

Alde & Ore Futures Conference feed back report  
Community sub group

This session began by giving those present the opportunity to briefly introduce themselves around the table groups, as networking was seen to be an important element of the conference - in addition to the content.

Using a system of interactive voting technology, a series of questions was posed to provide both an insight into the work of the Community sub group, and to validate and communicate issues raised through their work, with those present as representatives of the Community. The idea being to build on the practise of 'Poderen' meaning 'working together' as introduced by Frank Duent at the September 2009 conference - where one of the key lessons was to involve as many people as possible in exploring issues and solutions. (See report of the September 2009 Conference on the website).

The following is a summary of the specific questions and interactive results (from 94 people) with the brief commentary to set the context of this information. (Graphs are enclosed in appendix.)

The first question asked attendees to record which of the areas listed below they lived in, or closest to – with the aim of recording the geographic representation of those attending the conference and to see if any trends emerged between the geographic areas.

Results:

Blaxhall/Tunstall/Iken = 8%  
Wantisden/Chilesford/Sudbourne = 8%  
Benhall/Sternfield/Farnham = 10%  
Capel St Andrew/Boyton/Hollesley = 11%  
Butley/Gedgrave/Orford = 12%  
Aldeburgh/Friston/Snape = 19%  
Did not live in or near any of the above areas = 32%

68% of the people attending the conference lived in or near the geographic area of the Alde & Ore Futures project. The split between the project area approximately matched the actual population dispersal, with a slightly higher number from the Aldeburgh/Friston/Snape area - which may have been due to the location of the conference. The Chair of the Community group then introduced the members of the sub group and the area they represented demonstrating a geographic and interest spread.

Question 2 asked if people had read the Shoreline Management Plan document?

Results:

Yes – the whole report = 29%  
Yes – the executive summary only = 22%  
Yes – the section about my area only = 16%  
No – but would do so following conference = 32%  
No – not interested in Shoreline management = 1%

It was encouraging (following the introduction to the day which had explained the relevance of the SMP) that in total 67% of those attended had at least read part of this, and the remainder (32%) said they would do so, with only 1 person saying they were not interested. The links between the Shoreline Management Plan and the ACES (A Coast & Estuary Strategy) which would be completed and put out for consultation in 2011 - were mentioned.

The audience was advised that the Community sub group had meet on six occasions, following on from the feedback from the conference in September 2009 its aim was to identify negative impacts on the quality of life in the Alde & Ore area.

The interactive presentation then asked the 94 people attending to rank factors in order of greatest negative impact. Adding the scores for 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> choice together 'Reduced economic opportunities/current recession' had the highest impact followed by 'Reduced broadband service, mobile and/or TV signal' - although this category also scored the highest % as the least important response, mainly from those outside the area, indicating that this issue is either very significant or not at all significant to people. (Research indicates that there are pockets of very poor coverage in the area.) 'Lack of public transport or access to services' was joint third.

These results will inform the action plan for the Community sub group. Some actions have already been taken to highlight the need for improved Broadband in the area. As we learnt at the September 2009 conference core is "to find solutions to multiple issues at the same time". Emergency planning has been identified as a theme by several of the sub groups and this relies on mobile/broadband technology as a means of information.

The fourth question established if those attending knew the cause of the 1953 floods. All but 4% of those attending knew that it was caused by a weather event coinciding with exceptional high tides. Apart from mining accidents, the 1953 flood was the greatest peacetime disaster in British history. In the UK 40,000 people were evacuated from their homes, 300 lives were lost and 24,000 houses damaged. 160,000 acres of agricultural land was rendered sterile for a season at least. In Holland 1,800 people died and 50,000 head of cattle were lost.

Following on from this the next interactive question (5) asked about experiences during the recent bad weather.

Only 5 of those attending from outside the area answered that they were 'unable to travel due to snow/road conditions', compared to 26 people within the Alde & Ore area, however, a further 27 people in the area were unaffected. Equal numbers of people - both within and outside the area (a total of 4% of those attending) 'had to stay home due to closed schools/child care'.

