

## Essex Coastal Forum – Meeting Minutes

<b>Date:</b>	16 <sup>th</sup> July 2014	
<b>Time:</b>	11.00 – 13.00 (following a site visit commencing at 10am)	
<b>Venue:</b>	Mersea Outdoors, Rewsalls Lane, East Mersea, Colchester, CO5 8SX	
<b>Chairman:</b>	Cllr John Jowers (JJ)	
<b>Attendees:</b>	Roy Read (RR) John Lindsay Beverley McClean Richard Hatter (RH) Cllr Mick Page (MP)  Cllr Nick Turner (NT) Mike Badger Andrew St Joseph (ASJ) Stacey Clarke Jonathan Bustard Cllr Ray Howard  Rick Vonk Nicky Spurr (NS)	Maldon District Council (MDC) Environment Agency (EA) Colchester Borough Council Thurrock Council (TC) Regional Flood and Coastal Committee (ECC Rep) Tendring District Council (TDC) Tendring District Council Essex Coastal Organisation (ECO) Marine Management Organisation Natural England (NE) Regional Flood and Coastal Committee (ECC Rep)/Castle Point Borough Council RSPB Coastal Officer , ECC
<b>In attendance:</b>	Richard Taylor  Alan Bird  Deborah Fox Rob Wise	Mersea Harbour Protection Trust Mersea Harbour Protection Trust Essex County Council National Farmers Union
<b>Apologies:</b>	Mark Johnson (MJ) Peter Garrett Cllr Tim Young Lucy Shepherd Cllr John Aldridge (JA)  David Hedges Richard Atkins	Environment Agency (EA) Maldon District Council Colchester Borough Council ECC Flood Partnerships Manager Regional Flood and Coastal Committee (ECC Rep) RSPB Southend Borough Council

1. Presentations – summaries of these are included as appendices at the end of these minutes

- a. Mersea Harbour under Threat : Richard Taylor and Alan Bird, Mersea Harbour Protection Trust
- b. Commissioning Strategy - People in Essex experience a high quality and sustainable environment : Deborah Fox, Essex County Council

RH commented that DF had articulated the County Council's Commissioning Strategy very clearly. He felt ECC should work with the mosaic of people working on the land to increase rural recreation. He also felt it would be beneficial for landowners to work more at a coordinated level to develop the rural tourism offer, which is essential to support the tourism offer provided by cities and towns.

RH also asked about the potential to access New Homes Bonus funding for rural economic development. JJ replied that the majority of this funding goes to local authorities and is not available to ECC.

The Community Infrastructure Levy was highlighted as an option for funding community initiatives in rural areas – for every home built up to 25% could go to local community. One key distinction, to that of section106 funding, is that CIL is not area specific and will be able to be spent anywhere in the District.

JJ highlighted that it would be prudent for any funding applications to line up with the policy direction contained in the draft commissioning strategies as this would increase their likelihood of successful support from ECC. He noted the importance of accessing EU LEADER funding and advised Forum members that approx. £4.5m is to be made available through the Regional Growth Fund, with applications from local groups to be made by September. 2 potential Local Action Groups (LAG) have been formed (of relevance to the Essex coast) and are planning to apply for this. The areas have to have a population of less than 150 000, which therefore cuts out the larger towns.

- Heritage Coasts LAG covers the Tendring area (but excludes main urban areas including Clacton) – this is led by partners in Suffolk.
- Essex Rivers LAG includes Mersea and other coastal areas in Essex but excludes Colchester town – this is led by the Rural Community Council for Essex.

NT said he had seen the problems arising from failed large rural funding bids. In his opinion, smaller funding bids and community-led fundraising are often more successful.

## **1. Shoreline Management Plan (SMP)**

**John Lindsay (EA)**

More detailed report on progress than was able to be reported at the meeting, has been included in Appendix 3.

The last SMP Working Group (SMPWG) meeting was held on 27<sup>th</sup> Jan and had discussed Action Plan progress. The national reporting was completed on time and included progress against actions as follows;

- 15% complete
- 56% progressing
- 24% on hold
- 5% planned

It was noted that many actions won't be progressed/completed for considerable length of time which could affect the apparent rate of progress.

Another SMPWG meeting is due to take place in September - invitations will be sent out shortly. It is important that partners review their own list of actions to enable them to bring an update to the meeting to discuss.

