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Suffolk Estuarine Strategies

Deben Estuary Strategy

Introduction to the Strategy

February 2004



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The Environment Agency is the leading public body protecting and improving the environment in England and Wales.

It's our job to make sure that air, land and water are looked after by everyone in today's society, so that tomorrow's generations inherit a cleaner, healthier world.

Our work includes tackling flooding and pollution incidents, reducing industry's impacts on the environment, cleaning up rivers, coastal waters and contaminated land, and improving wildlife habitats.

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Introduction

The Environment Agency is responsible for managing the flood risk arising from rivers and the sea.

There are several areas in Suffolk that are becoming susceptible to flooding. The Agency has commissioned the development of long-term strategies to manage the flood defences for three of the Suffolk Estuaries: the Blyth, the Alde and Ore and the Deben. This project is known as the "Suffolk Estuarine Strategies". Flood management strategies are being developed over the next 2 years on a river-by-river basis starting with the Blyth estuary, followed by the Alde and Ore estuary, then the Deben estuary. This consultation document sets out the proposed approach to the strategy in the Deben estuary (Figure 1).

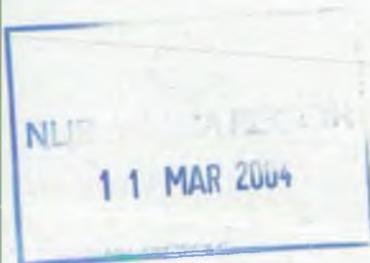
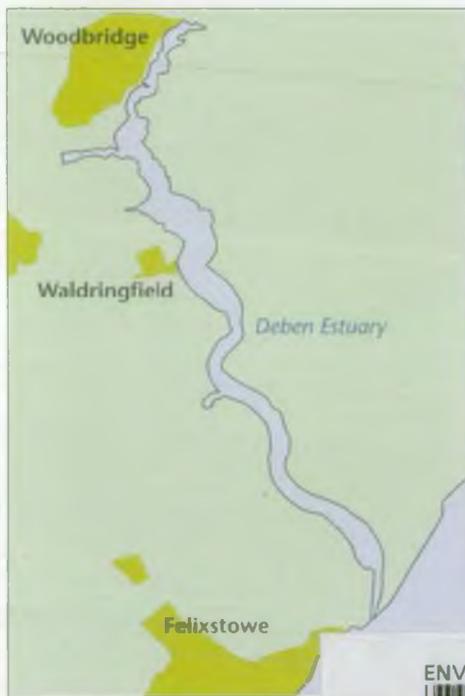


Figure 1 Location Plan

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Objectives of this consultation document

The objectives of this consultation document are to:

- Describe the flood defence issues in the Deben estuary and set out the approach to the study.
- Seek the views of interested and affected parties on the study and on potential future flood management objectives for the estuary.
- Identify key concerns of individuals and organisations.
- Seek environmental and technical data for the study area.



Photo 1 Looking south from Melton



Photo 2 Downstream of Falkenham Creek

What is a Flood Management Strategy?

The Environment Agency has permissive powers to build, improve or maintain many of the flood defences in the Deben estuary within the context of government funding requirements.

The Government encourages operating bodies such as the Environment Agency to consider flood defence in an integrated and sustainable way by looking at the whole of each estuary rather than individual sections. A long term plan, known as a Flood Management Strategy, is developed and sets out the policy and objectives for flood defence taking into account a broad range of local interests and issues. Within this framework we can make decisions about providing the most appropriate flood defences and this approach allows us to manage the whole flood defence system more effectively.



© Suffolk County Council

Photo 3 Looking up river from Bawsdey

Why are we developing a Flood Management Strategy for the Deben estuary?

The Deben estuary has been managed and altered by humans for many centuries. Much of the land next to the estuary has been reclaimed.

Flood embankments running alongside the river channel provide flood protection to this reclaimed land. The estuary and the reclaimed floodplain support features of nature conservation interest and activities such as tourism, recreation and agriculture.

Existing flood defences run almost continuously along the estuary from Woodbridge Haven to south of Hemley, with the remainder protecting the town of Woodbridge and the village of Waldringfield and other important locations such as Sutton Hoo. The majority of these are earth embankments with the occasional stretch like at Woodbridge having a harder protection on the front face.



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Photo 4 Martlesham Creek



Figure 2 Flood Defences Map

The estuary is now changing; climate change and sea level rise will lead to natural changes in the estuary such as an alteration in the alignment of the channel and widening and deepening of the estuary mouth. Such changes will lead to loss of saltmarsh and make it harder to maintain the current defences. The consequence of such changes will be to increase the risk of flooding to areas adjacent to the estuary.

Future flood defence management therefore needs to be considered very carefully to provide the most appropriate level of protection for residential properties, commercial and leisure activities and the environment. In order to do this the Environment Agency is undertaking a review of the issues affecting flood defences in the Deben estuary. This will determine and confirm a strategy for flood management to be implemented in the coming years.

Environmental considerations within the Deben estuary

The Deben estuary is an important area for those who live and work there. It has ecological and landscape importance, and associated economic, social and amenity value for the local community and tourists alike.

It will be critical for the development of any flood management strategy to consider these varied interests and to try and reach a balance between them within the constraints of national policy and legislation.

The Deben estuary is a valuable resource for nature conservation, with the majority of the estuary designated under European and National legislation.

The entire intertidal area of the estuary downstream of Bromeswell is a designated Special Protection Area (SPA) and Ramsar Site for its internationally important wintering bird populations, in particular its numbers of dark-bellied brent geese.

