



Thorpeness Readiness Assessment Report, January 2026

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1 Summary

This report presents findings from a readiness assessment process undertaken in Thorpeness, East Suffolk between July and October 2025. The assessment was undertaken by Icarus Collective Ltd, on behalf of East Suffolk Council. The main objective is to understand the extent to which stakeholders are ready to take part in planning and decision-making related to future adaptation challenges associated with climate change, specifically coastal erosion and coastal flooding. In this project, readiness is defined and measured in relation to six specified dimensions:

- the extent to which planning is climate sensitive
- knowledge and understanding about climate change and potential impacts on the community
- attitudes and emotions towards known risks and changes
- people's sense of agency
- conflicts and disagreement
- collaboration and trust.

Information to enable the readiness assessment was collected from a community survey completed by 240 people, and through 11 in-depth stakeholder interviews with community members and professionals. This information was analysed using tools in SmartSurvey and simple coding/thematic analysis techniques.

2 Key Findings

2.1 About the Community

- Thorpeness is a place that people like living in and feel connected to. People value the village feel, its scenic/natural beauty and unique character.
- Residents particularly enjoy the Meare and the beach, frequently using it for leisure activities and appreciating its beauty and tranquillity.
- People's priorities for the future of Thorpeness show a strong focus on its environmental and community sustainability. Respondents call for planning and action to protect Thorpeness.
- Respondents do not foresee a real change in the content of the priorities they identify for Thorpeness but rather imagine that the urgency and scale of the priorities will increase as time passes.

2.2 Readiness Assessment

- **Climate Sensitivity:** Readiness in this dimension is uneven. While awareness of coastal flooding and coastal erosion is generally strong, broader climate change considerations are not consistently embedded in local policies or planning. Some initiatives, such as the Shoreline Management Plan, show progress, but most approaches remain reactive to immediate hazards rather than proactive for long-term resilience.
- **Knowledge and Understanding:** Readiness in this dimension is uneven. Awareness of coastal risks is high, but deeper understanding – particularly of adaptation options – remains limited. Nearly 80% of respondents reported having little or no information about possible actions. Interviews confirm this picture: while many residents feel they “understand a fair amount”, there is a clear appetite for more knowledge.
- **Attitudes and Emotions:** Readiness in this dimension is developing. Concern about coastal risks is widespread, and strong emotional ties to Thorpeness – its beach, Meare and unique character – intensify this concern, particularly among those living closest to the coast. Overall, attitudes reflect a mix of worry, emotional investment, and a desire for more proactive responses.
- **Sense of Agency:** Readiness in this dimension is low. While the survey shows strong support for action and proactive planning, most respondents are not currently involved in initiatives and feel decisions are ‘out of their hands’. Interviews highlight uncertainty about how to engage and practical barriers such as lack of clear mechanisms for involvement. Providing accessible information, transparent processes, and visible pathways for participation will be critical to translating concern into meaningful action.
- **Conflict and disagreements:** Readiness in this dimension is uneven. While Thorpeness is generally seen as a friendly and cohesive community, underlying tensions exist that could affect engagement. These include divisions between permanent residents and second-home owners, seasonal fluctuations, and differing views on coastal defences and adaptation strategies. Interviews also highlighted mistrust between agencies and the community, contradictory messaging, and frustration over perceived inaction. Although these issues rarely amount to ‘conflict’, they can create uncertainty and fragmentation.
- **Collaboration and trust:** Readiness in this dimension is low. While there is willingness to collaborate, both survey and interview data reveal significant barriers. Many respondents doubt that their voices will be heard, and confidence in agencies’ strategies and leadership is low. Interviews highlight limited collaboration among stakeholders, mistrust, and the absence of clear mechanisms to turn intent into action.

Overall, the assessment shows that while concern about coastal risks and willingness to act are evident, readiness across the six dimensions is uneven. Strengths lie in awareness and emotional investment, but gaps in agency, collaboration and trust – combined with limited knowledge of adaptation options – pose significant challenges. Addressing these gaps through clear communication, practical engagement mechanisms, and consistent integration of climate considerations into planning will be critical to turning concern into coordinated long-term action for resilience in Thorpeness.

3 Introduction

Norfolk and Suffolk have some of the fastest eroding coastline in Europe, with many homes at direct coastal risk and thousands more properties and businesses directly and indirectly affected by loss of property, infrastructure, and utilities. In 2023, East Suffolk Council received funding from Defra as part of the £200 million Flood and Coastal Innovation Programmes, managed by the Environment Agency. The programme will drive innovation in flood and coastal resilience and adaptation in a changing climate. The aim of this specific project, Resilient Coasts, is to explore innovative solutions to help coastal communities across Norfolk and Suffolk become more resilient to coastal change.

The work is being delivered at a number of locations on the Norfolk and Suffolk Coast. This report focuses on Thorpeness in East Suffolk. Thorpeness is a village with a permanent population of around 215, which increases to around 1,200 in summer.

Thorpeness was developed in the early 20th century as a purpose-built holiday resort, known for its distinctive architecture and leisure activities such as the Meare and the Golf Club.

The Thorpeness frontage has eroding, sandy cliffs to the northern end of the village. The Shoreline Management Plan (SMP) for this area is Managed Realignment. This means solutions can be put in place to slow erosion to buy time to enable people to adapt to the risk but not stop it.

Defences in the northern section of Thorpeness date back to a gabion basket scheme in 1976, with additional geobags installed in 2010 and 2013. In spring 2021 Thorpeness suffered large cliff loss at the northern end which resulted in urgent works to place rock on the beach below No.22 North End Avenue. These works were largely community funded. East Suffolk Council facilitated the completion of the works in October 2021 and contributed £170,000 of gap funding to be claimed back from the Environment Agency through Flood and Coastal Erosion Defence Grant in Aid (FCERMGiA).

Since December 2024 there has been rapid erosion to the northern end of Thorpeness. East Suffolk Coastal Management and Adaptation Team created “trigger points” based on the erosion data for coastal management actions, incorporating a plan for the safe removal of properties when critical safety levels are reached. During early 2025, East Suffolk Council discussed the erosion risk and future housing needs with property owners at the northern end of the village. Since October 2025 several houses have been demolished on North End Avenue, following further rapid erosion.

While East Suffolk Council continue to work with those at risk of erosion in the short term, including considering short-term measures on a case-by-case basis, the Resilient Coasts project will continue to explore ways to plan for the long-term future of Thorpeness.

4 What is Readiness Assessment?

Readiness Assessment is a process for measuring how prepared people are for engaging in conversations, planning and action for change in their area. In the context of increasing flood and coastal erosion risks due to climate change, planning for the long-term is becoming increasingly important and urgent. However, not everyone is equally well-prepared – for example, because they lack information about how climate change might influence flood and coastal erosion risks (and other aspects of life), because the options for adaptation are not defined or understood, or because people have not yet developed the interest or capacity to engage in conversations about future scenarios and adaptation choices, some of which might be complex and contentious.

Understanding how prepared different individuals and stakeholders are to work together to adapt to a changing climate can help to ensure that engagement and decision-making processes are matched to the level of readiness in a given area. For example, ‘low readiness’ might mean that it is necessary to spend time improving knowledge and building capacities before moving into planning and decision-making. Interventions that do not take account of levels of readiness are more likely to encounter challenges, perhaps especially in the context of climate adaptation work where there are significant complexities and uncertainties.

Readiness Assessment is also a tool for participatory engagement with communities facing the prospect of change. Used as part of a series of engagement steps, it aims to:

- Generate collective knowledge about what people most value in their area, how they understand risk, and what they consider adaptation to mean.
- Support the development of adaptation strategies that are appropriate to local contexts and conditions, whilst being scientifically robust.
- Make effective use of resources by ensuring that engagement and other interventions reflect local conditions, including culture and emotions.
- Strengthen capacities to engage constructively with conflicts and disagreement and enhance sensitivity to differences and inequalities in people's experiences and readiness to adapt.
- Encourage a wider range of people to become involved in finding solutions to long-term adaptation challenges.
- Build better understanding and cooperation between different stakeholder groups.
- Increase capacities for informed deliberation on complex issues and choices.

4.1 Dimensions of Readiness

The six dimensions of readiness¹ below cover a range of factors that influence how prepared people might be to engage in climate-sensitive planning related to flood and coastal erosion risks. They cover not just knowledge dimensions – what people know and understand about climate change – but also attitudes and competencies that are important for engagement in constructive adaptation planning.

- A. **Climate Sensitivity:** To what extent do existing policies, processes, initiatives and personal behaviours/ decisions already take account of climate change projections? Do stakeholders actively pursue climate sensitive policies and decisions?
- B. **Knowledge and Understanding of Risks and Vulnerabilities:** What do key stakeholders (in this case the community of Thorpeness) know about climate change and how this might interact with flood/ coastal erosion risks in the community/ area? How much do people already know about possible options for adaptation and risk management? How well do practitioners and stakeholders know this place, including any features of the local environment and/ or culture that have a bearing on options for climate adaptation?
- C. **Attitudes and Emotions:** What level of concern do stakeholders have about climate change and how this might affect their community/ area? How strongly do people feel about where they live and the prospect of unwanted change? What emotions - potentially including anxiety, anger, grief and care - are likely to bear on their willingness and/ or capacity to be involved in climate adaptation planning? Do authority staff understand their own relevant emotions, and do they feel confident in handling emotions?
- D. **Sense of Agency:** Do people feel empowered to make changes that would help in the management of risks and/ or to make a difference to policies or decision-making processes? To what extent are resources – people, expertise, funding – available to support climate adaptation efforts?
- E. **Conflict and Disagreements:** What disagreements, divisions and/ or conflicts exist in this place? What is the nature of these conflicts? How might they affect capacities for climate adaptation? How prepared are people to engage constructively with conflict?
- F. **Collaboration and Trust:** To what extent are practitioners and stakeholders able to collaborate effectively with others who have relevant expertise and/ or who have a high stake in what happens regarding climate adaptation in this place? Is there enough trust to allow for meaningful collaboration?

¹ Note: this section provides background to the Readiness Assessment as described by the Environment Agency (2023) *Readiness assessment: tools and techniques*. Accessible from: [FRS17192/5 Readiness assessment: tools and techniques \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/117192/5_Readiness_assessment_tools_and_techniques.pdf)

4.2 Methodology

The Readiness Assessment tool aims to provide a relatively simple approach to collecting and analysing information on the different dimensions of readiness. It will not solve all challenges, rather it is a diagnostic tool that aims to create a basis for informed and stage-appropriate engagement. As such, the tool can be used to gain an understanding of current levels of readiness (diagnosis), to undertake actions that build or enhance readiness (engagement) and to develop plans for future adaptation (action).

In Thorpeness information was collected through a community survey and stakeholder interviews.

4.2.1 Community survey

Anyone working, living (permanently or second residence/ holiday home) in, or visiting Thorpeness, and aged 16 or over could respond to the survey. People were able to respond during an eight-week period over August to September 2025. Responses were collected using SmartSurvey, an online survey tool. Alternatively, people were able to complete a paper version of the survey, which was then uploaded to SmartSurvey. The survey was designed with close reference to the dimensions of readiness identified above and focused on generating information that could easily support conclusions about readiness. We also worked alongside a local design group of residents and representatives of local organisations including Aldringham-cum-Thorpe Parish Council, Thorpeness Neighbourhood Planning Steering Group and Thorpeness Coastal Futures Group to ensure the survey was relevant for their local area.

The survey was promoted in various ways: primarily via a flyer which was delivered to households in Thorpeness, but also through the networks of those involved in the local design group.

The survey consisted of two sections:

- Questions at the beginning and end of the survey gathered some minimal demographic information from respondents (e.g. age, gender, occupation) and details on their relationship to Thorpeness (e.g. favourite places, views about the beach).
- The main section of the survey explored elements more directly related to the Readiness Assessment. The focus here was on climate change, coastal erosion and coastal flooding. It included, for example, questions around respondents' knowledge and concern about coastal erosion and coastal flooding, their views on actions in relation to coastal erosion and coastal flooding and who they perceived to be responsible to take these actions.

The information gathered through the survey was both quantitative – e.g. asking people to rate levels of knowledge or concern on a scale – and qualitative in nature – asking for explanations or details on their views and experiences. The survey therefore contained a combination of closed and open questions. Some of the closed questions allowed respondents to only select one option, whereas others (e.g. What do you see as top priorities for Thorpeness in the next 5

years?) gave the opportunity to select multiple options. A few questions offered both pre-formulated responses and an opportunity to explain or add to these responses with free text.

