

AOCP

Alde and Ore Community Partnership Update

The estuary organisations, AOCP and Alde and Ore Estuary Trust, as well as ESIDB, are still waiting to hear the outcome of the outline business case submitted to Environment Agency to secure approval for the first part of the Estuary project, both in flood approval terms and as being eligible for grant in aid. It seems that the necessary and extremely detailed Outline Business Case has passed the close technical and economic examination and approval is now awaited. Until that approval is given, action to take the project forward is limited.

In the meantime, the AOCP is refreshing its web site as part of achieving better communications with the communities around the Alde and Ore Estuary.

The highest winter surge so far was on 19 November 2020 and saw both the Orford and Slaughden Quays under water, but the river defence walls were not overtopped, it served as a timely reminder of the need to ensure such walls in put into a good and stronger state.

Alison Andrews, February 2021

BCP

Bawdsey Coastal Partnership Update

No update at present.

BEP

Blyth Estuary Partnership Update

As a group, the BEP has supported the creation of an HMC for Southwold Harbour because it believes that such a body has the potential for bringing together each of the required stakeholders, within a single integrated solution, for the harbour and estuary. A joint meeting of the ESC Cabinet and Southwold Town Council was due to have taken place of 2 March in order to formalise the position and open the way for Members of the HMC to be formally appointed.

BEP is of the view that a multi-agency engagement, that encompasses the whole estuary, offers the best solution and it will be looking to the HMC for leadership in this particular regard; the Partnership is committed to such an approach.

In an encouraging development, it is looking more likely that the 2021 ***Fair on the Green***, that raises money for the Partnership's use might be able to take place on **1 August** this year.

Ian Bradbury, February 2021

Coastal Partnership East

East Suffolk Council Coastal Management Team Update

The Partnership continues to deliver a range of project-based and strategic outcomes during the COVID-19 pandemic for our most 'at risk' communities along the Suffolk coast. CPE are working with SCC to complete the pluvial and fluvial works in Lowestoft by mid-May with 150 homes better protected from flooding. Following the £43.5M Green Recovery funding of the £67M LFRMP by Defra last June, we and our project delivery partners Balfour Beatty are progressing the tidal walls construction in April with a ground-breaking ceremony. The tidal barrier construction will follow with delivery of the full project by 2026 following the development and submission of a Transport Works Act Order. This project underpins the wider aspirations for the Lowestoft Masterplan, Outer Harbour developments and links to the Gullwing project and aims to support wider economic growth, enhanced social opportunities and improved infrastructure for the town.

We are working closely with communities at erosion risk in Thorpeness and Pakefield and Corton and Gunton exploring options for short term and longer-term adaptation. Following, bad weather and storms last winter and again this year we continue to see significant beach erosion. The operational team have completed the majority of urgent and routine works through our repair and maintenance programme ahead of this winter season. We also continue to work with landowners and remind visitors to our coast about the dangers of walking on top of and at the base of the cliffs which are saturated and highly susceptible to cliff falls.

CPE also remain very engaged in the coastal elements of the SZC DCO process and are currently developing our elements of the ESC Local Impact Report and Relevant Representation ahead of the Examination by PINS. We have submitted a £10M bid to the £150M Innovative Resilience Fund along with 79 other expressions of interest from around the country - we look forward to hearing in the Spring if we are successful. Our proposal focuses on how we can support coastal communities transition from where we are now to a climate resilient position in the future with a suite of funding, finance, planning and technical options to support the transition.

CPE are currently using bespoke Collector App, and Survey 123 technology, to carry out their annual asset inspections and monthly monitoring of vulnerable frontages. CPE have now invested in SANDS, a coastal Management specific software, in order to provide project managers with contemporary analysis of geomorphological data. This software has already supported projects in Thorpeness, Southwold, Felixstowe, Pakefield, Lowestoft, Gunton & Great Yarmouth and is being considered by the EA as a tool that could be used more broadly.