The site visit this morning has shown that it will be necessary to reconsider the policy for the Rewsalls frontage at East Mersea. Some minor changes will also need to be undertaken. For major changes, these will need to be considered by ECF and also go out to public consultation – these will be discussed in the first instance at the SMPWG and will then feed into the next Essex Coastal Forum meeting, which is likely to take place in February 2015. Rewsalls will be one of the first instances where a policy change will be needed to bring forward the change currently scheduled for a different epoch.

Caravan Parks – the EA have been undertaking a resilience project to raise awareness of flood risk in caravan parks and to ensure appropriate emergency plans are developed. It was noted that a number of caravan parks flooded in the recent winter storms. Liaison with caravan parks has been undertaken, particularly in Maldon, with workshops being held. Positive outcomes included that 80% of coastal caravan parks (an increase from 17%) are now registered with Flood Warning Direct (FWD) and work is continuing with the parks to develop emergency plans. 10 have already been completed and more are in the pipeline to be completed in advance of the winter. The EA are planning to visit another 5-7 parks within the next month.

NT raised his concern that only 80% of caravan parks have signed up to FWD due to changes with the time limitation when caravans are able to be occupied. He questioned how many parks haven't signed up from TDC that are in the flood zone – NS advised that TDC had undertaken some dedicated work re this topic and suggested NT liaised with colleagues in the Emergency Planning Team at TDC.

BMcC advised the Forum that warning signs had been erected, at the entrance to all Colchester BC caravan sites, to alert users of the risk.

## **2. Brief Updates**

### **a. Blackwater, Crouch, Roach and Colne Estuaries Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ)**

ASJ asked what the actual area of the native oyster beds is in hectares?

**Post Meeting Note** : NS emailed Natural England seeking this information and was advised that most of the data used to recommend designating native oyster beds, and native oysters, as features of the MCZ came from a joint survey between Essex Wildlife Trust and the Blackwater Oystermen's Association. As the organisations undertaking the survey own the data, it is not possible to distribute it. KEIFCA are undertaking a survey which aims to provide a detailed native oyster abundance map across most of the MCZ (whilst also recognising the commercial sensitivity of this species). Once the data has been analysed and a report written it will be distributed to interested parties.

It was decided that a future meeting should discuss the MCZ in more detail.

**Action NS** : to include agenda item re the impact of the MCZ for the next meeting

### **b. Marine Protected Area (MPA) Management Project**

NS advised that improvements for the management of all Marine Protected Areas were being considered nationally. Updates of the MPA Strategic Management Project will be circulated with the minutes of this meeting.

### **c. Thames Estuary Airport**

RH had requested this item was brought to the Forum's attention, as although aviation capacity was recognised as being a national issue, any development of a Thames Estuary airport could have significant implications for Essex.

JJ clarified that ECC have not opposed a 2<sup>nd</sup> runway at Stansted for the longer term, and feel that once capacity is reached that another review will be undertaken. JJ said there'd be a need to examine the infrastructure demands which could be placed on Essex with any potential expansion at Stansted.

### **d. Marine Planning**

**Stacey Clarke (MMO)**

East Marine Plans were signed off in April 2014. Implementation sessions have been run within the Plan areas, to explain how the plans should be used in decision making

South Plan status : the vision and objectives for the Plan are in process of being developed – invitation to contribute has been sent out to different sectors.

A monitoring plan will be developed within 12 months to gauge use of the plans and whether there are particular parts of the Plan that are / aren't useful. A report will be produced within 3 years of the Marine Plan publication.

A review has been undertaken to assess how long the Marine Plan took to go through Government. This has identified that the whole schedule for Marine Plans took 9 months longer than anticipated and is now behind schedule.

It is not known when marine planning will be undertaken for Essex – there is the possibility that it could be undertaken quite soon if linking up with neighbouring areas, although it could take longer.

BMcC questioned whether the MMO are also considering the terrestrial planning timetables when determining which areas to progress at which stage? It was commented that if the MMO wait for 4 years, then they will miss the opportunity to coordinate with both Tendring DC's Local Plan (2016) and Colchester BC's (2017).

JJ welcomed the introduction by the MMO of a gradient of fee charges which meant that less would be charged for less complex licences.

ASJ asked for clarification of the landward boundary of the MMO's responsibility and was advised that this was Mean High Water Springs, and it was confirmed this meant the extent included as far as up to Battlesbridge.

SC advised that the MMO are working with Local Planning Authorities (LPA) to look at core strategies to identify overlaps etc.

Bev McClean ascertained that it would be useful for LPAs to write to the MMO to identify Local Plan timescales.