4.2.2 Stakeholder interviews

To address aspects of the Readiness Assessment tool that require specialised knowledge and contextual experience, we conducted semi-structured interviews with stakeholders from a diverse range of organisations, including local councils, environmental and community groups, as well as conservation and governance bodies. These interviews took place from October to November 2025 and focused on topics that the survey was less suited to explore such as elements relating to the dimension of Climate Sensitivity (e.g. to what extent policies, processes and planning take account of climate change science).

Participants were selected based on their expertise and involvement in coastal erosion and coastal flooding in Thorpeness, ensuring diverse perspectives across governance, environmental management, and community interests. Interviews provided qualitative insights that completed the quantitative survey data, enabling a more comprehensive understanding of the topic.

4.2.3 Analysis of the data

A total of 240 survey responses were received and analysed with a focus on understanding the readiness of the community in Thorpeness. Analysis was conducted using Excel and Jamovi (open-source statistical software). To aid the interpretation of the data, graphs were created which showed responses to closed/ multiple choice questions. Responses to the open questions, i.e. qualitative data, were manually coded to identify themes and patterns in the responses.

Eleven semi-structured stakeholder interviews were conducted across seven organisations, representing a range of perspectives and expertise: East Suffolk Council, Environment Agency, RSPB, Natural England, Thorpeness Neighbourhood Planning Steering Group, Thorpeness Coastal Futures group and Aldringham-cum-Thorpe Parish Council. The responses were summarised and analysed using a framework approach based on the Readiness Assessment tool.

The Readiness Assessment tool defines five different levels of readiness in relation to the six dimensions specified above ². Those five levels of readiness relate to scored questions in the survey and are added to by the qualitative insights from the stakeholder interviews. In the second part of the analysis, we present the overall assessment for each dimension, using the assessment system.

² An overview of the Readiness Assessment Tool and different levels of readiness can be found in the following publication: The Environment Agency (2023) *Readiness assessment: tools and techniques*. Accessible from: [FRS17192/5 Readiness assessment: tools and techniques \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/117192/frs17192-5-readiness-assessment-tools-and-techniques.pdf)

4.2.4 Limitations

The analysis presented below has to be read with an awareness of the limitations of this exercise, which are common in research of this nature:

- **Sample size and representativeness:** the decision was made not to use a random sampling approach, but to treat the whole Thorpeness community as the sample. While a healthy number of survey responses were received, it is unlikely to be wholly representative of the community. For instance, some second-homeowners may not have been reached due to limited access to their primary contact details. Although younger age groups accounted for a small proportion of respondents, this reflects the local demographic profile, where individuals aged under 35 represent a minority. It is also possible that those who are already active around coastal erosion issues will have been more motivated to complete the survey and ensure that certain perspectives were strongly represented. Similarly, 11 stakeholder interviews were conducted across seven organisations, which may not fully capture the diversity of perspectives within the wider stakeholder community. Stakeholders were chosen based on availability and relevance, which could introduce bias and limit generalisations of the findings. Interview responses rely on participants' personal knowledge and experience, which may reflect individual or organisational priorities rather than broader consensus.
- **Sampling bias:** It is important to note that some of the networks used to distribute the flyer were those with an existing interest in coastal erosion and coastal flooding. This may have introduced a degree of self-selection bias, potentially skewing responses towards individuals or groups already engaged with these issues. As a result, the findings may not fully represent the views of the wider community.
- **Interpretation:** when completing the survey, respondents had to consider for themselves what each category/ answer option meant. While this is straightforward for yes/ no answers, this can be more variable and subjective when asking to rate one's level of knowledge or understanding for example.
- **Inference:** open questions allow participants to share more elaborate answers, however the qualitative statements in the survey are overall brief – often single words or phrases. Therefore, caution has to be applied when inferring from such statements.
- **Timing:** the community survey was undertaken just prior to a period of rapid erosion and the demolition of several homes in Thorpeness over the winter of 2025. It is therefore possible that the assessments for the different levels of readiness would be different if the survey was repeated now.

5 About the survey respondents

A total of 240 responses were received for the Thorpeness community survey. Of those who disclosed their sex, 49% identified as female and 51% as male³. Just over half of respondents (55%) provided information about where they lived and/ or worked in Thorpeness, by answering question 41 (Figure 1). Among these, 49% had at least one property⁴ in Zone F (closest to the shoreline), while 29% had at least one property in zone E.



Figure 1: Thorpeness Zoning Map used in the community survey

While the survey was open to individuals aged 16 and above, responses from younger age groups were limited. This reflects the demographic profile of Thorpeness, where those under 35 form a smaller proportion of the population. Respondents aged 16-17 years made up less than 1%, those aged 18–24 years accounted for just under 2%, and 3% were aged 25-34 years. In

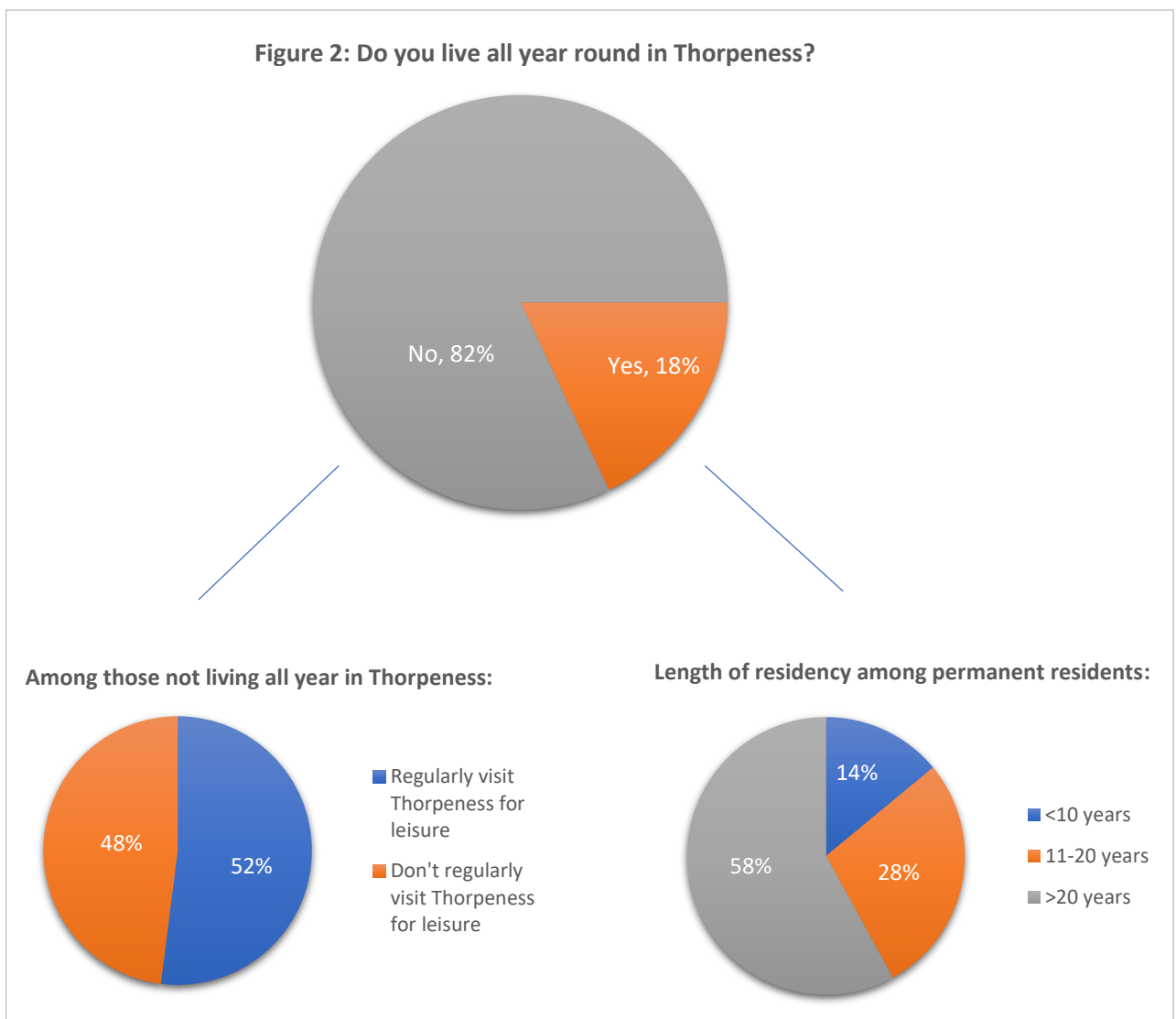
³ Respondents were able to select an option from: Female; Male; Prefer not to say; Other.

⁴ A main zone ('Zone1') was created for each respondent answering question 41 representing where they live all year round or have their most significant connection. If a respondent indicated additional zones, e.g. owning a second home or working in a different zone, these were recorded in 'Zone 2' and 'Zone 3' respectively. The 'zone 1' variable was used for cross-referencing in this report.

contrast, middle-aged and older adults formed the majority of participants. The 35-54 and 75+ age groups each represented around one-fifth of the sample (20% and 19%, respectively). The most represented age brackets were 55-64 years (28%) and 65-74 years (29%), together comprising over half of all respondents. Overall, the age distribution in the survey broadly mirrors the community’s demographic profile.

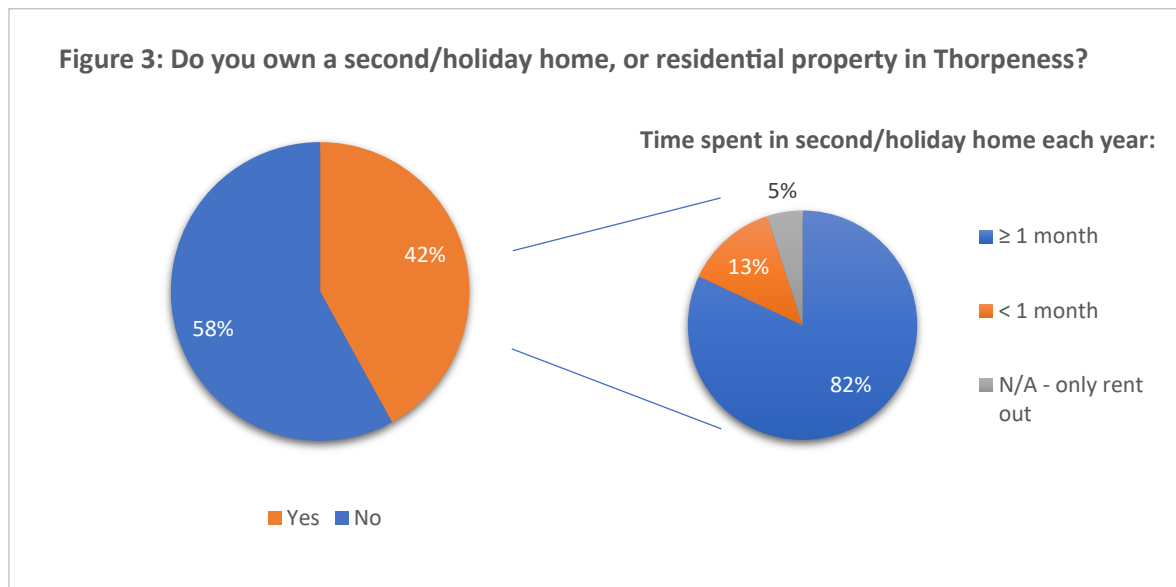
5.1 Patterns of residency and visitor engagement in Thorpeness

A significant proportion of respondents (82%) reported not to live in Thorpeness all year round. However, just over half of these (52%) stated they regularly visited Thorpeness for leisure, despite not owning a holiday property (see [Figure 2](#)).



Among regular visitors, nearly two thirds (64%) spend less than a month per year in Thorpeness, whereas 36% stay for a month or more annually.

Just under 42% of respondents owned a second/ holiday or residential property in Thorpeness. The majority of these owners (82%), spend a month or more in the village each year, suggesting a strong ongoing connection (Figure 3). Only 18% of respondents identified as full-time residents of Thorpeness (Figure 2). Within this group, the length of residency varied. At the time of the survey, 14% had lived in the area for less than 10 years, whereas nearly double (28%) had been living in the area for 11 to 20 years. The majority of permanent residents (58%) however stated they have lived in Thorpeness for more than 20 years.



5.2 Employment and professional links in Thorpeness

Across all respondents - whether permanent residents or visitors - the vast majority (89%) reported that they do not work in Thorpeness. Among the 11% who do, nearly one in five (19%) are employed in the holiday accommodation sector, reflecting the village's ties to tourism.

The majority of working respondents (55%) selected the 'other' category, with free-text responses revealing a diverse range of occupations. These included legal, financial and technology services alongside gardening, agriculture, property maintenance, retail and administration/ governance.