Karen Thomas, February 2021

DEP

Deben Estuary Partnership Update

A major piece of work for the coming year will be a **review of the Deben Estuary Plan**. The Plan was published in 2015 and needs to be reviewed and updated to reflect changes, at the national and local level, to some key policy areas and changing environmental positions. Stakeholder engagement will be essential to ensure that the revision process is inclusive, comprehensive and reflects key issues and concerns. Drafting the initial Scoping Report is underway. The report will note existing objectives, set out matters to be considered and updated, and identify new areas to be addressed.

As a part of the Plan review it will be interesting to look at the final report from a research project associated with the Marine Pioneer programme. The report, by Rachel Holtby, (Northumbria University) looks at 'Governance Recommendations for Delivery of a Natural Capital Approach in the Marine Environment' and considers whether

mainstreaming ecosystems science into policy and decision making in the marine and coastal environment is beneficial.

Work to the defence wall for **FC1** – between Bawdsey and Ramsholt - continues to focus much of the DEP's attention. We were pleased to be able to sign the legal agreement with East Suffolk Council which allows release of the CIL grant. This funding goes towards the cost of preparatory work and data collection and will inform the final design and construction choices for improving the wall.

Work with community representatives on expanding the coast and estuary monitoring project continues. The series of **photoposts** along the coast north from the mouth of the Deben are in position and being used to provide fixed point photographs of selected sections of coast. The next stage is setting up software which combines these visual images with relevant weather data and beach measurements and builds a comprehensive picture of changes to this section of the coast.

The DEP submitted a reasoned view on Natural England's - proposed route for the **England Coast Path round the Deben Estuary** - Felixstowe Ferry to Bawdsey Quay. In preparing their response the DEP stressed that they are not opposed, in principle, to establishing the coast path route but considered that this must be done without incurring a negative impact on a sensitive landscape and nationally important environment. This had not been achieved along sections of the estuary.

Christine Block, February 2021

Eastern IFCA

Eastern Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authorities Update

COVID-19 Update

Eastern IFCA are continuing to adapt working strategies during the COVID-19 pandemic. Our priority continues to be the health and safety of our staff and stakeholders. In line with government guidance Eastern IFCA have successfully held previous Authority meetings during this time using online technology. As these are public meetings with the option for members of the public to observe, we are developing plans to live stream Authority meetings on YouTube. It is hoped that this additional step will encourage broader engagement with stakeholders.

Fisheries Improvement Project – Southern North Sea Crab Fishery Unit

Following the downgrading of the Southern North Sea crab fisheries MCS Good Fish Guide's rating, the Authority has been supporting the industry with the development of a Fisheries Improvement Project (FIP). A 'needs assessment' of the fishery has been completed, detailing areas where the fishery would benefit from management and which will inform the objectives of the FIP. This has been provided to the industry, who will lead on its further development. It is intended that sustainability risks are addressed through the potential introduction of regulatory and/or voluntary measures.

Cromer Shoal Chalk Beds MCZ

Following the receipt of advice in 2020 from Natural England regarding the impact of active potting on chalk in the MCZ, we intend to address the conclusion that the conservation objectives of the site are being hindered via an Adaptive Risk Management approach. This will seek to identify appropriate management measures through further research to better understand the significance of the impact of potting on site features. This approach will involve collaboration with local fishermen, Natural England, and research partners to help inform site management. Correspondingly, a cross-organisational steering group has been established to aid this collaborative approach and establish the next steps for the development of management of potting activity within the MCZ, the first of these meetings was held in February 2021.

Whelk Permit Byelaw 2016 Review

Previous analysis of whelk landings data – which suggested that stocks are now being fished at unsustainable levels – is being reconsidered following the identification of an issue with catch recording on returns forms. This issue does not affect the Size of Maturity data, which relied on biometric sampling rather than forms. The results from this study lacked sufficient samples from Southwold to produce conclusive results. Work is ongoing to reevaluate methods to obtain sufficient samples from Suffolk coastal areas. Consultation closed in late February

2021 with industry on additional measures proposed by Eastern IFCA in the context of concerns about the level of effort identified as well as concerns of non-compliance that had been raised by stakeholders in the whelk permit review consultation held in August 2020. Responses to this consultation are now under review.

