

Southwold to Walberswick Flood and Coast Board

Minutes of meeting 17th January 2022

10am-12pm

Attendees:

DB	Cllr David Beavan	East Suffolk Council
DR	Cllr David Ritchie (Chair)	East Suffolk Council
ML	Cllr Michael Ladd	Suffolk County Council
KT	Karen Thomas	Coastal Partnership East
SB	Sharon Bleese	Coastal Partnership East
MF	Madeline Fallon	Coastal Partnership East
PM	Paul Mackie	Coastal Partnership East
TY	Thomas Yeung	Coastal Partnership East
SR	Sharon Richardson	Coastal Partnership East
JC	James Cochrane	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	SHRBUA
AJ	Anne Jones	Landowner
PJ	Phil Jones	Landowner
JB	Josie Bassinette	Walberswick Parish Council
IB	Ian Bradbury	Southwold Town Council
RS	Richard Steward	Blyth Estuary Partnership

Apologies:

PP	Paul Patterson	Coastal Partnership East
SK	Sam Kench	Natural England
MJ	Mark Johnson	Environment Agency
KB	Kerry Blair	East Suffolk Council
MH	Matt Hullis	Suffolk County Council
GM	Graeme Mateer	Suffolk County Council

Welcome, introductions, minutes and actions from last meeting	<p>The Chair shared a round of introductions.</p> <p>The Board approved the minutes of the previous meeting.</p>
Blue Flag coming back	<p>DB understands the blue flag will come back and part of this will need a beach users committee. DB has been in touch with the beach hut owners who are keen to participate. SF asked when this will happen.</p> <p>DB suggested the all clear should come in the next couple of months and he has raised this with ESC officers to prepare. DB thinks this will be in place by the summer.</p> <p>ACTION: DB to chase ESC</p>
Update from the Environment Agency	<p>GW shared the works on Wolsey Bridge are complete, the scheme at Buss Creek is complete, there have been some issues with damage to the Shepherds Lane area and EA staff are out on site meeting local residents and councillors this week to look at the issues.</p>

	<p>The EA have contracted Jacobs to do a design for the sluice issues near the caravan park. As a contingency for this winter, the EA have quotes to get the sluice cleared if the problem emerges again.</p> <p>The EA have been engaging with Walberswick Common landowners on options for Dunwich river sluice where the bridge goes over the sluice.</p> <p>RS asked for detail on the options for the Dunwich sluice. GW added the EA are looking at water level control for Dunwich levels and traffic management. This could be a single separate water level control structure and a bridge or a combined structure and a bridge.</p> <p>PO noted concern around keeping the outfall clear at the bottom of the river on the beach from Potters Bridge and asked, subject to access to the land, if the EA will clear the outfall for the foreseeable future. GW confirmed this depending on the definition of foreseeable future as he cannot commit future generations. PO suggested 4-5 years to allow a longer term solution to be developed for the road and reed beds. GW is reasonably confident that for 5-10 years the status quo will continue. There are questions regarding the sustainability of the European features of the designated site because it is frequently being damaged so the EA would be looking to relocate those legal features from that site. Everything seaward of the bridge has been relocated from a legal perspective and to relocate everything landward is a 5-10year process. That means the legal duties would be deferred to somewhere else, it would still be a SSSI and have to be managed but could be done more flexibly. PO suggested it could be more cost effective for the farmer to look after the outfall.</p>
<p>Southwold Harbour Study update</p>	<p>MF shared that the working draft copy of the report was received from RHDHV just before Christmas. MF met with RHDHV last week and the signed off draft copy should be sent to MF this week. When received it will be sent to the Harbour Management Committee and Steering Group for review and ENBE (who carried out the original study and scope for the harbour studies in 2018) as an independent technical reviewer. Once reviewed and feedback addressed the final copy can be issued. DB asked if there will be another meeting to look at the final draft. MF confirmed there will be.</p> <p>RS asked when the report will be shared. MF added it will be in the next couple of weeks.</p> <p>DR asked if the Harbour Management Committee will receive it. MF confirmed they will.</p>
<p>Potters Bridge update</p>	<p>ML shared that as soon as the outfall was cleared and the water subsided, Highways were ready to do the repair work and the road opened on 23rd December. They did a lot of inspection work and concluded the structure of bridge had not been damaged by constantly being under water. ML has spoken to the Cabinet Member and the Leader at SCC. Cllr Richard Smith is the Walberswick County Councillor and Strategic Highways Cabinet Member and his officers are working on options, which cost £8-10k. ML will fund this from his highways budget.</p>

PJ asked the Board to stop suggesting that the farmer dig out the outfall as his role is one of a tenant farmer, so he is allowed to farm the land but not excavate or dig. PJ asked the Board to refer to AJ and PJ as directors.