The variety of employment suggests that while relatively few respondents work directly in Thorpeness, many bring a rich mix of professional experience and skills to the community.

6 About Thorpeness

6.1 Why do respondents choose to visit Thorpeness rather than another coastal town/ village?

Respondents cited a wide range of reasons for choosing Thorpeness over other coastal towns and villages. Many highlighting the village's peaceful atmosphere, scenic/ natural beauty, and unique character as key attractions. Longstanding personal or family connections to the area were also frequently mentioned, underscoring the emotional ties many have to the village.

Others were drawn by Thorpeness's recreational offerings, including golf, walking, and swimming, which make it an ideal spot for both relaxation and activity. The village's charm, local amenities, and proximity to nearby towns further enhance its appeal, making it a convenient destination for both day trips and extended stays.

6.2 What is your favourite place in Thorpeness – and why?

Two places stood out clearly among respondents as favourites: the Meare (98 references) and/or the beach (89 references). The Meare was valued for its peaceful atmosphere, boating activities, wildlife, and nostalgic significance. The popularity of the beach came from an appreciation for its natural beauty, tranquillity, and opportunities for swimming and walking.

Many respondents also expressed affection for their homes in Thorpeness, citing personal memories and the village's unique charm. Other notable favourites included the golf course, Country Club, The Dolphin Inn, and The Kitchen Café - each appreciated for their amenities and social value.

Overall, the responses reflected a strong emotional connection to Thorpeness, with many highlighting its scenic setting, community feel, and multi-generational significance.

6.3 How would you describe the community in Thorpeness?

When asked to describe the community in Thorpeness, respondents overwhelmingly used words such as “friendly,” “welcoming,” “relaxed,” and “unique” (Figure 4). These terms reflect a strong sense of warmth and openness, with many highlighting the village's inclusive and supportive atmosphere.

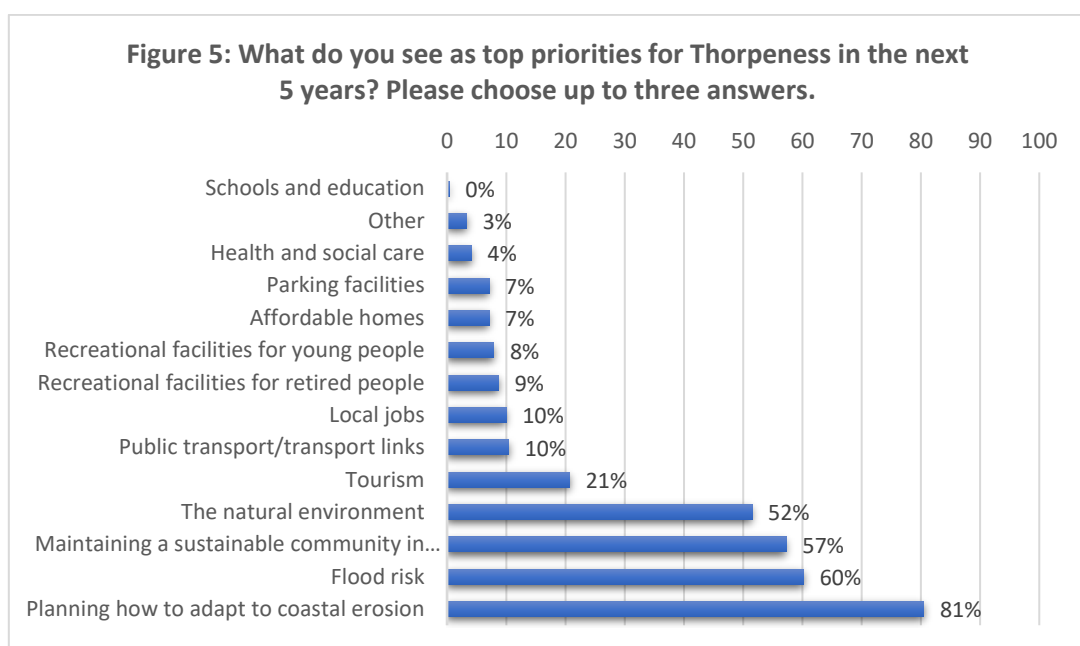
Several responses emphasised the multi-generational and family-oriented nature of the community, while others appreciated its traditional charm, peaceful environment, and idyllic coastal setting. A number of participants also noted the seasonal rhythm of the village - describing it as vibrant in summer but quieter in winter.

amenities such as cafés and public toilets. Emotional connections were also evident, with many referencing family traditions, childhood memories, and a strong sense of belonging to the area.

6.5 Top priorities for the next five years

Respondents were asked about their top three priorities for Thorpeness in the next five years. The results reveal a clear focus on environmental and community sustainability.

Adapting to coastal erosion emerged as the most pressing concern (Figure 5), though this may have been influenced by the survey’s emphasis on coastal erosion and coastal flooding. The next most frequently selected priorities were ‘flood risk’ and ‘maintaining a sustainable community in Thorpeness’.



A small percentage (3%) used the ‘other’ category to highlight specific or additional concerns not fully captured by the main options. These included topics such as electric vehicle charging infrastructure and affordable parking for residents. However, even within these open-ended responses, coastal erosion and cliff maintenance remained dominant themes. Respondents called for shoreline management, flood response planning and efforts to protect beach access and walking routes.

A follow-up question invited respondents to elaborate on their choices. These qualitative responses strongly reinforced the urgency of addressing coastal erosion and flood risk, which many viewed as existential threats to the village. Concerns included the potential loss of homes, damage to the Meare, and the long-term viability of Thorpeness if these issues remained unaddressed. Beyond environmental concerns, respondents emphasised the importance of preserving the village’s unique character. Some warned against overdevelopment, the proliferation of second homes, and the erosion of community life. Others highlighted the need for sustainable tourism, local employment opportunities, and improved infrastructure - including better transport links, parking, and facilities for older residents. A few also raised

concerns about the impact of large-scale energy projects, such as Sizewell C and offshore wind farms, urging that these developments be carefully managed to protect the coast and community wellbeing.

6.6 Longer-term priorities (20 years +)

When asked whether priorities for Thorpeness would remain the same over the longer term, nearly two-thirds of respondents (65%) believed they would not fundamentally change, while 18% anticipated a shift. However, analysis of the qualitative responses suggests that both groups are largely aligned in their core concern: the ongoing and intensifying threat of coastal erosion and coastal flooding. Those expecting change often pointed to the increasing severity of environmental challenges, while those anticipating continuity viewed these issues as persistent and enduring, requiring long-term attention. In essence, the difference lies not in *what* is prioritised, but in how its trajectory is perceived - either as a worsening crisis or a constant challenge.

There is widespread belief that rising sea levels, more frequent storms, and continued cliff retreat will pose growing threats to the village's physical integrity and long-term viability. Some respondents expressed fears that, without urgent and coordinated action, parts of Thorpeness could be lost entirely. Beyond environmental concerns, a few respondents also raised issues around changing demographics, including the decline in permanent residents and the rise in second homes, which could affect community cohesion and access to services. Infrastructure developments - such as Sizewell C and other energy projects - were seen as potential threats to the village's character and environment.

While a small number of respondents expressed tentative optimism that effective planning and investment could help preserve Thorpeness, the overall tone was one of uncertainty and concern about the future.

7 Assessment of Readiness

A. Climate Sensitivity

To what extent do existing policies, behaviours and choices in this area already take account of current climate change science, likely scenarios and their implications for flood and/ or coastal erosion risks? Do stakeholders actively pursue climate sensitive policies and decisions?

No Readiness	The actions and decisions of stakeholders in this place are not at all informed by or responsive to climate change science and scenarios.
Low Readiness	Most stakeholders have a minimal awareness of how climate change science and scenarios might influence their policies, decisions and/ or behaviours.
Uneven Readiness	Some stakeholders are taking climate change science and scenarios into account in their policies, decision-making processes and behaviours, but most are not.
Developing Readiness	Many stakeholders are consciously embedding climate change science and scenarios in their policies, decision-making processes and behaviours, with good evidence of progress.
Advanced Readiness	Climate change science and scenarios are already embedded in the policies, decisions and/ or behaviours of most stakeholders; climate sensitivity is normal.

The community survey did not include any questions in relation to climate sensitivity, as this dimension is considered more relevant for professionals involved in policy development, or those significantly involved in planning for coastal flood/ coastal erosion risk.

Interviews with stakeholders in Thorpeness suggested that while awareness of local risks such as coastal flooding and coastal erosion is generally strong, the extent to which climate change considerations are embedded in policies, processes and planning appears less consistent. Perspectives on this varied among interviewees, and some noted that they could only speak for their own organisation rather than others.

Several participants suggested that only “some” stakeholders are taking climate change science and future scenarios into account in their decision-making, and that most policies and behaviours remain largely reactive to immediate hazards rather than proactive in addressing longer-term climate impacts. Others offered a more positive view, pointing to examples where climate change considerations are consciously integrated into policies and planning, citing initiatives such as the Shoreline Management Plan, the Resilient Coasts project and the Neighbourhood Plan for Thorpeness. However, it was emphasised that “taking climate change into account” does not necessarily translate into implementation.

Interviewees also highlighted differences in integration depending on the type of risk. According to some, coastal flooding was perceived as better addressed within existing frameworks, whereas coastal erosion received less attention. A recurring theme was that climate change as a

broad concept is less embedded than the specific hazards of coastal erosion and coastal flooding.

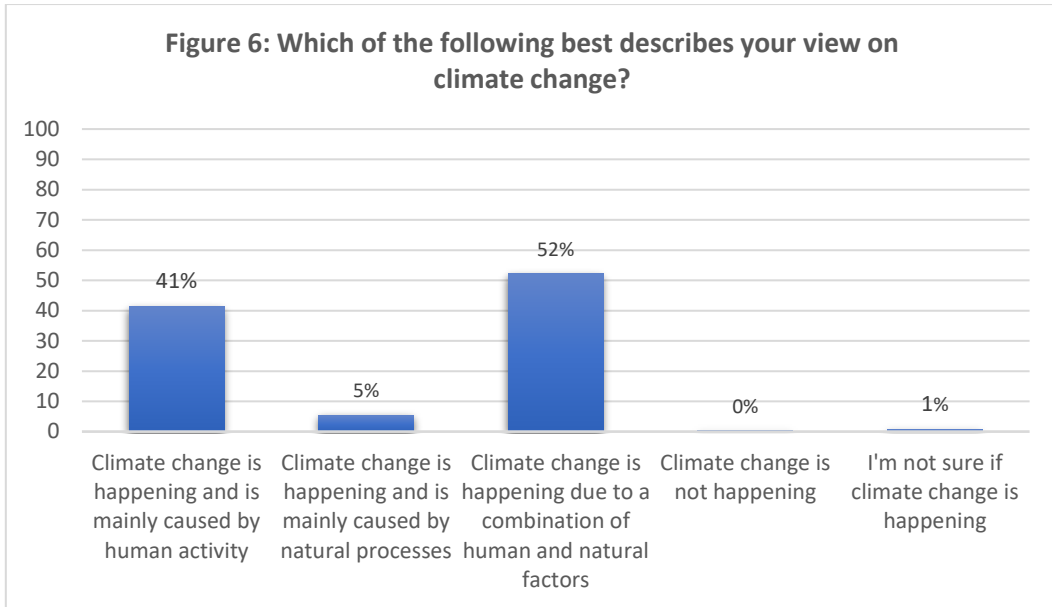
Overall, these findings point to uneven progress in mainstreaming climate change into local governance and planning. While there are positive examples of integration, gaps remain that could limit the community’s capacity to plan for long-term resilience. Strengthening the incorporation of climate change considerations beyond immediate hazards will be critical for effective adaptation.