Imogen Cessford, February 2021

EA

Environment Agency Update

The Environment Agency manages river and coastal flood risk. It also has a strategic overview role on the coast. Government Grant in Aid funds are administered through the Environment Agency. We work closely with all risk management authorities to support projects and bids for government funds.

The following update covers the key locations from an Environment Agency coastal flood risk management perspective.

Coastal Erosion at Benacre Pumping Station and the Kessingland Levels

We continue to work with Waveney, Lower Yare & Lothingland Internal Drainage Board, Water Management Alliance, local businesses and other partners on a long term solution for the Kessingland Levels. The Outline Business Case for the project is currently being reviewed by the national Large Projects Review Group.

Southwold North Initial Assessment

Working closely with East Suffolk Council we have funded a project to look at the options available for the ongoing protection of the northern Southwold frontage. This area is managed by both authorities. The Initial Assessment concluded that a scheme will be required in the coming years for the area and should be incorporated in to future programmes. We will continue to work with East Suffolk Council to establish what funding opportunities are available for a project.

Emerging projects

We are planning works to the frontage at Felixstowe Ferry, immediately in front of Harbour Villas and repair works to the embankments near the Wolsey Bridge in the Blyth Estuary. Both these projects are currently at the options appraisal stage.

Potters Bridge, Easton Broad

Recent weather events have caused the outfall on Easton Broad to fail. Rainfall events created high water levels on the Broad and flooded the B1127 road at Potters Bridge for a prolonged period of time. An alternative short term solution has now been found and the levels are currently controlled.

The EA manages this site for the designated features of the Easton Broad valley which are dependent upon stable water levels in the spring and summer months. We are working closely with NE and others to establish the best way forward for the sustainable management of the site.

We encourage Suffolk County Highways to investigate future options for the management of the road and the bridge.

Shoreline Management Plan Refresh

We have worked closely with EA national colleagues on the refresh for the Suffolk SMP. This work is proceeding and we have recently received the initial reports. Generally the refresh team found the Suffolk SMP to be sound and fit for purpose and the recommendations are likely to be relatively minor. This is largely due to the good governance of the plan principally through the activity of the SCF and the client steering group.

Suffolk Estuaries

The business case for the Upper Alde and Ore Estuary has been submitted for approval through the EA Large Project Review Group. The process is ongoing.

The Deben Estuary Partnership's plan for the Bawdsey Marshes, in coordination with then landowners, are making good progress.

Mark Johnson, David Kemp and Gary Watson, February 2021

IDB

Internal Drainage Board Update

Lowestoft Temporary Flood Barrier Public Sector Cooperation Agreement with East Suffolk Council

On the Saturday 12 Dec, a deployment training exercise was held jointly with WMA, Coastal Partnership East and 26 soldiers from the 3rd Battalion Royal Anglians Regiment, at Lowestoft docks to undergo training to support deployment of the temporary flood barriers that reduce the risk of flooding in Lowestoft in the event of a tidal surge. CPE delivered the commanders training, with the WMA team delivering the practical training on site. Every year, the temporary barriers are tested by and those operating the barriers are put through their paces so we can provide the best possible response to the threat of a North Sea tidal surge. The additional training with the Royal Anglians will ensure that enough manpower is available should the current trained crew be impacted upon by COVID 19. We constructed 170m in under an hour and it was a real pleasure to work with the Army Reserves.

Public Sector Cooperation Agreement with East Suffolk Council

We continue to support CPE via the repairs and maintenance contract which is now in its final year of three.

In week commencing 07/12/2020 we delivered an urgent works scheme on their behalf at Pakefield, installing approximately 100m of sacrificial defence line to the toe of rapidly eroding beach / cliff. This was achieved with one tonne bags filled with beach material, anchored to the shoreline topped with beach material as a recharge to deliver some form of protection here in the very short term. We are likely to undertake a small beach material recharge here at the end of this winter.

Benacre and Kessingland Flood Risk Management Project

We were able to submit the Outline Business Case to the Environment Agency on the 12 February and now await initial comments from LPRG. Natural England are working with Jacobs following a grant from the 'nature recovery' agenda, on investigating habitat design options for the Kessingland Valley (coastal, inter-tidal and freshwater).

