Département* may play an essential role in safeguarding coastal sites if it so decides. It has at its disposal a variety of legal (right of pre-emption) and financial (Departmental Tax on Sensitive Sites or *TDENS*) tools to carry out a true policy of acquisition and management of natural sites, working along the same lines, or in concert with the *CELRL*. The right of pre-emption consists of having priority in the purchase of land on sale in a zone previously earmarked as one of pre-emption. The *TDENS* is levied on constructions within a 'sensitive perimeter'. Since the law of 1985, *Départements* are empowered to declare their entire territory as 'sensitive'. The *TDENS* is legally limited to 2 % of a basis indexed to the cost of construction. In most *Départements*, however, it is set at 1 %. Decentralized Government has conferred on *Départements* a wide liberty of choice in matters of territorial planning. Although only 62 of the 95 Metropolitan French *Départements* have adopted the protection tool embodied in the *TDENS*, all coastal *Départements* (excepted Seine-Maritime) actively use it to conserve their coastal heritage.

The *Commune* is essentially involved in the daily running of protected public sites. It is, in principle, charged with the maintenance of sites acquired by the *Conservatoire* and the *Départements*. The costs incurred by this upkeep are theoretically met by the financial resources of the commune and by funds that

may eventually be allocated to this end by the *Départements*. Moreover, since the Law of Decentralization in 1983, each *Commune* is responsible for preparing its own Land Use Plan (*POS, Plan d'Occupation du Sol*) and especially for identifying natural zones that need to be conserved. The *Commune* thus has true powers of decision. Unfortunately, since natural zones are not directly economically profitable and even entail maintenance costs not covered by the public authorities, they are often gradually encroached on by other land uses encouraged by the *Commune*'s authorities. In principle, however, the liberty of *Communes* is limited by state legislation, especially by the 'Coastal Law' whose application must be enforced by Departmental Prefects.

England and Wales

In the United Kingdom, local authorities play a similar role in matters of land use planning. The County works out a Structure Plan which defines the main economic and social orientations of regional development (Hallyday 1988). These plans have to be approved by the Secretary of State and so become a statutory document. In addition, each District Council is required by the Central Government to produce a District Wide Local Plan. This plan is to be a statutory document subject to intensive local consultation as well as to a public enquiry. The District Wide Local plan proposes policies for the local authority on the development and use of land up for five years. Like the French *POS*, this plan aims to control and influence the use of land in the public interest by identifying areas where development can and cannot take place. The plan also needs to conform, in general terms, with the global Structure Plan. In places where District and County Councils have been replaced by Unitary Authorities, Structure and Local Plans are to be replaced by Unitary Plans, combining the two former ones. Differences in the choice of environmental policies among local authorities also crop up, as among *Départements* in France.

Local authorities may also define and manage Local Nature Reserves, whose selection criteria are similar to those of National Nature Reserves set up by English Nature. But these sites are more of local interest and emphasis is placed on open-air recreation. The decision to create Country Parks is also one taken by local authorities. These parks constitute recreation sites open to the public.

The action of British local authorities as far as natural sites are concerned differs strongly from that of their French counterparts. As a general rule, they do not have a policy of acquisition of estates to be con-

served. Their action rather consists in setting up management plans followed by maintenance agreements with the private land owners. As far as field application goes, the County, the District or the Unitary Authority thus complement the Countryside Commission and English Nature or the Countryside Council for Wales. Their good knowledge of local situations is a major advantage that puts them in a favourable position to negotiate, act as intermediaries, give advice to private landowners and inform the public. Their staff, some of whose running costs are defrayed by grants from the Countryside Commission or the Countryside Council for Wales, is charged with the surveillance and community involvement in protected sites such as Heritage Coasts, Country Parks and Local Nature Reserves. Moreover, Counties, Districts or Unitary Authorities often acquire and run land necessary for public reception such as car parks, picnic sites, toilets and paths to the sea.

In France, as in the United Kingdom, local authorities, by virtue of their political status and their scope for taking decisions, play a key role in protecting natural coastal sites.

Private initiatives

England and Wales

This sector mainly comprises two sets of stakeholders: nature conservation organizations and private land owners.

Nature conservation organizations, referred to as Voluntary Conservation Organizations, play a particularly active role in safeguarding the British coast. As far as sites conservation in terms of ecosystems is concerned, the two main organizations, to which are affiliated numerous local groups, are the County Wildlife Trusts and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds. Other private organizations that need mentioning are the Council for the Protection of Rural England, the Council for the Protection of Rural Wales and the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers. The former actively monitor and denounce development projects that may downgrade the quality of landscapes while the latter encourages the involvement of volunteers in environmental conservation.

