

Minutes of Meeting held on 9 March 2021 on Zoom



In attendance:

DR	Cllr	David	Ritchie	ESC (Chair)		RWi		Rob	Wise	NFU
ASt		Alysha	Stockman	CPE (minutes)		AA		Alison	Andrews	AOCP
KT		Karen	Thomas	CPE		MF		Madeline	Fallon	CPE
TB		Tim	Beach	AOCP		KM		Keith	Martin	SCAR
MA	Cllr	Melissa	Allen	ESC		PJR		Philip	Ridley	ESC
DB	Cllr	David	Beavan	SCAR / ESC				Adam	Rowlands	RSPB
CB		Christine	Block	DEP				Sharon	Richardson	CPE
AR		Andy	Rouse	BCP				Will	Burchnall	BMSDC
RS		Richard	Steward	BEP			Cllr	Keith	Patience	ESC
GW		Gary	Watson	EA		ASm		Andy	Smith	RFCC Rep
SA		Simon	Amstutz	SCH AONB				Jane	Haviland	RDA
GN	Cllr	Graham	Newman	SCC				Isi	Steen	CPE
SB		Sharon	Bleese	CPE		GU		Graham	Underwood	UoE
SK		Sam	Kench	NE		LC		Lisa	Chandler	ESC
JM	Cllr	James	Mallinder	ESC		LG		Lucy	Goodman	CPE
GS		Georgie	Sutton	MMO		RWh		Robin	Whittle	RDA
ED		Emma	Dixon	WMA		SF		Sally	Fishwick	NE
SJ		Steff	Jones	SCC						

Apologies: Greg Hall (AW), Julian Gregory (JG), Cllr Tony Cooper (ESC), Cllr Derek Davis (BDC), Matt Hullis (SCC), Sarah Barker (IBC)

1.	Welcome and Introductions	The Chair shared a round of introductions.
2.	Energy Projects Update including Sizewell C	<p>Lisa Chandler, Energy Projects Manager at East Suffolk Council (ESC) shared the Forum can contact sizewellc@eastsoffolk.gov.uk with any further questions.</p> <p>LC informed the Forum that the EA1N and EA2 offshore wind projects, with onshore infrastructure proposed close to the village of Friston, are at the examination stage. Officers are working hard on ESC's input to those examinations and everything is published on the Planning Inspectorate (PINS) website. LC shared a list of all the current and forthcoming energy projects in the area.</p> <p>Lucy Goodman, Coastal Technical Assistant at Coastal Partnership East (CPE) shared that after the Sizewell C coastal engagement event in December, EDF Energy submitted a change application to PINS in January. LG shared some key concerns CPE and ESC still have but they are in regular discussions with EDF Energy and Cefas. The key issues include: the incomplete design of works meaning that officers cannot fully assess the environmental impact; the seaward movement of the Hard Coastal Defence Feature advances the line going against the Shoreline Management Plan (SMP) policy to hold the line and maintain the natural evolution of the coastline; the impact of the beach landing facilities is unknown but modelling is underway; there is limited information around how the soft coastal defence feature will function and it will challenge the SMP policy. CPE and ESC have requested EDF Energy to extend their scope of monitoring south to include the Thorpeness village frontage and a continual approach to monitoring and mitigation plan with any changes to the plan consulting ESC and the Marine Technical Forum. LG added there are a lot of other nationally significant infrastructure projects along the coast and EDF Energy have been requested to consider these projects even if they do not directly overlap.</p>

