

Southwold to Walberswick Flood and Coast Board

Minutes of meeting 15th June 2023 2pm-3pm

Attendees:

DB	Cllr David Beavan (Chair)	East Suffolk Council
KY	Cllr Kay Yule	East Suffolk Council
ML	Cllr Michael Ladd	Suffolk County Council
SB	Sharon Bleese	Coastal Partnership East
MF	Madeline Fallon	Coastal Partnership East
SR	Sharon Richardson	Coastal Partnership East
AS	Alysha Stockman	Coastal Partnership East
VG	Vanessa Gouldsmith	Natural England
ABu	Adam Burrows	Natural England
PO	Philip O’Hear	Reydon Parish Council
JT	Jamie Thompson	SHRBUA
ABl	Andrew Blois	Landowner
RS	Richard Steward	Blyth Estuary Partnership
SF	Simon Flunder	Southwold and Reydon Society
AJ	Anne Jones	Landowner
PJ	Phil Jones	Landowner

Apologies:

KB	Kerry Blair	East Suffolk Council
KT	Karen Thomas	Coastal Partnership East
JF	Jon-Paul Farthing	Coastal Partnership East
CKR	Charles Krolik-Root	Coastal Partnership East
CF	Chris Finbow	Coastal Partnership East
PP	Paul Patterson	Coastal Partnership East
JC	James Cochrane	Coastal Partnership East
IB	Ian Bradbury	Southwold Town Council
JB	Josie Bassinette	Walberswick Parish Council
MJ	Mark Johnson	Environment Agency
GW	Gary Watson	Environment Agency
MH	Matt Hullis	Suffolk County Council
GM	Graeme Mateer	Suffolk County Council

Welcome and introductions	SB shared a round of introductions. The Board approved the minutes of the last meeting.
Election of Chair	SB shared that DB has been nominated for Chair. There were no other nominations. KY proposed DB as Chair and RS seconded. DB was elected as Chair.
Southwold Strategy	SB shared that one of the Resilient Coasts (RC) pilot sites is Southwold and during the hiatus the RC project team have been looking at possibilities for the pilot sites. Southwold is a complex frontage with a number of different risks, shared ownership, and management of the frontage and risks predominantly sit between the local authority and Environment Agency (EA). The Board would need to work in partnership with multiple stakeholders, the community, and businesses. The evidence from the Harbour studies, estuary plan, and the responses from the December consultation provide a view of what

	<p>people value and what they see as the greatest priorities on this coast. There is a need for greater clarity on evidence, data, and risk collectively, a range of solutions, a baseline of community and business readiness to change, and a better route to funding. SB suggested the most sensible way to do this is through a strategy. The Gorleston to Lowestoft Coastal Strategy (GLCS) is available at https://www.coasteast.org.uk/assets/img/1414210.pdf</p> <p>There is a RC officers meeting next week where a strategy for Southwold will be recommended.</p> <p>ML asked how each of the groups in the Southwold area interrelate and interact with the other groups as there could be some duplication.</p> <p>The Chair agreed and added that each group have different roles.</p> <p>ML added it would be helpful to have a flowchart or similar which shows how all of the groups work together and interrelate.</p> <p>SB agreed and suggested showing a governance structure for the Board and how the other groups feed into it and vice versa. IT would also show how the Board feeds into the RC Board. A strategy will enable the Board to give certainty to funders.</p> <p>PJ suggested the number of people going to different groups was not very efficient. PJ and AJ have met with EA and Philip Ridley (Head of Planning and Coastal Management, East Suffolk Council) from a planning point of view in parallel concentrating on their mile of coastline. They have employed some consultants who have done an initial survey study with 3D modelling and are now completing another study to design a set of sea defences to be built in a modular approach. PJ and AJ noted they have stepped out of the Board recently as they were not sure how it fitted with their aspirations. PJ asked if the Board would like them to be involved and how.</p> <p>The Chair confirmed the Board would like PJ and AJ involved and added the strategy will help to agree a way forward.</p> <p>The Chair suggested not going straight to solutions on the strategy but look at the problems and work towards the solutions.</p> <p>SB agreed and added the strategy will start by looking at what information there is already.</p> <p>ACTION: SB to create and circulate a governance structure</p>
Community Engagement Update	<p>SR shared that CPE is proposing to find out the baseline to understand the community's readiness to change using a tool owned by the EA and created with Icarus. This is a community-based survey of up to 40 questions that once completed will enable the Board to understand the knowledge and understanding of the risks that the community have, awareness of climate, sense of agency, highlights any conflicts, and opens doors for collaboration to build trust. It enables the Board to look at things across themes, for example, governance, proposals in place, and readiness of stakeholders beyond this group. That allows areas that are going to need work to be identified and shows the engagement needs and what potential there is.</p> <p>The Chair asked if this is about surveying the group and then talking about being ready for engagement but not actually engaging with the public.</p> <p>SR added it is looking at the community group that exists but also across the whole community to look at everybody's readiness and measure it to see if collectively the community are ready to take this project on.</p>