As far as conservation of the natural beauty of landscapes and historic sites is concerned, the National Trust is a testimony to the immense power that a private organization may acquire in the United Kingdom. This humanitarian organization, founded in 1885, has become an essential stakeholder in coastal conservation. Through Enterprise Neptune, launched in 1965,

the Trust, drawing on private funds, carries out an action that is comparable, but of greater scope, to that of the *CELRL* in France. It has become the biggest private landowner in the United Kingdom (over 250000 ha in 1995). The National Trust does not have an equivalent among French organizations devoted to a similar cause.

France

Non-Governmental Organizations in France are less developed and are still essentially grass roots structures. However, they tend to play an increasing role in decisions concerning the natural coastal zone. Examples include the *Ligue pour la Protection des Oiseaux* (League for the Protection of Birds) and the *Société pour l'Étude et la Protection de la Nature en Bretagne* (Society for Nature Study and Protection in Brittany), both of which are extremely vigorous and influential. Some members of these organizations are also on the boards of directors of the *Conservatoire de l'Espace Littoral et des Rivages Lacustres*, the Regional Environmental Directorate, Departmental Site Commissions, and other bodies. These organizations, often unofficial, become powerful elements involved in decision-taking.

Another type of private organization is that of the *Conservatoires Régionaux* which are the counterparts, at the local scale, of the *Conservatoire de l'Espace Littoral*, but whose action is not limited to the coastal zone. There are presently 16 organizations of this type in France.

In spite of their growing dynamism, these organizations are still hampered by their disparate range of activities, sizes, and motivations. They often lack funds and have a negative image of 'utopian ecologists' that limits public recognition of their work. On both sides of the Channel, voluntary nature conservation organizations constitute a significant group of bodies whose importance is growing. Organizations sometimes possess and manage their own local natural reserves. The more important ones are regularly consulted concerning projects in sensitive areas and most of them work in concert with local authorities and receive public grants. They are the democratic response to the eventual bureaucratic or political insufficiencies in our society, especially through spontaneous and rapid initiatives and reactions by virtue of their thorough knowledge of field situations and local socio-economic contexts, and of the voluntary character of their activities.

Private landowners influence coastal site conservation in different ways. Landowners whose estates are threatened by marine erosion may band together, for instance, to form a syndicate aimed at coordinating

and implementing protective measures or at obtaining aid from the authorities. Moreover, landowners sometimes own protected sites. This is not a very common situation in France, as sites to be protected are most often acquired by public organizations (*CELRL*, *Départements*, *Commune...*). This situation is however encountered in 'listed' or 'classed sites', or Parks and Nature Reserves.

In the United Kingdom, the situation is different. Most of the measures aimed at coastal protection are taken without acquisition of the land, which remains private property. The collaboration of landowners is indispensable, making them unavoidable stakeholders in coastal protection. Meetings aimed at informing, counselling or striking compromises with landowners are a very important part of the work of the staff of English Nature, local authorities and site wardens. The national contexts are in fact very different. The big landowners in Britain sometimes feel invested with a mission, and set examples by protecting or by helping to protect the national heritage. They are, as such, particularly open-minded towards coastal protection organizations which they support and with which they cooperate. In France, it would appear that whenever the State or a local authority becomes involved in an affair aimed at regulating the use of private land with a view towards assuring its protection, landowners tend to feel aggressive and dispossessed. If public authorities should intervene on private land in the general interest, it is generally thought that they should take entire charge of the problem, acquire the land and compensate the landowner. This way of thinking may be both a cause and a consequence of the greater interventionism of the French State.

The foundations of French and British protection policies

France: joint intervention of the Conservatoire and the Départements

In France, the *Conservatoire de l'Espace Littoral et des Rivages Lacustres* and the *Départements* are very similar in the scope of their actions and their objectives. They share a common mission of safeguarding natural environments, via land acquisition. The inalienability of the acquired lands, a willingness to keep these open to the public, and collaboration with *Communes* in the daily running of these sites are other common characteristics of these two stakeholders. In the field, they share tasks and work together, more or less closely, to carry out the three main cornerstones of conservation: acquire, manage and upkeep sites.

Acquisition is the most secure way of ensuring

		Acquisition of land	Planning	Current management	Advices (state, local authorities)	Public information	Conservation policies
State	<i>C.E.L.R.L.</i>	*	*		*	*	*
	English Nature Countryside Council for Wales		(Grant aids)		*	*	*
	Countryside Commission		(Grant aids)	(M.N.R.)	*	*	*
Local Authorities	<i>Département</i>	*	*	(Grant aids)		*	*
	Commune			*			
	County District Unitary Authority		*	*		*	
Private Bodies	National Trust	*	*	*		*	*

Fig. 3. Table of the main stakeholders and actions for the conservation of the coastal natural sites in France, England and Wales. CELRL against systematic development with the same diligence.

long-lasting protection of threatened sites. The *CELRL* and the *Département* generally agree on a programme of coordinated acquisition. Sites of national or regional importance are often taken by the *CELRL* while those of local interest are acquired by *Départements*. There are, however, numerous local departures from this pattern. The least important sites generally remain as communal or even private property.