Twice the number of people in the Alde & Ore area suffered from limited information compared to those outside the area, and a significant number (16%) of those attending said 'it was not clear what I could do to help the community and myself' validating the theme that greater communication would assist.

It was commented that in 1953 there was a strong community spirit and significant level of human resources responded compared to recent experiences where people may not know their neighbours and fear litigation should they act. These dilemmas were considered a product of current times, but ones that could be overcome.

Question 6 asked which of the agencies (connected to the conference) did people have an understanding of - with regard to their function and responsibilities?

Results for this question were as follows; Environment Agency = 28%, Natural England = 22%, Suffolk Joint Emergency Planning Unit = 6%, Integrated Coastal Zone Management = 26% and Estuary Partnership Plan = 18%. These results indicated that more awareness is needed especially as to the role of SJEPU and EPP, however the overall results were low when remembering that those attending could have answered a maximum of 100% against each agency

This question was also written in a way to draw attention to the use of acronyms, and the potential barriers created by the use of technical language. The Artists & Culture group developed this theme further, later in the conference. Attendees were also encouraged to view the displays in the foyer where these agencies were represented to learn more.

Another key theme running through the Community sub group work was Communication. Aims were to identify potential actions within existing current structures and good practise, to enable individuals to be greater informed and participate effectively in the complex decision making facing the Alde & Ore area in the years to come.

Question 7 results captured that the most consistent communication (32%) was through a regular newsletter. 24% of those attending thought their village/town had a Parish plan, 18% an updated website and 10% an Emergency Plan, and only 4% thought they had a Green Travel plan. 9% overall did not know what their Town/Parish had (2/3<sup>rd</sup> of these respondents were from outside the area) with 3% answering that they did not have any of these.

The perceptions of those attending, did match some of the research by the Community sub group with who did not have a website or Parish plans accurately aware of this, however there was a more positive assumption about Emergency plans compared to reality - which was that out of the 16 Parish/Town Councils that responded to a survey only 4 had both a Parish and an Emergency Plan. 7 Towns/Parishes had neither.

Parish Plans are vital to (as Frank Duenk from the Netherlands encouraged at the conference in September 2009) 'develop an agenda with stakeholders about the future of the area' and will form the focus of the sub group's ongoing work. Suffolk Acre had a display in the foyer and is available to assist Towns/Parishes to complete a Plan.

Emergency Plans are also crucial to assist our response to an actual crisis or in preparation for these, as well as being a way to identify and bring all available resources together in a creative and effective way, and demonstrate joint working between community, voluntary, private and statutory bodies.

The last question asked respondents to rank 7 potential protective actions. Although the overall average scores were fairly close, (adjustments were made if people used 1 instead of 10 as the highest score) in reviewing the individual rankings there were some significant findings:

Other than 'Protection of human life' which was ranked the most important for everyone, those outside the area clearly ranked highest the protection of 'Tourism/economy' with 'Agriculture & aquifer', 'AONB and wildlife' and 'Slaughden' all equally next important. The lowest ranking was given to the 'Hinterland' and 'Housing'.

The category of 'Hinterland' was also consistently lowest ranked by all areas within the Alde & Ore indicating that this may not be fully understood.

'Protection of Housing' ranked higher within the project area, with 'Protection of Slaughden' important for all areas but more so for those geographically closest. The strongest support for the 'Protection of AONB and wildlife' was from the Aldeburgh/Friston/Snape and Butley/Gedgrave/Orford areas.

The Chair of the Community group concluded that it was important to improve our understanding of how Coast, Estuary and surrounding land all contribute to economic and social wellbeing of our community. And that joined up thinking and actions (which are creative and innovative) along with greater communication and the use of combined private/public resources and the synergy between issues - would give real opportunities to move from a position of leaving things to CHANCE to real CHOICE, but would require some change of culture, assumptions and processes.

During questioning after all the sub groups had reported, the apology was given from a group of young people who had been invited as part of the Community group – they had worked on a musical presentation but due to exams were unable to attend.