

Suffolk Flood & Coastal News

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1. Suffolk Coast Forum

1.1 Suffolk Coast Forum Conference

The Suffolk Coast Forum's annual conference was held on Wednesday 8th October at the Orbis Centre in Lowestoft. Despite the weather doing its best to deter people, over 150 people came along to hear a wide range of speakers from the Local Enterprise Partnership, the Suffolk Coast Forum, its partners and the community. This is the third annual conference and this year's theme was Beyond the Surge, focusing on the devastating impacts of the December 2013 tidal surge and the progress that has been made since. Included in the programme was the opportunity to hear from two members of the community, Teresa Cooke, landlady of The Crown in Snape and Jon Wilkins, Chairman of the Waldringfield Flood Defence Group. Both spoke about their harrowing experience but heartened the audience with their positive approach to finding a way forward. Particularly noteworthy were the protection and regeneration works being done by local communities for the protection of their own villages, or for the salt marshes which provide a valuable ecosystem resource.



A feature of the conference which has always been well received by the audience is the opportunity to pose questions to a panel of experts (*see photo*). Once again this proved a popular item. In addition to the speakers, there were a number of exhibitors which ranged from community groups such as the Deben Estuary Partnership through to EDP Energy. Media interest in the event was also excellent with coverage on BBC Look East, BBC Radio Suffolk and the East Anglian Daily Times amongst others. So far the feedback received has been fantastic and will help to shape next year's conference.

1.2 Shingle Street to Bawdsey Manor Coastal Community Partnership

The communities at these locations were so concerned about the future management options for their part of the Suffolk Coast that they have formed a new community partnership. They will be working closely with statutory agencies, the adjacent estuary partnerships and the Suffolk Coast Forum, to find ways to ensure the future of this challenging section of the coastline. Ongoing investment here is needed and it will require the partnership to find alternative funding sources in addition to Flood Defence Grant in Aid.

2. National Consultations

2.1 Sustainable Drainage

Over the past three years flood risk management authorities have been preparing themselves for the start of Schedule 3 of the Flood and Water Management Act 2010 – the section on Sustainable Drainage (SuDS). Mainly due to the inability of the Government to agree upon how to fund the ongoing maintenance of SuDS, the expectation of a start in October 2014 did not happen. However, unexpectedly in September, Defra and DCLG delivered a consultation paper outlining a new way of delivering SuDS, through changes to Planning Policy.

For details of the consultation and the response of the Suffolk Flood Risk Management Partnership, see www.greensuffolk.org/SFRMP. The Partnership supports in principle the concept of the SuDS decision sitting with the planning authority, assuming proper technical expertise is made available, but has serious concerns about the proposals in relation to the adoption and long term maintenance of SuDS. The consultation fails to provide any detail, particularly on funding matters.

2.2 Flood Risk Management Plans and River Basin Management Plans consultations

The Environment Agency launched two related consultations on 10th October, the first on Flood Risk Management Plans (FRMP); the second on River Basin Management Plans (RBMP). RBMPs set out long term objectives for the quality of the water environment. They identify the condition of rivers, lakes and coastal waters and the pressures on them. The plans provide evidence that will help those with an interest in the water environment to agree where improvements can be made. FRMPs describe the risk of flooding from rivers, the sea, surface water, groundwater and reservoirs. They set out how the Environment Agency, local councils and water companies will work together, with communities, to manage flood risk.

To view and respond to the river basin management plan consultation (closes 10/4/2015) see: www.gov.uk/government/consultations/update-to-the-draft-river-basin-management-plans

To view and respond to the flood risk management plan consultation (closes 31/01/2015) see: www.gov.uk/government/consultations/draft-flood-risk-management-plans

If you have any views that you would like incorporated into the Suffolk Flood Management Partnership responses, please email jane.burch@suffolk.gov.uk

3. Surface water flooding investigations and projects

3.1 Recent flooding reports:

Since 1st January 2014 the County Council has received over 350 reports of surface water flooding from all corners of the county. We have seen a number of incidents of extreme, but localised, rainfall resulting in flash flooding largely affecting roads, but also flooding some 35 homes. We suspect that not all events are reported to us and we urge everyone to send in details via the website www.suffolk.gov.uk/floodrisk (see section on Investigating Flooding).