The work of the *CELRL* and the *Département* consists of rehabilitating the environment and opening it to the public. The financial burden for the basic work involved is assured by the *Département* as far as its lands are concerned. The *CELRL* allocates ca. 25 % of its budget to the management of these sites, but this generally does not cover the entire costs and the *Département* often co-finances these operations on the lands acquired by the *CELRL*. For sites belonging neither to the *CELRL* nor the *Département*, but necessitating protective measures justified by their natural value, the *Département* may also intervene through agreements with the landowner (generally a *Commune*).

Daily upkeep, which is essential because of the dynamic nature of many coastal sites, subject to both physical processes and human pressure, is, financially, a more thorny problem. The policy of the *CELRL* and the *Département* consists in conferring on local authorities responsibility in matters of daily upkeep. By doing so, these two stakeholders hope to elicit in local authorities, sensitivity to the problem of conservation of the sites they have acquired. However, most municipalities are not enthusiastic about carrying out this task without financial compensation. Most consider that the extra costs

incurred eat into their meagre budgets. *Départements*, and even sometimes the *CELRL*, are obliged to procure technical and financial aid to these reticent keepers, if they do not wish to see their previous conservation efforts go in vain. Moreover, the Conservatoire ensures training of wardens specialized in the maintenance of coastal sites. These wardens are generally employed by the *Commune* or the *Département* concerned and are paid through income from the *Taxe Départementale d'Espaces Naturels Sensibles (TDENS)*. There are still rather few qualified wardens and these are often assigned to *CELRL* sites.

While the *CELRL* is the principal French stakeholder in matters of acquisition because of the budget devoted to this end, the *Département* takes precedence as far as management and daily upkeep are concerned, by virtue of the income it draws from the *TDENS*. However, the great liberty conferred on *Départements* has generated marked local disparities. Failure by *Départements* and *Communes* to carry out their commitments generally results in very serious problems in the upkeep of acquired sites.

England and Wales: Enterprise Neptune and heritage coasts

Two key players in coastal conservation are the National Trust and the Heritage Coast system.

The National Trust for Places of Historic Interest and Natural Beauty acquires, in the public interest, monuments and land in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (there is a separate Trust for Scotland). Al-

though recognized by the government from which it receives substantial grants, the Trust is not a State body, unlike the *Conservatoire de l'Espace Littoral et des Rivages Lacustres* in France. "It depends on the generosity of those who give properties and the money to maintain them, on more than 2 million subscribing members and on its friends and supporters" (Anon. 1992, p. 2). Subscriptions, donations and legacies of its members provide almost half of the annual revenue and "the stamp of approval which the membership signifies is a source of pride" (Anon. 1992, p.1).

In 1996, the National Trust has under its protection more than 900 km (or 50000 ha) of coastline in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Up to the 1960s, it mainly acquired mansions, castles and prestigious gardens. But in the face of mounting development pressure against wild coasts, the Trust took steps ahead of the government and launched in 1965 a major save-the-coast operation called Enterprise Neptune. This was the first national strategy of coastal conservation in the United Kingdom.

The objective of Enterprise Neptune is to acquire about a third of the shoreline and to manage it 'prudently' in order to improve its quality for the pleasure of all. Since 1965, this Enterprise Neptune has collected over £ 20 million and has acquired 720 km of shoreline in England and Wales (18 % of this coast) (Anon. 1996). In addition to its properties, the Trust controls, through management agreements, 86 km of coast in England and Wales (in comparison, the *CELRL* possesses 492 km of shoreline in metropolitan France). Enterprise Neptune is a very successful endeavour and finds much favour with a generous public by organising numerous anniversary ceremonies and typical British patronage.

The National Trust is therefore a major organ for conserving natural coastal sites in the United Kingdom. Its enormous prestige and great wealth make it without equal in France and probably in the world. Its budget in 1995, for England, Wales and Northern Ireland was £ 151 million, half of which is allocated to the coast. The money comes from private donations, grants (from the State and the Countryside Commission in particular), donations from firms, and from the income from its estates (such as leasing of farmland, entrance fees to sites,...), as well as from benefits from the commercial activities exerted by the Trust (shops, restaurants, hotels...). The Trust's budget for protecting the coast is about five times that of the *CELRL*.

