

Southwold to Walberswick Flood and Coast Board

Minutes of meeting 22nd February 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
MH	Matt Hullis	Suffolk County Council
GM	Graeme Mateer	Suffolk County Council
JB	Josie Bassinette	Walberswick Parish Council
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

Welcome and introductions	SB shared a round of introductions.
Nominations for chair	DR requested nominations for chair of the group. DB nominated himself. SF and JB seconded.
Clarification of Board aims and objectives and geographic area	<p>SB asked the group what they would like to get out of this Board.</p> <p>DB suggested a coordinated effort towards all the issues across the area and that the agencies should be brought together.</p> <p>JB agreed.</p> <p>PO asked that Easton Bavents be included. PO added the Board need to understand what is happening in the area, what is likely to happen, and get plans in place well ahead of needing them. PO raised the issue of funding and suggested landowners will need to be engaged as they have a crucial role around the estuary.</p> <p>ML suggested the group should pull a strategy together for this part of the coastline bearing in mind climate change and understanding how the beach and other aspects are changing over time.</p> <p>MJ added what is technically feasible, environmentally acceptable, and fundable should be included as discussions progress.</p> <p>SF suggested creating a short vision statement.</p> <p>DB agreed to work with SB to pull all the views together into a vision statement.</p> <p>SB agreed and raised caution around the use of the word “protect” as there are areas of coast where work needs to be done to see how the community can adapt to what is coming and making sure those plans are good for the communities that are impacted.</p> <p>MJ agreed it is important to recognise all the wider challenges.</p> <p>PO added any adaptation policies need to engage the people living at Easton Bavents as far as possible and look after their needs in the local plan to gain a consensus on a strategy.</p>

	<p>DB asked if there is a reason why landowners have not been invited to this meeting. SB responded there is no reason and agreed that this approach worked well at Benacre and Kessingland.</p> <p>DB asked if Anne Jones and Edward Vere Nicoll could be invited to the next meeting. SB agreed.</p> <p>JB asked if in addition to the vision statement, a list of the other groups and who is participating in those could be made.</p> <p>SB added with the Kessingland group, those landowners who are principally impacted and therefore potentially contributing are involved in the board. SB suggested the same approach for this group.</p> <p>DB agreed to invite Anne Jones.</p> <p>ACTION: SB and DB to pull together a vision statement</p> <p>ACTION: SB to invite Anne Jones to the next meeting</p> <p>PO suggested the estuary should come into the scope but added there are too many landowners there to have them all engaged in the Board.</p> <p>DB suggested an estuary sub-group.</p> <p>PO agreed and suggested another option is the Blyth Estuary Partnership could be connected to this Board. PO suggested DB and SB come up with options with how to manage these issues before the next meeting.</p> <p>DB agreed.</p> <p>ACTION: DB and SB to come up with options to engage landowners</p> <p>MH added it would be helpful to clarify from a which statutory body is responsible for what and suggested creating a clear document so that the Board can understand what it trying to be achieved, who needs to be involved to achieve that and where the statutory responsibilities lie.</p>
<p>Update from the Environment Agency</p>	<p>GW shared that the machine at Potters Bridge was stolen last Wednesday. It had a tracker on it and has been found on the south coast. The Environment Agency (EA) are waiting to hear back from the police as to whether they will get it back.</p> <p>DB asked if the outfall is open or closed at the moment.</p> <p>GW added judging by the flooding it is probably closed but he has not been out on site.</p> <p>DB asked why the local farmer has not been contracted to keep it clear.</p> <p>GW added it is not possible for the EA to contract the farmer to do the work on their behalf.</p> <p>ML shared that Suffolk County Council (SCC) will be looking at a longer-term strategy for the B1127 as it is a key route north. There is a lot of capital funding that will be needed and the cost of raising that road even by a foot is considerable.</p> <p>DB requested a ballpark figure of the cost and how feasible it is to get the funding.</p> <p>ML agreed something needs to be done to get a cost on it to get it in the budget.</p> <p>RS added an embankment was planned for Potters Bridge and asked if piling would be a more cost-effective solution like what was done on the A12.</p> <p>MJ added piling was looked at as part of that project but was not sure if there was a challenge around the feasibility of the piling. There was a publicly stated recognition that the embankment might not work because of the poor ground conditions and the length of piles was at the extreme end of what can be bought.</p> <p>DB added highways will look at these options again when they cost the work. DB suggested putting some automated warning signs up in the meantime because people are turning off at Wrentham and not realising how deep it is. Those signs could also go on the internet, so people knew what the depth was.</p>

