

ALDE AND ORE ESTUARY PARTNERSHIP CONSULTATION ON THE DRAFT ESTUARY PLAN

NOVEMBER –DECEMBER 2015

The Consultation

1. The public consultation on the draft Estuary Plan together with the Sustainability Appraisal took place from 5 November until 17 December 2015. The AOEP website was open with all the relevant documents and the facility to make comments. Three public drop-ins were held, in Aldeburgh on Saturday 21 November 9.30am-1pm, Snape Maltings on Thursday 26 November 2-7pm and Orford Town Hall 2-7pm. Over 170 people signed the attendance list (there may have been a few who did not), of which some 70 were at Aldeburgh despite the appalling weather, 60 plus at Snape and 50 plus at Orford, with a few people at two or all events.
2. Comments, mostly online, were made by 132 individuals or organisations. There were 3 from Parish Councils which do not have a member on the AOEP, (Chillesford, Iken and Sudbourne), one from Aldeburgh Town Council, and six from organisations namely RSPB, SCDC Coastal Management Team, AONB, SCC Rights of Way Dept., Deben Estuary Partnership and Suffolk Wildlife Trust.
3. AOEP representatives met with the Suffolk Coastal District Councillors for the area, Ray Herring, TJ Haworth-Culf and Maureen Jones to discuss the plan and its importance to the area. AOEP offered to attend all parish council meetings for those parishes in or partly in the Alde and Ore Estuary area and a number took up the offer. AOEP members have now attended meetings of Parish Councils not on the AOEP where it was possible to explain the AOEP plan and answer questions, namely Aldringham, Blaxhall, Boyton, Iken, Sudbourne, and Hollesley as well as some who have a representative on the AOEP, Snape and Orford. The Tunstall chairman has also had a briefing, Parish Councils which have not had a direct visit but which have a representative on AOEP any way and so have been continually updated on the plan by their representatives are Bawdsey, Butley, Orford plus Aldeburgh Town Council.
4. Separate meetings were held with the RSPB and National Trust and the revised draft plan, at their wish as well as that of the AOEP, will be more inclusive of their plans for the flood cells for which they are responsible.
5. Every effort was made to ensure that the consultation was widely known about including articles in the East Anglian Daily Times and local news communications including the Aldeburgh Gazette and Aldeburgh News, Village Voice (Orford) VillageVoices (Hollesley) EbbnFlo (Snape and Blaxhall) and the Link (Orford, Butley, Chillesford, Tunstall, Iken and Sudbourne). Posters were displayed as widely as possible throughout the area and 250 copies of the Draft Plan were also distributed. Individual members of the Partnership also made the consultation known on their networks.
6. A new AOEP website was specially set up to deal with the consultation as the page on the AONB website which AONB have kindly hosted did not have the capacity to hold all that a consultation web site needed.

7. During the course of the consultation and afterwards the Sustainability Appraisal, the Habitats Regulation Assessment and the Water Framework Directive Assessment have been completed requiring no further adjustment now to the Plan.

Responses to the consultation

8. The consultation demonstrated a very strong ground swell of support for the draft Estuary Plan and helpful comments on emphasis, approach and on details were made. Overall the draft plan was welcomed and comments were made on the need for covering different aspects or emphasis but the general principles and thrust of the plan are well supported. At the drop-ins the most frequently raised concerns related to the coastline section of the Alde and Ore at Slaughden, concerns that enabling development projects might be detrimental to the area, as well as local interests at each place.

9. The main response to the six questions in the consultation were as follows:

Question 1. Which location are you most interested in? Responses given were that 68 were most interested in the Upper estuary (Aldeburgh Iken and Snape), 34 in the Middle Estuary (Orford), 5 in the Lower Estuary (Butley and below, and 21 in the Whole Estuary.

Question 2. Have you any comments on the upgrading of the river walls? These will be raised and strengthened; although there will be some overtopping in the event of surge tide as happened in December 2013, breaching and damaging flooding should be avoided
Over 80% of the responses supported the plans for the river defences. 86 respondees very positively affirmed the plan, 16 made no comment so were presumably content and 20 were a mixture of supportive but with particular points of concern or made other comments such as the pity that the Hazlewood Marsh walls had not been restored, attention being required for roads.

Question 3 Do you have any comments/observations on any environmental/ landscape/ wildlife concerns? Please detail:

40 respondees commented specifically to support the Plan, 11 had nothing further to add to the plan while 41 made no comments indicating the plan says all it needs to do, giving '92 contents' in total. There were 18 more specific comments, two of which was concerned about engaging the RSPB, National Trust and others which has been done, 2 on concerns about cycle paths but most on particular local concerns or emphasising the good environmental and wild life features to be preserved. There was a third grouping of 12 comments on the balance between wildlife and human use of the land scape three quarters of which feel the emphasis is too heavily on wildlife.

Question 4. Have you any comments on the recreational aspects of the area in terms of access to the river/footpaths/rambling and sporting interests etc.

51 of the 77 responses to this question were supportive of the plan wishing to see the present recreation opportunities continue much as they are now. About ten would like to see more footpaths and the ferry between Slaughden and Ferry Point restored. There are mixed views on cycle paths.

Question 5. Have you any comments on the proposal to raise funds through enabling development? What other ideas have you for raising funds?