There have been significant flooding events (5+ properties flooded internally) in Bury St Edmunds, Lawshall, Kesgrave and Sudbury. Reports will be/have been issued outlining the results of formal investigations in these areas (see below). Within available resources partners try to investigate all reports of flooding, but sometimes this can take time and there is not always a quick and easy solution to the problem.

It is clear that in some cases the intensity of the rainfall was so great that it would overwhelm any drainage system, no matter how well maintained. Most systems are only designed to cope with a rainfall event with a 1 in 30 chance of occurring in any one year, yet some of the rainfall we have seen recently was estimated to be a 1 in 80 event. It is clear that we must all consider other ways to help reduce rainfall run off and make space for it away from homes and properties.

3.2 Bury St Edmunds

Flooding has happened in both Gardiner Close and Sheerwater Close on more than one occasion this year, with a small number of properties flooded internally. Formal investigations are underway to understand the contributory factors and suggest ways to reduce the future risk.

3.3 Debenham

Initial modelling of both fluvial and surface water flood risks is complete, providing a baseline for flood alleviation options to be considered. Initial discussions with landowners have raised the need for some additional modelling upstream of the village, which has now been completed. Further development of possible options, including upstream storage ponds/basins and a two-stage channel beyond the point when the watercourses meet, will now progress. Partnership funding scores are generally low so delivery is dependent on securing local funds. The new modelling will result in an update of the flood map for the village.

3.4 Ipswich

The Lovetofts Drive project is now complete, including the creation of the SuDS park in the public open space. The area will remain fenced off until the grass has been given the chance to establish fully. Anglian Water led this project.

The SuDS proposal in Stonelodge Park has been modelled and will be installed in the next few months.

3.5 Kesgrave

In May and June some areas of Kesgrave suffered from serious flooding. The worst affected was Terry's Gardens and a formal flood investigation report has been published (available on the www.greensuffolk.org/SFRMP). In addition to the excessive amount of rainfall, the investigation indicated that a blocked outfall and capacity of Anglian Water's SuDS basin may have been a contributory factor. The water company has cleared the outfall and is undertaking its own investigations into the capacity issues.

The area around Helston Court was badly affected by flooding on the roads and the SCC Highway team are investigating ways to reduce the problem in future, possibly through improvements to the existing, but currently unmaintained, soakaways.

3.6 Lawshall

On 19th September a number of properties were flooded from overflowing ditches, highway drains and the foul water system. Suffolk County Council received 14 reports of flooding in 3 locations, including 6 cases of internal flooding. This incident is currently being investigated.

3.7 Leiston

The hydraulic modelling work, which mimics the effect of various intensities of rainfall on the current drainage system, is now complete. It has been used to indicate a number of potential short, medium and long term mitigation measures. The information was shared with residents at the Flood Working Group meeting in September and will be progressed when funding is available, hopefully in 2015/16. Anglian Water has already undertaken some local works to improve drainage and the highways team are now undertaking more frequent inspections and maintenance of road gullies.

3.8 Long Melford

There have been several incidents of surface water flooding of highways and the curtilage of properties in Long Melford recently. In order to better understand the causes of the flooding and map the complex, often old, drainage system, a series of CCTV surveys are being carried out. Initial surveys are being followed up with relevant parties but there are numerous problems such as ingress of tree roots into a pre-1900 drainage system, which will be costly and difficult to put right.