Suffolk Estuaries

ESIDB continue to provide support to the local estuaries in Suffolk.

Work to the Kings Fleet outfall has been completed as part of the WEG project. Changes were made to the Kingsfleet Pumping Station outfall structure located at the edge of the saltmarsh with stone and rock material being placed into the existing steel piled outfall to act as a baffle for the pumping station discharge pipe. The discharge pipe was lengthened to flow into this baffle. Work has already been completed to decrease the quantity and speed at which pumped fresh water leaves the discharge pipe into the adjacent saltmarsh. Within the Kingsfleet inlet 160m of brushwood faggots were installed to encourage saltmarsh establishment. The purpose of the brushwood is to see if we are able to convert an area of mudflat in the fleet to become saltmarsh, enabling habitat compensation.

Emma Dixon, February 2021

MMO

Marine Management Organisation Update

No update at present.

NE

Natural England Update

England Coast Path – An update on Suffolk stretches of the England Coast Path has been provided separately.

Shoreline Management Plan/Suffolk Coast Forum – Natural England’s representatives regarding the SMP and the Forum have recently changed with Francesca Shapland and Andy Millar both moving onto new roles. Sam Kench is now NE’s SMP lead for Suffolk and David White is NE’s Senior Responsible Officer for the SMP for both Norfolk and Suffolk.

Designated sites adviser updates:

1. Emily Deacon has been in ongoing conversation with Alex Moore da Luz from Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB about his nature recovery redshank project <https://www.suffolkcoastandheaths.org/2021/02/15/redshank-volunteering-opportunities/> and plans to engage with the public at Shotley to try to reduce the impacts of recreational disturbance on ringed plover.
2. Designated site casework continues throughout the coast; for example, working on Site of Special Scientific Interest/ Special Protection Area casework on the Orwell Estuary, recently providing advice re timings and potential impacts of essential maintenance works on the Orwell Bridge.
3. Our advisers have also been approving extensions to Higher Level Stewardship schemes or signposting landowners to Countryside Stewardship – the new application windows are now open, more info here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/countryside-stewardship>

Marine Team Update – NE continues to engage in the examinations for East Anglia ONE North and East Anglia Two Offshore Windfarms. The main issues continue to be in relation to the significant adverse effects to the special qualities of the Suffolk Coast and Heaths AONB and the expected Adverse Effect on the Integrity of the Outer Thames Estuary SPA resulting from collision and displacement risk designated SPA birds. In a drive to resolve as many issues as possible in the last few remaining weeks of examination Natural England is agreeing to disagree with the Applicant in relation to seascape issues in order to focus on compensation and our statutory responses. For us to have the necessary time to do this, NE has made the Examining Authority, and interested parties, aware that we won’t be attending future hearings in March. Although, we anticipate further ExA questions as a result, but believe that is achievable.

Sizewell C – On the proposed Sizewell C Development Consent Order (DCO) application, Natural England is continuing to engage with EDF Energy and other stakeholders to resolve as many outstanding environmental issues as possible (as were raised in our Relevant Representations to PINS in Sep 2020) ahead of the DCO Examination. This is currently through various issue-specific meetings and the development of a draft Statement of Common Ground (SoCG) with EDF Energy. We are currently preparing our input to the DCO Examination period which has now been scheduled for 14th April to 14th October. The first key deadlines include our agreed first draft SoCG with EDF Energy by the 12th May and our Written Representations to PINS by the 26th May which we are currently working on.

Sam Kench, March 2021

S&OEMG

Stour and Orwell Estuary Management Group Update

No update at present.

Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB

Suffolk Coast & Heaths Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Update

AONB Grants-Now open for applications:

AONB grant programmes for individuals, organisations and businesses to bid for to undertake projects that benefit the environmental qualities of the area and/or support access or understanding of the areas are now open. In 2020 more than £100,000 was awarded across over 80 projects. More information at:

www.suffolkcoastandheaths.org/managing/grants/ or

www.dedhamvalestourvalley.org/managing/grants/

Contact aonbgrants@suffolk.gov.uk for more information.