GW added he has not suggested the farmer should clear the outfall and it is not something the EA has been involved in.

DB asked if PJ and AJ would be prepared to keep the outfall clear.

PJ would be prepared to discuss.

PJ added the EA was offered access to the land before Christmas to clear the outfall. PJ and AJ need to make that more formal and would like to offer the EA a licence which allows this to happen under a defined set of terms.

GW added the EA legal advisors say they do not need a licence but suggested PJ write to the EA and he will forward to the legal team to respond.

PJ added there are certain circumstances where a licence is required and it is an opportunity to widen the scope.

PO added the views of all the parishes affected by the closure of the road are that they would like to see these issues resolved in an affordable, sustainable and manageable way. The communities would like these issues resolved on a 5-10 year basis.

SF asked for an update on electronic signage.

ML added SCC is happy to part fund but do like community support, which is best shown by money.

PO added Reydon are identifying £1-2k of CIL money towards the cost of the signage and are hoping Southwold Town Council will do the same.

DB added the most important part of the signs is the depth indicator which can go on the internet. Water level control collars have been removed from the outfall at the beach so the water level in the reed beds seaward of Potters Bridge are extremely low. AB is happy with them at the moment but collars will probably have to go back on for the summer to maintain levels.

IB added Southwold Town Council have always been interested in using its CIL money for a situation like this.

ML shared this issue has two elements which are the immediate impact and the longer term strategy, which is in place now. ML asked if the bridge is not going to flood, why spend the local highways budget on it.

GW had a good meeting with the Highways engineers and have agreed to work forward on timescales. GW added no more floods is not a guarantee from the EA as the road is susceptible to storm surges and heavy rainfall events.

DB added there is sea level rise and this road is below sea level so a feasibility study is needed.

SF agreed.

ML agreed to continue with the feasibility study.

AJ raised that the concerns of Easton Bavents Ltd have not been taken into consideration.

PO added Reydon Parish Council have corresponded with AJ on a number of issues in a constructive way. If there are other concerns AJ and PJ want to raise they can attend the public forum or ask for it to be raised at the Parish Council.

AJ agreed to go through that route and added it would be nice to be involved in discussions with Therese Coffey.

PO added that meeting was requested by Southwold and Reydon Society and had no intention of cutting AJ and PJ as DB was already engaging with them.

	<p>KT added that CPE recognise the significance of the erosion that occurs along that frontage and there is a way forward in place with monthly discussions about the plans for the business and landholdings.</p>
<p>Public engagement</p>	<p>SR explained to the Board what a virtual room is and that it can be used to display information boards, show short films and presentations, capture information via a feedback station, and to view and download documents. This is a useful tool to reach the wider community and it can be easily updated as things change.</p> <p>SB and DB have discussed how to move the engagement forward and getting information out to the public. The virtual room will enable to Board to share information about the Southwold Harbour Study or Potters Bridge for example. This Board does not have a budget but SB has been able to find some funding within the current pathfinder budget to build this.</p> <p>SB added Tim O’Riordan is an advocate for communities building their own structure of what goes on in their area and moving that forward. Tim is offering time free of charge to talk to the community about what can be done in Southwold as a broader piece. This discussion is for the Board to think about what they would like to include and plan Tim’s visit.</p> <p>DB asked about the sequence of Tim’s visit and the virtual room.</p> <p>SB suggested playing it by ear depending on how things are and that one could concurrently launch ahead of the other.</p> <p>PO added the advisory group are being required to be the link between the Harbour Management Committee and the wider community. If there is a physical meeting with Tim PO suggested opening that to members of the advisory group. Southwold and Reydon Society and other organisations have mailing lists and Facebook pages to share the virtual room with. PO suggested including a summary of the harbour study as 400 pages is too much. PO also suggested ranking items in an order with information, for example: north groyne, raising banks of estuary, spillways, harbour road, mouth of harbour etc.</p> <p>SB agreed the ranking would enable people to have their own say.</p> <p>PO suggested getting the two local primary schools engaged with the virtual room and the surrounding secondary schools such as Sir John Leman, Bungay High School, SET Beccles.</p> <p>SB suggested engaging second homeowners and asked the Board to email any further thoughts or ideas.</p>
<p>Funding update – Southwold north</p>	<p>PM’s team are focussed on northern end and the potential works that may take place there. PM’s team are working to understand funding rationale for the northern end to try and gather all the information and data that has been produced and start to develop a funding strategy ahead of options being crystallised. There is a data gap around understanding what the wider impacts are to Southwold and the surrounding area of things not happening at the northern end and investment not being delivered in time. This includes the wider benefits such as the aspirations for economic development and impacts to the economy if flooding took place. A piece of work will need to be commissioned to look at wider benefits.</p> <p>DB asked if there is any way the Board can help locally in providing data.</p> <p>PM added the best thing for a funding strategy is to have a group of stakeholders in support and advocating for the project.</p> <p>DR noted in north Southwold there is a border between EA and ESC responsibility and asked if the EA is looking at this work as a key partner.</p> <p>PM agreed the EA is fundamental, but all stakeholders need to work together.</p>