54 of the responses saw enabling development as an essential element of fund raising. 34 responses left the line blank and 4 stated they had no comments to offer. In total therefore 87 respondees supported or accepted the use

of enabling development. In addition, 22 separate responses gave advice on raising funds and so mostly supported the fund raising proposals. 4 focussed on the need to ensure that the area was not damaged by development and 6 others mentioned this point.

Question 6. Finally, have you got any outstanding concerns or specific questions on the plan we have not answered or need clarifying? Or have we missed anything? Please detail here:

21 responses expressed strong concerns that the Draft Estuary Plan had not addressed the continued life of the sea wall and shingle shore south of the Martello Tower sufficiently. The Draft had pointed out that this coastal stretch was primarily the responsibility of the Environment Agency. But these points have been well taken. The revised Estuary Plan will bring out the importance of this shoreline to the Estuary Plan and the need for the Shoreline Management Plan to be reviewed and to secure compatibility with Plan.

14 responses expressed thanks for the work that had been done to produce the plan, 4 mentioned timing, 2 drafting points and about 6 others were individual views on particular aspects including getting value for money, flooding of Aldeburgh from the north and water seeping under Orford walls, housing and one not supporting the plan. 81 responses gave no further points.

Changes to the Plan in the light of the Consultation and environmental appraisals.

10. The main adjustments made to the draft Plan in response to the consultations and to the Sustainability Appraisal and Habitats Regulation Assessments are as follows

- i. **Coastal squeeze.** The draft plan recognised the need to take account of coastal squeeze and its impact on the environment. Discussion on meeting the various environmental regulations in the context of the Sustainability Appraisal has allowed more detailed plans to deal with this to be developed. To satisfy regulatory requirements the Plan will include a more specific reference to monitoring the environment and a commitment to find new habitats should coastal squeeze lead to the loss or degradation of habitats such as saltings.

Detailed discussion on the Monitoring Programme and memorandum and how it will work, will start once the Plan has been finalised post consultation. In the meantime EA and NE are preparing a list of everything already monitored and the timing/periods of the existing monitoring programmes so that when discussing a programme there is a base line of what data exists already and any gaps, if any, are identified. It may be possible to bring in the RSPB (who already work with NE) and possibly the National Trust to the EA and NE monitoring programme. The AOEP can include the monitoring and work the partnership does on salting projects and Rod West's work with students at Stanny Farm, Iken. The idea would be to have a full formal review of data every 5 years as stated in the draft above but in practice there could be an informal meeting of a sub group annually to check things are on track and pick up problems early.

- ii. **Shoreline Management Plan.** This matter was one of the main subjects raised at the drop-ins and was specifically referred to in almost 18% of responses. The Draft Estuary Plan had recognised the importance of the coastal defences south of Aldeburgh to north of the Orford Lighthouse but had taken the approach that sea defences fell primarily to the Environment Agency. The AOEP are in continuous talks with EA about this length of coast but it is clear that the central importance of this stretch to the integrity of the estuary must be more explicitly explored. In particular the need for the current Shoreline Management Plan to be reviewed to look at the possibility for the two parts of this stretch, the built up sea wall and the shingle ridge to be managed on the same time scale.
- iii. **Enabling development** proposals were fully supported by over half those who commented on the enabling development question while almost a fifth did not state a view but gave ideas, as requested, for additional ways of raising funds while about a quarter simply not comment at all. The concerns raised were particularly that such development might undermine the Area of Outstanding Beauty which the

estuary plan is seeking to sustain. The revised plan seeks to be more specific on the controls which will be in place on any enabling development and to describe in more detail the likely amount needed compared with existing building in order to show the intention is to add a relatively small amount to the local housing stock, not to flood the area with large developments out of keeping with the landscape and services. The Plan has also been amended to provide more detail on the funding strategy and plans.

- iv. **Boundary with the Deben and Bawdsey plans.** Section 3 of the Draft Plan will be amended to make it clear that the choice of parish boundaries taking in any parish which has all or part of a flood cell within its area or an upland area irrigated from a flood cell for the outline of the plan is solely to ease communication and administration. This differs from the Deben where the river catchment area was chosen and also the plan has a wide set of objectives. The Bawdsey Plan which is mainly coastal never the less has to cover an area of river which also links to the Ore so that clarity and good communication will be essential. The draft will therefore be strengthened on this point.
- v. **RSPB and National Trust** As a result of meetings with these bodies the flood cells for which they are responsible will be brought within the plan.
- vi. **AONB.** The Draft Plan has been amended to be compatible with AONB legislation and its Strategic Plan of the Suffolk Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.
- vii. **Time line for the Plan.** The plan has been amended to put in specific times for review of the progress of the plan and re-assessments of the state of the estuary, including that the plan will be reviewed every 10 years from the date of its. Also that the aim is to complete the major defences works within 10 years of the start of the AOEP to provide, where needed, the target resilience standard in the year 2050. The plan will be reviewed regularly and a fundamental review will need to be undertaken on the future as 2050 approaches.
- viii. **A number of drafting changes** have been suggested either to make a point more clearly or to meet statutory or legal wording requirements. Drafting changes will also be made to bring out for example the way the estuary provides a living connection with its several settlements and creates a unique area and that the first stage is to get the walls in good repair and thereafter the work will mainly be monitoring and maintenance.

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Note: the full details of every response, but not attributed to named individuals or bodies, will be available on the AOEP website: www.aoep.co.uk