

Suffolk Flood and Coastal News – January 2016



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1. Introduction

Welcome to the winter edition of the Suffolk Flood and Coastal News. In this edition we look back on, amongst other things, the Suffolk Coast Forum Conference, meeting with the Minister for the Marine Environment, the quality of our Suffolk bathing waters, important news for businesses investing in flood defences and report back on the projects progressing across Suffolk.

We hope that you find this helpful and informative. If you have any feedback about the content or would like to see other subjects covered in the future, please do let us know.

2. Local and national news

2.1 Suffolk Coast Forum Conference

The Suffolk Coast Forum's 4th annual conference took place on Thursday 1st October at Wherstead Park, Ipswich. It broke all previous records for attendance and followed a new format which included an exhibition area and the inclusion of sixth form students. Delegates said of the new format "Having the stands was a good idea, raised profile of different bodies" and "Liked the format this year."

The conference benefitted from a good range of speakers which included Alison Baptiste, Director of Strategy and Investment, Flood and Coastal Risk Management for the Environment Agency and Jaap Flikweert, from Royal HaskoningDHV talking about the Dutch approach. As well as the main conference speakers, four seminars were available covering the environmental, technical and financial challenges of managing our coast. A fifth seminar was given to the sixth form students followed by a site visit to Felixstowe.

Feedback from this year's conference has been exceptionally good with comments such as "This year has been the best so far." However, there are areas where improvements can be made for future conferences, such as the introduction of interactive workshops and better representation of the work of the AONB.

Work is underway to develop the 2016 conference, which will again aim to include commercial sponsorship to provide the best value for money.

2.2 Working with Government - Meeting with Minister for the Marine Environment George Eustice MP

The Local Government Association Coastal Special Interest Group (SIG) Chairman Councillor Andy Smith recently met George Eustice MP, Minister for the Marine Environment. A number of topics were discussed:-

Funding of the Inshore Fishing Conservation Authorities (IFCA): Currently Defra contributes £3m funding for New Burdens on IFCAs and the funding is due to end in 2016. The Chairman highlighted that with county council funding under increasing pressure it is unlikely that they could further financially support the IFCAs. This would significantly impact on the work programme of the IFCAs, to protect our marine economy and environment. This was discussed in depth with the Minister and the case for maintaining the New Burdens funding was championed.

Coastal Concordat: It has been two years since the Concordat was launched with the aim of stream lining consents for coastal works. The Minister was urged to discuss this with Department for Communities and Local Government in order for it to become enshrined in planning guidance and thus help re-invigorate the initiative.

Orders for management of specific fishery sites: Orders for management of specific fisheries, for example shellfish, are introduced with varying degrees of consultation across the country. The SIG has been invited to contribute to the drafting of updated processes in this respect.

2.3 Coastal Adaptation

Defra released its long awaited [report on the Coastal Pathfinder projects](#) looking specifically at 'roll-back' of properties (including Easton Bavents in Suffolk and Scratby and Happisburgh in Norfolk). This report is welcomed and made an important recommendation that national flood and coastal funding should be considered for coastal adaptation.

Co-incidentally the National Trust has relaunched it's coastal strategy document, [Shifting Shores](#). Cllr. Andy Smith and Bill Parker (Head of Coastal Management at Suffolk Coastal and Waveney District Councils) made a joint presentation with the National Trust at the recent DEFRA / Environment Agency Coastal Stakeholders biannual meeting. The presentation explored opportunities and issues for delivering coastal adaptation.

2.4 Bathing Water Update

Following the recent Bathing Water announcement, Suffolk beaches at Felixstowe, Southwold and Lowestoft have all been rated as 'excellent', which is the highest possible bathing water rating. This is the latest testing conducted by the Defra. The acceptable standards of cleanliness have become much stricter, and so achieving the status of 'excellent' now requires higher levels of water quality than ever before.

2.5 Tax relief for Businesses contributing to Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management (FCERM)

In the 2015 Finance Act, tax relief was made available for business investing in flood and coastal erosion risk management projects (FCERM). This is designed to encourage private sector investment into partnership funded schemes or projects. An [information note](#) has now been agreed with HMRC to be used to promote this to businesses. This is designed as an incentive to businesses to help address the funding gap in projects between Flood Defence Grant in Aid (FDGiA), Local Levy and Local Government contributions, and the total cost of projects. In the six year spending plan 2016/2022 this shortfall is currently estimated at £70m.