	<p>PO hopes the initiative Southwold and Reydon Society took to try and get all the parishes affected by Potters Bridge to chip in might lead to a wider sense of partnership between those councils.</p>
<p>Other partner updates</p>	<p>AB shared there has been an increase in fast boats in the Blyth, which is having an erosion effect particularly on the narrow part of the channel upstream of the harbour. DB agreed there is a problem with jet skis and speed boats there and suggested ESC as habour authority need to issue licences or ban the activity. AB agreed some form of regulation is needed. DR added this has been a problem nationally and it has been discussed at the Local Government Association Coastal Special Interest Group (LGA Coastal SIG). SB is lead officer for the LGA Coastal SIG Beach & Water Safety Group. The Department for Transport and Maritime Coastguard Agency have put arguments to government for legislation and registration of jet skis. There is a minor bill raised by one of the MPs going through. The LGA Coastal SIG are intending to take it to the All Party Parliamentary Group to discuss and support legislation for Personal Watercraft (PWCs) as it is important to recognise the need for registration. There are broader implications for personal safety as well as impacts to the coast. DR asked SB to put a note into the Harbour Management Committee. SB agreed. JT added this has been raised in SHRBUA meetings and the comments about whether sailing beyond the Bailey Bridge will stop will be considered.</p> <p>PO was alerted to an incident where a family with some dogs had walked from Covehithe to Southwold and were trying to climb up the concrete blocks to get on to the river wall, which were very slippery. They did get up safely but it was dangerous. PO added there are notices in Southwold saying no access to the beach north of here but they are not very big. PO has not been to Covehithe since the incident but does not think there are notices there. PO suggested warning signage at Covehithe, possibly the bridge across the outfall from Potters Bridge and bigger warnings at Southwold with details of the coast path route. SB added Covehithe falls under Edward Vere Nicoll, Benacre Estates and SB would be willing to talk to him to see if there is something he would be willing to do. SB can talk to Annette Robinson, Rights of Way officer at SCC to see if there is something they can do where the paths are and if the signage is theirs. AB added where NE take the national nature reserve from Benacre Estates he can put some signs up this afternoon saying that it is not passable. AB agreed to talk to Annette to address the southern end and NE northern end. SB added CPE can use social media to advise people of what is practical and possible. AJ agreed that there is only access along the beach when the tide is very low and previously suggested a beach ramp access to DB. AJ would be happy to cooperate on something as the alternative is a long way round. PO added Reydon PC would be willing to contribute to an access ramp. KT added CPE are happy to pick this up in discussions they are having with AJ and PJ.</p> <p>ACTION: SB to prepare a note for the Harbour Management Committee on PWC registration and legislation ACTION: SB to speak to Edward Vere Nicoll about signage at Covehithe ACTION: AB to put up warning signage on NE land and speak to Annette Robinson about signage ACTION: SR/SB to share access issues on CPE social media</p>

Date of next meeting and close	DB suggested next meeting before starting the engagement. Board agreed. ACTION: AS to circulate a doodle poll for the next meeting
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