**Action : All LPAs with emerging Local Plans to highlight relevant Plan timescales to the MMO**

**e. Clacton to Holland-on-Sea, Sea Defences Scheme      Cllr Nick Turner / Mike Badger, TDC**

Contracts had been awarded to VolkerStevin, Boskalis Westminster and Atkins (VBA) for scheme construction and to Mott MacDonald for project management.

The total budget for the scheme is up to £36m, although it is the intention to bring it in under budget and to be completed prior to Christmas 2015 . Work has already started on site.

NT acknowledged the hard work of many officers at TDC, especially Mike Badger & his team, June Clare who had been inspirational and CEO Ian Davidson. Many politicians had also been highly influential including the previous leader Cllr Stock, who was responsible for ringfencing £3m towards the scheme which was then matched by ECC. Thanks also to EA, Mark Johnson and John Lindsay, and to ECC Nicky Spurr to satisfy ECC's money is being well spent. The Regional Flood and Coastal Committee had also contributed funds.

MB gave a scheme update, that physical works starting on Monday. Ovenden would be starting to remove existing groynes and open up a 1km working face. SOSPAN will be arriving on 29<sup>th</sup> / 30<sup>th</sup> July, to lay down temporary material to enable shore-based work to be undertaken.

Rock would be arriving on the beach in late August to enable the construction of the fishtail groynes. It was intended to follow a campaign to extend into late September and October, possibly working through if weather conditions were favourable.

Fliers updating the public had been distributed and a portacabin established at Holland Haven. Time lapse photography will be on TDC website, allowing scheme progress to be widely promoted. TDC are currently looking for sponsors for the 23 beaches which will be formed.

JJ commented that Members should consider undertaking a site visit prior to construction commencement to look at the serious undercutting.

**f. Shoeburyness Coastal Defences Scheme**

Richard Atkins had provided an update to NS that the new administration had proposed to review the process by which the scheme was selected. This will be discussed by Full Council on 17<sup>th</sup> July and the terms of reference agreed.

The scheme was outlined to Members as being the construction of a bund behind a number of beach huts which would have been left unprotected. The issue had been so highly influential that it had affected the election with Southend Council now being under no overall political majority. RH commented that he had listened to professionals which had enabled him to become aware that some of the objections made at public events were without foundation. It was felt likely that the final solution will end up reverting to the original scheme. JJ commented that there were lessons to be learnt including that it was important not to rush into things before everyone's on side, given the great significance the human aspect can have.

### **3. Essex Coastal Forum Terms of Reference**

A revision to the Terms of Reference was agreed, to remove reference to the EU SUSCOD Project, and also to include the Marine Management Organisation in the Membership of the Forum

These were formally proposed for agreement by NT and seconded by JL, and agreed by all members.

### **4. 2014 Coastal Conference**

NS advised that the previous conferences had been funded by EU SUSCOD project and that this funding had now come to an end. Partners had been canvassed by email to ascertain the appetite for a conference for 2014, and it was decided that there wasn't a huge appetite (or more importantly, funding) for a conference this year.

Conferences would still be considered at a future meeting, when decisions could be taken re whether they are necessary and if so, whether they should be annual or bi-annual.

### **5. Regular agenda items**

**All**

#### **a. Minutes of last meeting**

ASJ – to liaise with NS after the meeting with amendments. Revised version will be distributed with minutes of this meeting.

#### **b. Reports from meetings attended**

Cllr Mick Page informed the Forum that he'd attended the Rural Conference / LGA Coastal SIG meeting.

NT advised that there had been a visit by the Chairmen of the RFCCs to Clacton.

#### **c. Issues or best practice examples for Forum's attention**

The scheme for Cobmarsh Island discussed earlier in the meeting was highlighted as an example of best practice

ASJ : highlighted the work the EA were doing to provide coastal defence materials for landowners.

#### **d. Legislation updates**

None to update

### **6. Any other Business**

None

**All**

### **7. Date and Venue of next meeting**

Post Meeting Note : next meeting will take place 2 – 4pm on 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2015, in Committee Room 1, Essex County Council offices, County Hall, Chelmsford, CM1 1QH

## Appendix 1

### Mersea Harbour Under Threat : Summary of Presentation

#### Richard Taylor and Alan Bird, Mersea Harbour Protection Trust

A community partnership has been established to try to find and implement a solution to protect Cobmarsh Island (adjacent to Mersea Island) from coastal erosion, as the impact this would have on West Mersea harbour through increased wave / surge action is recognised as being significant. Cobmarsh Island has suffered damage to its saltmarsh, both historically in the 1987 hurricane as well as the more recent storms (which saw 3-4m of saltmarsh lost). It was noted that the size of Cobmarsh Island had reduced from 32 to 16 acres since 1923, and that Packing Shed Island had also suffered significant losses reducing in size from 23 acres to 1 acre over the same time period.