		<p>LG shared a Local Impact Report from ESC and Suffolk County Council is being written and will go to PINS. ESC and EDF Energy's Statement of Common Ground is also in draft and will be sent to the examiner.</p> <p>AA asked why the monitoring is not being extended to Shingle Street and shared concern that the coastline itself and the impact on that has not been raised. LG agreed to push for a greater monitoring extent.</p> <p>ASm added that anywhere there is an unnatural hard point, there is usually scour and raised concerns about the transition of the southern end of the Sizewell C defence to the Sizewell B defence. LG added it is a continuous transition into the Sizewell B defence but there will be a pocket where Sizewell C is more forward than Sizewell B and this has been considered.</p> <p>The Chair asked if there is any more the Forum can do to follow up the issues raised. LG added that ESC has been in discussions with Defra who have been explaining further to PINS the lack of information available and ability to make decisions on the impact assessment.</p>
3.	Maintenance of Suffolk River Walls	<p>Robin Whittle, former chair, River Deben Association and Richard Steward, Blyth Estuary Partnership introduced the paper and proposed a protocol for the maintenance of river walls.</p> <p>GW added the use of the Environment Agency website would not be possible for hosting NGO content as it is on gov.uk. <i>RWh response (added after meeting): The EA is intimately involved in the decision making for the maintenance of the river walls. The EA would be the most appropriate place to hold the full record of any agreed protocol.</i></p> <p>CB added the Deben Estuary Partnership always welcome thinking on the problems with maintaining walls or defence in the estuary. CB raised the issue of funding, for example, flood cell 1 is limited to what the landowners will be prepared to contribute. <i>RWh response (added after meeting): FC1 is a flood cell which was classified as 'Economic' and has been specifically named as vital in the control of the tidal prism. Surely safety and maintenance should not rely just on the landowners interest. The robustness of this wall is vital to the whole community, and the EA. I agree that resilience could be obtained by applying a possible lower cost technique proposed by Andrew Hawes - leaving the walls unraised and applying mesh and anchors to the surface. However, such a solution inevitably causes a higher flood risk. When this flood risk becomes unacceptable to the landowners, they are faced with the increased cost of raising the wall on top of a 50-year-old rusting mesh. This would almost certainly require the use of further mesh & anchors to hold the new clay in place. This underlines the need to set up a protocol which is agreed by all parties involved, that will stand the test of time.</i></p> <p>The Chair was concerned that if flood walls are continually raised of any type there could be a surge within the estuary. The aim of flood walls is to be resilient and overtop rather than getting washed away and breaching. The Chair asked if that is a valid consideration when looking at the wall building discussed. RS added the suggestion is that areas where there are houses and properties should be higher. 300mm would mean that all other areas flood before the areas with property, which is why it is included that in the protocol.</p> <p>AR noted CB's point about funding and added it should not be a reason for not trying to set standards to aspire to. AR asked if there is anything similar in place for coastal defences because at East Lane there are variable levels.</p> <p>AA added it is accepted that clay walls have to be redone every 50 years and agreed that resilience is the approach rather than height. In FC1 there is about 8m of soft mud below the wall, which means a different allowance for subsidence than in FC10, where</p>

		<p>there is 30mm. Within each estuary there are different shapes, which affect the tidal flow and the way the surges go. AA does not agree that a protocol is the way forward and suggested to keep making sure that the experts are checking out with others what their experience has been.</p> <p><i>RS response (added after meeting):</i> <i>Almost all our estuary walls have been built on old saltmarsh. In the case of the embankment around Southwold Town Marsh built in 1600, the wall stands 3.4m above marsh level and sits on 12m of saltmarsh. The wall protecting FC7 in the Deben is likely to have a similar substrate and supports a wall that is at least 3.7m above marsh level (4.0mOD). In Holland they have walls that stand more than 5m above marsh level.</i></p> <p>SB suggested the estuary groups take a partnership approach outside of the meeting to agree whether what the protocol is suggesting fits in with all of the work that was done to pull the estuary partnership plans together. SB suggested also including the EA and IDB in discussions.</p> <p>SB added it would not be possible to apply this protocol to the coast because it is a dynamic and challenging coastline with different issues, heights, landowners, and types of cliffs. The coast does have very robust SMPs that give guidance that is reviewed as to whether they are appropriate.</p> <p>ASm suggested this thinking be included in the Deben Estuary Plan review.</p> <p>TB agreed that the partnerships are key and would be happy to speak to the other estuary partnerships about the value in a protocol. TB added that to maintain the partnerships they do need funding and support. The partnerships are looked at across East Anglia and wider as leading lights in some of their work, so it is important to maintain them.</p> <p>The Chair agreed.</p>
4.	Innovative Resilience Fund	<p>KT shared that the Innovative Resilience Fund is a £150m fund from Defra and CPE has put a bid in to create a programme of work across the Norfolk and Suffolk coast for the largely coastal erosion communities. The fund is aligned with the EA FCERM Strategy and Defra Coastal Policy.</p> <p>The fund will be assigned to 25 places. CPE decided to take the Norfolk and Suffolk coast as its place as they did not feel that any one location would give the learning that would then be applicable elsewhere on the coast. The team thought about and asked partners what is happening already, what they could offer the project and what they could offer the communities and businesses if they applied for this funding.</p> <p>CPE mapped the coastal communities into four archetypes and looked for the community that could give the most valuable learning, which are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undefined and at erosion risk – Hemsby, with links to Pakefield, Gunton and Shotley • Defended and at erosion risk – Trimmingham, with links to Corton and Walcott • Urban areas at risk of tidal inundation – Great Yarmouth, using learning from Lowestoft • Rural areas at risk of tidal inundation – Thorpeness, with links to estuary strategies and open coast areas in Norfolk <p>The Coastal Losses Innovative Funding and Finance Project has been looking at how to take forward the Norfolk and Suffolk Coast Transition Programme. It has been split into themes, which are: policy and legislation; communication, engagement and behavioural change; funding and finance; spatial planning; and technical (data, evidence, engineering). These will be tailored to each community for the point they are at.</p> <p>CPE are aiming for an adaptation toolkit moving from crisis response towards coastline resilience. KT added the outputs of the project include: a definitive funding and finance system that relies less on central government funding; a behavioural change toolkit for the coast; short term utilisation of coastal properties; and collaboration with private developers.</p>