The term Heritage Coasts designates non-statutory protection, i.e., without true legal value. These coasts nevertheless constitute one of the cornerstones of the policy of coastal conservation in Britain. In 1966, under pressure from public opinion worried by the

mounting threats to the coast, the government launched a major inventory of the coasts of England and Wales. The aim of this operation was to provide a firm foundation for a long-term policy destined to conserve the natural beauty of these coasts and to promote their use by the public as areas of informal recreation (Cullen 1984; Williams 1992). Two reports published in 1970 (Anon. 1970a,b) proposed that 1300 km of coasts still conserved and representing landscapes of outstanding beauty be listed as Heritage Coasts and protected.

In 1972, the Government accepted the concept of Heritage Coasts and officially recommended it to local authorities which are required to integrate this in their Structure Plans and Local Plans. But this recommendation did not confer a legal status on Heritage Coasts. On several occasions, the Countryside Commission, English Nature, the Countryside Council for Wales and several local authorities have requested in vain that the Government reconsiders its decision. As most Heritage Coasts also have a designation of National Parks, Areas of Outstanding Beauty or sites belonging to the National Trust they benefit, in this respect, from a legal status of protection. Of the currently listed 45 Heritage Coasts, 35 are AONBs or National Parks and over 40% are protected by the National Trust. As a result, the State sees no necessity to create a new, specifically protective, status. The Government has so far simply encouraged local authorities, in collaboration with the Countryside Commission or the Countryside Council for Wales, to identify Heritage Coasts in their development plans, to define policies for their protection and to prepare plans for their maintenance.

The Heritage Coast concept has been globally positive. In 1996, 45 Heritage Coasts had been completely defined or laterally defined, representing nearly 1525 km of coast and nearly 35 % of the shoreline of England and Wales. In every case, however, the efficiency of this policy depends, as in the case mentioned above of *Départements* in France, on the goodwill and dynamism of local authorities and of the concerned officers. The legal protection of Heritage Coasts can be seen as their weak point. Depending on the protective status they come under, they are subject to different regulations that render the system disparate and difficult to manage. No specific legal measures exist to guarantee the permanence of this extraordinary coastal heritage (although they are notified in Structure and Local Plans which are statutory documents). Conscious of this weakness, the Countryside Commission, English Nature and the Countryside Council for Wales encourage, as much as possible, acquisition of these sites by voluntary conservation organizations such as the National Trust or the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds. On the other hand, it can be argued that

the voluntary basis of the Heritage coasts reinforce their protection.

The Conservatoire de l'espace littoral et des rivages lacustres has rather taken inspiration from the policy of Heritage Coasts with its concept of safeguarding the coastal heritage for future generations and in its *modus operandi* which largely involves the participation of local authorities. The French State has endowed it, with a powerful protective legal tool. Sites acquired by the CELRL and the *Départements* become inalienable properties.

Discussion

The French and British systems are thus markedly different in their conception (Fig. 3). The former is based on State initiative, via the *Conservatoire de l'Espace Littoral et des Rivages Lacustres*, and comprises a strong set of legal tools (notably the 'Coastal Law'), while the latter is mostly a product of private initiative, epitomized by Enterprise Neptune, and largely rests on non-statutory designations (like Heritage Coasts). Moreover, the French system places capital emphasis on land acquisition while British organizations function mostly through agreements set up with private landowners.

In addition to the National Trust and its extraordinary Enterprise Neptune, the private sector, represented by nature conservation organizations, voluntary groups and private landowners, play a primary role in Britain, unlike in France where the activity of this sector is much more limited. The reasons for this contrast are complex and are probably to be found in a difference of mentality, progressively fabricated by the historical and cultural past of each country. While the British seem readily mobilized by causes of this type and show a spirit of initiative and sometimes even 'aristocratic paternalism', the French often exhibit an kind of inertia, expecting things to be done by the public authorities. There is much less State intervention in England and Wales. The British Government has been often pushed by mounting pressure from the public opinion to intervene for coastal conservation. The two main thrusts of concern and action, Enterprise Neptune and Heritage Coasts, that staved off threats to coastal sites in the 1970s, did not come from the Central Government.

The aim of this paper is to give a global review of the main stakeholders and mechanics of coastal zone conservation on both sides of the English Channel, and to point out their differences and similarities. The question now is how to take stock of the situation. Is conservation more effective in one country or in an

other? It does not seem evident. According to the French Ministry of Environment, 25% of the English and Welsh coast was developed at the beginning of the eighties, compared to 51 % in France (Anon. 1980; Anon. 1982). It seems clear that France suffered the serious consequences of a sudden and belated awareness. However, are the criteria of 'development' the same in the both countries? What about the quality of ecosystems in non-developed areas? What is the present rate of development on the coasts? Are French protection laws stronger, in fact, than the British designations? The nature conservation professionals, confronted daily with applying these policies, could probably provide elements of an answer; the debate is open...

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