B. Knowledge and Understanding

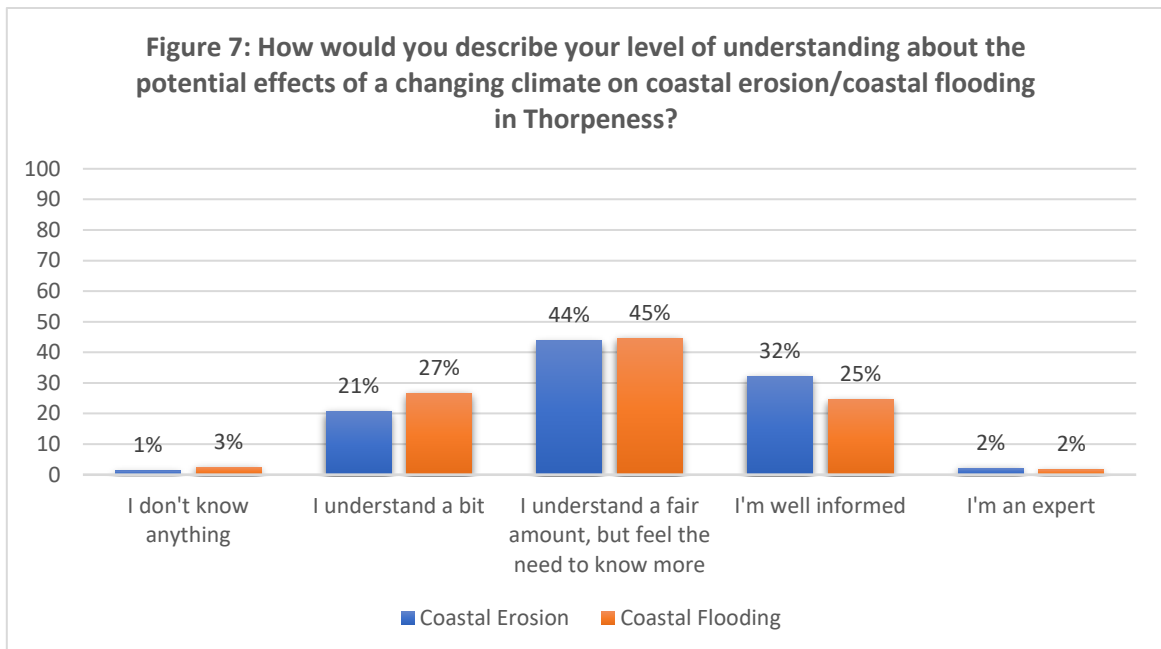
How well do stakeholders understand flood and/ or coastal erosion risks facing the area and how climate change might affect these risks?

No Readiness	Stakeholders have no meaningful knowledge or understanding.
Low Readiness	Stakeholders have limited and/ or confused knowledge or understanding.
Uneven Readiness	Some stakeholders are well-informed, but the majority indicate a partial or fragmented knowledge.
Developing Readiness	Most stakeholders have significant knowledge and understanding.
Advanced Readiness	All major stakeholders across this community have significant knowledge and understanding.

Survey responses gave both direct and indirect insights into people’s perceived levels of knowledge about coastal flood/ coastal erosion risks. Given respondents’ identified priorities for Thorpeness ([see section 2](#)), it is perhaps unsurprising that the survey data revealed a strong general awareness of climate change among respondents ([Figure 6](#)). Nearly all respondents (99%) acknowledged the existence of climate change. However, opinions on its causes differed: 52% believed it results from both human and natural factors, while 41% attribute it primarily to human activity.



Despite the strong awareness, there was a clear appetite for more information about local impacts. Responses to a direct question on perceived levels of understanding ([Figure 7](#)) suggested that people feel slightly more informed about coastal erosion than coastal flooding. A higher proportion considered themselves ‘well informed’ about coastal erosion (32%) compared to coastal flooding (25%). Conversely, more respondents reported only understanding ‘a bit’ or nothing about coastal flooding (29%) than coastal erosion (22%), indicating a greater perceived knowledge gap around coastal flooding.



While results must be interpreted with caution (as explained below), we briefly examined whether perceived levels of understanding about climate-related risks varied by age group ([Table 1](#)) or zone of living ([Table 2](#)).

Neither age nor zone of living showed statistically significant differences in respondent’s perceived levels of understanding - suggesting that any observed variation may be due to sampling variability or chance. As such, Tables 1 and 2 present the distribution of self-reported levels of knowledge across age groups and zones, but no firm conclusions can be drawn from these comparisons.

Across both tables, most respondents rated their understanding as either ‘understanding a fair amount’ or ‘being well informed’. The data suggests no meaningful differences in perceived knowledge across age groups or zones. However, higher response counts in certain categories - particularly among those aged 35-74 and in zones E and F - may reflect greater engagement or simply larger population representation in those groups. This uneven distribution may have affected the reliability of comparisons and should be considered when interpreting differences.

Table 1: Levels of understanding about the potential effects of changing climate on coastal erosion/flooding in Thorpeness by age group

Age	Perceived levels of understanding										10 11
	Coastal Erosion					Coastal Flooding					
	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	
18-34 years	0	2	3	5	1	0	2	3	4	1	10 11
35-54 years	0	10	18	17	2	1	12	23	9	2	46
55-64 years	1	9	34	20	1	1	17	30	16	1	63
65-74 years	0	18	25	23	1	3	19	26	19	0	66
75+ years	1	9	24	9	0	0	11	24	8	0	41
TOTAL	2	48	104	74	5	6	61	106	56	4	

Understanding: 1 = I don’t know anything, 2 = I understand a bit, 3 = I understand a fair amount, but feel the need to know more, 4 = I’m well informed, 5 = I’m an expert

To minimise the risk of participant identification, data from the younger groups (18-24 years and 25-34 years) were aggregated in the tables. Likewise, data from Zone A and Zone B were combined.

Table 2: Levels of understanding about the potential effects of changing climate on coastal erosion/flooding in Thorpeness by Zone of living

Zone	Perceived levels of understanding										4
	Coastal Erosion					Coastal Flooding					
	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	
A & B	0	0	2	2	0	0	0	2	2	0	4
C	0	3	6	6	1	0	3	8	4	1	16
D	0	3	6	0	0	0	4	5	0	0	9
E	0	8	18	10	2	4	9	15	9	1	38
F	0	7	27	29	1	1	11	31	20	1	64
TOTAL	0	21	59	47	4	5	27	61	35	3	

Understanding: 1 = I don’t know anything, 2 = I understand a bit, 3 = I understand a fair amount, but feel the need to know more, 4 = I’m well informed, 5 = I’m an expert

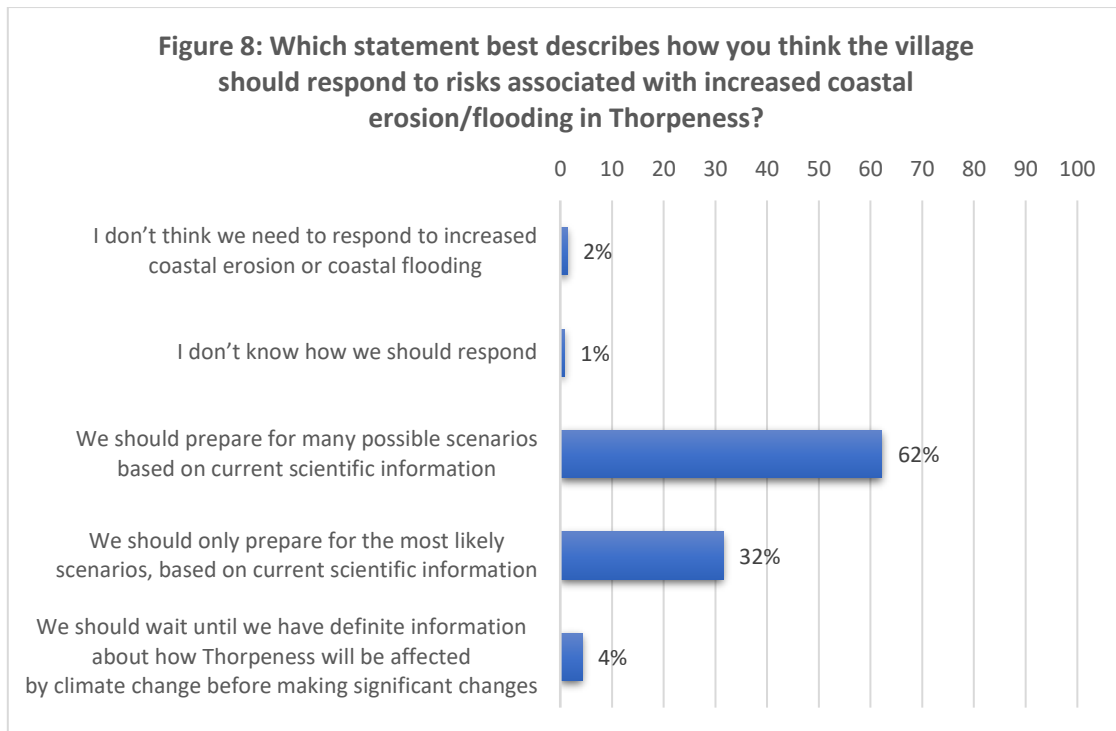
As mentioned, these comparisons need to be interpreted with caution. Subgroup analysis involves dividing the sample into categories such as age groups or zones of living. However, due to uneven representation across e.g. age groups or zones of living, pairwise comparisons lack statistical reliability. Additionally, respondents were asked to self-assess their level of understanding, which introduces subjectivity. For example, identifying as ‘well informed’ may reflect modesty, confidence, or overestimation, rather than a consistent benchmark of knowledge.

To interpret these responses meaningfully, we considered what might characterise a well-informed understanding of climate change. This could include:

- Recognising that climate change has multiple, interacting effects (e.g. extreme weather, rising sea levels, biodiversity loss),
- Understanding a range of direct and indirect local implications for places like Thorpeness (e.g. coastal erosion, coastal flooding, economic impacts on tourism),
- Awareness of timescales and potential severity in line with current scientific consensus.

Furthermore, being ‘well-informed’ would also encompass knowledge about different options and strategies for managing climate-related risks (e.g. different approaches to protection, acceptance, adaptation, avoidance and relocation), and some of the benefits of or trade-offs between each. It could also be suggested that, if a person has a more holistic understanding of risks, they would also be thinking about responses in a more joined up way.

Question 22 complemented the direct question on knowledge by asking how people believe the village should respond to coastal erosion and coastal flooding risks. The results ([Figure 8](#)) showed strong support for proactive and comprehensive planning, with the vast majority of respondents (94%) believing that Thorpeness should take action to address the risks associated with climate change. However, opinions differ on the scale and scope of that action. Nearly two thirds (62%) of respondents indicated that the village should prepare for as many scenarios as possible whereas 32% preferred to focus only on the most likely scenarios. Just 4% suggested to wait for definite information before making significant changes. These findings suggest a community that is aware of the risks and largely in favour of early, strategic planning to safeguard the village’s future.



Stakeholder interviews broadly support the survey findings, indicating that the community has a reasonable level of awareness. However, some interviewees distinguished between awareness and understanding, noting that while awareness is high, deeper knowledge of coastal flooding, coastal erosion, and climate change impacts is lacking.

Most interviewees described community knowledge as *“understanding a fair amount but feeling the need to know more”*, with some responses falling between *“understanding a fair amount”* and *“understanding a bit”*. Occasional references to individuals being *“well informed”* or even *“experts”* were typically linked to those directly affected by coastal erosion or coastal flooding. Many felt that residents in Thorpeness have been ‘forced’ into greater awareness as the impacts have become increasingly visible and tangible. However, some suggested that second-homeowners who had properties further inland, may be somewhat insulated from this reality and able to overlook the situation more easily.

A few interviewees added that limited understanding is compounded by changing narratives, such as media coverage that can sensationalise issues or overemphasise certain aspects without fully reflecting the context or reality.

Overall, the interviews mirror the survey’s picture: strong general awareness but a clear appetite for more information. Taken together, the data suggest that while awareness is high, knowledge remains uneven.

C. Attitudes and Emotions

What level of concern do stakeholders have about flood and coastal erosion risks, and about how climate change might affect those in the future? How might emotions - potentially including anxiety, anger, grief and attachment to place and community - bear on their willingness and/ or capacity to be involved in resilience-building?