Qualifying projects must be part-funded by FDGiA monies. Entirely privately funded and/or Local Levy-only projects are not eligible for tax relief. The tax relief is available to incorporated businesses (companies) and unincorporated businesses (partnerships, sole traders, etc.). It does not apply to private individuals.

The measure will not only apply to financial contributions but also contributions of service (for example, the donation of labour), land, and plant and machinery that are used in the project. This measure applies from January 1st 2015 and so has been running for one year already. It applies to both inland and coastal locations, erosion and flooding providing it has some FDGiA funding.

The Local Government Association Coastal Special Interest Group has been championing the production of a useful and accessible information note to share with potential business funders. This has now been agreed with HMRC, Defra and Environment Agency.

3. Flood investigations and project updates

3.1 Reporting a flood

Suffolk County Council has updated its [flooding web pages](#) and in particular made it much easier to report flooding to ensure a quick and appropriate response from the relevant agency.

3.2 Flood Investigations

Following flooding in July, Suffolk County Council has carried out two Section 19 (Flood & Water Management Act) investigations in Langar Road, Felixstowe and Aldwyck Way/Velda Close, Lowestoft. The reports are available [here](#).

In Velda Close & Aldwyck Way, 33 properties were flooded, caused by significant rainfall over a short duration, rainfall exceeding the design capacity of the surface water drainage systems, and blockages along the Kirkley Stream. Illegally dumped garden and fly-tipped materials added to the blockages. The recommendations in the Section 19 report were shared with residents at a public meeting in October and are being progressed rapidly, including plans for significant maintenance works to the Kirkley Stream. More reports of flooding linked to the Kirkley Stream, upstream in the Carlton Colville area, have been reported following the S19 investigation, and a Flood Action Group created. Channel clearance has recently been undertaken in this area by the Environment Agency. Longer term actions to further reduce flood risk along the Kirkley Stream, such as additional flood storage capacity, will be considered as part of the wider Lowestoft Flood Management Project.

At Langar Road, Felixstowe, at least 4 properties were flooded internally in July, caused by exceedance of drainage system capacity, blockages and high ground water table. The report has been published and the various risk management authorities are taking forward the recommendations within the report.

3.3 Flood Projects

a) Lowestoft Flood Risk Management Project

Studies to support the strategy have been completed along with the SEA Technical Scoping Note. Balfour Beatty has been procured through the Scape Civil Engineering and Infrastructure Framework to progress the project. Governance of the project has been agreed and the inaugural meeting of the Board will take place early in March 2016. A risk workshop is planned for early January 2016 and a business engagement workshop will be held on 9th February. Public consultation on the long list of options is planned for March/April 2016 and site investigations for the tidal works are programmed for April.

Temporary defences: The procurement process to purchase the 1400m of temporary defences will be completed in early 2016 and it is anticipated that the barriers will be available from spring.

Fluvial and pluvial progress: Initial modelling has been completed and the July flooding in the Kirkley Stream area utilised to verify the model. Some ten areas at risk of surface water have been identified across the town and in each area options to reduce the risk will be considered and incorporated into the wider Strategy.

For further information please contact the Project Manager Sharon Bleese by email at sharon.bleese@eastsuffolk.gov.uk

b) Leiston

A public meeting was held in December to review the recently completed highways and Anglian Water works to improve surface water drainage, and to discuss the way forward. Property level protection has been investigated but was not appropriate and the project will now deliver minor works to improve the surface water drainage in the town in 2016.

c) Sudbury/Great Cornard

Initial studies indicate fewer properties at risk from surface water flooding than originally thought. The project will thus be scaled back to match the available grant funding.

d) Debenham

Debenham forms part of the Holistic Water Management Project. An update on progress to date is available [here](#).

e) Needham Market

The latest update is available [here](#).

3.4 Suffolk Flood Risk Management Strategy Review

The Suffolk Flood Risk Management Strategy was first published in early 2013 but with many legislative changes (notably in relation to sustainable drainage) and updated flood risk information, the Suffolk Flood Risk Management Partnership is now reviewing and updating the document. A low-key consultation is taking place and the document will be formally adopted in early 2016.

A copy of the draft 2016 Strategy is available on request from jane.burch@suffolk.gov.uk

3.5 Suffolk Holistic Water Management Project

The aim of this pilot project is to consider water holistically, looking to manage this valuable resource so as to maximise its economic and environmental benefits and minimise flood risk. We now have five working groups taking forward various aspects of the Holistic Water Management Project (HWMP). For the latest information see the website www.greensuffolk.org/hwmp and read the latest project update [here](#).