	<p>SF suggested traffic lights as a short-term fix because the flooding tends to be on one side of the road and people are going onto the other side of the road, which is dangerous.</p> <p>GM added he is happy to raise this with highways maintenance colleagues to look at what could be done from a transport perspective in the area and identify some potential costs.</p> <p>ACTION: GM to speak to highways colleagues about transport options</p>
<p>Update – Southwold Harbour project</p>	<p>MF shared that the Southwold Harbour Study started in 2019 to develop an investment plan for continued use of the harbour and understand the physical behaviour of the harbour and estuary. The consultants were Royal HaskoningDHV and the stakeholder group consisted of harbour users, businesses, and homeowners. All the data and information collected for the investment plan is available on the GIS website https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/688b9522139c4e38b4d19332aa1451ba. The next workshop is tomorrow to review the options and modelling outputs. The final investment plan will be available when the project closes in May 2021.</p>
<p>Update – Southwold Initial Assessment</p>	<p>MF shared the initial assessment was a joint study between the EA and East Suffolk Council (ESC) carried out by consultants, Jacobs. It reviewed the historical information, confirmed the need for a project, looked at and costed different options. The frontage was grouped into three sections: Easton Marshes (EA), Easton Marshes north of pier (ESC), town frontage south of pier (ESC). The report and appendices are available on the Coastal Partnership East (CPE) website at https://www.coasteast.org.uk/projects</p> <p>MF added the first preferred option, Combination Option 3, included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design and surveys • Installing two intermediate groynes in bays T6-7 and T7-8 including beach nourishment (south of pier) • Installing rock T-heads to R2-4 including nourishment of bays R1-4 (ESC north of pier) • Installing rock revetment at toe R4-8, leaving existing rock groynes intact (EA northern end) • Constructing J groyne and beach access structure at R8 <p>The total cost would be £6.7m and attracted 17% on the partnership funding calculator score. This equates to ~£1.1m leaving a funding gap of £5.7m.</p> <p>MF shared the second preferred option, Combination Option 8, included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design and surveys • Installing rock revetment at toe R4-8, leaving existing rock groynes intact (EA – Easton Marshes) • Constructing J groyne and beach access structure at R8 <p>Then after 15 years:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Installing 2 intermediate groynes in bays T6-7 and T7-8 including beach nourishment (ESC – South of Pier) • Installing rock T-heads to R2-4 including nourishment of bays R1-4 (ESC – north of pier) <p>The total cost would be £4.1m and attracted 27% on the partnership funding calculator score. This equates to ~£1.1m leaving a funding gap of £3m.</p>
<p>Funding overview</p>	<p>PM shared that traditional funding sources for this sort of project are Flood Defence Grant in Aid (FDGiA) from Defra via the EA, local flood levy raised from council tax, and local authorities. FDGiA and local flood levy is mainly focused on properties protected but does include environmental and economic benefits as well.</p>

	<p>PM added for most projects a preferred option is developed and then benefits and beneficiaries are looked at. This information is then put through the partnership funding calculator and gives a score. It says how much funding will come from government and how much will need to be raised elsewhere. Different organisations are eligible for different pots of funding and there are increasing numbers of partnerships of different organisations coming together and accessing funding from multiple places based on their type of organisation.</p> <p>PM shared that challenges for this project include that there are not many houses so FDGiA will be low and it is quite expensive to do work on the coast. PM added there needs to be an understanding of what the funding need will be from other sources and how benefits can be maximised. Wider benefits could include making the beach better, incorporating other assets (beach huts) or projects (better accessibility). The more benefits delivered the more fundable the project is and the more sources of funding it is eligible for. Damages avoided is also important to look at. If protecting businesses, the Local Enterprise Partnership could be looked at.</p> <p>PM added that the Board need to understand the preferred option and what the approximate funding target is. Then they need to understand the plan, strategy, what the aspirations are (tourism plans, business plans, regional strategies), how the project will support that and wider benefits. Then the benefits and beneficiaries analysis can be done. Once all of this is understood then the Board can look at what sorts of funders are interested in those sorts of benefits and then the funding strategy can be created.</p>
<p>Questions and discussion</p>	<p>ML shared that a lot of the plans are in place already, for example, Southwold Town Council's strategic aims and priorities. Southwold has a designated Coastal Community Team, and the economic plan covers a lot of the points PM raised. ML asked if there will be another round of coastal community funding.</p> <p>PM confirmed CPE are expecting it to come around again and it is usually announced towards the end of the year.</p> <p>ML added there is a windfarm proposal just off the coast and asked if that could be a source of funding.</p> <p>PM added ESC and SCC have an important role in having conversations with the operators to understand what opportunities there are for securing funding. These have not yet been successful other than the existing grant pots created.</p> <p>DB asked the group what they would like to achieve, particularly in relation to Easton Bavents. PO suggested if possible, to maintain the cliffs at Easton Bavents and therefore protect the marshes between Southwold and Reydon. If that is not possible the Board need to look at the cost of a fallback defence to protect the properties. PO added the Board need to know what is likely to happen and what could happen to adapt, change, or prevent it.</p> <p>PP added the Shoreline Management Plan (SMP) for the section of coast running north of the amusement pier does have a policy for holding the defence line but talks about the possibility of there being a change to managed realignment. The current policy promotes maintaining defences that would prevent flooding of the Buss Creek area for as long as is practically possible, but the funding required to deliver that is challenging to find. The SMP does address the risk of the existing defence being outflanked to the north but there are challenges around funding.</p> <p>GW added when the line was drawn, Easton Bavents cliffs were further out to sea, so a promontory is forming at the northern end of Southwold. The original wall was readdressed and that is why the very northern part has a slight curve to it to start looking at the rollback of Easton Bavents cliffs.</p>