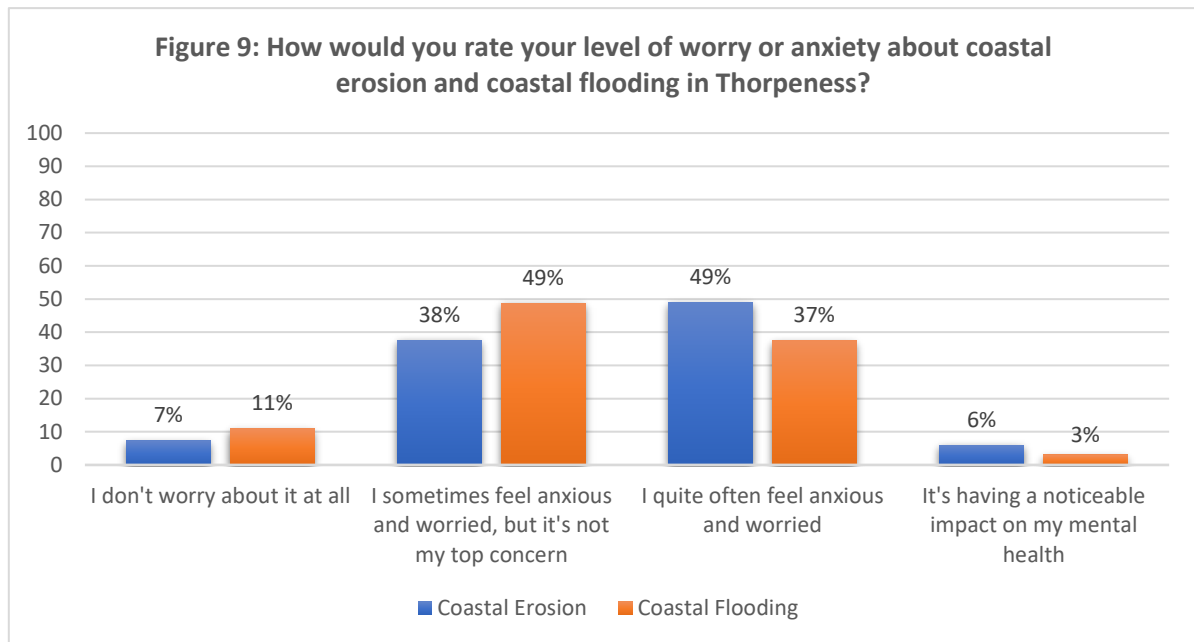
No Readiness	Flooding, coastal erosion and/ or climate change are not recognised as issues of concern or are the focus of active denial/resistance.
Low Readiness	Flooding, coastal erosion and/ or climate change are hardly recognised as issues of concern. There are only sporadic expressions of anxiety, connection to place and community, or other relevant emotions.
Uneven Readiness	Flooding, coastal erosion and/ or climate change are recognised as issues of concern for some stakeholders but not others. Some of the emotions that are being expressed are motivating people to engage in climate adaptation efforts while others are counterproductive.
Developing Readiness	Flooding, coastal erosion and/ or climate change are widely recognised as issues of concern and priority. There are increasing expressions of and conversations about a range of emotions, and these are beginning to motivate action.
Advanced Readiness	Flooding, coastal erosion and/ or climate change are widely recognised as issues of concern.

Question 19 of the survey explored respondents' level of concern regarding the effects of coastal erosion and coastal flooding. As shown in [Figure 9](#), both issues are significant sources of worry, with very few respondents reporting no concern at all.

When comparing the two, coastal erosion versus coastal flooding, coastal erosion appears to elicit slightly more frequent and intense concern. Nearly half of the respondents (49%) said they often feel anxious or worried about erosion, compared to 37% for coastal flooding. Conversely, coastal flooding was more commonly described as a moderate concern, with 49% saying they sometimes feel anxious, compared to 38% for erosion. Stakeholder interviews broadly confirmed these patterns. While views varied – some stakeholders felt most people are not overly worried, while others believed anxiety is more widespread – the overall sentiment echoed the survey findings: there is at least some, and seemingly increasing, anxiety about coastal erosion risks in Thorpeness.

A small but notable proportion of respondents reported that these issues are having a noticeable impact on their mental health - 6% for coastal erosion and 3% for coastal flooding - highlighting the emotional toll of living with environmental uncertainty. Given respondents' strong emotional connections to Thorpeness - particularly their affection for the beach and the Meare, its natural beauty, uniqueness and nature - it is perhaps unsurprising that threats like erosion and flooding are viewed with such concern. The potential loss or degradation of these beloved spaces represents not just a physical risk, but a personal and emotional one for many in the community. Stakeholder interviews reinforced this finding, with several interviewees noting

that coastal erosion and coastal flooding are affecting mental health, confirming that a small but significant proportion of residents experience noticeable emotional wellbeing impacts.



Analysis of the open-text comments - where respondents could elaborate on their answer - provided deeper insight into the emotional impact of coastal erosion and coastal flooding, particularly among those who were permanent residents, or had long-standing ties to Thorpeness. Many described feelings of anxiety, distress, and helplessness. Stakeholder interviews reinforced these findings.

Interviews suggested that second-homeowners might feel less concerned about coastal risks or are able to 'ignore' the issue. However, survey data painted a more nuanced picture. In the free-text responses, even respondents who do not live in Thorpeness year-round expressed concern for the village's future, its residents, and its distinctive character. Coastal erosion was widely perceived as a visible and accelerating threat, with some respondents noting its impact on their mental health and feelings of security. While coastal flooding was mentioned less frequently, it was still recognised as a serious risk, often linked to coastal erosion and broader climate change effects. Closed-question responses revealed a statistically significant difference between those who own a second or holiday home and those who do not (i.e. permanent residents). Overall, second-homeowners reported slightly lower levels of concern about coastal erosion⁵ and coastal flooding⁶ compared to primary residents. It is worth remembering, however, that while the split between second-homeowners and primary residents was relatively even (42% vs 58% respectively) there was a much larger gap between those living in Thorpeness year-round (18%) and those saying they do not (82%). This suggests that the level of concern may relate less to

⁵ P < 0.001. To identify how likely it is that differences observed between groups happened by chance, statistical tests use a p-value. A smaller p-value (e.g., less than 0.05) suggests the difference is unlikely to be due to chance and therefore provides stronger evidence of a real effect

⁶ P = 0.021

property ownership and more to the amount of time spent in the village, which can be one and the same for some but might not be the case for all respondents.

A few stakeholder interviews suggested that some individuals may feel the impacts of coastal erosion and coastal flooding will, due to their age, no longer affect them. As a result, they may not feel particularly concerned, may be indifferent to the issues, or may lack motivation to take action. When examining levels of concern across age groups ([Table 3](#)), the data showed that concerns about coastal erosion and coastal flooding were moderate and consistent. Most respondents reported feeling ‘sometimes’ or ‘quite often’ anxious or worried, with no age group showing significantly higher or lower concern. Patterns were similar for both erosion and flooding, and - as with previous comparisons - any small differences observed were not statistically significant, suggesting that variations may be due to sampling variability or chance.

Table 3: Levels of concern about coastal erosion/flooding in Thorpeness by age group

Age	Perceived levels of concern								
	Coastal Erosion				Coastal Flooding				
	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	
18-34 years	0	5	5	1	1	6	3	1	11
35-54 years	1	18	21	6	4	23	17	2	46
55-64 years	6	22	31	4	7	32	21	2	63 62
65-74 years	7	28	30	1	8	32	24	0	66 64
75+ years	1	14	24	2	3	16	19	2	41 40
TOTAL	15	87	111	14	23	109	84	7	

Concern: 1= I don't worry about it at all, 2 = I sometimes feel anxious and worried, but it's not my top concern, 3 = I quite often feel anxious and worried, 4 = It's having a noticeable impact on my mental health.

Stakeholder interviews suggested that proximity to the coast influences concern levels among residents, with those living closer to impact zones tending to feel more anxious. Since October 2025 several houses have been demolished on North End Avenue, following further rapid erosion. This may have affected people’s responses, as the stakeholder interviews took place during this period of rapid erosion.

Consistent with these observations, statistical analysis revealed a significant difference in levels of concern about coastal erosion across zones ([Table 4](#)). Specifically, respondents in zone F⁷ (see [Figure 1](#)) reported higher levels of anxiety compared to those in Zones D and E, suggesting that zone F stands out in terms of perceived worry about erosion. Over half of zone F respondents indicated they ‘quite often feel anxious or worried’, a proportion notably higher than in other zones.

In contrast, no statistically significant differences were found between zones in relation to concern about coastal flooding. This suggests that while flooding is recognised as a risk, perceptions of erosion are more variable and location-dependent, likely reflecting the visible

⁷ Zone F was located nearest to the coast whereas Zone A was furthest inland.

and immediate impact of erosion in zone F. It is however important to remember that zone F had a much larger number of respondents, which increases the reliability of estimates for that zone. However, this also means that comparisons with smaller zones should be interpreted with caution, as lower sample sizes may affect statistical robustness.

Table 4: Levels of understanding about the potential effects of changing climate on coastal erosion/flooding in Thorpeness by Zone of living

Zone	Perceived levels of concern								
	Coastal Erosion				Coastal Flooding				
	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	
A & B	0	3	1	0	0	2	1	0	3 4
C	2	5	9	0	2	5	9	0	16
D	0	7	2	0	1	7	1	0	9
E	2	14	19	1	4	15	14	2	36 35
F	2	10	38	13	4	21	32	5	63 62
TOTAL	6	39	69	14	11	50	57	7	

Concern: 1= I don't worry about it at all, 2 = I sometimes feel anxious and worried, but it's not my top concern, 3 = I quite often feel anxious and worried, 4 = It's having a noticeable impact on my mental health.

Another useful comparison involves examining the relationship between respondents' self-reported levels of understanding and their expressed levels of concern. This analysis revealed a notable pattern, both in relation to coastal erosion ([Table 5](#)) and coastal flooding ([Table 6](#)).

By comparing these two dimensions, we aimed to understand whether a greater knowledge correlated with higher or lower concern, and whether information gaps might contribute to emotional responses. The results – though caution is warranted due to previously discussed limitations – suggested that understanding and concern are related to some extent, with greater understanding generally associated with higher levels of concern.

Table 5: Levels of understanding and concern about the potential effects of changing climate on coastal erosion in Thorpeness

Coastal Erosion Concern	Perceived levels of understanding Coastal Erosion					
	1	2	3	4	5	
	<i>I don't worry about it at all</i>	1	5	4	7	
<i>I sometimes feel anxious and worried, but it's not my top concern</i>	2	29	33	23	1	88
<i>I quite often feel anxious and worried</i>	0	15	60	38	2	115
<i>It's having a noticeable impact on my mental health</i>	0	0	6	7	1	14
TOTAL	3	49	103	75	4	

Understanding: 1 = I don't know anything, 2 = I understand a bit, 3 = I understand a fair amount, but feel the need to know more, 4 = I'm well informed, 5 = I'm an expert

Focusing on coastal erosion, there was an overall statistically significant difference in levels of concern across self-reported understanding by groups⁸. However, further analysis did not identify any specific group differences as statistically significant. This suggests that while concern levels varied across understanding categories, the differences between individual groups may be subtle, reflecting a gradual increase in concern with rising awareness rather than sharp breaks between categories.

Table 6: Levels of understanding and concern about the potential effects of changing climate on coastal flooding in Thorpeness

Coastal Flooding Concern	Perceived levels of understanding Coastal Flooding					
	1	2	3	4	5	
	<i>I don't worry about it at all</i>	0	11	7	7	
<i>I sometimes feel anxious and worried, but it's not my top concern</i>	3	39	50	19	1	112
<i>I quite often feel anxious and worried</i>	2	12	41	29	2	86
<i>It's having a noticeable impact on my mental health</i>	0	0	5	1	1	7
TOTAL	5	62	103	56	4	

Understanding: 1 = I don't know anything, 2 = I understand a bit, 3 = I understand a fair amount, but feel the need to know more, 4 = I'm well informed, 5 = I'm an expert

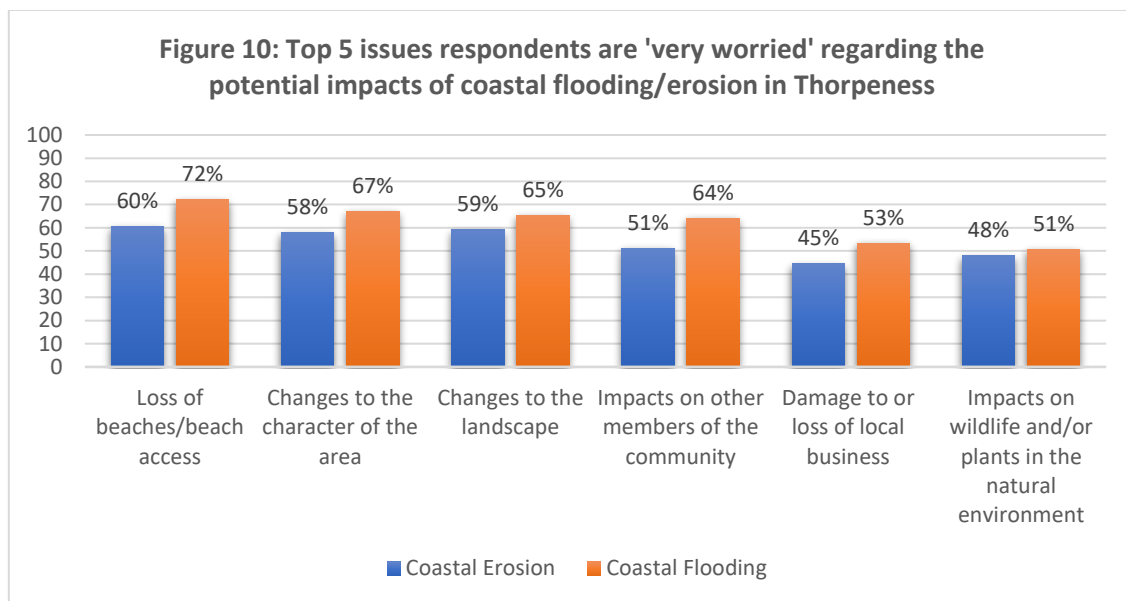
⁸ p = 0.033

To identify how likely it is that differences observed between groups happened by chance, statistical tests use a p-value. A smaller p-value (e.g., less than 0.05) suggests the difference is unlikely to be due to chance and therefore provides stronger evidence of a real effect.

