

Essex estuaries flood management strategies



Introduction

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 river system rather than individual sections.

A long term plan, known as a flood defence 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.

The Environment Agency is currently progressing with a strategic approach to flood management on the estuaries and coasts of Essex and Suffolk. More details of the Suffolk Strategies can be found on the relevant fact sheet.

Essex estuaries

The Essex Seawall Management Strategy produced in 1998 aimed to present an economic approach to the management of Essex tidal defences in line with the recommendations of the Essex Shoreline Management Plan (1997).

The main policy options for flood defence are as follows:

- Hold the Line
Continue to maintain or improve defences
- Managed Realignment
Breach a defence allowing tidal inundation to high land or build a newly aligned defence landwards of the original
- Advance the Line
Reclamation of the intertidal / subtidal foreshore seaward of the defence

- Limited Intervention
Emergency works only for health and safety reasons
- No Active Intervention

The Essex Seawall Strategy recommended a policy of 'hold the line' for many Essex frontages pending hydrodynamic modelling studies of all the Essex estuaries.

Many of these frontages were considered to have low economic benefits in terms of what they protect compared to the expenditure needed to maintain them.

Horsey Island



The hydrodynamic studies would allow a better understanding of the estuarine processes and the response of estuaries to future sea level rise and related climate change scenarios.



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In line with the Essex Seawall Strategy recommendations, Halcrow have been commissioned to produce a coherent flood management strategy for each of the Essex Estuarine complexes taking into account economics, technical feasibility, socio-economics and environmental sustainability.

Flood management strategies

Many different groups will be involved in the development of the flood management strategies. These will include the project team, steering groups, statutory authorities, residents, landowners, businesses, non-governmental organisations, general public and the media.

Throughout the development of the flood management strategies, a series of information bulletins will be distributed to all interested parties to keep people informed of progress.

The Strategies are being progressed on a rolling programme and all Essex estuaries should have a flood management strategy in place by 2007.

The Roach and Crouch Flood Management Strategy is already underway and is to be followed by the Colne and Blackwater, the Stour and Orwell and finally Hamford Water.

Each strategy will take about 3 years to complete and begins with a period of data collection, monitoring and modelling, followed by strategy design and public consultation.

The aim is to produce a flood management strategy, which will provide a sustainable approach to the management of the estuaries' flood defences including local socio-economic and environmental issues.

The information from these strategies will then be fed into the second edition Shoreline Management Plans. In order to take forward strategies in this holistic way it will mean using new approaches to flood defence problems.

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