SB added this is the next move on from the work in December. People's willingness to go on the journey needs to be ascertained if the Board want to take the community with them in terms of the coastal strategy and for everybody to embrace what the strategy includes or the Board's direction.

KY noted the slides suggested governance was something being worked towards but thought governance would be needed in the first place for all the groups to engage with the Board. KY asked if governance is not already in place, why it is not.

SB confirmed the governance is in place and added that the Board provides the governance for Southwold and brings everything together. The Board feeds into the RC Board and the discussion about the number of other groups is to make sure that they have the opportunity to feed into the Board and the Board has the opportunity to hear what they are doing and feedback into that. The point of doing the readiness assessment, which has been done elsewhere, is that when trying to work with an entire community the team need to understand who is keen to work to move things forward and who is comfortable with things as they are and are interested in being kept informed but do not want to be actively involved. There will be people the team need to work with in terms of mitigating issues as part of the strategy and being clear about if that is not possible. The GLCS had a core group of people, the majority of which were representing a number of other people so they were able to communicate out to their group members. This needs to be understood before the engagement can be set up. The governance is in place but the team need to understand the community.

SR explained the process of completing a readiness assessment, starting by disseminating a survey into the community and gathering the data needed. This includes an initial introduction to the community groups with an element of co design, which could be at the start with workshops regarding wider stakeholder mapping, and the questions can be edited. Once the information has been fed back the Board can discuss and analyse what that has said and plan the actions needed from that point.

PJ shared that Easton Barents Ltd, with the exception of ABI, are the only people on the Board presently losing anything and that makes this seem like a paper exercise rather than an exercise in trying to save houses and a business in a real way. AJ and PJ have spent the last six years trying to engage with Coastal Partnership East and Natural England in trying to plot a way forward but have been met with resistance in terms of meetings and using policies in a positive and constructive way to help with the situation. The Chair added the Board are about trying to get the community behind the strategy and are happy to include these efforts and cooperate, but the whole community must be behind a strategy rather than focusing on individual problems. The Chair agreed with the concern that this may be a bit of time wasting but trusts that SB's team know what they are doing and is prepared to try it as it has worked in other areas. The Chair is keen to get engagement moving forward this autumn and winter.

KY raised concern that the people being engaged with need to have governance in place from their local population before they engage as there will be many timewasters. KY also added the importance of making sure the survey is not just a lot of words and pictures. KY suggested it needs to be proactive and have the right people saying what they need to say on behalf of their communities.

SF agreed it is critical to get governance in place, the right people involved, and being in a position to communicate it with community. SF added it seems very complicated and difficult to explain to people what it is that this is trying to achieve.