		<p>KT shared if CPE received the funding, they would like to enable coastal communities to transition to lower risk and a climate resilient future in the next 20 years. A range of transitioning ideas will be piloted including allowing some natural functioning of the eroding coast. Community masterplans will be core to the project.</p>
5.	Conference speakers and subjects	<p>SB shared the conference will be held on 7th October and will likely be virtual. This year's theme will look at climate resilient coasts and estuaries with speakers around working with people, working with science, and working with nature. SB asked if the Forum would be interested in a speaker to help them to engage with their communities in a different way, utilising behavioural insights. With regards to science and nature Kellie Fisher and Guy Cooper have launched a website for students called Coastineers and they are going to run the student section of the virtual workshop. SB asked the Forum which speakers they would like to hear.</p> <p>CB agreed a behavioural change toolkit theme would be useful as this can be challenging.</p> <p>GU added there is a lot of behavioural psychology around that and agreed to approach a colleague in the psychology department who has worked on how people think about sea level rise and see if she has any suggestions.</p> <p>ACTION: GU to approach colleague and put her in touch with SB</p> <p>TB added Paul Hayden, Chair of the RFCC, volunteered to use his address book and agreed to go back to him.</p> <p>ACTION: TB to ask Paul Hayden about speakers and share with SB</p> <p>The Chair asked whether to plan for an online conference or a hybrid conference. SB added the research she has done shows most conferences are still being planned virtually. This conference is moving into a particularly difficult time, where last year there was a rise in infection rates. It would be sensible to have a virtual conference.</p>
6.	Questions on the England Coast Path paper	<p>CB asked if the Secretary of State makes a site visit.</p> <p>SF added that for every objection deemed admissible the planning inspector that is allocated to that stretch of the coast will do a site visit to orientate themselves and clarify the planning inspector's questions. An invitation goes to the person who has made the objection (usually the landowner or land manager), the access authority, and SF would also normally accompany the planning inspector.</p> <p>CB asked if objections must come from landowners or a local authority not from community organisations such as the DEP. SF confirmed this.</p> <p>CB asked if it is possible for the DEP to ask the planning inspector to look at a particular site.</p> <p>SF added the process follows the legislation and it is only people with a legal interest in the land who can make an objection and they are the sites that the planning inspector looks at. Where a representation (which can be made by anybody) has been made and is linked to an objection, the inspector will see the representation but there is not an opportunity to invite the inspector out to look at anything. SF suggested CB could write into the planning inspectorate and explore that.</p> <p>RWi asked why only some reports have been determined for the Shotley Gate to Felixstowe stretch and asked about the process of opening.</p> <p>SF added each coastal access report is split down into chapters and each chapter is now a report in its own right. This means where there were no objections the Secretary of State was quickly able to look at the representations and make a decision about those non-contested chapters. Reports 1 and 3 are still waiting to be determined because there are objections on them, and that process moves more slowly. That will be the pace for every stretch of coast. Once the Secretary of State has approved a chapter report, Natural England (NE) works with the access authority to implement it on the ground. This can be done by implementing parts of and not all of it; or by waiting for the whole stretch to be approved and implement it then. NE are in discussions with the access authority to find the best way of approaching it, but it is likely that NE will commence the rights on each stretch as the stretch is implemented.</p> <p>RWi suggested that is communicated to landowners.</p>