3.6 East Suffolk Internal Drainage Board (ESIDB)

ESIDB officers are continuing to work with the estuary partnerships in the Alde and Ore and Deben estuaries in the development and delivery of their estuary plans. The IDB have been tasked with developing appraisal reports for Bawdsey, Sudbourne and Gedgrave Marshes. As part of the appraisal the IDB will be sharing good practice from recent flood defence projects at Waldringfield and Snape.

ESIDB officers, working with Suffolk County Council's Greenest County team are developing a framework for the use of clay and others suitable materials arising from local developments. They are discussing the best way to source clay at a strategic level with key developers, as well as holding local discussions with smaller developers and building sites on an opportunistic basis. IDB officers are also working with local authorities and planners to establish whether there are opportunities within the planning system to highlight the need to take this approach with developers to avoid building products going to landfill.

ESIDB are working closely with the Rivers Trust, Suffolk Wildlife Trust and Bramford parish Council to reinstate a 1km section of the old River Gipping channel. Through discussions with the Environment Agency the work will deliver Water Framework Directive objectives in supporting fish and eel populations to migrate upstream. The project will begin in January 2016 and aims to link with an existing river restoration project to create almost 2km of river restoration.

IDB Project Manager Karen Thomas can be contacted by email at karen@wlma.org.uk

3.7 Waldringfield flood defence scheme

Following the tidal surge of December 2013, the businesses and residents of Waldringfield formed the Waldringfield Flood Defence Group (WFDG). The WFDG, working with the ESIDB, has delivered a more resilient flood defence for their community along 1km of estuary frontage. The group raised funds through the Coastal Communities Fund and other funding routes to pay for the works.

The work began in February 2015. The design and build project aimed to create a higher wall with a wider crest width and gentle back slope to withstand overtopping and breaching in the future. In addition, by winning all the material from the farmland behind the wall, a new freshwater wetland was created.

The project delivered suitable alternative habitat for water voles within the year of construction, which has been a significant success element of the works. The IDB have also designed and delivered a saltmarsh restoration pilot as part of the scheme to add further natural flood protection to the wall. The project was officially launched on December 1st 2015 and has been praised locally as a great model of partnership working. This project is a demonstration of what can be achieved at relatively low cost on rural flood defences. The photos below show the wall and the defence before the scheme and then afterwards.



Photos showing Waldringfield Flood Defence project before the scheme and then afterwards.

4. Coastal Management

4.1 Lowestoft South Beach

The £3.3m scheme to rebuild the seawall and access ramp at Children's Corner in Lowestoft was largely completed before Christmas 2015. The remaining minor works will be completed in January well in advance of the new season. The urgent work has now secured the sea defences, introduced a rock reef that should enable the traditional beach to be retained and introduced guard railing for public safety. This work was funded through a combination of £2.9m Flood Defence Grant in Aid and £450k of Waveney District capital funds.



Images of the defence Work at Children's Corner in Lowestoft which are nearing completion.

4.2 Gorleston to Lowestoft Coastal Management Strategy

The draft option consultation, which was extensively promoted, took place in September and October 2015. Drop in meetings were held in Gorleston, Hopton, Corton, North Denes and Kirkley. Members of the Advisory Group joined the project team in Hopton and Corton to help deal with questions and concerns about the project. This proved to be extremely helpful, particularly in Hopton where over 60 people attended. In total, 107 people attended the drop-in meetings and formal feedback forms were received from 36 people.

Over the next two months the project team will continue work to develop the draft strategy based upon the comments received as part of the consultation and their further engagement with those directly affected.

Contact sharon.bleese@eastsoffolk.gov.uk

4.3 Norfolk and Suffolk Coastal Partnership

Progress is well underway for the formation of a single coastal team from four local authorities (Great Yarmouth Borough Council, North Norfolk District Council, Suffolk Coastal District Council and Waveney District Council). This new combined approach, which is the first in the country to cover two counties, should enable the team to become more resilient, attract new key staff to support communities and deliver coastal management projects along some of the fastest eroding coastline in Europe. More details will be circulated in early spring.

4.4 Norfolk and Suffolk Coastal Hub

In the autumn of 2015 a new partnership of organisations in Norfolk and Suffolk who have expertise or responsibilities on the coast was been formed. More than 20 organisations are developing their ideas of how they can work together more effectively and make better

decisions about coastal issues. MKEN, based at the University of East Anglia (UEA) have been appointed the secretariat and have already secured £120k funding from the Natural Environment Research Council to look at the potential of the blue economy in Norfolk and Suffolk. More exciting development are expected next year.

