



Funding Workshop Summary

18 May 2010

This note sets out a summary of some of the key lessons and conclusions to emerge from the discussion.

Workshop Objectives:

- Share existing knowledge about funding
- Develop way forward for the funding the priorities from the Alde and Ore Futures project
- Start creating a 'blueprint' for funding along the Suffolk coast
- Develop a clear short term plan of action

Presentations from:

- Jeremy Schofield (Suffolk Coastal District Council) Bill Parker (Suffolk Coast Futures)
- Steve Hayman (Environment Agency) Tony Coe (Regional Flood Coast Committee)
- Edward Greenwell (East Suffolk Internal Drainage Board)
- Fran Bedding (Suffolk County Council)
- Eric Norman (Suffolk Coastal District Council)
- Andrew Blois (Blyth Landowner)
- Gerry Mathews (New approaches)
- Cathy Smith (Suffolk Coast and Heaths AONB)
- Geoff Fordham (Other coastal initiatives)

Introduction

The area faces a variety of issues including:

- Climate change
- An ageing population
- Housing affordability
- Vulnerability of our coasts
- The long term future of the area's economy and its assets – agricultural, heritage, nature

The priorities of the new government and the state of public finances mean there will have to be less reliance on central government and top-down approaches, but the need to devise innovative local solutions. While coastal defence funding was the main focus of the meeting, it is clear that to persuade potential funders to support initiatives there will need to be an integrated package of actions pursuing a variety of shared objectives that provide a *justification* for defending our coast.

Key lessons and conclusions

Funding bodies' requirements

The partnership will require funding, for a variety of strands of activity:

- Research in valuing what we have
- Communication and understanding
- Develop strategic plans
- Delivery of action plans
- Ongoing Revenue needs
- Major Capital works and enabling funds

Although the details are as yet unavailable, it is clear that all public funders' budgets will be under increasing pressure, and therefore, all will tend to look for a *variety* of returns on any investment they are able to make. For example, the Environment Agency's funding criteria

require details of measurable outcomes, and the greater the range of outcome within any bid, the better chance it has of receiving funding. Creating a 'basket of outcomes' requires creative thinking. For example, the addition of a footpath along a new / improved sea defences that can be integrated into wider access and education opportunities may make the proposition attractive to a wider range of potential funders.

A second major requirement for many funders is evidence of *partner* commitment – through funding contributions. Indeed the Environment Agency is required to achieve a funding ratio of an average of 5:1 across its investments – so any funding application that can offer a higher rate of leverage is likely to be looked on relatively favourably.

Evolving opportunities

The RFCC (formerly Regional Flood Defence Committee now Flood Risk) would welcome new initiatives to apply to the levy fund for funding.

The IDB (Internal Drainage Board) may be able to offer expertise and practical delivery skills for works on estuary walls.

Innovation – some new (and borrowed ideas)

As we cannot rely on traditional sources of finance we will need to generate the creativity to develop innovative funding ideas. A few suggested at the workshop included:

- Building 'self-financing' sea walls – using waste that would otherwise go to landfill
- Use of enabling development
- Developing revenue streams from renewable energy sources e.g wind-farms
- Recycling decommissioned offshore oil platforms for inshore reefs
- Sales (tourist) tax

Challenges to be taken into account:

- What is a sustainable sea wall and to what standard are walls to be kept to?
- The additional costs that need to be addressed when budgeting
 - Planning permission applications through Parish Councils are eligible for a 50% rebate.
 - Archaeology costs can be reduced through agreement on the frequency of inspections and appropriate training of machinery operators
 - The current lack of appropriate waste material and the ability to access the site from only 180°
 - Waste soil permissions vary due to volume of material used p.a.
 - Cost of licences (e.g. FEPA)
 - Environmental audits and Environmental Impact Assessment (where required)

Experience from elsewhere

Some of these lessons are confirmed by the experience of other coastal towns that have succeeded in raising finance for some kind of regeneration programme. Initiatives in towns as diverse as Morecambe, Chichester and Scarborough have all displayed the following characteristics:

- Integrated management through active partnership structures inc:
 - national and local government
 - government agencies
 - local communities
 - local business
 - conservation NGOs
- Multiple shared objectives: these vary according to local circumstances (and often include coastal defence), but also address economic development and community concerns
- All recognise the importance of a long-term strategy but...
 - ...also stress the value of short-term quick wins, to build support and maintain morale

- Some good examples include: emphasising local labour (creating local jobs and developing new skills), using local businesses and wherever possible locally sourced materials
- Perhaps most important of all: strong leadership, which can come from public private or community sectors.

Discussion Comments

- IDB could be a potential delivery organisation
- Develop clearer (and common) understanding of criteria for 'sustainability' of sea walls based on outcomes
- Action needed on seawalls along Alde and Ore
 - need to start planning process across the estuary
 - Planning process to plug into ACES – combined effort
 - River wall monitoring has already identified areas in need of immediate works – in advance of ACES
- Need to be clear as to who will drive process forward
- Need for a consistent environmental protocol for the planning process
- Prepare for lobby of new government – need to brief Therese Coffey

Next steps

- Draft the framework Plan for the Alde and Ore to provide the basis of multiple shared objective funding bids **Action: Bill Parker**
- Hold a Planning Forum (potentially within a wider Estuaries Forum) **Action: Bill Parker**
 - For all the estuaries
 - Specific audience – landowners with sea walls
 - To include - Environment Agency / Suffolk Coastal District Council (Planning team) / Natural England
- Set up innovation team to review funding issues **Action: Bill Parker**
 - Short term: develop support for both planning applications and actions in specific locations
 - Medium term – wider estuary approach
 - Longer term – innovative approaches to secure revenue in the longer term

Conclusion

Securing funding in future will become increasingly dependent on the delivery of a range of shared objectives not just that of flood risk management, being able to demonstrate this will be essential to support future funding applications.