



Photo: Andrews

Aldeburgh Marsh wall (Phase I) under snow

Background to The Estuary Partnership

It is now nearly 6 years since the Partnership was formed and we are still hailed as a groundbreaking community partnership set up as a result of the Alde and Ore Futures study in 2011. The overwhelming thrust from the community was that they wanted the estuary to remain as it is and that was the mandate the AOEP took as its mission.

The Estuary Partnership now consists of the following voting members all of whom are volunteers:

Edward Greenwell	Chairman, Farmer Nominee
Guy Heald	Finance and Business (Chairman of Estuary Trust)
Alison Andrews	Alde & Ore Association Nominee
Jane Marson	Landowner Nominee
Harry Young	Business Representative
Rodney West	Ecological Representative for RSPB, NT, SWT
Vacancy	Householder Representative
5 Parish Councillors representing the community:	
Tim Beach	Parish Council Nominee (Snape)
David McGinity	Parish Council Nominee (Butley, Wantisden & Capel St Andrew)
Brian Johnson	Parish Council Nominee (Boyton and Bawdsey)
Peter Palmer	Aldeburgh Town Council Nominee
Mike Finney	Orford and Gedgrave Parish Council Nominee



Highlights over the last 6 years

2012	Monthly meetings to scope wall sustainability funding and costs
2013	Assessment of river walls completed by Andrew Hawes Scoping out the Sustainability Appraisal for the Estuary Plan First Saltings restoration project completed December surge tide breached Hazlewood Marsh and flooded Snape The Estuary Trust was registered with the Charity Commission
2014	Drafting the Estuary Plan and website set up
2015	Snape Wall upgraded following surge tide Further saltings restoration project Public consultation on the Estuary Plan
2016	Phase I Aldeburgh wall upgraded - rectifying previous work Slaughden coastal defences upgraded The Estuary Plan adopted by statutory authorities
2017	Modelling of whole estuary plan for flood risk Launch of Save our Suffolk Estuary funding campaign

More Recently

The AOEP works closely with the Internal Drainage Board (IDB), a unique partnership nationally in fact, who commissioned a hydrodynamic model of the whole estuary which has recently been completed by HR Wallingford, funded by the Regional Flood and Coastal Committee. This assessment highlights the flood risk in a number of scenarios (various wall heights and surge events) and provides the information required to apply for consents to upgrade the walls. Part of this modelling was funded by Tidal Lagoon Power (TLP) as they are looking at east coast estuaries for potential intertidal habitat creation opportunities to offset their tidal energy projects in the Severn Estuary. TLP's modelling has considered potential managed realignment (MR) options (breaching of defences to create new mudflats) with various local landowners.

As previous modelling had suggested some localised flood risk while the walls were being raised, there were a number of discussions that centred on needing a flood release valve. Partly generated by Tidal Lagoon Power's exploration as to how compatible their needs dovetailed with our plans, MR in the Iken flood cell became an option under discussion. However, although TLP's MR option could temptingly save the Partnership £2-3 million pounds by reducing the upgrading costs (i.e. less wall to upgrade), the landowners' first objective is to have the Iken wall consistent with the rest of the estuary. This prompted 3 further modelling runs to understand the implications. The initial assessment of the report (draft received late on 5th March) suggests that it will be possible to have a height of 3.3 metres throughout the estuary (including at Iken) although some flooding mitigation to a small number of houses in Iken and Orford will be necessary as a temporary measure until all the walls are upgraded.

Currently, therefore, the AOEP are proceeding with the agreed estuary plan. It may well be that areas of managed retreat will be needed in future. There is a monitoring programme in place with Natural England to assess the 'coastal squeeze' issues our Estuary Plan may create in time.

The AOEP are working with the IDB to develop a fully costed and phased programme of works for the whole estuary which will include all management costs to provide a more refined funding total.