4.5 iCOASST

The iCOASST project (<http://www.icoasst.net>) is looking at decadal scale modelling of the changes to the coast, with a case study around the Deben estuary. The research and modelling work will close with a conference in late January, with further work to follow on the dissemination and learning from this project. Possible applications along the Suffolk coast are being considered for this ground breaking work.

4.6 Sand / Shingle Engine

The Crown Estate has been leading on research work of a possible Shingle Engine at Slaughden to help manage this potentially vulnerable location. Based on the Dutch idea of a Sand Motor the work is almost complete. The initial results indicate that it could be a way forward but there are still significant challenges to be overcome including licencing, funding and practical delivery. It will be a key subject for discussion at the next Suffolk Coast Forum meeting.

This idea will be included in any review of the long term management of the Aldeburgh frontage.

4.7 Community Coastal Teams

Coastal Community Teams (CCT's) are a Government initiative across England which is intended to encourage a greater local partnership working in coastal areas. 118 CCT's are now established across England, with three in Suffolk Coastal and Waveney, based around the Deben Peninsula, Lowestoft and Felixstowe. Each Coastal Community Team is intended to:

- Encourage greater local partnership working in coastal areas
- Support the development of local solutions to economic issues facing coastal communities
- Establish a network of teams across England who can work together and with Government to tackle issues facing coastal communities
- Encourage the sustainable use of heritage/cultural assets to provide both a focus for community activities and enhanced economic opportunities

All of them have been tasked to produce an economic plan by the end of January 2016 that will inform the Government what the priorities are for their area, which have been compiled through consultation with the local community and stakeholders. A more in-depth report about the CCT's will be available in the next edition.

For more information about the teams contact:

Samantha.Jones@eastsuffolk.gov.uk for Lowestoft
Helen.greengrass@eastsuffolk.gov.uk for Felixstowe
peter@culturalengine.org.uk for the Deben Peninsula

4.8 Woodbridge

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The floodwall in Woodbridge is being repaired to maintain the level of flood defence previously provided by the floodwall. Phase 1 of work is due for completion this month. Please note that Phase 2 was due to start 9 December but began on site 4th January 2016. Footpaths will be kept open wherever possible and only partially closed for the minimum time necessary to ensure public safety. Diversions will be in place.

4.8 Slaughden (Aldeburgh)

Following storm damage, the Environment Agency recently undertook some emergency works at this vulnerable location, following storm damage. In addition, it will shortly begin work to construct 200m of rock toe protection in front of the seawall, extending north from the existing rock protection to tie in with the naturally higher beach level. The 4500t of rock will be delivered by sea and temporarily stored at the back of the beach near Aldeburgh before being put in place. After the rock is placed, the beach will be recharged using stock piled material.

The damaged sheet piled groynes will be cut down to at least 1m below beach level before works start. This is to address the public safety issue and to allow for plant access across the beach.

5. Community Emergency Preparedness (CEP) and Business Resilience

The ninth edition of the Suffolk Community Emergency Planning newsletter can be found online [here](#).

5.1 Business Efficient Resilience Tool (BERT)

Suffolk Coastal and Waveney District Councils, Environment Agency and Groundwork have worked together to produce an innovative new tool to provide businesses across Norfolk and Suffolk with help in making the task of becoming resilient more achievable.

BERT is an [online tool](#) which will help businesses to develop and build a resilience action plan. Launched at a business breakfast on 2nd November the toolkit comes with a free support package provided by Groundwork, which includes telephone support, workshops and individual support to coastal businesses in Suffolk and Norfolk.

Groundwork has been working with businesses to help them understand and address resilience since 2010. In partnership with the Environment Agency, Groundwork developed a business resilience review, which provided the basis of BERT and a supply chain risk mapping workbook. These methodologies have been tested with businesses and BERT encapsulates the learning and feedback received.

Additional funding to extend this project and support more businesses is being explored.

6. News from the estuaries

6.1 Alde & Ore Estuary Partnership (AOEP)

A very successful public consultation on the Draft Estuary Plan ended on 17th December 2015. A number of useful comments were made which will be included in the final plan to be submitted for endorsement by County and District Councils and the Regional Flood and Coastal Committee.

For information visit website on www.aoep.co.uk

Join the Volunteers in Butley Woods

We need more faggots for the next saltings restoration projects so please join the volunteer team in Butley Woods cutting and bundling faggots on Saturday 16th January, 1000-1400. Bring a picnic. A very good day – energetic and fun.