Some contentious issues were initially highlighted by RSPB and Fellowship Afloat, however these through working in partnership these were later resolved.

A number of choices exist

- Do nothing – not considered acceptable
- Hard defences either using rocks or a stream of lighters - very costly, and difficult to achieve in such a natural area
- Soft defences to build up the level of protection offered by soft defences – preferred option

Opportunities have arisen for the beneficial use of some of the dredged material which might result from a potential capital dredge being considered by the Harwich Haven Authority (HHA). The intention would be for sediment to be strategically placed on specific points on the island to provide 100-150 years of protection. It is estimated that 95m<sup>3</sup> of sand and gravel is needed for the scheme.

ECC has agreed to contribute £15 000 towards the scheme, as the importance of the harbour for the tourism economy has been recognised, as the population on Mersea Island can increase from approx. 7 000 to 28 000 over a summer weekend. JJ felt that it is also hoped that as ECC has provided previous support to the HHA (through supporting their application for TENT-T funding) that this will help to encourage the engagement of HHA in this initiative.

Constraints

- Legal obligation to protect the habitat of the little tern which nests on beaches.
- Issues to be resolved with the Charity Commissioners to enable the partnership to gain charity status.

It is estimated that the foreshore recharge could cost between £180 000 and £960 000. A public consultation would seek to overcome the public objections associated with the use of a Harwich dredger to spray the material onto the desired locations.

## Appendix 2

### ECC Commissioning Strategies

#### Deborah Fox, Head of Commissioning, Sustainable Essex Protection

Deborah described the public and partner consultation process for ECC's seven developing commissioning strategies. Essex County Council has set out a clear vision for Essex – ECC want to be a county where innovation brings prosperity. To achieve this vision it is necessary to work in new ways with partners in the public and private sectors, the voluntary and community sector, and with individuals, families and communities. It is also necessary to approach the challenges faced with creativity and innovation if the desired outcomes are to be secured.

The consultation is hosted on the Essex Insight website and responses can be submitted through this portal by 14 September using the following link:

<https://surveys.essexinsight.org.uk/TakeSurvey.aspx?SurveyID=400>

DF highlighted the draft commissioning strategy that members of the Forum would have most interest in: *"People in Essex experience a high quality and sustainable environment"*. This contains indicators on preventable flood incidents, level of pollution, access to valuable open spaces, perception of quality of the environment and more. There are proposed strategic actions for our coast, open spaces and roads and footways. For example, it is the intention to coordinate services so that flood risk and localised flooding is reduced and the effects of the aftermath of incidents minimised.

DF said that there are many linkages between the council's outcomes. For example the health and wellbeing outcome is closely linked to that for the sustainable environment. This is through the health benefits of access to nature and open spaces. There are also linkages between the environment outcome and one concerning education, training and lifelong learning. For example there is potential to increase participation in volunteering in open spaces. We could do more to make explicit links between the Essex coast and economic development.



## Appendix 3

### **ESSEX AND SOUTH SUFFOLK SHORELINE MANAGEMENT PLAN**

#### **UPDATE FOR THE ESSEX COASTAL FORUM – JULY 2014**

The Essex and South Suffolk Shoreline Management Plan Working Group are responsible for the monitoring and change management of the Shoreline Management Plan. The Working Group can approve minor textual changes to the document to allow the Plan to be updated in accordance with current circumstances. The Working Group can also recommend any moderate or major changes to the SMP for consideration by the ECF and the RFCC respectively.

The coordination of the changes to the Action Plan is lead by the Environment Agency for this SMP. The coordinated response of the SMP Working Group is submitted to the Environment Agency's National Strategic Overview team, in the second week of April, to formulate the Section 18 report to Ministers under the Flood and Water Management Act 2010. The Section 18 report documents the application of the National FCERM Strategy.

This SMP contains 125 Actions, which can be broken down into catchment wide actions and those for specific geographical areas.

#### **Progress: 2012/2013**

During the 2012/2013 reporting year we reported that around 12% of actions were complete, 46% progressing, 32% on hold, and 10% planned. No changes were submitted as it was the first year for reporting.

