

Southwold to Walberswick Flood and Coast Board

Minutes of meeting 16th September 2021

2pm-4pm

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
MF	Madeline Fallon	Coastal Partnership East
PM	Paul Mackie	Coastal Partnership East
AS	Alysha Stockman	Coastal Partnership East
GW	Gary Watson	Environment Agency
SF	Simon Flunder	Southwold and Reydon Society
PO	Philip O'Hear	Reydon Parish Council
AB	Adam Burrows	Natural England
JT	Jamie Thompson	SHRUBA
AJ	Anne Jones	Landowner
PJ	Phil Jones	Landowner

Apologies:

PP	Paul Patterson	Coastal Partnership East
SK	Sam Kench	Natural England
JB	Josie Bassinette	Walberswick Parish Council
MJ	Mark Johnson	Environment Agency
RS	Richard Steward	Blyth Estuary Partnership
KB	Kerry Blair	East Suffolk Council
MH	Matt Hullis	Suffolk County Council
GM	Graeme Mateer	Suffolk County Council

<p>Welcome and introductions, minutes and actions from last meeting</p>	<p>The Chair shared a round of introductions.</p> <p>The Board approved the minutes of the previous meeting.</p>
<p>Update from the Environment Agency</p>	<p>GW shared the two projects further up the estuary and the work at the sluice by the caravan park are still ongoing. The Environment Agency (EA) have started another project working with the Walberswick Common landowners to look at various options for the Dunwich River outfall sluice and the bridge that goes over the top of that.</p> <p>The Chair asked if GW was aware the Easton Broad outfall had got blocked and been cleared by hand.</p> <p>GW confirmed he was aware.</p>
<p>Update – Southwold Harbour Project</p>	<p>MF shared the last workshop with the steering group was on 10th June where the modelling of the spillway and narrowed channel options were discussed. The group recapped the project's aims and went through the comparison of the initial results and costings of the options. MF met with Royal HaskoningDHV (RHDHV) in July to discuss the structure and the format of the report. RHDHV have been writing the draft report over the summer which should be ready within the next two weeks.</p> <p>The Chair asked what the process is now.</p>

<p>Update – Southwold Harbour Committee</p>	<p>MF added when the draft report is received it will be shared with the stakeholder group and Harbour Management Committee to review it technically before it is a final report.</p> <p>PO added the report was useful and seemed to confirm what the Blyth Estuary Partnership have found about raising the estuary walls. PO noted that funding will be a challenge. PO asked if MF is expecting much to change between the draft and final report.</p> <p>MF added the recommendations, options and costings in the report will be the same, but it is open to comment.</p> <p>DR shared the second meeting of the Harbour Management Committee is next week where they will look at the setup of the advisory group, the finance report from the harbour area, and the draft Southwold Harbour Investment Plan report.</p>
<p>Update – Southwold Emergency Plan</p>	<p>The Chair shared the emergency plan was circulated with the papers and asked the Board to read it and share their comments.</p> <p>ACTION: Board to share any comments on the emergency plan</p>
<p>Potters Bridge update</p>	<p>ML shared Cllr Paul West is now Cabinet Member for Ipswich, Operational Highways and Flooding and Cllr Richard Smith is Cabinet Member for Economic Development, Transport Strategy and Waste. ML has contacted Cllr West who has confirmed this is not an operational issue. ML has received a response from Suffolk County Council (SCC) flooding team saying that highways drainage pipes can only get rid of water when they have a clear outfall and improvements of additional infrastructure such as bridging over a longer section or raising the road levels might help. This issue is something Strategic Highways would deal with.</p> <p>With regards to costs for warning signs, Graeme Mateer, Head of Transport Strategy, told ML it recognises while additional safety signage or safety measures, for example, advance warning signs would be lower cost and could be provided, it is unlikely to be sufficient for managing local expectations. Expectation that the road should be kept open during long periods of flooding is their overriding concern and it is not considered that signage would be an effective alternative measure but may be required if it is not possible to avoid frequent closures of a road due to flooding.</p> <p>ML suggested the issue is how often the road is closed due to flooding. Last week ML noticed some water creeping over the road and there has not been any rain for 2-3 weeks, so it is to do with the outfall. ML asked if Cllr Smith should be on the Board as he represents Walberswick and as a Cabinet Member.</p> <p>The Board agreed.</p> <p>ML asked if there is an option to try and keep the outfall open.</p> <p>GW added the EA are currently not able to access the site to clear the outfall.</p> <p>PO asked if there is anything the Board can do to persuade the landowners to let the EA access the outfall and if the Board could write to them to agree access.</p> <p>GW added the landowners are on this call and the EA are in discussions with them.</p> <p>SB added the Board do not have the powers to enforce anything but could set out a case on behalf of and including the members of the Board in the letter.</p> <p>AJ shared that Easton Bavents Ltd have cooperated for years with clearing the outfall but are now frustrated that they are expected to watch everything they own wash away into the sea with no help or support from the local authority. The outfall is the only thing they feel will make anybody take notice of them. AJ added they would like some support, conversation, and cooperation and to begin a dialogue about Easton Bavents.</p>