	<p>PO suggested firming up the hold the line options and the J groyne and being clear what the implications are for the beach so that people can prepare for any changes. PO added it should be one of the Board’s priorities to try and get funding.</p> <p>RS added 20 years ago the furthest groyne north of the pier was 80m long and higher than the rock groyne now and there was a lot of sand between the groynes. That has all disappeared and RS asked if the groynes could be raised by 1m and lengthened to 80m to protect the promontory and build up sand in front of the groyne to the north, which would protect the cliffs from erosion.</p> <p>GW added that groynes are never 100% efficient as they are always open to the sea and therefore extending a groyne would be incredibly expensive and only give a small benefit for a limited period. Coastal erosion is an ongoing process and engineers try to defer that for a limited period.</p> <p>RS asked why the groyne was shortened as when that was done the beaches were lost. GW was not around at the time of that scheme but added it would probably be for cost effectiveness and the efficiency of the existing groynes.</p> <p>DB noted the proposal for a J groyne with a rough cost of £4m and asked if there is a feasible way to raise the funding.</p> <p>PM added it depends on what the benefits of the scheme are as funders are always looking for something new or extra to be delivered and that can be challenging. PM is confident £4m can be raised, the challenge is how long it will take. A strong partnership between local authorities, the community and businesses will help raise that money in the shortest time.</p> <p>JB added this group must have knowledge of the project’s wider impacts for example on the Blyth estuary and Walberswick coast. JB suggested having a narrative for when the funding proposal is written.</p> <p>DB agreed.</p> <p>ML added coastal protection should not be a local issue and tourism is a national issue and local MPs need to be on board with the project. People like coming to the coast from across the country and it is a national issue that should be funded from central government.</p> <p>SB added funding from government is difficult to obtain with an erodible frontage. When a property floods it floods immediately or within a certain timeframe, so it is easier to count the benefits of that. With an erodible frontage it will depend how far back and when the property is going to come at risk as to when the benefits can be counted. The Partnership Funding Calculator has just gone through a review and is unlikely to be reviewed again. CPE’s Head of Partnership, Karen Thomas is in discussions at a national level to look at where a local authority’s funding comes from. There is a lot of work to be done on an eroding coast in terms of how the funding is apportioned as opposed to for a floodable coast but with this project there is a mix of floodable and erodible frontages. SB noted JB’s point about putting together a case that is broader and agreed the narrative can be compelling. SB added there is the counter argument that the bid is so large it becomes not fundable so the issues could be broken down into compartments.</p> <p>PM added that national funders ask how the nation benefits from the town being resilient. The response can include impacts to the economy, tourism, and people do not just visit from the next village they visit from across the country.</p>
Other partner updates	None.
AOB	<p>ML asked if being in a pre-election period changes anything.</p> <p>SB added it does not normally as this is a recommendations board rather than a decision-making board, but she will check with electoral services.</p>

	<p>ACTION: SB to check with electoral services if this Board is impacted by the pre-election period</p> <p>JB suggested as a future agenda item the Board could think about how to collect data on benefits and beneficiaries, such as with the Bailey Bridge taking over 100,000 walkers a year which helped SCC be able to fund it. There could be a programme running constantly on this to help build the narrative.</p> <p>DB agreed and asked SB if some of the ESC Economic Development team should be involved. SB agreed to talk to PM offline to get more of his suggestions.</p> <p>ACTION: SB to speak to PM about other people to involve</p> <p>PO agreed a joined-up strategy is needed with some costs and break it down into deliverable projects to make funding easier. PO suggested the Board need to know how the harbour will be protected and how Easton Barents will be protected. PO agreed with lobbying nationally, but the narrative will need to be in place first. PO suggested PM or the appropriate person have a conversation with Scottish Power Renewables about using the harbour for their supply vessels if the harbour is maintained.</p>
Date of next meeting and close	<p>DB suggested the next meeting to be in two months and asked for an appointment to be sent round for zoom.</p> <p>The group agreed.</p> <p>ACTION: AS and SB to organise the next meeting</p>