#### **Progress: 2013/2014**

The SMP Working Group met on the 27<sup>th</sup> January 2014 to discuss progress on the actions and review potential changes. The Working Group were given until the 10<sup>th</sup> February 2014 to send in any additional comments to the EA.

In April 2014 the EA submitted the SMP Monitoring and Change Management spreadsheets to the Environment Agency's National Strategic Overview team for inclusion in the Section 18 report.

The current statistics for the Essex and South Suffolk SMP actions are as follows:

- 15% complete
- 56% progressing
- 24% on hold,
- 5% planned

However, there are a number of factors to consider when considering progress against the actions. These points were taken into account by those reporting and include:

- A number of the actions are not programmed to start until later epochs
- An action may be progressing over several years

#### **Changes to the Plan for 2013/2014:**

Minor textual changes were made to the SMP in the 2013/14 reporting year, as agreed by the SMP WG on the 27<sup>th</sup> January 2014. These include:

- 'Potential' added to all Managed Realignment actions to clarify the intent of the action.
- Sea Level Rise Graph changed to amend an incorrect line on the Sheerness graph between 1850 - 1890. The line has been removed.
- Revision to lead partners on some actions

There were no major or moderate changes to the SMP for this reporting year.

## **Key action developments for 2014**

### **Clacton & Holland scheme**

**Action detail:** *Progress coastal strategies for Tendring frontages and establish viable schemes.*

**Action status:** *Progressing*

The project follows the "hold the line" policy for the SMP and supports the recently approved Clacton and Holland Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Strategy for this section of the coastline.

The project is being led and delivered by Tendring District Council with Environment Agency support. The preferred options the use of fish tail groynes with sand and shingle re-nourishment which are designed to hold the beach material and limit its movement by wave action.

### **Progress 2013/2014 –**

#### **Caravan Park Resilience Project**

**Action detail:** *Develop flood risk guidance specifically for the caravan owner, occupant or business; to raise your awareness of the risk, and to ensure that this is included in any emergency plans that are already in place or immersing.*

**Action status:** *Progressing*

In early 2013, through the SMP Working Group, staff from the Environment Agency (EA) and Essex County Council (ECC) met to discuss how to develop Emergency Community Schemes around coastal flood risk, with the intention to improve the flood resilience of caravan parks in Essex.

An important part of this work was to gather and collate the current caravan park information currently held by both ECC and the EA, analyse the data and prioritise which sites were at most risk. From this a set of priority sites have been identified based on the highest risk sites.

Currently we are deciding on the best approach to work with the caravan sites. Engagement with the site owners may be on an individual basis or a park of a group, depending on the similarities in the site makeup.

**Progress 2014 –** We liaised with several parks in Maldon, in May 2014, to investigate the interest in attending an emergency planning workshop. There was minimum interest from the invited parks, so we opted for working with the parks on an individual basis.

Following on from this:

- We now have 80% of coastal caravan parks in Essex signed up to Floodline Warnings Direct, originally this was a lot lower at 17%.
- We have been working with parks to create their own Flood Evacuation plans, and these are starting to be sent back to us at a good standard. We have now received approximately 10 plans, and more are still being filled in. We are working with the parks to complete their plans before the winter arrives and this process has led to strong communication links with the parks.
- We are planning on visiting 5 to 7 parks in the next month.

### Investigation into contaminated walls in Essex

**Action detail:** Investigation to establish the extent of contaminated defences/land and methods for future management. Review of policies that concern waste filled sea walls and land following completion.

**Action status:** *Progressing*

A PHD student appointed to take forward investigation, through the Queen Mary University in London, into the extent of contaminated defences in Essex. This is a 3 year investigation which will be completed in March 2015.

**Progress 2014** - Sampling and analysis is being undertaken and the key deliverables as part of the project are on target. The outcomes from the PHD study into waste filled walls will be used to determine appropriate management of the defences for the future.

### Aims and objectives for the 2014/2015 reporting year.

During 2014/2015 the Working Group will need to:

- Review the current and future policies, for particular Policy Development Zones, following the impacts of the tidal surge in December 2013.
- Reconsider the policy for Rewsalls (East Mersea), following engagement with local landowners, and decide how we can most effectively manage the social, environmental and economic aspects of that area.
- Investigate the potential for a major change to the SMP and the chain of approval required to progress this change.
- Continue to work together to improve discussions and encourage timely updates to assist with reporting on SMP actions.
- Encourage more substantial feedback on the actions, from Working Group partners, to feed into the National reporting.