	<p>The Chair offered to meet AJ and PJ and start a dialogue.</p> <p>SB added Coastal Partnership East (CPE) are the Coastal Management Team for East Suffolk Council, Great Yarmouth Borough Council, and North Norfolk District Council. Bill Parker was Head of the Partnership and retired in June 2019. Karen Thomas is now Head of the Partnership. SB's understanding is that AJ has had some conversations with GW who has said for AJ to contact CPE. AJ has had emails with MF around potential options and Philip Ridley has sent AJ an email outlining exactly what needed to be done. CPE need to see a planning application to be able to start a dialogue and comment on designs and methodology alongside what the current policy looks like. The EA and Natural England (NE) will need to look at it too. AJ added Easton Bavents Ltd have spent a year trying to get a planning application for something they were told would be straightforward. It was expensive and they feel that they have had little support until recently from the parish. They would not like to go through that again.</p> <p>SB noted there are other communities in similar situations. The landowners are going to be doing this work and it is not the Council who will be taking that forward.</p> <p>DR added during the Pathfinder Project AJ came to meetings. Bill Parker was working for the Council and listened to AJ and spent a lot of his time trying to find solutions to some of the issues. Planners have to follow the national rules and local rules. There may be, through CPE, ways of helping but for a planning application, the planners have to judge any application on its merits and go through the democratic process. The planners cannot write the application.</p> <p>PO noted AJ referred to the parish and added the Parish Council was content with the report that went to the Planning Committee about the barn conversions, which were exempted from their Principal Residents Policy. The Parish Council did not make any representations against that. The Parish Council have not yet discussed the current application but are likely to agree the portable holiday lets proposed. The Parish Council wants to support the people at Easton Bavents and also wants to see the water drained off Potters Bridge and the reed bed water levels kept at the right level as they think that habitat and road is important.</p> <p>AJ agreed Bill Parker did help them but since he has left they have not heard anything. The only reason they are being awkward over the road is because they feel it is the only way anyone will listen to them.</p> <p>SB asked AJ to send her an email detailing the help needed.</p> <p>ACTION: SB to formally invite Cllr Smith to the Board</p> <p>ACTION: AJ to email SB detailing what help is needed</p>
Initial community engagement	<p>SB noted the Chair would like to involve Tim O'Riordan from University of East Anglia in the engagement who will not be available until later in the year due to personal circumstances. SB suggested creating a virtual visitor centre to share information, reports and allow the community to ask questions and feedback. This can be accessed by anyone at any time and can be left open for several months. SB also suggested producing an e-newsletter. SB has managed to find funding for these options and asked if the Board would like to go ahead.</p> <p>The Chair asked if the harbour study could that be incorporated.</p> <p>SB confirmed this and added any reports or studies that the Board are happy to share can be included. The Chair can also record a welcome message.</p> <p>The Chair asked about people who do not use IT.</p> <p>SB added that at Pakefield CPE are producing poster like boards to display and the newsletter will cover some of those people. When people are comfortable an in-person drop-in could be run. CPE will be testing this in Pakefield in October and SB can report back on how that goes. The Chair agreed.</p> <p>PO agreed with the suggestions as there are big decisions to be made and money to be raised and the community need to be behind them.</p> <p>ACTION: SB to report back to the Board how the drop-in at Pakefield went</p>

