

# Defending Trinidad's coastline – sustaining its economy

client > The Ministry of Works and Transport of Trinidad and Tobago



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**Tamzen Strudwick,  
Project Manager**

Coastal erosion, landslides, poor drainage and earthquakes have all threatened the integrity of roads along the north east coastline of Trinidad for many years. Providing the only access routes to and from local villages and fishing facilities, concern about the deterioration of these roads has become an issue of national importance for Trinidad. In addition, the north coast is a site where one of the largest of all marine turtles, the leatherback, nest, and tourists are known to venture to this area of the island to view the turtles in their natural habitat.

As such, the government is keen to develop eco-tourism in Trinidad, and understands the necessity, on both counts, to improve these access roads, and protect the vulnerable coastline from further deterioration.

In response to these concerns, the Ministry of Works and Transport of Trinidad and Tobago has commissioned Royal Haskoning to undertake a coastal protection strategy to identify the cause of coastal erosion and advise how the affects of flooding and soil erosion can be minimised. The project aims to identify the key areas at risk along the frontage and then develop detailed designs, implementation plans and tender documents for the construction of a range of coastal protection structures and measures.

“When we visited the study area in January 2009, we saw evidence that the rate of erosion had significantly accelerated in some places,” says project manager Tamzen Strudwick. “Some dwellings that were built on the seaward side of the road had collapsed into the sea and others were perched precariously.



**ROYAL HASKONING**

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"During February we held three public consultation meetings with local communities that are affected by the ongoing coastal erosion and flooding. These consultations helped us obtain some very useful information about the areas affected, and the rate of the erosion occurring.

Commenting on how heavy rain and flooding has often hampered proceedings, Tamzen said: "Visiting the project sites during the rainy season between June and December can be very challenging as the volume of water causes numerous landslides which often blocks main and minor roads and has caused the collapse of road bridges.

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With the problem and solution identification and the formulation and analysis of alternatives reports, now complete the project team is producing the feasibility report and implementation plan which includes the design of the recommended solutions identified for each of the key problem areas.

Senior officers of the Drainage Division of the Ministry of Works and Transport believe that with the implementation of this project, they are confident that they will be able to protect the northern coastal areas from further damage, protect the affected communities and sustain the viability of the area into the future.

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