3.9 Lowestoft

A Strategic Flood Group is overseeing the work of both the tidal and fluvial/pluvial flood working groups and links to the wider Lowestoft Transport & Infrastructure Plan which underpins the growth and regeneration of the town. The initial tidal modelling and economic impact assessment is now complete. Work is currently underway to determine the best type of gate or barrier and siting, both from a flood risk and Port operation perspective, and to ensure it would not jeopardise any future widening of the Port access. The possibility of phased delivery of the works, potentially raising walls around the most vulnerable areas in the next few months (subject to funding/permissions) is being assessed. All the initial studies should be complete by the year end so that everything can be brought together to gain initial outline project approval next spring, before moving on to more detailed design work, subject to funding.

Fluvial/surface water modelling will be complete by December and this will then be linked to the tidal modelling to ensure that when a tidal barrier is closed it does not increase the risk of surface water flooding. In addition, small scale works to reduce flooding in the Kirkley Stream area is planned for early 2015.



Schematic showing extent of flood risk and possible tidal defence scheme for Lowestoft – details currently being progressed.

Through the intervention of the Regional Flood and Coastal Committee this project has been included in the 2016-22 indicative programme for funding and some £2.6 million of levy funding allocated. However, Defra has been seeking further clarification about the costs, phasing and benefits of the work as well as potential sources of partnership funding contributions. An announcement about the funding allocation is expected in the Government's Autumn Statement in early December. Meanwhile, Growth Funding is being sought through the New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership and Waveney District Council is leading work on seeking private sources of funding. This project will continue to be a high priority for the all partners over the coming years.

3.10 Needham Market

A revised baseline hydraulic model has been produced, which better reflects the observed flooding in the town of Needham Market in May 2012. It has now been agreed, with the local flood working group, that we are in a position to accept the model as it stands and thus focus on using it to assess options to reduce the flood risk to the town. The options being tested have been previously agreed with the community. Some funding is available for small-scale practical measures. The emergency planning team continues to work with the community.

3.11 Newmarket

The consultant undertaking the study was asked for further information which has delayed the next phase of community engagement. Some of the information produced to date has been used to inform development. Meanwhile, ongoing inspections and maintenance of the No. 1 Drain appears to have reduced the localised flooding.

3.12 Rushmere St Andrew

Flooding on the road and the associated spray from vehicles driving through the water continues to cause concern. Work on Chestnut Pond some years ago has helped the situation, as has the more regular inspections of highway assets.

Following a public meeting in October, organised by Dan Poulter MP, Suffolk County Council and Anglian Water are working together to identify long term, cost-effective improvements to surface water and foul water drainage systems to alleviate the localised problems with standing water in the vicinity of Chestnuts Pond.

3.13 Stanton

The recent flooding in Stanton was due to exceptional rainfall onto recently cultivated fields, causing silt to build up on the roads and in drains. Extensive road flooding around the village is currently being investigated by the Suffolk Highways team.

An order has been submitted to Kier MG for design and installation of a new trash screen with working platform in the Grundle watercourse. Installation is likely to be in the next few months. In spite of this being a health and safety issue, no national funding is available, so the work will be funded by the County Council, but ongoing responsibility for maintaining the structure will rest with the Parish Council.

3.14 Sudbury

Recognising that both Sudbury and Great Cornard are at risk from river and surface water flooding Suffolk County Council is now beginning a detailed flood management plan. Initially data will be collated from all partners to better understand the risk prior to considering options for alleviating that risk. At an appropriate time we will be seeking views from the local community.

3.15 Woodbridge

CCTV surveying of the drainage systems (see photo) is underway in a number of locations where localised flooding has occurred. This will indicate any issues with the local drainage leading to discussions with relevant parties about ways to improve the situation.