Stour and Orwell Survey

The AONB team has limited ability to speak to people using the paths around Shotley, Brantham, Orwell Country Park and beyond due to current restrictions. The AONB team is seeking information from residents and visitors on how they use the area around the Stour and Orwell Estuaries. We would welcome your thoughts via the survey at: www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/stourandorwell/

Great British Beach Clean: Results 2020

The Great British Beach Clean looked different this year. Beach cleans were restricted to small groups and enlisted friends, families and 'bubbles' to help clear beaches of litter and take part in the citizen science project. The AONB supported many of these groups. Included in the national results was the fact that Personal Protective Equipment (such as masks to combat the spread of the Coronavirus) were found on 30% of beaches. National results at https://www.mcsuk.org/news/gbbc_2020_results

DEFRA announce new scheme including support for Farmers in 'protected landscapes'

The Government has announced an 'Agricultural Transition Period' that will see Direct Payments and existing agri-environment schemes phased out from 2021 in preparation for the new Environmental Land Management scheme. Farmers in 'protected landscapes', such as AONBs, will be supported to diversify their income streams and lay the groundwork for Environmental Land Management. Government has indicated more information will be made available in early 2021. See

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/940434/atp-adviser-pack.pdf

Simon Armitage's Laurel Prize for Poetry 2021

The largest eco-poetry prize in the world have asked if the AONBs would like to partner with them again in 2021. Last year's second placed Karen McCarthy-Woolf will be working with Coast and Heaths AONB in 2021. Further details to follow.

Mini Updates:

- Film of AONB grant funded project A Wing and Prayer at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OvCQaPfwgCE&feature=youtu.be>
- Stour Estuary and recently extended Coast & Heaths AONB to feature on BBC's Countryfile TV programme on 13 Dec 2020 (with some familiar faces undertaking wildlife projects).
- Natural England awarding small grant for AONB nature recovery work in Coast & Heaths AONB for Redshank project.
- AONB team will be working with SOS Swifts in 2021 to install 58 Swift Boxes and 9 callers
- AONB Nature Recovery work. A short film updating showing what the team are doing at: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1xBrfAmdhHZIPV5Yww-um5CZnszql4umX/view?usp=sharing>
- Google Maps now shows recent extension to Coast & Heaths AONB
- The story of the internationally significant archaeological finds at Sutton Hoo came to the Netflix platform on 29 January. The story of Basil Brown's role in the discovery is portrayed in the film 'The Dig'.
- The work of the National Association for AONBs, including updates from its constituent members, is available in recently published annual report

https://landscapesforlife.org.uk/application/files/2916/1117/5323/Annual_Report_20_FINAL.pdf It includes information on caring for natural beauty, the Colchester Declaration and caring for heritage. Plus lots lots more.

Simon Amstutz, February 2021

Suffolk Saltmarsh Group

Suffolk Saltmarsh Group Update

There is no new update for this group at this time except to say that the Chair is exploring whether additional resource is available to support this group and will seek the SSG's view on how best to go forward in the Spring when winter working is over as resources across all key statutory authorities is currently at capacity.

As reported in November: Following a lot of momentum behind the group when we held workshops last year, SSG produced an Action Plan for 2020/21 which we hoped would form the programme of prioritised actions to be delivered. Despite all parties 'signing up' to the Plan it seems limited resource can be allocated to deliver those actions. Challenges from MMO licencing and setbacks in funding projects have meant that saltmarsh projects coming through have dropped off and dedicated resource from key organisations that have responsibilities for saltmarsh improvements have been lost.

SSG was always intended to act as a strategic group to support grass roots work by tackling the 'difficult' to do issues faced by the local estuary groups. Without dedicated resources for saltmarsh project work to support local groups work has curtailed and COVID 19 has compounded this issue.

SSG remains in place to offer strategic support to facilitate projects with many willing partners and community representatives, so perhaps the most obvious action to take forward at this time is that bodies that have saltmarsh and intertidal habitats within their remits consider their resources, look to any funding that might be available and re-instate dedicated officer(s) to support community projects with their data, evidence, consenting and funding needs. The SSG Chair will look to facilitate a discussion on this with relevant partners in Q3.

Karen Thomas, February 2021