**Essex Coastal Forum – Meeting Minutes**

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| **Date:** | 25th February 2014 |
| **Time:** | 14.00 – 16.00 |
| **Venue:** | Committee Room 1, County Hall, Chelmsford |
| **Chairman:** | Cllr John Jowers (JJ) |
| **Attendees:****In attendance:** | Mark Johnson (MJ)Roy Read (RR)Jonathan Bustard Andrew St Joseph (ASJ)Richard Hatter (RH)Cllr Ray HowardLucy Shepherd Cllr John Aldridge (JA)Beverley McCleanDavid HedgesMike Badger Cllr Nick Turner (NT)Cllr Mick Page (MP)Nicky Spurr (NS)John BrienPaul Jeffries  | Environment Agency (EA)Maldon District Council (MDC)Natural England (NE)Essex Coastal Organisation (ECO)Thurrock Council (TC)Regional Flood and Coastal Committee (ECC Rep)/Castle Point Borough CouncilECC [Flood Partnerships Manager](http://intranetapps3/essexcontacts/role_detail.asp?ID=99912)Regional Flood and Coastal Committee (ECC Rep)Colchester Borough CouncilRSPBTendring District Council Tendring District Council (TDC)Regional Flood and Coastal Committee (ECC Rep)Coastal Officer , ECC Harwich Haven AuthorityTopsail Charters |
| **Apologies:** | Cllr John Lamb Peter GarrettCllr Tim YoungJohn Lindsay | Southend Borough CouncilMaldon District Council Colchester Borough CouncilEnvironment Agency (EA) |

1. Welcome, apologies and introductions
2. Presentation : Harwich potential Capital Dredge John Brien (Harwich Haven Authority)

Presentation to be circulated after the meeting.

Harwich Haven Authority has a statutory role as the Harbour Authority covering Harwich and Felixstowe, with duties including safety of navigation / pilotage/ vessel traffic etc.

HHA in very early stages of considering a potential capital dredge. 2 potential dredge depths are being considered: 15.5m and 16m. Consultants have scoped the initial physical impacts, which gives an indication of the likely environmental impacts. ECC supported HHA’s application to EU for TEN-T funding for studies to facilitate the next stage. Studies undertaken include soil tests comprising 112 trial pits and 350 samples tested. The underlying material was found to be clay with channels of sand / gravel.

The pre application phase includes a scoping report for stakeholder consultation. It is anticipated that the necessary studies and assessments will be completed by March 2015

Beneficial use disposal options for the material generated by the dredge are likely to be identified in 3rd Quarter of 2014, so potential sites from stakeholders would have to be with HHA by end of June. Information is sought from stakeholders regarding existing projects which are in a good state of development. Beneficial use options will be considered by the Marine Management Organisation before they consent to the disposal of the remainder at sea.

**Question and Answers following Presentation**

Q how does the structure change when in contact with air?

A it is a solid material which will dissipate over time – likely to take decades to break down / disperse

Q are HHA anticipating plenty of interest for sands and gravels?

A it was estimated that these would fetch £8-9 per m3. Sale is not considered as good an option as reclamation for use in construction or beach recharge would be considered beneficial.

Q what are the limitations on the delivery of hard clays?

A these are more difficult as can’t be pumped, and would therefore require use of smaller split barges for the dropping of material onto the foreshore at High Water (HW). These vessels would need 3-5m depth at HW for access.

Q where does HHA’s responsibility end?

A once material is placed – movement once deposited would not be HHA responsibility. With regards to softer materials, it might be considered OK to pump these ashore.

Q when would the material be ready?

A Timescale is as follows;

* pre application due to be completed by March 2015.
* formal application will follow for consideration by the MMO - could take anywhere from 2-12 months depending on whether there are any objections.
* Looking at commencing dredge in 2016
* Dredging would take approx. 18 months

Q what level of detail is required at the end June deadline for expressions of interest ?

A short report of approx. 10 pages, though could potentially be less than this

Q what projects are being considered and what status are they at?

A Cobmarsh proposal – consortium of 15 bodies including RSPB and EWT

 Previous receiving sites such as Old Hall, Tollesbury Wick and potentially Feldy could potentially also be considered.

 E Mersea, Holliwell Point was also mentioned as being important

MJ advised that the sites which had been raised at landowners’ meeting have been discussed with John Brien.

1. Presentation : December Tidal Surge and Severe Weather Mark Johnson (EA)

18 000 people had been evacuated. Tide took approx. 7 hours to move between Hunstanton in Norfolk and Southend.

