

The Deben Estuary Partnership Newsletter

Autumn 2011

Deben Estuary Plan - A new way forward

This edition of the DEP newsletter includes an extra page to give you information on the new Deben Estuary Plan – the document that will set out the future of the estuary and its flood and coastal defences. The DEP are working with the Environment Agency and Suffolk Coast and Heaths AONB to draw up the Plan and the following article tells you how it will work.

The Deben Estuary stretches from Felixstowe Ferry to above Woodbridge and lies within the Suffolk Coast and Heaths Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Agriculture and marine related businesses, recreation and tourism are all closely linked to the Deben estuary. The estuary is protected by river walls but nevertheless, land is still vulnerable to tidal flooding from the North Sea.

The traditional approach - where the Environment Agency (EA) draw up a strategy - is to change. Now the Flood Risk Management information will be integrated into a wider, more inclusive approach to estuary planning. **Flood risk and estuary defences will be planned alongside the needs of communities, landowners, businesses, tourism and recreation.**

The Deben Estuary Partnership (DEP), in association with the EA and Suffolk Coast and Heaths AONB Unit (SCHU), will lead this new approach. **Landowners, businesses, Parish Councils and community organisations can be involved in formulating the Plan and will, therefore, have greater local influence over the future of the estuary.**

The previous process of drawing up an Estuary Strategy -Traditionally, flood and coastal erosion risk has been considered a stand alone matter set out in a coastal or estuary strategy. Government guidance (Defra) states that such strategies should adopt a sustainable approach to managing flood risk and be mindful of a 100 year timescale. The EA must consider how flooding can affect the range of activities and assets that exist within an estuary and oversee how government funds, ear-marked for protecting people and their environment against flood risk, are spent. Historically this process has been set out in a Flood Risk Management Strategy.

Community feedback from previous strategies has highlighted two important points:

- Previous strategy documents have not included the values and aspirations that landowners and communities have for their estuary.
- A 100 year timescale makes it very difficult to plan – it is the next 25 years that matter most to local people.

The EA's previous process for developing a Flood Risk Management Strategy has drawn to a close. Data on flood risk, economic benefits and the state of the estuary walls will feed into the New Plan.

The Plan will focus on what can be delivered within a given time-frame with proposals assessed for sustainability and long-term impact.



The Plan will include:

- **An Action Plan** - covering a realistic 0 to 10 and 25 year period.
- **A Funding Framework** - recognising that Central Government funding will not be able to pay for all the flood defence work that people would like to see in the estuary. A funding framework will look towards identifying a wide range of financing options – both traditional and innovative. The aim will be to align potential funding streams with activities over 10 year periods - allowing time for new money to be sought and bid for.
- **A Planning Framework** – ensuring activities and opportunities within the estuary are recognised by and integrated with other planning and management policies.

What Happens Next

Deben Estuary Plan

One of the first steps towards formulating an Estuary Plan is contact with landowners for whom flood defence will be a major consideration. The EA have met with key landowners and more meetings are planned also with other river frontage owners on the 25th of November.

The Plan is not confined to landowning circles and the aim is to extend involvement to all those who live and work in the estuary area – to make sure people for whom the area is important have the chance to contribute. As the plan is developed, regular opportunities to review developing proposals and actions will be important. Some decisions - particularly how to fund agreed actions - may be difficult and it will be important for information and data about the estuary to be available so that everyone can make informed judgements.

Briefings for Parish Councils and local organisations will be arranged and close links with the River Deben Association and representatives of wildlife groups will be necessary.

As the Plan progresses it will be monitored by the County and District Councils and other statutory organisations - which will not control the outcomes but have the responsibility of ensuring that proposals recognise other overarching strategies – such as the Shoreline Management Plan.

Christine Block, Chair, Deben Estuary Partnership

Future flood defence work will, out of necessity, be carried out by more than just the EA. For example flood cells judged “uneconomic” in national terms and warrant no EA action however a local decision may be to continue maintenance. In these cases it will be important to recognise the role of the Internal Drainage Board (IDB) - the other statutory body that has the capability to carry out flood defence work.

A fantastic way to support the river

A six mile sponsored swim from Ramsholt to Woodbridge for the last two summers has raised funds for projects on the river. The DEP send thanks to all those who took part - a great effort and much appreciated.

Contacting us: You can now find the DEP's web page on <http://www.suffolkcoastandheaths.org/>

This is where lots of new information regarding the Deben Estuary Plan will appear and will be updated as proposals develop.