	<p>PO agreed that governance, what the Board want to achieve, and consulting about those need to be defined fairly quickly. PO would prefer that consulting about specific ideas. SB added the critical thing to look at was having a strategy that brings together all the projects and rather than giving solutions, suggests potential options. The GLCS looked at what the options were if no, limited, and full funding was available so that funders could be approached on the basis of the evidence, options, and what funding can be sourced to cover those areas. The readiness assessment gives a better understanding of who needs to be engaged with and what their position is. The sentiment analysis in December was about what people value but this is about how they want to engage with process, what they want to see on their coast and estuary, and gives a baseline of what engagement is needed. Any funding bid has to set out what engagement has been done and what consensus has been achieved so the readiness assessment is needed as a body of evidence to move anything forward. Tim O’Riordan would be able to help with some of the engagement in terms of bringing people together as a forum. In terms of governance this Board has a formal governance structure as an outside body, it is how the other groups in Southwold feed in that needs to go in the formal governance flowchart. The Chair asked what this plan is going to do by when. SB will be able to give a better idea of that after the RC officer meeting. SB agreed to update the Board following that meeting.</p> <p>The Chair raised concern about being in the same position in a year’s time. SB suggest it might be helpful for the Board to look at a readiness assessment questionnaire to see what it does and highlighted that the questions can be changed. The Chair asked for an estimate of the programme to be shared with the GLCS link and any other information the Board need.</p> <p>SB added that SR can send the Board a copy of the readiness assessment. The Chair suggested a short meeting in July as the readiness assessment will need the Board’s approval.</p> <p>SB agreed and added that AS will send the link to the GLCS. SB suggested having the meeting in person only at Reydon Village Hall due to the tourist season in Southwold and that AS can send a doodle poll for the end of July.</p> <p>PO has a contact for Reydon Village Hall.</p> <p>ACTION: SB to update the Board on timescales following the RC officer meeting ACTION: SR to send the Board a copy of the readiness assessment ACTION: AS to send the Board a link to the GLCS ACTION: AS to send the Board a doodle poll for the end of July ACTION: AS to ask PO for Reydon Village Hall contact</p>
Updates from Partners	<p>PO shared that the Blyth Estuary Partnership is the successor to the Blyth Estuary Group that has been going for at least 20 years with a concern about what needs to happen to maintain the estuary in its current shape. That is important because if the estuary has further permanent breaches, the tidal prism will be so great that the Harbour is at risk of being inoperable. The future of the estuary and the future of the harbour are intimately related. The proposal for a Harbour Revision Order would give the Harbour no responsibility for the estuary upstream of the Bailey Bridge but will give it the authority to contribute to works upstream where they are judged necessary to maintain the future of the Harbour. If that goes through the various responsibilities will be clear. Principle responsibility for the estuary sits with the landowners, councils that join the estuary, and other stakeholders. The Partnership is representing all of those and the aim is to come up with a preferred strategy. The preferred strategy will involve a spillway at Tinkers as was recommended by Royal HaskoningDHV which will need to be discussed with the landowner there. Then there is raising the rest of the banks to a uniform height (2.8m or</p>

	<p>3m above ordnance datum), but most importantly is to work over time to create the banks with a strong enough and correct profile to withstand surges and overtopping where it occurs. If the Partnership can achieve that and strategies for quick drainage or any overspill into the spillway it would enable the estuary to be maintained as it is. The Partnership's role is to develop the strategy, consult its members, hopefully get a consensus, and start building the case for funding.</p> <p>SB noted that the Deben Estuary Strategy and the Alde and Ore Estuary Plan both went to Cabinet, were endorsed and are material considerations in terms of Planning. The Blyth Estuary Strategy has gone through EA and SB asked if it has been to Cabinet and if it would after it has been updated.</p> <p>PO agreed it would be valuable to go through Cabinet and added the plan to raise the walls to 2.8m already has planning permission.</p> <p>The Chair added KY is portfolio holder for Planning and Coastal Management and suggested including her.</p>
AOB	None.