<p>Funding Overview</p>	<p>PM and his team are waiting for some outputs before they can draft a funding strategy. The harbour report will give an idea of the wider economic data that might need to be collected and the scale of the funding challenges. PM added there will probably be another study to understand the wider economic benefits and risks to the road coming into Southwold and the wider impacts to tourism and businesses. PM needs to understand who benefits and what the benefits are and added it is key for works to be interconnected to build a narrative and make the most of any funding bids.</p> <p>The Chair asked if one of the outputs is the costs and benefits of the J groyne.</p> <p>PM confirmed that is one of the outputs but the harbour report is key as well. PM needs to understand the intention, timescales and funding challenge for the north. That can be done through discussion rather than waiting for an output.</p> <p>The Chair asked if that discussion can be had.</p> <p>PM asked if CPE are at a stage where they can talk about options, challenges, targets, and timescales for the northern end.</p> <p>MF added there is the initial assessment of options and costings so the next step is a possible more detailed options appraisal.</p> <p>PO suggested making the next agenda putting issues in an order. PO's understanding is the groyne at the north is an urgent priority and the replacement of the south pier with a rock groyne also looks urgent. PO suggested the next issue would be starting work on the embankments up the Blyth or Potters Bridge.</p> <p>The Chair added the Board also need to understand what is fundable.</p> <p>JT asked if that amount of money can be raised.</p> <p>PM added some of the options are unfundable in the traditional sense. The approach to flood and coastal management is focussed on the number of properties but there is funding for other benefits. Looking at wider economic benefits such as disruption to the road, businesses, impact on the attractiveness of Southwold, funding is more feasible. The Board need to start building the evidence base now so they are ready to put a bid in when a funding source emerges.</p> <p>SF asked if compensation for coastal communities is something to tap into with the development of wind farms and Sizewell C. SF added the Alde and Ore have set up a charity and asked if that is an option.</p> <p>PM added they are good sources of modest but symbolic contributions to a funding campaign. The challenge is time and resources, but CPE have not had much success in conversations with offshore energy providers as they want the commercial rationale is for contributing. Both will be part of the funding strategy as it says something important about support for the project and that can catch the attention of government.</p> <p>PO suggested the Harbour Management Committee and advisory group consider setting up a charity. PO added if Southwold Harbour is maintained properly, it could be the base for smaller servicing boats for the wind farm and gives an economic argument to contribute to the harbour.</p> <p>DR did not think the Harbour Management Committee should set up a charity or Community Interest Company (CIC) as they will have other challenges and can raise money by developing the harbour and its assets. DR agreed with the charity idea.</p> <p>ML added Southwold already has an established coastal community team and asked if there is another round of the coastal community fund.</p> <p>PM added there has not been an announcement on another round of that funding. PM shared CICs and trusts are great mechanisms as a repository for fundraising and are eligible for grants that the Councils are not.</p>

	<p>The Chair agreed to explore ideas for the charity.</p> <p>SB offered to introduce PO to other communities that have set up a CIC or charity. The Chair agreed it would be helpful.</p> <p>PO suggested including the Blyth Estuary Partnership in this discussion as they may be the vehicle to set up a charity to cover the issues in the estuary and harbour.</p> <p>ACTION: Chair to explore setting up a charity</p>
Other partner updates	No updates.
AOB	<p>ML has received an email from a resident saying that the footpath in South Cove on the B1127 around the edge of the broad has been closed since 2014. ML has contacted the Rights of Way team and understands there is an issue between the EA, NE, and Benacre Estate.</p> <p>AB is not aware of the standoff and added the footpath has been flooded for a number of years. To move it up the valley would be a statutory issue.</p> <p>ML agreed the issue was probably that the footpath has been flooded, not used, and needed to be moved. ML suggested sending details to NE and EA so they can resolve the issue.</p> <p>The Chair asked for an update on the coastal path at the next meeting.</p> <p>ML suggested he ask someone from the Rights of Way team to come to the next meeting.</p> <p>ACTION: ML to share details of the footpath issue with EA and NE</p> <p>ACTION: ML to ask someone from the Rights of Way team to attend the next meeting</p>
Date of next meeting and close	ACTION: AS to send doodle poll for next meeting on Zoom