The estuary is also designated under national legislation as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) for its nature conservation value. The saltmarsh and intertidal mud-flats that occupy the majority of the site display the most complete range of saltmarsh community types in Suffolk. The Deben estuary also forms part of the Suffolk Coasts and Heaths Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), a designation highlighting its landscape value.



Photo 5 Tide Mill at WoodBridge



Figure 3 Conservation areas

The Deben estuary area also houses the site of Sutton Hoo, the ancient burial ground of past Anglo-Saxon pagan kings. This makes it one of Britain's most important archaeological sites, as important as Stonehenge. Another historically important site is the Tide Mill at Woodbridge.

Any flood management options within or adjacent to all of these important sites have the potential to adversely affect the features of interest, or conversely, provide opportunities for enhancement.

The estuary provides a setting for important features related to residential and commercial land use, recreation and tourism and water quality. Navigation and the many moorings and boatyards along the estuary are of particular importance to commercial and recreational stakeholders on the Deben. The impacts of the flood management strategy on these features will be a core consideration in its development. A key component of the Deben estuary strategy will be an environmental appraisal of the proposed options carried out as part of the Strategic Environmental Assessment of the Strategy.

What is the approach to the Deben estuary strategy study?

The Deben estuary is the third of the Suffolk Estuarine Strategies studies to be undertaken. There are a number of key stages throughout the programme, as shown in Table 1.

Initially, the future behaviour of the river will be predicted using a computer model of the estuary. This will help us to identify options for managing the defences in the future, and look at how those options will affect the estuary and its flood management objectives over time.

Consultation with organisations and individuals who are interested and/or affected by the proposed strategy will be undertaken at these key stages. The parties to be consulted are listed at the end of this document. If you know of any organisation not presently listed which you feel should be or you would like your own organisation added to the list, please contact those people listed in the contacts page at the end of this document.



Photo 6 Defences on Deben estuary



Photo 7 Downstream of Tide Mill - looking south

Table 1 | Outline of the consultation process

Stage in Programme	Consultation Opportunity	Timescale
Introduction to the Deben estuary study	Initial consultation with the local community, landowners, statutory authorities and other parties	Winter 2003
Initial appraisal of flood management options for the Deben estuary	<p>Presentation of the various scheme options in the form of a public consultation document.</p> <p>Consultation with organisations and individuals who have expressed an interest in response to the previous consultation.</p> <p>Public exhibition to present the various scheme options</p>	Summer 2004
Appraisal of preferred flood management option for the Deben estuary	<p>Presentation of the preferred option in the form of a public consultation document. Consultation with organisations and individuals who expressed an interest in response to the previous consultation document.</p> <p>Public exhibition of Deben estuary strategy</p>	Autumn/ Winter 2004/5
Publication of Deben estuary strategy	Advertisement in local newspapers. Report available for public comment	Spring 2005
Approval of Deben estuary strategy	Period for review of strategy by Defra and other statutory consultees	From Summer 2005
Deben estuary strategy implementation	Implementation of the Deben estuary strategy findings and recommendations	Following approvals

Who will be consulted about the Deben estuary strategy study?

The following groups will be contacted during the present and future consultations, as well as the general public:

Alderton Parish Council	Department for Transport
Anglian Water plc.	East Anglia Fisherman's Association
Anglian Wildfowlers Association	Eastern Sea Fisheries Joint Committee
Barker Gotlee	East Suffolk Water Ski Club
Bawdsey Parish Council	East Suffolk Water Abstractors Group
Bromeswell Parish Council	English Heritage
British Association for Shooting and Conservation	English Nature
British Canoe Union	Environment Agency
British Telecom	Essex and Suffolk Water Company
British Trust for Ornithology	Felixstowe Town Council
Butley Parish Council	Hasketon Parish Council
CEFAS, Centre for Environment, Fisheries, and Aqua-culture Science	Hemley Parish Council
Country Land and Business Association	Kirton and Falkenham Parish Council
Countryside Agency	Maritime and Coastguard Agency
Crown Estate	Martlesham Parish Council
Deben Yacht Club	Melton Parish Council
Defra, Department of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs	National Farmers Union, NFU
	National Grid

National Monuments Record Centre	Waldringfield Hut Owners Association
National Trust	Waldringfield Parish Council
Norfolk and Suffolk Anglers	Waldringfield Sailing Club
Norfolk & Suffolk Local Flood Defence Committee (LFDC)	Woodbridge Anglers Club
Ramblers Associations	Woodbridge Cruising Club
RDS, Rural Development Service	Woodbridge Golf Club
River Deben Association	Woodbridge Parish Council
River Deben (Upper & Lower) IDB	Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust
RNLI, Royal National Lifeboat Institution	
RSPB, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds	As well as,
RYA, Royal Yachting Association	Local conservancy bodies
Seckford Golf Club	Local landowners and businesses
Strutt and Parker	Local clubs
Sutton Parish Council	Voluntary and special interest groups
Suffolk Coastal District Council	
Suffolk Coasts and Heaths Management Unit	
Suffolk County Anglers Association	
Suffolk County Council	
Suffolk Preservation Society	
Suffolk Underwater Studies Group	
Suffolk Wildlife Trust	
Transco	
Waldringfield Boat Yard Ltd	
Waldringfield Fairways Committee	

Consultation contact

As part of the introduction to the Deben strategy, we are seeking everyone's views on the study and on potential future management objectives for the estuary. If anyone has any comments, would like to raise any key issues or concerns, or are able to provide any useful information in the development of the strategy, please use the enclosed comments form.

Alternatively, please contact the project team at the following address:

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