

The Difficulties of Designing Future Coastlines in the Face of Climate Change

By Professor Tim O'Riordan



Thursday 5 December 2013
At 6:00 pm
followed by reception

To be held at :
The Landscape Institute,
Charles Darwin House,
12 Roger Street,
London WC1N 2JU.
Nearby tube stations Russell
Square or Chancery Lane.

RSVP (not later than 1 December)
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Tim O'Riordan OBE is Emeritus Professor of Environmental Sciences at the University of East Anglia and a Fellow of the British Academy. He is involved in research addressing the themes associated with better governance for sustainability. His direct work relates to designing future coastlines in East Anglia in England and in Portugal, so that such coastlines are ready for sea level rise and the creation of sound economies and societies for a sustainable future. He serves as Special Advisor to the House of Commons Environment Audit Committee and also as Special Advisor to the Cambridge Programme for Sustainable Leadership.

There is considerable uncertainty over the speed and extent of sea level rise accompanying climate change. There is even more ambivalence over changing the character and nature of coasts especially in favour of realigning settlement and infrastructure when many coastal economies are weak and vulnerable. Furthermore, there is no guaranteed institutional arrangement for creating meaningful and long lasting dialogue between interested parties and coastal designers. So it is proving exceedingly difficult to create the conditions of trust and evolving participation to shape the future of coasts whose physical form cannot be assured without increasingly expensive intervention. There is no easy way out, so the fall back position is to tough it out. The reasons and the consequences of this ephemeral arrangement will be discussed in the context of case studies in Norfolk and Portugal.