

Southwold to Walberswick Flood and Coast Board

Minutes of meeting 28th May 2021

10am-12pm

Attendees:

DB	Cllr David Beavan (Chair)	East Suffolk Council
DR	Cllr David Ritchie	East Suffolk Council
ML	Cllr Michael Ladd	Suffolk County Council
SB	Sharon Bleese	Coastal Partnership East
PP	Paul Patterson	Coastal Partnership East
MF	Madeline Fallon	Coastal Partnership East
PM	Paul Mackie	Coastal Partnership East
AS	Alysha Stockman	Coastal Partnership East
MJ	Mark Johnson	Environment Agency
GW	Gary Watson	Environment Agency
SF	Simon Flunder	Southwold and Reydon Society
PO	Philip O'Hear	Reydon Parish Council
AB	Adam Burrows	Natural England
RS	Richard Steward	Blyth Estuary Partnership
JT	Jamie Thompson	SHRUBA
SK	Sam Kench	Natural England
KB	Kerry Blair	East Suffolk Council
AJ	Anne Jones	Landowner

Apologies:

MH	Matt Hullis	Suffolk County Council
GM	Graeme Mateer	Suffolk County Council
JB	Josie Bassinette	Walberswick Parish Council

Welcome and introductions, review of previous minutes	<p>The Chair shared a round of introductions.</p> <p>ACTION: AS to amend SF representation to Southwold and Reydon Society in previous minutes. (complete)</p>
Update from the Environment Agency	<p>GW shared the Environment Agency (EA) have two projects in the Blyth at the moment. One is an embankment repair at Wolsey Bridge, the other is to redesign the end of the Southwold Haven Sluice as it suffers from frequent blockages.</p> <p>The project at Dunwich River Sluice in Walberswick is just starting. The EA have been working alongside James Darkins from Walberswick Common Land Trust and other community representatives to look at high level options for establishing the sluice.</p> <p>DB and GW visited Potters Bridge to look at the EA's efforts to make sure pedestrians can get over safely. The EA are in discussions with Easton Barents Ltd about ongoing access to the site and currently do not have permission to access over the Easton Barents Ltd land in order to clear the site and manage water levels. The EA are in negotiations with Easton Barents Ltd. DB asked if access is possible from the north.</p> <p>GW confirmed not as the nearest access point would be at Benacre Sluice, which would mean tracking across designated foreshore.</p>

	<p>ML has had early discussions about Potters Bridge with the Leader of Suffolk County Council (SCC) and the new Cabinet Member for Operational Highways Paul West. ML is trying to organise a meeting to get a joined-up strategy for the bridge longer term with Paul West and suggested GW could attend. ML added there may be some SCC money for flooding, but the solution would need to be costed up. DB requested this in the next couple of months.</p> <p>DB asked about the plan for next winter and if the problems can be reduced. AB is responsible for managing the national nature reserve on the north side of the bridge and has bid successfully for some money for works on the site this year. There may be a short-term solution around managing the water flows into the main river channel from the dyke system. DB suggested coming back in two months with a plan for that. MJ asked if there was a traffic light system or temporary lights when there was potential water on the road. DB confirmed there was. SF added at night the water is not visible and lights in the short term could avoid any major risk. ML is unsure on the practicalities of lights as advance notice is needed to set them up. ML suggested a traffic survey along the B1127 to give evidence of the number of vehicles that use the road for funding purposes. ML agreed to sort the traffic survey and suggested including someone from highways on the Board. MJ added there are numerous locations around the country where roads are covered by tidal waters and suggested permanent signs saying “road liable to flooding” to highlight the risk. ML added there are already signs there. SF added there are signs coming from Lowestoft but not from Southwold. DB suggested automatic signs that say the depth of water at Reydon crossroads and Wrentham crossroads. PO added the parish council will support in lobbying for both short- and long-term solutions. ML suggested a long-term strategy is needed. DB agreed.</p> <p>ACTION: ML to meet with Paul West and cost up potential options for Potters Bridge ACTION: AB to look into short term solutions around managing water flows ACTION: ML to arrange a traffic survey of B1127</p>
<p>Update – Southwold Harbour project and Initial Assessment</p>	<p>MF shared that since the last meeting stakeholder workshop 6 has been held where the detailed results of further modelling from the marsh sedimentation were presented and there was a detailed discussion on the requested spillway option. The assessment of the proposed spillway option including tidal modelling progressed after the workshop and a further workshop was agreed to present the spillway modelling results and draft investment plan. A final workshop is required to address the stakeholder feedback and the draft project report. The stakeholder group have requested further modelling of the narrowed channel of the lifeboat station area, so this work has been agreed and further wave and tidal modelling is progressing. Assessment of all the modelling results is ongoing to inform the comparison of management scenarios in preparation for the next stakeholder workshop on 10th June. Preparation of the project report will progress after the meeting in June and a draft report will be issued for review on 9th July. The final stakeholder meeting will be held following this review to discuss and go through all the comments in early September. The final report showing all the extensive modelling results, costing of all the options and the final investment plan will be available in September.</p> <p>DB asked if the J groyne at the bottom of the Easton Bavents cliff is a priority and if funding can be worked on for that.</p>