**Essex Impacts**

Due to the investments made in Essex in the past by the RFCC, defences were much more likely to stand up well to the pressures, though there were some impacts as follows;

Hullbridge : repairs undertaken to repair a section of sea wall which slumped causing a marginal reduction in the defence height.

Rewsalls Farm, East Mersea : this defence suffered big impacts from the southerly gales rather than the storm surge itself. The damage would be assessed and emergency repairs completed.

Q (JA) is there a lesson which can be learnt to help us to gain additional resources to ensure that we’re ahead of the game in the future, as it is necessary to take action but in some instances that can require significant funding.

A (JJ) the issue of coastal flooding is very high on the agenda. Treasury rules stipulate however that there needs to be a benefit cost ration of 8 : 1 which many feel is not fit for purpose as this give a significant advantage to urban areas. It is important to look at different ways of building defences and further exploring the potential solutions afforded by strategic managed realignment.

JJ felt the case to continue to defend the wall was indefensible due to the costs relative to the benefits there. It is acknowledged that although ECC property is likely to be affected, it is important that there is a form of prioritisation which is acceptable to the majority.

ASJ commented that communication with those affected is key and mentioned a report by the NRA.

It was noted that airborne solutions were on standby and that these had needed to be utilised in Wales, although it was acknowledged that for this approach to work this would require suitable material to be on hand.

NT felt that the lessons learnt through the winter storms showed that there was a need for communication to be improved as local Members weren’t being kept sufficiently up to speed.

JJ commented that Gold command didn’t involve Members and that it was important that politicians didn’t interfere during emergency situations.  It was felt appropriate that if there were people who needed to be involved who had been missed, that this would need to be addressed.  It was felt that the practicalities of forwarding a summary of the situation to Local Members might be worthy of consideration

**Action NS : Liaise with ECC Emergency Planning re the potential distribution of a summary document to relevant Local Authority representatives during emergency situations**

RH highlighted a major concern for the Essex Coastal Forum is the prospect of an airport in the Thames Estuary and requested this was made an agenda item for a future meeting

**Action NS : include Thames Estuary Airport as agenda item for future meeting**

1. Essex Flood Management Partnership update Lucy Shepherd (ECC)

LS reported the number of flood incidents from October to February 2014. In the previous year there had been 90 reports of non-Highway related incidents however this year it had increased to 190. A scoping exercise was being undertaken looking at reported flooding from surface water.

Funding – LS thanked ECC RFCC members for the 2.7% increase in the Local Levy. Cllr JJ advised that when proposal was submitted, that it had initially been opposed by Norfolk and Suffolk. Southend and Thurrock had supported the increase.

Flood and Water Management Alliance was being established between the Essex Flood Management Partnership and Emergency Planning in Essex. The focus would be on warning and informing, including education and would include the development of a website to raise awareness. An increased community involvement in ditch maintenance was being encouraged.

At the Thames RFCC on 1st December, partners had agreed 5% increase in Local Levy but lost by 1vote due to the input of the London Boroughs who have since suffered significant flooding.

Central RFCC had voted for no increase in the Local Levy.

It was reported that Kent Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) had prosecuted Kent Highways and JJ commented that we’d not wish to see a similar situation in Essex.

1. Essex and South Suffolk Shoreline Management Plan (SMP) Action Plan Mark Johnson (EA)

A paper had been circulated which detailed the meetings of the Shoreline Management Plan Working Group (SMPWG) which have taken place. There is a legal requirement through the Floods and Water Management Act to report progress. A number of key actions which have been progressed were highlighted;

* Clacton Holland Project – £36m coastal defence scheme is progressing well and is now fully funded. Tenders are due to be returned within the next few weeks. Marine Management Organisation (MMO) licence had been obtained.
* Caravan park flood resilience – paper has been circulated and all going according to plan.
* Contaminated walls – PhD studentship is progressing well. Would be good to have feedback in the next 6 months.

**Action MJ : report back re progress re the Contaminated walls PhD study at next meeting**

Essex Coastal Forum has evolved from the Elected Members Forum, hence if there are any policy changes then they will need to come to this Forum. If a policy change does become necessary, then there will need to be an informing process locally.

MJ reported on an example in Suffolk where a policy change had been necessary for Thorpeness and advised that the process had involved public consultation. The policy change would be referred back to the Regional Flood and Coastal Committee once the approval of the Suffolk Coastal Forum had been obtained.