Anyone wanting further details on any of the issues above should contact Jeff Horner on 01473 260929 or floods@suffolk.gov.uk

4. Coastal Management

4.1 Lowestoft South Beach Works

The first phase of an £1.5 million project which will place rock on the beach adjacent to the seawall will start in October and continue for up to nine weeks. The start was delayed by difficulties with rock deliveries and the longer than expected time taken to obtain essential approvals. When completed, the work will bring major benefits to the area by reducing the risk of collapse of the vulnerable seawall. There will, however, be some disruption and noise during the construction process. Phase 2 will see promenade repair and safety measures, plus beach stabilisation work over the northern beach and this is planned to follow in spring 2015. For more details see http://www.waveney.gov.uk/site/scripts/documents_info.php?documentID=839&categoryID=848&pageNumber=2

4.2 Gorleston to Lowestoft Coastal Strategy review

Waveney District Council and Great Yarmouth Borough Council are inviting the local community to get involved in shaping future management of the coast from Gorleston-on-sea to Lowestoft. This stretch of coastline has a number of challenges, not least how to fund the protection of the key business assets and communities. The project will ensure that the strategy meets the needs of the community and three drop-in sessions have been held recently to encourage local involvement. Further information on the project can be found at www.g2lcs.org.

4.3 Local Government Association Coastal Special Interest Group

The Chairman of this national body, Cllr Andy Smith from Suffolk Coastal District Council, has been invited to meet with the new Defra Secretary of State, Liz Truss MP on behalf of coastal local authorities. This is an opportunity to raise common issues to all coastal and estuarine authorities. The key points to be discussed include simplification of future tidal surge, storm recovery packages, increasing the importance of economic benefits when determining government funding for coast protection schemes, identification of new ways to encourage private investment into Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management.

The next SIG meeting in December will include a workshop for Members so that they can learn the new ways of accessing routes to EU Funding sources. This is intended to include practical application of this knowledge so that coastal authorities can gain access to funding for important schemes around our coasts. Work is also underway to find routes to funding from businesses along our coast, to encourage them to invest in schemes that we all depend on.

4.4 Felixstowe Navigation Markers

Approval is imminent for the expenditure of £350m to simplify and upgrade the navigation markers along the north and south Felixstowe coastal frontage. The current markers are in a poor state of repair and this major project scheduled to place over the winter will bring a number of benefits. This includes safer beaches for bathers, clearer signage for those in boats, reduced future maintenance costs and a de-cluttering of the view from the beach as the number of markers will be significantly rationalised.

4.5 The importance of preserving salt marsh

Cambridge University has just published research that provides further evidence that preserving natural flood defences is key to building coastal resilience. This report adds further justification to support the work of our estuary partnerships who have a number of salt marsh restoration projects underway.

<http://www.cam.ac.uk/research/news/salt-marsh-plants-key-to-reducing-coastal-erosion-and-flooding>.

5. News from the Estuaries

5.1 Alde & Ore Estuary Partnership (www.aoep.co.uk)

Snape Repairs: At the beginning of September the Internal Drainage Board (IDB) started work on the Snape river defence (north wall) to repair the damage following the tidal surge in December 2013. £75,000 has been made available from the Government's post surge Repair Grant and this will be supplemented by community funding. The Environment Agency has agreed to fund further modelling prior to the start of a major capital scheme next year. The tidal sluice beyond Snape Bridge and the marsh sluice may be improved to allow a more effective evacuation of water from the flood plain after a tidal surge.

Estuary Plan and Enabling Development Update: The Estuary Plan is under development and will now be subject to a sustainability appraisal, with a view to finalising it early in 2015. The Estuary Partnership is at the forefront of work to secure 'enabling development' to ensure that funds are obtained to upgrade the estuary flood defences, totalling some £7-10 million. This work will help to protect some 1500 homes and maintain the farming and tourist industry that supports the economy of the area. The District Council should soon be in a position to discuss potential development sites that have been offered by landowners in the estuary.

Hazlewood Marsh: Suffolk Wildlife Trust has decided that the breaches and wall damage are too expensive to repair, meaning that the freshwater marsh will be lost, replaced by intertidal habitats. The local residents and land owners are building bunds to protect their own land from further inundation.

