



2nd Community Conference Report 26th March 2010

Conference Headlines

- Flood resilient estuary walls are essential for local communities
- A co-ordinated estuary wide flood emergency plan is required
- High speed broad band in the area is vital
- A comprehensive plan is needed for improving recreation
- Funding will be from multiple sources to deliver multiple benefits
- Communication with the wider communities has to improve
- Young people must be involved
- Shared objectives for the area is key to good governance

Over 100 leaders of the local community, local authorities and government agencies, more than two thirds of whom live or work in the area met to be updated on progress made so far on Alde and Ore Futures project and add valuable input into building up plans for the future of the area.

Originally launched on 4th September 2009 (see report on www.suffolkcoastfutures.org.uk/ report) the first Community Conference identified both what is special about the local area around the Alde and Ore and also the key issues for the long term viability of the communities in the area.

Between the conferences, 5 Topic Area working groups have been meeting through the winter to explore the issues in more detail and also identify possible local solutions.

The 2nd Community Conference brought together the learning so far and set the wider context of adopting an Integrated Coastal Zone Management approach for the area between Thorpeness and Shingle Street and in land as far as Benhall, Blaxhall and Hollesley.

Cllr. Andy Smith (Deputy Leader SCDC and Chair of Suffolk Coast Futures¹ Executive Group) opened the conference and welcomed all the attendees. He confirmed that the goal of the Alde and Ore Futures project is to plan for the long term future for the area balancing the needs of the local communities with those of the environment and the economy. He introduced the morning's agenda.

¹ Suffolk Coast Futures partners – East of England development Agency, Environment Agency, GO-East, Suffolk County Council, Suffolk Coastal District Council, Suffolk Coast and Heaths Unit and Waveney District Council.

Alde and Ore Futures – Bill Parker (Suffolk Coast Futures – project officer)

After recapping on the range of challenges facing the area in the long term (including: climate change, aging population and the increasingly difficult situation on public finance), and building on the lessons learnt from the Dutch experience expressed in the first conference, there are three key issues facing coastal communities:

- Coastal Governance or ‘who decides what’ and the alignment of organisational policies
- Enabling coastal communities to take greater ownership of their future
- Delivering action for sustainable coast by creating multiple funded programmes

The presentation then focussed on clarifying the purpose of the 3 inter-related but distinct activities that are currently impacting on the Alde and Ore estuary area.



Shoreline Management Plan (coastline marked in purple)

www.suffolksmp2.org.uk

Lead by Suffolk Coastal District Council and the Environment Agency, this plan looks at whether to maintain the coastline in its current location usually through the maintenance of sea defences (hold the line), let natural coastal processes take their course (no active intervention) or manage natural processes through targeted intervention (managed realignment). The plan looks at each section of open coastline over 100 years separated into three time periods. Currently the plan is going through the approval processes. At the most vulnerable location for the estuary at ‘Slaughden’ in the short term it aims to ‘hold the line’ and the medium and longer term options will be reviewed in the light of the additional work of ACES and Futures (see below)



Aldeburgh Coast and Estuary Strategy (ACES)

(Area marked in blue) www.suffolkestuarries.co.uk/ACES

Simon Allam, project manager from the Environment Agency, explained that this strategy specifically covers the management of flood risk in the estuary and on the coast over the next 100 years. It will identify where there is justification to invest national funds to protect people and their properties and provides a basis for national investment in flood risk management activities in the future. The strategy will explore different approaches to managing flood risk and adapting to a changing coastline by working with local people and partners. The strategy is currently at a data gathering stage and the draft strategy will be presented in a formal public consultation which is planned to be undertaken in early 2011. This work is informing and will inform the work of the Futures project



Alde and Ore Futures (marked in red) www.suffolkcoastfutures.org.uk

Lead by Suffolk Coast Futures a partnership of key local authorities and agencies this aims to take a much wider approach than that of flood and erosion risk management, covering at the long term viability of local coastal communities. The aims of the project are:

- To find better ways of working between the community and local councils / agencies
- To create a framework plan that addresses the issues and links together other plans and strategies
- To find ways of winning and combining national, public and private funding
- To improve the way decisions are made about the future of the area

The timescales for the project is until 2031 but the project needs to recognise the longer term implications of issues such as flood risk.