Contact david.mcginity@googlemail.com.



Volunteers collecting faggots last spring

6.2 Deben Estuary Partnership (DEP)

In the autumn of 2015 the Deben Estuary Partnership was interested to receive the specially commissioned Environment Bank's report 'Investing in Natural Capital – saltmarsh restoration on the Deben Estuary'. The report brings together the fundamentals of an approach to natural capital and ecosystem services and applies the thinking to saltmarsh. The opportunity to explore these concepts through an intertidal pilot on the Deben has excited and stimulated DEP members and they look forward to working on this over the coming year with Karen Thomas (ESIDB) and Paul Mackie (SCDC).

The adopted approach will recognise that the saltmarsh not only has a value in terms of carbon capture but can deliver important, natural flood risk benefits, provide worthwhile fish breeding and feeding habitat and can comprise a significant element of the coastal landscape that appeals so much to visitors. The hope is that the work will provide a significant step forward in funding saltmarsh restoration as well as opening up consideration of the investment value of the other estuary assets via different funding routes.

In a different direction the DEP has been able to use £10,000 to award modest grants to small, new businesses. It has been good to have the opportunity to encourage people starting to work within the estuary area and it is hoped to monitor the ongoing development

of these micro businesses. So far three grants have been allocated - there is still a little money left and the DEP would welcome further applications

6.3 Stour & Orwell Management Group

The Stour & Orwell Estuary Management Group is in the process of reviewing its Management Strategy and Scheme of Management (the plan that brings together actions for the authorities who have responsibilities to the area owing to its protected status as a Special Protected Area under the EU Birds Directive). One of the Group's current activities is the bait digging code of conduct.

Migratory birds arriving in numbers on the Stour & Orwell estuaries create a spectacle for all those who brave the chill to experience it. Protecting these winter visitors from disturbance is an ongoing job and part of this is the voluntary code of conduct that asks bait diggers to avoid digging worms in certain areas in the months spanning November to April. The code also asks people to keep dogs off the mudflats in these areas. The code is adhered to by many but there are also many who are unaware or choose to ignore it. A working group of IFCAs, NE and AONB is considering all other options that we can engage to reduce bird disturbance in this critical season as it appears that more stringent measures outside Suffolk may be displacing bait diggers to our estuaries.



Black tailed godwits asleep on the Stour at Mistley in winter
Credit: H Stephens



Bait digging at Orwell Bridge
Credit: H Stephens

For more information contact Haidee.stephens@suffolk.gov.uk, Suffolk Estuaries Officer

6.4 Saltmarsh Conference

The value of saltmarsh to Suffolk was celebrated at a unique Saltmarsh Conference held 8 October 2015. Hosted and funded by the Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB it attracted over 100 people with approximately equal numbers attending from the community, from organisations or agencies and from the academic sector. Speakers were leaders in their fields; economists, scientists, researchers and project managers of major saltmarsh restoration and managed realignment projects. Afternoon sessions showcased the work being done by local partners and estuary partnerships to restore fringing saltmarsh habitats in our estuaries. Professors Andrew Watkinson and Tim O'Riordan from University of East Anglia chaired the day and the final open forum respectively, and the feedback was overwhelmingly positive, with the audience appreciative of the opportunity to hear the fascinating detail of this fragile habitat and local resource.

The issue of local saltmarsh restoration is being championed by the Suffolk Coast Forum, who are supporting a strategic approach across all the Suffolk estuaries and encouraging a pilot project looking at ways to raise funds for this valuable work.



Saltmarsh at Falkenham on the Deben
Credit: T Pick

6.5 Building a relationship with the Marine Management Organisation (MMO)

Over the years local partners have worked together to simplify the process of consulting and obtaining licenses for local projects, and have helped community groups through the necessary processes. The Marine Management Organisation (MMO) is a fairly new government body sponsored by Defra and does not have any locally-based staff involved in licensing. As a key partner the MMO licensing team, who are based in Newcastle, were invited to visit Suffolk and gain a better understanding of the work that is done here. A very useful meeting was held in December which enabled better understanding off all the relevant issues.

Although it was disappointing that more could not be done to reduce the requirement to license small scale works (such as low energy-reduction fencing and silt trapping structures) the MMO supports our aims to develop more strategic plans for saltmarsh works in the estuaries and will work with us to streamline the process as much as possible. The MMO were taken on a visit to Waldringfield and saw the wall re-profiling and saltmarsh restoration that the IDB has recently finished.

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