	<p>SB suggested MF pulls together a short report for the Board to give the options some clarity and on funding. PM could input on where that funding may come from or whether there is Flood Defence Grant in Aid (FDGiA) available. This could be a discussion for the next meeting to look at prioritisation.</p> <p>DB agreed and suggested as funding is short, clarifying what is the most fundable and what is most important.</p> <p>MF agreed to pull together a report to summarise the options and costings in terms of priorities.</p> <p>PO asked for a summary of the Harbour issues for those not in the stakeholder meetings. DB asked if the slides are available on the internet. MF agreed to check if they are on the website and share with the group.</p> <p>ML asked if there is anyone at East Suffolk Council with expertise in funding. SB confirmed this is PM. PM added he is recruiting for three funding officers. CPE have had multiple successes across Suffolk on funding for flood and coastal resilience projects. The key thing for PM is understanding what the budget is, what is most important and what is going to deliver the most benefits. At the moment there is plenty of funding available. PM is waiting to see the outputs of the report and suggested commissioning a separate funding study following that to feed into a funding strategy for the project. DB summarised there will be a report on priorities for the Southwold coast and then PM will look at the funding so at the same time the Board receive the report, they will know if the options can be funded. PM agreed and added some work will need to be done to understand how much FDGiA is available and potentially make a case for local levy. There might need to be a separate study to understand beneficiaries of the option and then potential funders can be shortlisted.</p> <p>SF asked if the funding investigation is going to look at the Harbour separately or as part of the overall Southwold to Walberswick area? DB confirmed the Harbour will be separate. PO suggested including the whole estuary when looking at the Harbour as they are interrelated. With regards to the case for seeking funding, the Blyth Estuary Partnership has already done some work to document and articulate the importance of wildlife tourism, the working harbour, leisure, and fishing to the local economy and overall environment. An agreed prioritised strategy is needed.</p> <p>ACTION: MF to pull together a report on the options, costings and priorities for the J groyne solution ACTION: AS to share link to Southwold Harbour Stakeholder Workshop slides</p>
<p>Review of the Board's aims and objectives, and stakeholder engagement</p>	<p>SB talked through the Board's terms of reference. DB and SB met recently to discuss the aims and objectives of the group. SB suggested with regards to resilience, creating resilience champions similar to what is being done in Lowestoft. DB and SB also spoke about engagement and how that could be achieved. SB asked the Board to review the stakeholders listed on the slide to see if anyone has been missed.</p> <p>SB highlighted involving and collaborating with people takes a lot of resource, so the stakeholders need to be analysed to make sure that the tools and techniques used are proportionate to the resource available. SB shared the principle to consider are what do the Board want to engage with people about, what will be the outcome of the engagement (if it is</p>