1. Other updates
* Blackwater, Crouch, Roach and Colne Estuaries Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ)

One of few MCZs in the country which has been ratified to date. A variety of different bodies will need to be involved as the implications of the designation are taken forward. The Inshore Fisheries Conservation Authority (IFCA) can address fisheries related issues within 6 nautical miles and introduce management measures as appropriate. It was reported that the Kent and Essex IFCA has looked at this in detail.

ASJ – this came up for discussion at the 2013 conference. A representative from the Marine Management Organisation (MMO) had been questioned over the impact the organisation has over the intertidal zone. At that time, it hadn’t been possible to give any assurances re the impacts the MCZ designation might have on stakeholders. It was agreed that a future agenda item to discuss this topic in more detail would be appropriate as many of those present shared concerns.

**Action : NS to ensure Blackwater MCZ is an agenda item for future meeting**

JJ has raised the influence of the MMO at the Rural Farming network. It was felt that the MMO was good on larger issues like ports, but not on the smaller intertidal issues especially as costs for an MMO licence can be very significant

JB felt the MMO has been put in very difficult situation by Defra, who have given very little steer except that the MCZs should be designated in advance of the Management Measures being in place.

* Coastal Concordat

It was noted that the Coastal Concordat sets out key principles for coordinating the consenting process for coastal development in England and that Tendring District Council was one of the early adopting local authorities.

* Coastal Caravan Park Flood Resilience Initiatives

It was noted that this item had largely been covered during SMP section. It was noted that many people had gone into their caravans to escape the surge.

BM commented that the planning expectorate aren’t successfully upholding appeals, but that they are letting through applications for full year occupancy which will result in people living in caravan parks throughout the year.

* Storage of materials for landowners’ use in coastal defence maintenance

It was brought to Members attention that the Essex Coastal Organisation, Environment Agency and ECC (Coastal Officer and Waste Planning team) had been working together to try to find a way to store material (provided by the EA) for use by landowners. Work would continue and updates be provided to the Essex Coastal Forum when appropriate.

DH checked that this material was for local repairs rather than for enhancements and this was confirmed.

3 potential sites were currently proposed.

* Essex Coastal Warden Scheme

NS advised that this scheme had been funded through the EU SUSCOD project which had ended at 31st December 2013. There was no funding currently identified to continue the scheme into the future however The Conservation Volunteers who had been managing the scheme on ECC’s behalf were considering a Heritage Lottery Fund application.

1. Essex Coastal Forum
	1. Review of Terms of Reference

Existing membership of the ECF was discussed following a request by Essex Wildlife Trust to become a formal Member. Following discussion, it was decided that as there’s already a prominent environmental group (namely the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds) on the ECF, that this organisation could represent others from the sector to avoid the risk of the Forum becoming too biased to any one sector. It was also noted that additional organisations were welcome to attend the group as observers, as long as prior notification was provided and agreed.

It was decided that, given their significant role both with regards to marine planning and the IFCA, that the MMO should be invited to become a formal Member of the Forum.

**Action NS to invite the MMO to become a formal Member of the Essex Coastal Forum**

* 1. & c) Activities – past and future including 2014 Coastal Conference

Many of the activities of the Essex Coastal Forum had been possible due to them forming part of the EU funded SUSCOD project. NS advised that this project had now come to an end. JJ felt that although the coastal conferences had been useful, that without external funding being made available that they might no longer be able to take place. All Members were asked to consider whether they could make a funding contribution to this activity.

**Action : All to consider making a funding contribution towards the cost of a 2014 Essex Coastal Conference and to advise NS accordingly**

1. Regular agenda items
	1. Minutes of last meeting

No amendments deemed necessary. Compliments made re the quality of the minutes produced.

* 1. Reports from meetings attended - none
	2. Issues or best practice examples for Forum’s attention - none
	3. Legislation updates - none

1. Any other Business - none
2. Date and Venue of next meeting

This would be taking place in July, date to be confirmed. In light of both the MCZ designation and the damage sustained during the winter storms, a Mersea location was considered appropriate.

**NS to circulate date and venue for the next meeting**

**Post Meeting Note : next meeting will take place from 10am on 16th July at Mersea Outdoors, Rewsalls Lane, Mersea.**

There will be a brief outline of the key issues with the sea wall at the site by John Lindsay (EA) followed by a site visit to look at the damage which was sustained during last winter’s severe weather.  The formal meeting will then start at 11am and will be followed by a sandwich lunch.