		<p>SF added that as NE start working on each stretch, the access authority will liaise with landowners individually that are affected. A large part of the coast path is based on existing public rights of way or existing highways that are already open so most concern will be around sections where there is no existing access right.</p> <p>AA asked about the costs and timing of the Bawdsey to Aldeburgh stretch as work to the walls should start in the upper estuary this year over the next seven years. SF added the proposals within the coastal access reports are the works that NE intend to implement and NE pay 100% of the cost of those works. This does not include repairs to sea walls because the route would not have proposed on a sea wall if it was unsuitable. However, NE would want to coordinate establishment work with any other work that is going on. SF suggested AA could put in a representation on the proposals before the end of March to flag any concerns.</p> <p>CB asked if the existing coast path has been closed for safety reasons due to erosion, who carries liability if NE route the coast path along the dangerous stretch of cliff. SF added if the coast path has been aligned along a cliff top, NE will engage various stakeholders whilst doing that alignment. If the erosion is rapid, the route will likely have been aligned someway back of the clifftop and roll back will be proposed. NE support the access authority to manage the England Coast Path and where there is a dangerous situation, they can close the coast path and put in a temporary route.</p> <p>CB asked if somebody using the coast path had an accident, who carries liability. SF added the legislation and coastal access scheme say that people take responsibility for their own safety when they go out along the coast. Landowners have the lowest liability in law and NE have a factsheet which SF can share. In the past, where people need to be made aware of a particularly tricky situation NE have put signage up and asked people to stay well back.</p> <p>SB added the Maritime and Coastguard Agency is currently nationally reviewing how beach and cliff safety is managed, who is responsible, and any enforcement that can be taken. SB offered to share the recommendations with the Forum when they come out.</p>
7.	Thorpeness, Pakefield and Corton	<p>MF shared the Gunton and Corton project is for an options appraisal study of north Corton, Corton village and Gunton. The project was awarded to consultants Jacobs, who are starting with the Gunton frontage, working in partnership with Anglian Water, as this has experienced more erosion of beach material in the last year. Monitoring data is being analysed to assess the erosion forecasts and enable Anglian Water to make decisions on relocating the sewage pipes. Options will then be identified and impacts appraised to determine indicative costs. The SMP policy (currently Managed Realignment moving to No Active Intervention) for this frontage may also be reviewed depending on the outputs of the appraisal study.</p> <p>As the coastline has retreated in north Corton, it has left the old historical defences that were once at the base of the cliff out on the open coast and there is no public access to the area. The project will look at options for removing parts of the old revetment and encasing sections of it in rock like small breakwaters to retain beach sediment and slow the erosion of the cliff face.</p> <p>Corton village has historical sea defences that have been repaired over the years. The project will look at possible options for a larger rock revetment or sea wall along the line of the existing wall with enhancements to the rock revetment to the north of the wall. This will include solutions for public access. CPE will be engaging with the local community and local holiday park businesses as the project progresses.</p> <p>MF added that at Pakefield the coastal trends have changed, beach levels have dropped, and the tidal range comes higher up the foreshore, triggering erosion to the cliff south of Pakefield. The project started in February with consultants Mott MacDonald. It will develop understanding of current coastal change trends and review the SMP policy. Last year CPE commissioned monthly topographic surveys and a bathymetric survey to assess how the sediments are moving. CPE are working closely with the Pakefield community stakeholder group and we have monthly meetings together.</p> <p>Thorpeness has a preferred option of rock revetment in the northern part of the village where the gabion basket and geobag defence is currently. This project with consultants</p>