	<p>successful what will that look like), how will the Board resource or fund engagement (SB offered some of her time), how will this integrate and add value to existing engagement (such as with the Southwold Harbour Study and the Initial Assessment), and what form engagement might take (what tools will be used, how that will be evaluated and monitored, and over what period). SB added it is good to understand what people do not know and what they need to know and how and when that will be evaluated. CPE have many virtual engagement tools such as virtual visitor centres, virtual consultations, and social media. This will all feed into a communications and engagement plan that gives direction and alongside will be a work programme with some timings so that the Board can forward plan.</p> <p>DB agreed with the resilience champions idea. There is a very active virus help group in Southwold.</p> <p>SB suggested involving the Joint Emergency Planning Unity (JEPU) and the EA's flood resilience team to look at what is possible and what is already out there that could be utilised.</p> <p>PO added in Reydon work is starting again on the emergency plan. There is a big overlap between an emergency plan and a resilience plan and PO suggested pulling one together between the parish councils. PO also suggested including the full range of the tidal estuary (beyond the A12 to Blyford) as there is still a considerable potential for flooding.</p> <p>DB agreed.</p> <p>ML shared an issue with the Southwold emergency plan was that it relied on individuals and suggested the virus and emergency groups come together. ML raised concern around duplication of work and that many members of the Board are also members of the stakeholder groups listed.</p> <p>SB added that part of the engagement is to link with work that is already happening and read across existing groups such as the community team and EA flood resilience work. Regarding relying on individuals and people moving on, the work in Lowestoft with community champions is to address that. It is train the trainer so the champions will train the rest of the community who then continue to train new volunteers. SB suggested contacting Snape village to learn from their experience of resilience and emergency planning and what they have set up.</p> <p>ML suggested at SCC to hold annual resilience forums or emergencies to keep groups active.</p> <p>SB added Snape have been doing annual exercises. SB asked if ML spoke to JEPU at SCC.</p> <p>ML confirmed that it came out of SCC's scrutiny on COVID-19 that the plans were in place but had fallen apart through lack of use. It was asked what the resilience group could do to engage the communities more regularly.</p> <p>SB shared most of the work on community engagement on resilience and emergency planning is done at a district level and by the EA. Keith Fawkner-Simpson is part of the JEPU and is working with Pakefield on their emergency response. Keith has a good method of supporting communities and SB suggested Southwold could be included.</p> <p>DB suggested involving Tim O'Riordan from UEA and holding public meetings to understand the environmental threats, costs and the economy.</p> <p>SB agreed and suggested discussing with Tim about how that might work.</p> <p>ACTION: Board to review list of suggested stakeholders ACTION: SB, DB and Tim O'Riordan to discuss engaging the community</p>
Other partner updates	None.
AOB	<p>ML raised concern around the Easton Bavents end of the promenade and difficulty accessing the beach.</p> <p>DB agreed and added that is why the J groyne is a priority. The idea of the J groyne is to stabilise the beach and reduce erosion to the cliffs so that something can be done about access.</p>

	<p>MF confirmed that public access can be built into the project similarly to other schemes. PO agreed it would be useful to look at access at the same time. PO added there was a suggestion of a staircase onto the beach that got exposed when beach levels lowered. ML asked if that was long-term and if there was anything that could be done sooner. DB agreed something short-term is needed and added the problem is without a stable beach the access would become exposed.</p> <p>MF confirmed access built into the project would be long-term and asked if GW has had any discussions around the issue.</p> <p>GW confirmed only that the EA are aware of the issue and have appropriate signage. As part of the Initial Assessment enabling a new access route was raised and was a fundamental issue in the design of the J groyne type solution.</p> <p>ML added there are many wooden steps in Kessingland and other places on the coast and asked why it would not be possible here.</p> <p>GW added it is an aggressive environment and is not something the EA would necessarily do but would work with colleagues if they wanted to embark on a solution like that.</p> <p>DB added it would only be a half tide solution due to the rock groynes and asked is a concrete pathway would be possible.</p> <p>GW added the rocks move regularly and there was a concrete plinth, but it led someone to a hazard. For the moment the EA think the signage and to keep people away from it is the best solution.</p>
<p>Date of next meeting and close</p>	<p>DB suggested a meeting at the end of July. ML can come back with the proposal from highways. SB noted some of the items that MF mentioned in terms of presenting options are not going to be ready, but July is fine to discuss other items.</p> <p>MF added the draft report should be ready by July.</p> <p>PO suggested a discussion in July about Potters Bridge if there has been some progress made even if the Harbour and the shoreline will not be ready until September.</p> <p>ACTION: AS to circulate a doodle poll with dates for July and September</p>