A similar trend was observed for coastal flooding, with an overall statistically significant difference in concern levels across understanding groups⁹, but again, no statistically significant pairwise differences were found.

Questions 20 and 21 offered valuable insight into the main concerns of respondents (Figure 10). The top five issues people worry about in Thorpeness are largely consistent for both coastal erosion and coastal flooding, with differences emerging primarily in the intensity of concern and the fifth-ranked issue. Concern about coastal flooding was more evenly distributed across a range of topics and levels of worry - from 'very worried' to 'slightly worried'. In contrast, concern about coastal erosion was more concentrated, with stronger emotional responses focused on fewer key issues. This suggests that while the types of worries are similar, the depth and spread of worry differ between the two risks.

A recurring theme in the comments was frustration with perceived inaction from authorities and a desire for more coordinated, transparent, and proactive efforts to protect the village and its coast/ coastal frontage.



When considering what people valued and appreciated about Thorpeness - its uniqueness, the beach, the Meare – the results are unsurprising and reflect expected priorities. Importantly, even though most respondents reside in zone F, which is closest to the shoreline, their concern is often directed toward impacts on the wider community rather than on personal property loss or damage. Additionally, concerns about insurance costs and property risk were less prominent, suggesting that respondents were more focused on preserving the village’s character and protecting vulnerable areas, than on individual impacts. This pattern reflects both a strong sense of community and a heightened awareness of environmental vulnerability, particularly among those living closest to the coast.

⁹ P = 0.047

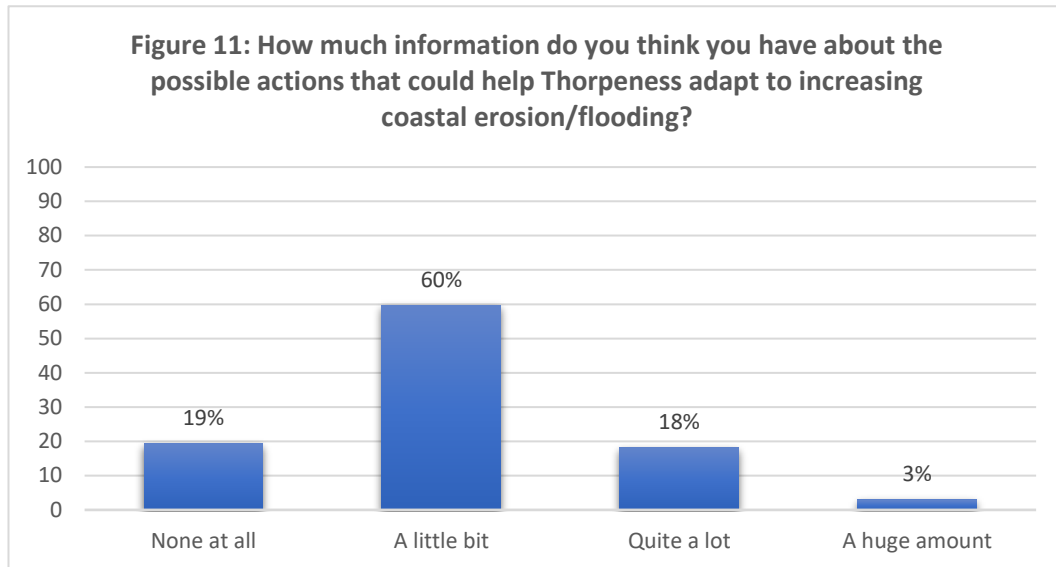
D. Sense of Agency

Do stakeholders feel empowered to make changes that would help them manage risks and address vulnerabilities in the context of climate change? Do they feel responsible for doing so? To what extent are they able to access resources – expertise, funding – to support climate adaptation efforts? Is effective leadership present where needed?

No Readiness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a strong sense of disempowerment, and no visible leadership on climate adaptation efforts. • There is no sense of responsibility for action.
Low Readiness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many stakeholders feel that when they do try to engage, they are not listened to or able to make a difference. • Many lack the resources to take part in climate adaptation efforts.
Uneven Readiness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only some stakeholders feel that their contributions are listened to and/ or that they can make a difference, while others do not. • Some are starting to take responsibility within their own spheres of influence. • There are some efforts to lead on this work, but these are not yet widely recognised or effective.
Developing Readiness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is an increasing sense that suggestions and initiatives by stakeholders are making a tangible difference. • Many are participating, and some are developing their own initiatives for change. • Where needed, leadership is becoming more visible and effective.
Advanced Readiness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stakeholders across the community have an effective voice and/ or feel empowered to act on their own initiative to make a tangible difference. • There is effective leadership where needed, and this is creating an enabling and supportive atmosphere for all.

As discussed, the survey revealed that respondents overwhelmingly support the idea that Thorpeness should take action to address the risks posed by coastal erosion/ flooding – whether through comprehensive planning for multiple scenarios or by focusing on the most likely outcomes. This proactive attitude was echoed in the free-text comments, where several respondents expressed frustration and the lack of progress or slower pace of addressing the issues.

However, when exploring respondents’ awareness of possible actions that could help Thorpeness adapt, there appears to be a significant information gap. Nearly 80% of respondents reported having no or only a little bit of information regarding actions for adapting to coastal erosion and coastal flooding in Thorpeness ([Figure 11](#)). Several interviewees confirmed this finding, indicating that people often do not know if or how they could get involved, and some would – according to interviewees – only engage if decisions align with their preferred direction.

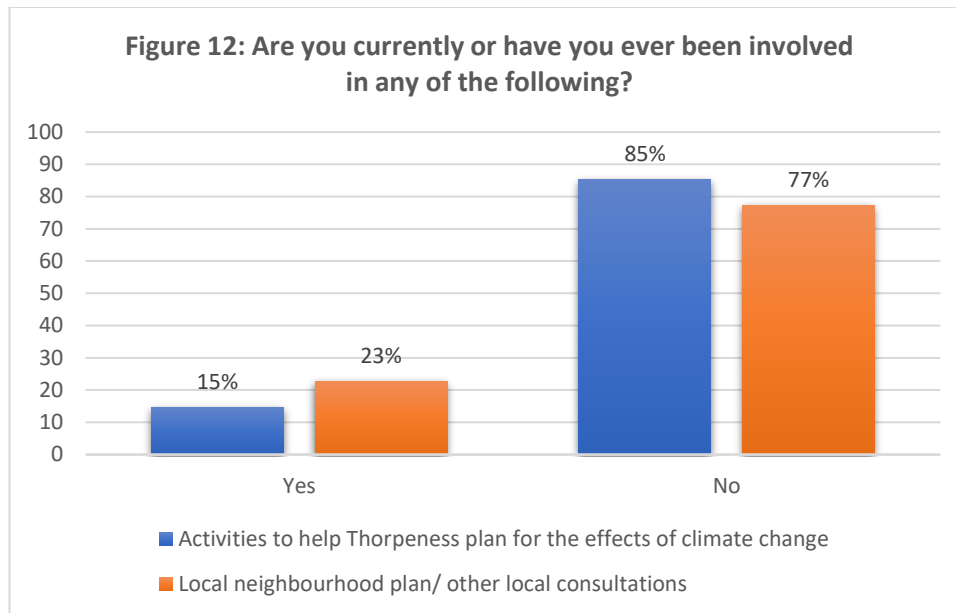


In response to the question about what kind of actions people think could help Thorpeness to adapt to increased coastal erosion or coastal flooding as a result of climate change, respondents offered a wide range of suggestions in free-text comments. These responses clustered into five key themes:

- Physical coastal defences: the most common proposals focused on tangible interventions such as rock armour, gabions, sea walls and cliff reinforcement, with many calling for urgent expansion of existing structures.
- Strategic planning and expert-led research: respondents highlighted the need for long-term coastal modelling, risk assessments, and scenario planning to guide future decisions and ensure that adaptation efforts are grounded in evidence.
- Collaboration and communication: some comments emphasised the importance of better coordination between local authorities, residents, and national infrastructure projects like Sizewell C, calling for more inclusive and transparent dialogue.
- Financial support mechanisms: suggestions included government funding, community contributions, and levies on tourism or second homes to help finance adaptation efforts.
- Transparency and empowerment: many respondents expressed a desire to reduce bureaucratic barriers and enable residents to take proactive steps to protect their homes and village, reflecting a need for greater agency and local involvement.

These themes align with earlier findings in the survey, which showed that most respondents are concerned about climate change and its potential effects on Thorpeness, and that they value the village's natural environment and unique character. This shared awareness could positively influence willingness to engage in future planning and decision-making.

However, in the past and/ or at present, the majority of respondents are not involved in any initiatives to help Thorpeness plan for a future that is shaped by climate change ([Figure 12](#)).



Despite widespread concern about coastal erosion, coastal flooding, and climate change, the analysis suggested a gap between respondents’ level of concern and their current levels of engagement in planning and decision-making. While various factors may contribute to this disconnect, the findings point to untapped potential for greater community involvement. Interviews provide some insights into the factors that might be contributing to the disconnect. Some practical and social barriers that arose from the interview data included:

- Direction of action: it was mentioned that some would only engage if decisions aligned with their preferred direction.
- Perceived lack of agency: many residents feel decisions rest with local authorities, and contradictory messaging creates confusion and conflict.
- Demographics: an aging population may feel the impacts will not affect them personally, while second-homeowners and holiday-led operators were described as less concerned and harder to engage.
- Trust and transparency: stakeholders pointed to the need for clearer, more consistent communication to build confidence in decision-making processes.

A statistically significant association was found between respondents’ level of concern and their involvement in activities to help Thorpeness plan for the effects of climate change¹⁰. Although the association was modest, it suggests that those with higher levels of concern, showed greater involvement in activities ([Table 7](#)). However, it is worth bearing in mind that many respondents will have been invited by existing networks such as the Coastal Futures Group and therefore findings might not be fully representative. Furthermore, this trend was not observed

¹⁰ P = 0.007 for coastal erosion and p = 0.004 for coastal flooding

To identify how likely it is that differences observed between groups happened by chance, statistical tests use a p-value. A smaller p-value (e.g., less than 0.05) suggests the difference is unlikely to be due to chance and therefore provides stronger evidence of a real effect.

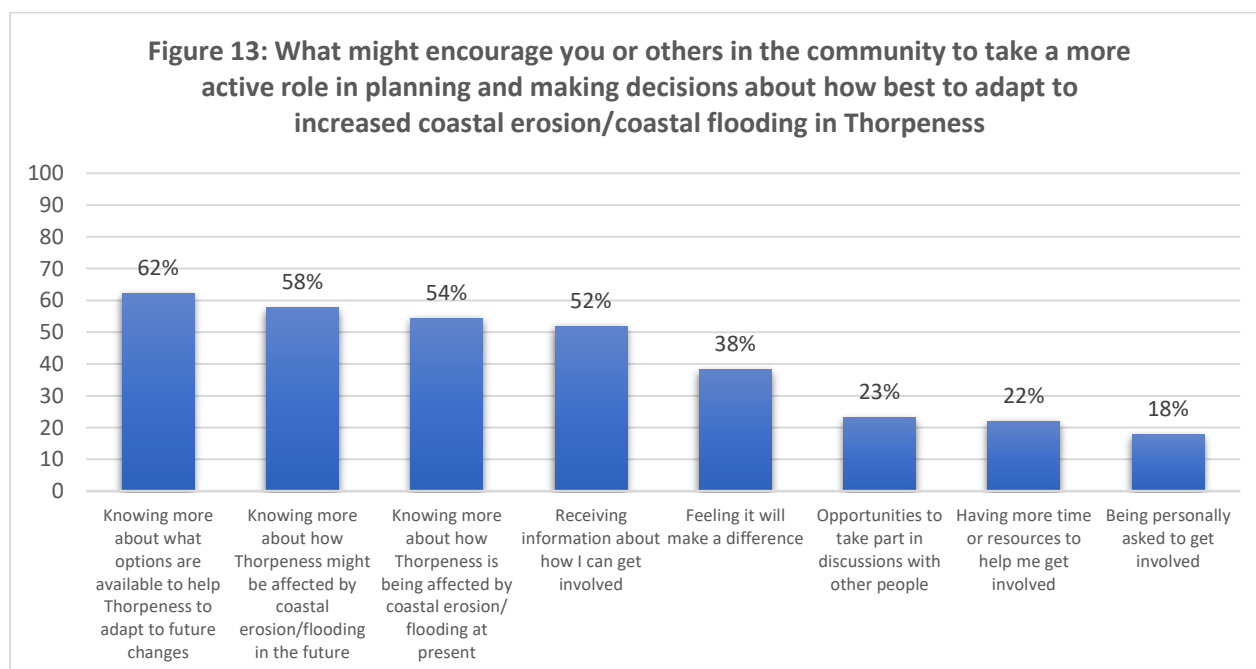
between respondents' level of concern and their involvement in local neighbourhood plan or consultations.