5.2 Deben Estuary Partnership:

Deben Estuary Plan: The culmination of several years' hard work to develop a long term plan for the estuary is reaching its climax. The draft plan and associated sustainability appraisal will be

released for public consultation on 17th November, with the aim of having the final plan adopted in the New Year. The draft plan and details of the many opportunities for the public to be involved in the consultation will shortly be posted on the website <http://www.debenestuarypartnership.co.uk>.

Repairing the damage: The December tidal surge last year caused damage along the length of the Deben, with flooding in locations from Felixstowe Ferry to Woodbridge. Much time and effort has gone into repairing walls and into considering how flooding can be prevented in the future. The worst property damage was at Waldringfield where sixteen properties and the boatyard were flooded. The efforts and excellent work of the Waldringfield community secured a substantial grant of some £600,000 from the Coastal Community Fund, which, together with funding from householders and the Environment Agency is allowing a new scheme to go ahead.

The height of the surge flooded all the properties outside the river wall at Felixstowe Ferry. The Boatyard saw equipment damaged and at the Sailing Club new floors and carpets were needed as well as equipment- together an insurance claim of over £200,000 was met.

Storm damage, including breaches in the walls, on both sides of the river, occurred at the top of Martlesham Creek and at also at Ramsolt (see *photo of repaired wall*). Repairs in these locations have been/are being undertaken by the landowners as they did not qualify for government funding. On the north bank at Martlesthams, the wall will be repaired to include two spillways, which provides a cost-effective but flood resilient way of protecting the land. There will also be a trial of various footpath materials on this section of wall, to help us all to better understand the best way to integrate repairs to both flood walls and the rights of way that run along them.



Major work is about to start at Kirton where a short section of wall protects properties and land up to Newborne. The Environment Agency has been able to provide funding for this through the emergency funds made available as a consequence of the December surge. As all this repair work reaches completion, the Deben Estuary Partnership will focus on the need to improve the standard of defence for flood cells 1 (Bawdsey) and 4 (Shottisham) – these remain the two major areas along the estuary where there is a risk of storm damage causing major flooding.

5.3 Stour & Orwell Management Group:

A new footpath route and new vital areas for wildlife are some of the positive outcomes envisioned by a partnership project on the south bank of the Orwell. The grazing marshes at Hill House Farm near Chelmondiston were inundated in December last year when the seawall was overtopped and the sea flooded the site. The seawall and the footpath were damaged by this flood. The landowner has been working with the Environment Agency on a proposal that will change the shape of the southern edge of the Orwell estuary, creating 45 hectares of intertidal habitat and 18 hectares of species-rich grassland; a managed realignment, as recommended by the Essex and South Suffolk Shoreline Management Plan. It is projected that the new wetland will support an increased number of birds including: redshank, black tailed godwit, dark bellied brent goose, and other waterfowl and also increase the nursery area for fish fry and marine life. The project will create a secure new footpath route in the light of predicted sea level rise, allow future maintenance of sea defences elsewhere in the estuary and allow farming to continue on the land and adapt to future sea level rise.

A planning application, which includes the changes to the footpaths, is expected to be submitted around December 2014 and this is likely to have a 16 week determination period during which time Babergh District Council will also hold public consultation. For details of this project contact: Merle Leeds at hillhouse@environment-agency.gov.uk

6. Holistic Water Management Project

The Holistic Water Management Project running across the Deben catchment is piloting novel ideas for a more joined up approach to all aspects of water management. Ideas being pursued include natural flood management around Debenham, alteration and/or removal of redundant structures within the river to improve fish passage and ecological diversity and diverting surface water into a storage reservoir for use by farmers and for public water supply. The latter is estimated to bring an additional £1.5-2m to the local food production economy annually. There is also a strand of work looking at the regulatory processes around trading of water licences and creation of reservoirs. More details about the project are available on www.greensuffolk.org/hwmp

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