You can also call: Trazar on 01394384948 or email: Trazar.astley-reid@suffolk.gov.uk

News in Brief

Managing Saltmarsh

Over the last year we have been eagerly awaiting monitoring results on our pioneering scheme to restore saltmarsh at Sutton Hoo. By stemming the flow through the breach in the river wall and placing ‘fence’ structures along further vulnerable sections the intention has been to slow the flow of the ebb tide and allow silt to be deposited to regenerate the saltmarsh.

Recent measurements indicate that the trial is going well. In places, inches of muds have accumulated and there is the first sign of plant growth at the back of the site. This is very encouraging and the DEP and the National Trust will be monitoring the site closely. The ability to improve the condition of saltmarsh on the Deben would have many beneficial effects and other schemes are being considered.

Trazar Astley-Reid - Suffolk Estuaries Officer

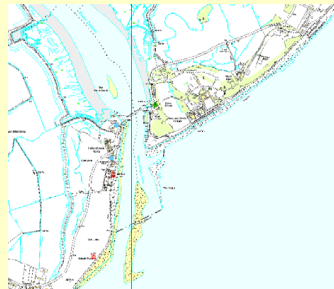
Understanding the Mouth of the Estuary

Last spring the EA undertook further work on the river defences at Felixstowe Ferry but recognised that future, longer term options to protect the community will have to be considered.

As a first step in finding a satisfactory solution a ‘technical workshop’ was recently organised by the EA.

Experts came together to exchange information and to develop a common understanding of the complex processes that govern the mouth of the river. It was also as important to recognise what isn't known. It was recognised that the Knolls – the shingle banks at the mouth of the river on the Bawdsey side - create key shelter for the estuary and restrict the tidal flow into the river.

Bawdsey Marshes and Felixstowe Marshes, including Felixstowe Ferry, are very important areas and failure of either, alone or in combination, will noticeably impact upon water levels in the estuary and cause changes to the mouth and the Knolls. Management of these flood cells is therefore paramount and needs to take into account these wider issues.



A summary and full report of the findings of the day have been published. This document will inform further discussions leading into the estuary plan.

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The DEP have been able to facilitate initiatives assisting with some small scale work on wall maintenance reported here. The next steps are further maintenance and improvement to walls. The DEP will seek to support and work with the IDB.

Martlesham wall and footpath work

The poor state and damage to a wall and much used footpath along Martlesham Creek led to an opportunity for the DEP to facilitate work and stretch limited finance as far as possible.

James Foskett, who farms the land, describes the work: "Miles Waterscapes, our preferred contractor, started grass cutting on John Symes's Wall at Martlesham at the beginning of September with digger work starting 10 days later. In near perfect weather conditions for wall building the contractors made great strides correcting the damage to the top of the wall and filling in 'low ways' - taking the wall up to 3.2 metres high where it was particularly badly worn.

Of the 1450 metres of wall work, potentially the trickiest bit was replacing some concrete revetments on parts of the wall to protect from wave action but the biggest issues have been finding enough clay of the right consistency to build the wall without having to cart it too far and looking after some special snails.

The footpath surface has been strengthened with crushed concrete and the Borrow Dyke and newly constructed wildlife scrapes where the clay came from are to be tidied up at the end of the project.

When it's all done we just need a good rainfall to make all the vegetation re-root and green up which will help the new wall bind together giving new habitats for wildlife - reptiles and water voles."



River wall work at Ramsholt and Pettistree

As reported in the Spring Newsletter work on a short section of wall at Ramsholt needed to be carried out.



Successful partnership work put together a funding package with money from the two landowners, the County Council and Suffolk Coastal District Council and local community. The EA and Estuaries Officer, Trazar Astley-Reid, gave guidance on legislative requirements and, after receiving tenders, R.J.Welham of Waldringfield was awarded the contract.

Work started in early autumn with around 200 tonnes of clay brought in to rebuild the wall. Relocation and replacement of the fascia blocks followed.



With careful management of the budget it was possible to carry out additional work on the Pettistree Hall river frontage.

Robert Simper's photo (left) shows how blocks have been replaced in several places where erosion was starting to occur. Around 40 tonnes of clay were brought in to fill the cavities, an exposed concrete beam was repaired and the fascia blocks replaced.

We are pleased to report that the work at both Ramsholt and Pettistree has now been completed.

Graham Henderson