Table 7: Involvement in planning for climate change in Thorpeness by level of concern

Involvement in planning activities	Perceived levels of concern								
	Coastal Erosion				Coastal Flooding				
	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	
Yes	1	6	22	5	1	10	22	1	34
No	15	82	92	9	23	102	63	6	198 194
TOTAL	16	88	114	14	24	112	85	7	

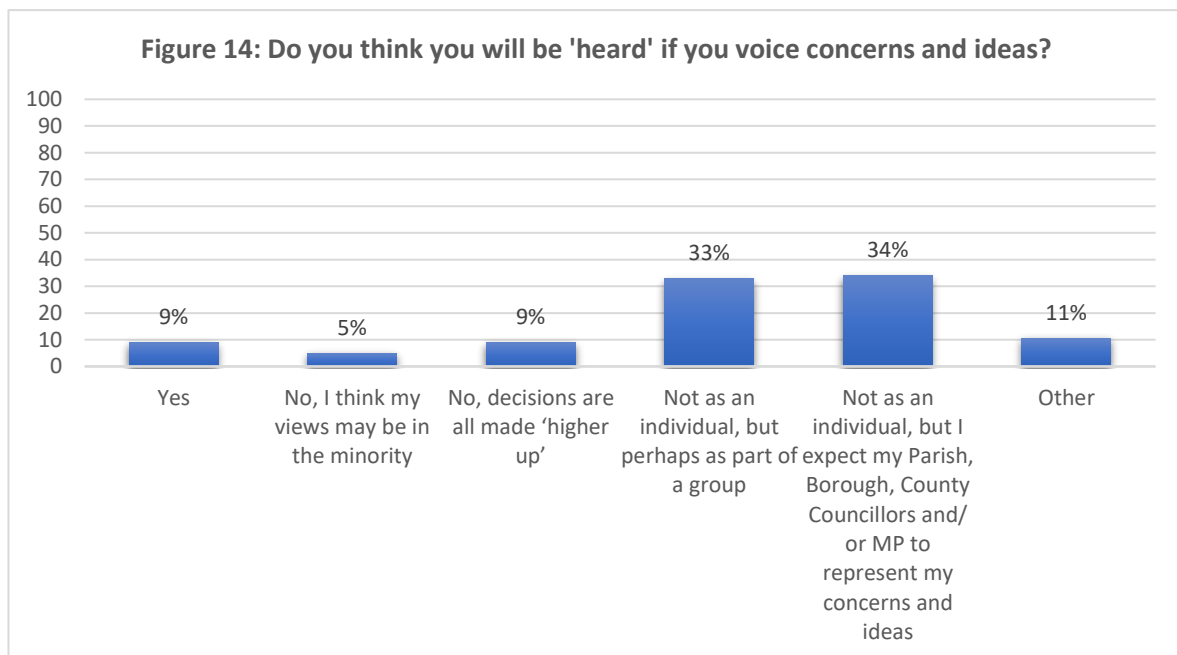
Concern: 1= I don't worry about it at all, 2 = I sometimes feel anxious and worried, but it's not my top concern, 3 = I quite often feel anxious and worried, 4 = It's having a noticeable impact on my mental health.

Question 29 explored what might encourage respondents - or others in the community - to take a more active role in shaping adaptation to increasing coastal risks. The results indicated that access to information is a key motivator (Figure 13). A large proportion (62%) of respondents felt that knowing more about available adaptation options would encourage involvement. In addition, 58% expressed interest in learning how Thorpeness is likely to be affected by coastal flooding/ coastal erosion in the future and 54% wanted more information about current impacts. Just over half (52%) also felt that receiving information on how to get involved would positively influence their willingness to participate.



These findings suggest that enhancing transparency, communication, and education around both the risks and the possible responses could play a crucial role in mobilising community engagement. With a foundation of concern and emotional investment already present,

providing clear pathways for involvement may help translate awareness into action. As shown in [Figure 13](#), apart from a desire to have this information respondents were also keen to feel it will make a difference (38%) or be provided with opportunities to take part in discussions with other people (23%). Interestingly, quite a low number of people express the belief that their individual concerns and ideas will be heard (9%) – [Figure 14](#). However, nearly a third (33%) feels that perhaps as a group, their voice would bear more weight.



Findings from stakeholder interviews added further depth to this picture. Most stakeholders felt that only a few individuals are confident about participating in planning and decision-making for climate adaptation. Those imminently affected by coastal erosion were perceived as more confident by some, but many are said to see the issue as “out of their hands” and something they cannot influence. Others noted that confidence is not the main issue – rather, it is about creating opportunities for active involvement.

Together this indicates that there is some necessary work to build capacities for planning and decision-making. If people are provided with more information, transparency, opportunities for collective engagement and visible pathways for participation, and are made to feel their voice matters, the community’s existing concern and commitment could be transformed into meaningful, coordinated action. This might be particularly important given that some stakeholders observed that while initial engagement is difficult, once people become involved, they tend to participate actively.

However, to fully unlock this potential, some of the data also suggested that adequate resources and funding would need to be available. This would further enable both physical adaptation measures and inclusive planning processes for sustained and effective action.

E. Conflict and Disagreements

What disagreements, divisions and/ or conflicts exist in this place? What is the nature of these conflicts? How might they affect capacities for climate adaptation? How prepared are people to engage constructively with conflict?

No Readiness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are significant unresolved conflicts and/ or divisions within this community that make it difficult to cooperate on climate adaptation. • Some stakeholder groups feel excluded from this community.
Low Readiness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are conflicts and/ or divisions that make effective cooperation difficult. • Capacities for constructive conflict engagement are low. • There are patterns of inequality and discrimination against some stakeholder groups.
Uneven Readiness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is some recognition of conflict, disagreement and/ or inequality. • Some stakeholders are willing and able to work through this, but others are acting in ways that exacerbate or sustain conflict.
Developing Readiness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is either limited conflict, disagreement or division, or most stakeholders are willing and able to tackle conflict/ disagreement/ division constructively. • There are deliberate efforts to overcome patterns of inequality and discrimination.
Advanced Readiness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Major conflicts, disagreements and inequalities have been tackled, and most stakeholders have the capacity to respond constructively to any future conflicts or disagreements.

The Thorpeness survey indicates that, while the community is generally perceived as friendly and cohesive, there are a few underlying areas of tension that could influence engagement in action planning. Stakeholder interviews reinforced this, revealing divisions within the community and between key actors involved in coastal management.

For some respondents, immediate priorities such as housing, livelihoods, or health understandably take precedence over longer-term climate risks. Others, however, expressed values and worldviews that emphasise responsibility to future generations and the wider community, motivating engagement beyond self-interest. Free-text responses also revealed some perceived tension between permanent residents and second-homeowners or holiday lets. Fourteen comments explicitly referenced this divide, using wording such as “*two disconnected camps*” or “*holiday village for second homers*”. These remarks suggest concerns about social fragmentation, exclusivity, and the impact of second-home ownership on community identity. Interviews echoed this theme, suggesting that second-homeowners may feel less concerned about coastal risks compared to permanent residents. This was attributed to the fact that some second-homeowners do not experience the threat continuously and may prefer to focus on the positives during their time in Thorpeness. Stakeholders noted that this could make engagement with second-homeowners more challenging, as their participation may also depend on whether they are physically present in the area at the time of meetings or consultations.

Seasonality was another recurring theme. Seventeen responses highlighted the fluctuating nature of Thorpeness, describing it as: *“Busy in summer, empty in winter.”* This variation in population and activity levels may affect how connected or cohesive the community feels throughout the year and could influence participation in adaptation planning.

Both survey comments and interviews revealed that actual or potential conflict also has an emotional dimension. For example, people who feel unheard or disregarded in decision-making processes tend to express frustration, distrust and a lack of agency. Even when not directly linked to climate adaptation, these experiences and emotions can influence willingness to engage.

Stakeholder interviews added further nuance, noting disagreements over whether to install coastal defences and what constitutes the ‘right’ course of action. Views ranged from wanting things to remain unchanged, to fears that innovation could worsen the situation, to beliefs that erosion is a natural process and that spending money to stop it is futile. Some interviewees mentioned deep-rooted discomfort about helping those perceived to have made poor choices (e.g. investing in a danger zone), which can create division and conflict.

One interviewee described the community as being ‘in the middle of a triangle of conflict’ between Defra/ Government, the Environment Agency, and the local authority – each looking to the others for action, funding, or policy direction, leaving the community feeling trapped. Contradictory messaging from authorities, such as presenting options that later prove unfeasible, was seen as creating confusion and eroding trust. While relationships between agencies and the community are improving, some interviewees felt this progress came too late, as erosion advanced faster than anticipated.

Although these tensions exist, they do not necessarily amount to outright conflict. Interviewees often framed the situation as ‘division’ or ‘lack of joined-up thinking’ rather than conflict. Importantly, most agreed that Thorpeness remains a strong and compassionate community. The challenge lies in addressing uncertainty, improving transparency, and creating inclusive processes that enable constructive dialogue and shared decision-making.

F. Collaboration and Trust

To what extent are stakeholders within this community able to collaborate effectively? Is there enough trust to allow for meaningful collaboration?

No Readiness	Trust is very low, and there is no collaboration.
Low Readiness	There is little meaningful collaboration. Some stakeholders trust each other, but many don't.
Uneven Readiness	Collaboration and trust are developing, with scope for further development.
Developing Readiness	There is promising collaboration among stakeholders, and this is currently gaining momentum. Trust is being built.
Advanced Readiness	There is a track record of effective collaboration involving the majority of stakeholders. Stakeholders trust each other and work well together.

Some of the responses to open questions reflect a certain sense of ‘distrust’ that agencies and stakeholders will take the action that is needed. As often the case when exploring community views in relation to change, the picture is multifaceted and interlinked. For example, as previously shown ([Figure 13](#)), over a third of respondents would like to feel that it will make a difference if they take an active role in climate adaptation planning and the vast majority (81%) feel that – as an individual – their voice will not be ‘heard’ ([Figure 14](#)). It is predominantly different levels of government that respondents assign significant responsibility to for responding to coastal erosion/ coastal flooding ([Figure 15](#)).

In response to the question about which people or organisations hold the greatest responsibility for helping Thorpeness address coastal erosion and/ or coastal flooding, the top five identified as having “significant responsibility” are predominantly different levels of government ([Figure 15](#)). Locally, East Suffolk Council and Suffolk County Council are seen as carrying the most responsibility, with Aldringham-cum-Thorpe Parish Council also featuring, though to a lesser extent. At the national level, respondents place significant responsibility on the Environment Agency and central government. This top five remains consistent for both coastal erosion and coastal flooding. Additionally, utility companies rank sixth in both cases, with 48% of respondents assigning them significant responsibility for coastal erosion and 45% for coastal flooding.

