

The Deben Estuary Partnership Newsletter

Autumn 2012

Did you know :

- **40 % of all saltmarsh in Suffolk is found on the Deben**
- **Saltmarsh in the Deben is designated as a special environment and habitat for birds**

It's been two years since we took steps to manage and restore the saltmarsh at Sutton Hoo.

We are pleased that monitoring by the National Trust Volunteers and photos taken in 2010 and 2012 show encouraging results – just look at the before and after pictures!



Before - 2010



After - 2012

The change has been enough to allow areas of Samphire to get established. Although Samphire is a 'seasonal pioneer species' it indicates that there are signs of saltmarsh recovery.

This month we have carried out maintenance work, funded by SCC, on the tidal valve in the breach and on wave attenuation fences along the old field boundary. This will help control the tidal flow, maintain the site equilibrium and, we hope, speed up the accretion process.

PLANNING THE ESTUARY PLAN

NEXT STEPS FOR SALTMARSH - research and a project planned at Falkenham

These results are promising but we have a way to go in understanding how to care for these valuable habitats that also protect our flood banks and footpaths. To compliment these works the DEP and the RDA are conducting a **basic study of the saltmarsh data** that already exists about the causes of depletion and erosion, with a view to identifying the gaps in our knowledge. From this our aim is to set up a research project to compliment and inform our ongoing programme of work.

Now we are planning **works on the Falkenham saltmarsh** upstream from Felixstowe Ferry. This is an important area under pressure from the tide flowing between the saltmarsh and the river wall. The plan is to use soft engineering – mainly staked willow bundles and straw bales, to slow the flow of tide through the marsh. We hope to carry out this work in 2013 with help from funding from the AONB's 'Touching the Tide' project.

THE BIG SWIM – 40 Swimmers waiting for the fog to clear at Waldringfield



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For the third consecutive year The Big Deben Swim has raised finance for the DEP. This year saw a longer 10k swim from Waldringfield to Felixstowe Ferry and more participants. At 7.00 am on Sunday 9th September 40 intrepid, selected open water swimmers (70 applied) gathered on Waldringfield beach ready to catch the ebb tide. Waiting for thick fog to lift meant that the start was delayed but, by 8.30, the weather improved and the swim was soon making good progress. Swimmers were in pods of 9 people with a medic in each pod accompanied by canoes and a rescue boat. The leading swimmers reached Felixstowe Ferry in glorious sunshine in around 2 hours and all were ashore by 11.30 ready for a shower and bacon butty.

Thanks to financial support from the AONB Community and Conservation Fund the money for the DEP from raised by the swimmers and other sponsors will **exceed £1000** this year. All thanks must go to the free support given by the accompanying canoeists and rescue boat team .

Dredgings and Estuary Defences

Boatyards, fairways committees and clubs from both the Deben and the Alde & Ore met at the Deben Rowing Club recently to discuss the Marine Licensing consultation on the **new rules that will govern Dredging and Marine Works**. Following discussion a number of clear points were agreed and the DEP have sent these to the Defra. The response was subsequently supported by SDCD, SCC and SCAR.

The meeting has led to a wider recognition of the beneficial use of dredgings for habitat management. This will be picked up in the new Deben Estuary Plan. **Contact Trazar Astley-Reid Tel : 384948**

The EA and representatives of the DEP recently met senior staff from Felixstowe Ferry Golf Club to discuss estuary defences and the Golf Club sea wall. The meeting talked about the current problem of erosion under the rock armour - which could present a risk for low lying land behind the wall. The area that could be affected extends across the golf course and includes Felixstowe Ferry hamlet and a large area of very good quality farmland. Currently the rock along the estuary beach seems to have bedded down onto the clay and erosion of shingle has lessened. While this may be a positive situation the overall problem of risk remains and no long term conclusions have been reached.

Mark Johnson explained that changes to The Knolls would continue to affect what happens along the shoreline and so the EA would continue to monitor the situation closely. The Golf Club representatives fully understood the problem and Mark promised that they would be kept in the picture.

“Where is environment and wildlife?”

This was a comment made at the recent Suffolk Coast and Estuaries Communities Conference. Flood defence is understandably a priority, but how it is achieved must take account of the environment - wildlife and habitats are core elements in the Estuary and a **DEP Environment Committee** will be laying foundations for long term planning.

It will seek to ensure that a balance is achieved between the best interests of wildlife and people who live by, work on and enjoy the river.

As a start, and prompted by the ‘Portrait of the Deben’, a workshop has drawn together views and concerns expressed by local individuals and organisations. These points will be fed into the Estuary Plan, along with data already possessed by NE, EA, RSPB and the Suffolk Wildlife Trust. This will help to generate a set of firm principles to protect and enhance all aspects of the natural environment in the Deben estuary.

Bank cutting and reconditioning wall work

The EA are to carry out essential, grass cutting, vegetation clearance and reconditioning of river walls this winter.

If you would like to learn more or talk to them about this work go along to Drop In Sessions at Waldringfield (Nov 26th) and Sutton (Nov 30th) Village Halls between 2pm -7pm.

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