		<p>Royal HaskoningDHV will be to carry out an outline design for the rock revetment with trigger levels for removal in line with the SMP policy for Managed Realignment. Survey data will be reviewed to calculate beach levels and current forecast trends for erosion. Visualisation tools will enable the community to understand what the changes will look like and make decisions on the options to include public access from north to south as well as inland to the village.</p> <p>CPE are commissioning a drone survey for Thorpeness and Pakefield to allow communities, homeowners, consultants and themselves to see the challenges and changes to these two coastlines and for those who haven't been able to do site visits due to COVID-19 restrictions.</p>
8.	SMP Refresh & EA Strategy	<p>GW shared that since the last meeting there have been no national updates on the SMP Refresh or EA Strategy. EA are working with ESC on Sizewell C and are in agreement with everything that has been said.</p> <p>GW has been working with MF and SB on the SMP Refresh locally and met last week to get that process started.</p> <p>GW has been working with ED on the Benacre Project, which is currently with the EA Large Project Review Group for assurance. They will give a technical assurance of the project and look at environmental, engineering and economic aspects.</p> <p>ASm has been invited to be involved in the digitisation of SMP information in the long term for the wider community. The first stage is an interactive mapping website of the existing SMPs, for which ASm has seen the prototype. The next stage will be to widen the mapping process to encompass a digitised view of the coast, including its relationship to planning. ASm would appreciate any comments on how that might evolve.</p>
9.	Updates from partners	<p>Stour & Orwell Estuary Partnership – SA added the partnership are looking to appoint a Chair at its meeting next week.</p> <p>Deben Estuary Partnership – CB added the DEP are exploring the idea of a resource centre to exhibit the findings from the research on the Deben and the coast.</p> <p>Coastal Partnership East – The Chair queried the estuary partnership funding. KT agreed to find out more and suggested the potential for a paper to the RFCC to see if there is anything to support the estuary partnerships going forward. ASm agreed. ACTION: KT to investigate estuary partnership funding</p> <p>Environment Agency – CB asked who sits on the SMP Client Steering Group mentioned in the EA update. GW added it is led by ESC and EA, NE, Historic England, and other members attend. SB agreed to send CB a list of the members. ACTION: SB to send CB a list of the SMP Client Steering Group members</p> <p>Marine Management Organisation – GS added the South East Marine Plan is due imminently in the spring. The MMO are currently running a series of Marine Plan implementation training sessions for both the East and South East plans. These are targeted at local planning authorities and are also being run nationally for NE, EA and IFCAs. GS invited those parties to get in touch if they have not heard about these training sessions.</p>
10.	Key dates and forward look	<p>ASt confirmed the next meeting dates are 13th July, 26th October, and 1st February. SB added the Deben Room at East Suffolk House has been booked for the October and February meetings but was unavailable for the July meeting. SB suggested holding the July meeting virtually. The Forum agreed.</p> <p>KT added CPE hope to hear if they have been successful with the IRF bid in April. The preliminary hearing for Sizewell C is the 23rd March and the PINS process will go on until October with CPE involved in hearings throughout the summer and into the autumn.</p>

11.	Suggested agenda items for future meetings	<p>The Chair suggested an IRF update if CPE are successful with the bid. KT agreed. KT suggested a short update on IRF and the Lowestoft Project together as the tidal wall construction will commence in April and there will be the ground-breaking in May. The Chair agreed.</p> <p>ASm raised concern about gaps in ensuring new developments are subject to the right criteria in relation to coastal flood risk. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) now has an expanded section on Coastal Change Management Areas (CCMAs) but the SMP is no longer an overtly referenced document. Changes to the EA's flood maps mean some defences are no longer recognised as defences. The flood map now shows that the ground from there inland is not subject to flood risk other than a limited Zone 2 risk. If a defence is shown on the flood maps then the planning takes account of the presence of a defence and that it can fail. ASm requested an agenda item on this at the next meeting and will put together a portfolio, documentation, and evidence for this so that the Forum can move it forward.</p> <p>KT agreed to look at any documentation and added CPE are working with the Planning Policy team to progress the Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD) for the CCMAs. SMP action planning is at a point to bring everything back together. CPE will be progressing this between now and September. KT suggesting including ASm's concern in that at a local level and address anything nationally through the LGA Coastal SIG or EA colleagues.</p> <p>ASm added he hopes to bring some focus to this group on a more rapid timescale as in the meantime there are applications coming in where this is an issue.</p> <p>CB asked if that item could include a section on the relationship with the SMP and estuary management plans as the Deben is under review at the moment and there needs to be understanding on the policy context.</p> <p>SB added as part of the SMP Refresh estuary management plans have now been referenced and included but is has not finished yet. SB asked when the action plans become live.</p> <p>MF added as they come out in spring and summer the outcome of the refresh should be worked towards.</p> <p>SB suggested when it is ready sharing the revised SMP action plan with the Forum to show where the estuary management plans sit.</p> <p>AR suggested a presentation on MMO consent, what it covers, and what it involves. GS agreed look into it. If that team are not able to present, GS can share information with the Forum.</p> <p>The Chair suggested ASm get in touch with the other people involved to bring back something coherent. ASm agreed.</p> <p>CB suggested if there is still confusion, someone from Planning attend the July meeting. SB agreed to arrange this.</p>
12.	Previous minutes	The Forum approved the previous minutes.
13.	Any Other Business	JM shared that due to emergency legislation there is allowance to change the usage of land for 56 days without going through the normal planning procedure. This is causing some impact particularly with regards to pop up camping sites which are often close to the estuaries and sea. JM asked the Forum to register any issues with Environmental Protection if there is any negativity to the environment or any anti-social behaviour. This will build up evidence to enable further action to be taken.
Close at 12.28		