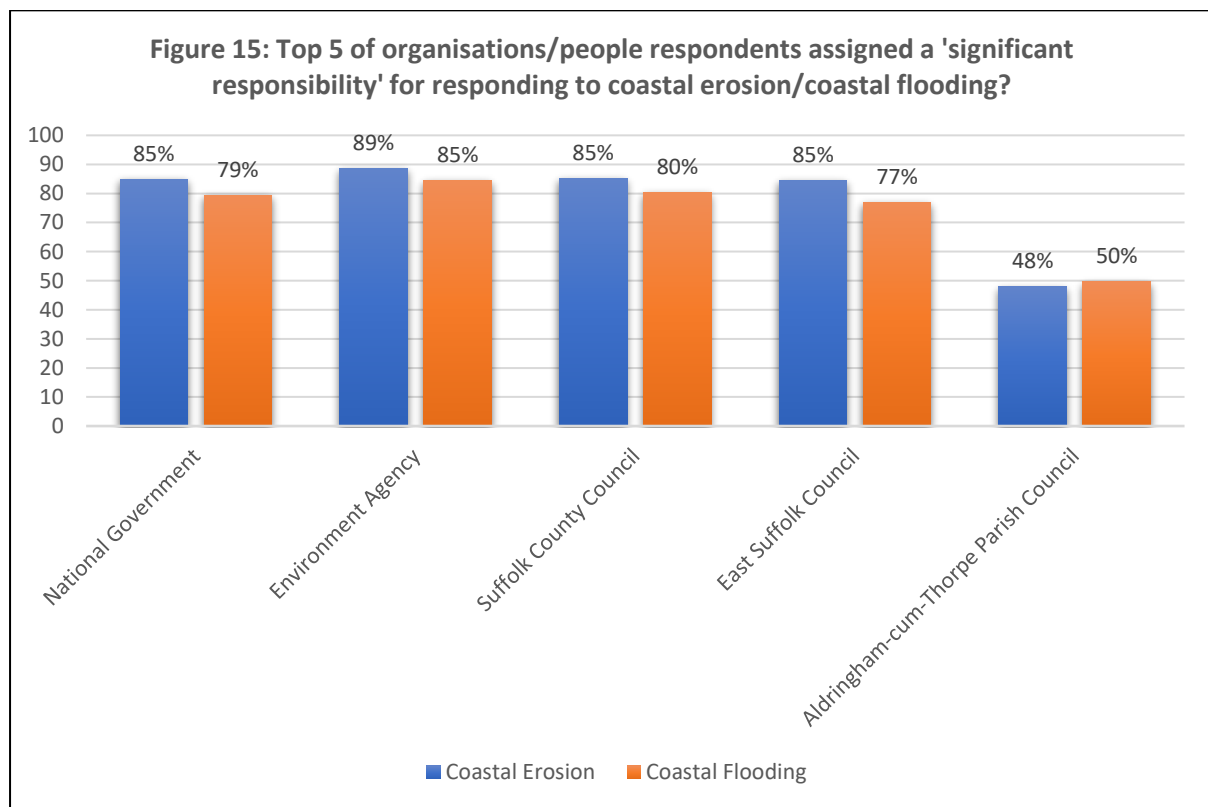
Interviewees provided valuable perspectives on the extent to which stakeholders within the community collaborate effectively. The majority felt that collaboration is limited, with most describing the situation as either “*a few stakeholders are able to collaborate but most are not*” or “*about half of the stakeholders are able to collaborate and half are not*”. While collaboration may appear strong from the outside, some interviewees noted that private conversations often reveal mistrust and concerns about being disadvantaged.

There was agreement that some elements of the community are working together, but uncertainty remains about how widespread this collaboration is. Interviewees highlighted a willingness to collaborate and a degree of trust, but warned that if progress stalls, anxiety could

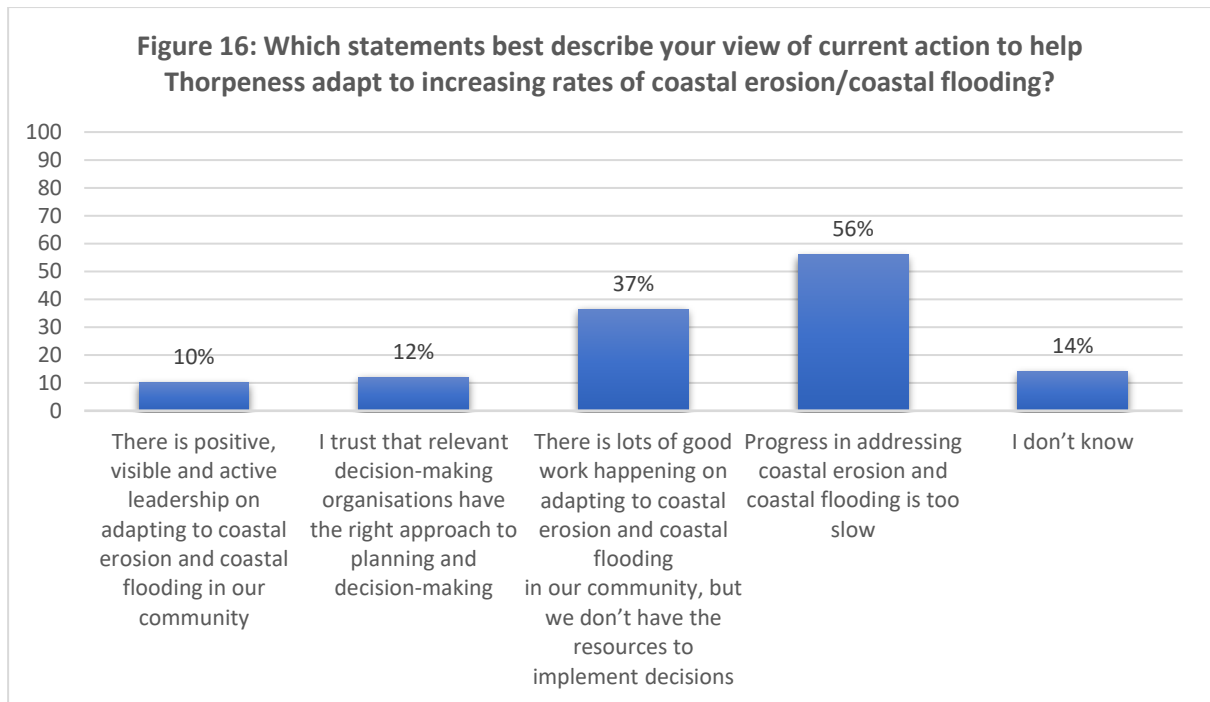
grow and existing trust may deteriorate. A recurring challenge is the genuine uncertainty surrounding the science of coastal erosion, which makes planning more difficult. Consistent messaging was seen as critical for maintaining trust, and a shared focus was considered essential for effective collaboration. The divide between permanent residents and second-homeowners was again referenced as a factor that complicates cohesion.

Several interviewees stressed that trust is not necessarily the main barrier - rather, the absence of practical mechanisms for collaboration undermines efforts. While there is willingness, there are few clear delivery routes or interventions to turn intent into action. Others felt that trust is weakened by conflicting narratives and mixed messages from different actors.

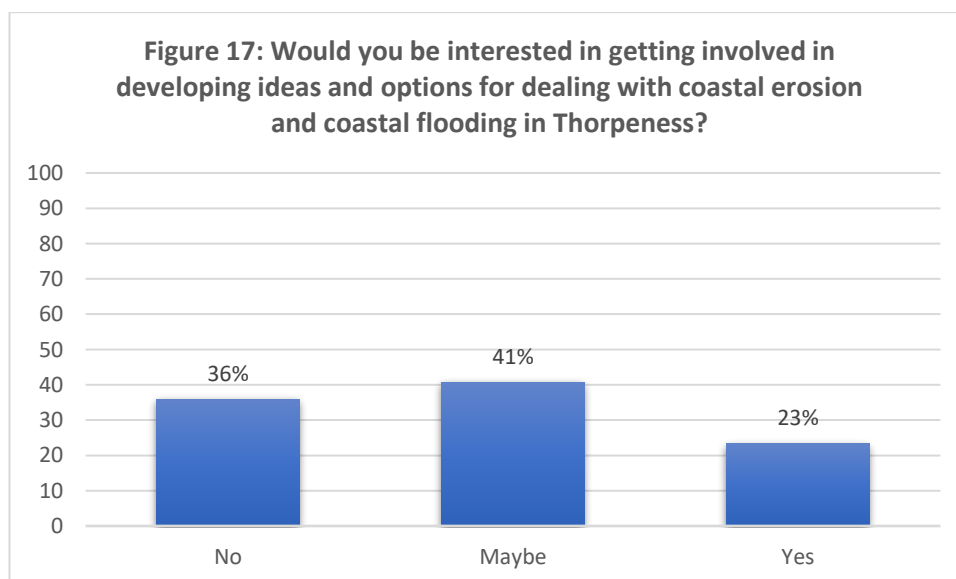
Despite these challenges, there was a sense that if circumstances demanded it, the community would ultimately come together to support one another. However, interviewees emphasised that without clearer structures, consistent communication, and actionable pathways, collaboration will remain fragmented and vulnerable to breakdown.



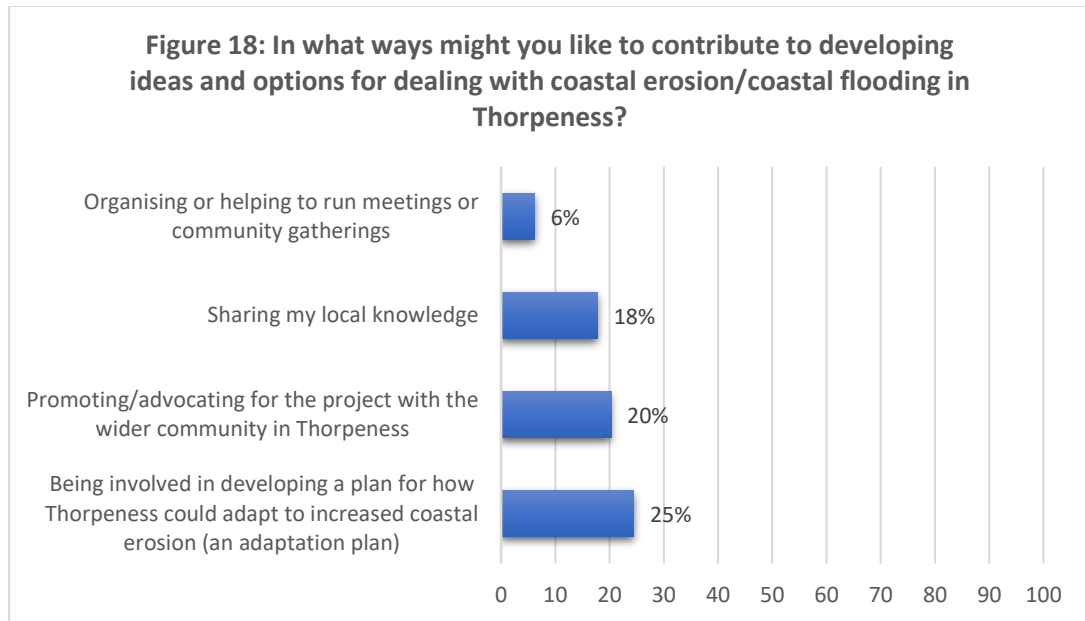
Although many respondents look to different levels of government for action, confidence in their approach is low. Only 12% believe that agencies have the right strategy for planning and decision-making, and just 10% feel there is positive, visible, and active leadership on coastal erosion and coastal flooding adaptation in Thorpeness (Figure 16). This perceived lack of progress may partly stem from the view that, while good work is happening within the community, the resources needed to implement decisions are missing — a concern expressed by 37% of respondents.



Underlying feelings, emotions and perceptions can strongly influence people’s willingness or capacity to engage with decisions and actions – particularly on complex issues such as climate change. Over a third of respondents (36%) indicated that they would not be interested in getting involved in developing ideas or options for addressing coastal erosion and coastal flooding in Thorpeness (Figure 17). This is an interesting finding considering around 40% felt that local residents, homeowners, and landlords have ‘some responsibility’ in responding to these challenges. However, the belief that individual voices are unlikely to be heard (Figure 14) may help explain this reluctance. Given just over 38% of respondents said they would be motivated to participate (Figure 13) if they felt their involvement would make a difference, this further highlights the importance of visible impact and feedback in fostering engagement.



Question 38 asked respondents how they might like to contribute to developing ideas and options for dealing with coastal erosion/ coastal flooding in Thorpeness ([Figure 18](#)). Just under a quarter (25%) expressed interest in helping to develop an adaptation plan for the village whereas another fifth (20%) indicated they would like to promote or advocate for the project within the wider Thorpeness community.



8 Next Steps

This exercise was focused on assessing how prepared people in Thorpeness are for engaging in constructive conversations, planning and action for change in their area, in relation to long-term risks and changes associated with climate change. Drawing on survey data and stakeholder interviews, the findings suggest that overall readiness is uneven. Of the six dimensions assessed, readiness is 'uneven' for climate sensitivity; knowledge and understanding and for conflict and disagreement, indicating variability in how these issues are perceived and managed. It is 'low' for agency and for collaboration and trust, reflecting limited confidence and mechanisms for collective action. In contrast, attitudes and emotions, are at a 'developing' stage, showing progress but still requiring significant strengthening to support effective engagement and decision-making.

The results will be used to inform the design and delivery of future engagement activities and conversations on coastal erosion and climate change adaptation in Thorpeness.