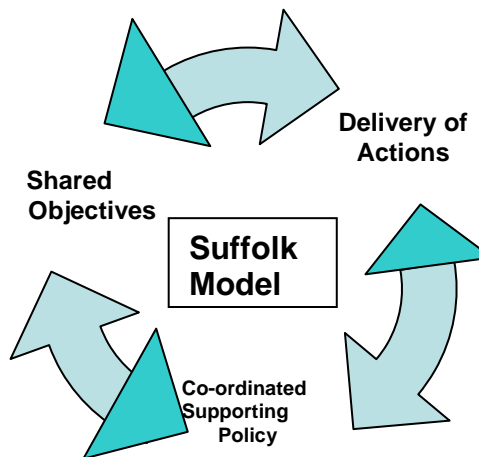
These three components are distinct, inter-related and important parts in securing a viable future for those who live, work and enjoy the area.

Governance

The focus of the conference was on Alde and Ore Futures and how the work on this estuary was to learn from previous experience from with Suffolk and abroad to make a real difference to the local communities. The conference was introduced to the Suffolk Model a new process to manage the governance on the coast. This will be developed through the work of the Alde and Ore Futures project and is likely to be the basis of the approach to governance along the Suffolk coast – Alde and Ore Futures leading the way.

The Suffolk Model is made up of three interdependent component parts to successful governance. These are:

1. Shared Objectives – Communities, local authorities and government agencies need to have agreed the shared objectives to determine the 'direction of travel'
2. Co-ordinated and Supporting policies - Local authorities and agencies need to have supporting and co-ordinated policies, if inter-organisation or even intra-organisational policy conflicts exist then this will inhibit the delivery of successful governance. Supporting policies will also enable greater accessibility to resources and priority within organisations that have the capacity to make a difference.
3. Delivery of Action – This includes the development of both the decision making process and aligning resources (including funding) to make deliver action 'on the ground'



These three components are mutually dependent and only when they are all aligned can effective governance be delivered. The Conference then examined in more detail the development of one component i.e. 'shared objectives'.

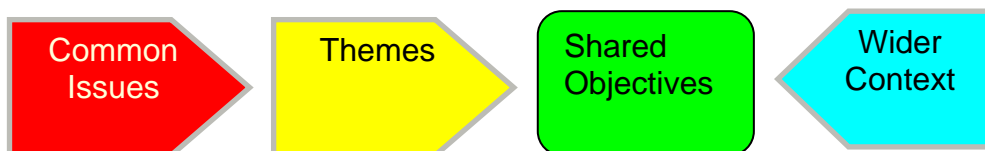
The development of 'shared objectives' is broken down as follows:

Common issues are made up of both **issues** (usually expressed as frustration with the existing situation or processes and also **aspirations** – ambitions for the area.

Themes are the aggregation of these individual issues / aspirations into common themes, often but from different perspectives or angles but coalescing around specific themes.

Wider Context is the reality of the 'the real world' as we all have to work within legislative, economic and policy boundaries.

However if these can be aligned between all the different parties then these can be deemed to be **shared objectives**.



The 1st Community Conference in September 2009 started this process together with a web survey and a local public event more than 450 separate issues were identified together with those aspects that make the area special to people. During the Winter 5 Topic Area groups (Communities; Businesses; Landowners; Environment Recreation and Access; Art and Culture) chaired and supported by members of the local community were asked to examine the issues in more detail, identify the key issues and identify possible solutions. Over the winter more than 70 local people committed a total in excess of 1,200 hours working on the identifying the themes for the shared objectives.

Topic Area Feedback Presentations

Full presentations are available at: www.suffolkcoastal.gov.uk/yourdistrict/coast/aldeore/conference2010

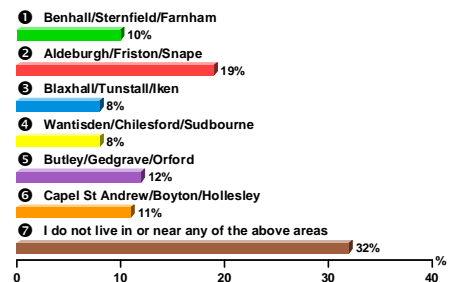
Communities



Utilising individual touch pad technology the audience was able to vote on a range of background questions posed by Cllr Marianne Fellowes (Chair). The audience response produced some interesting results including nearly 2/3 of those who

had responded had read some or all of the Shoreline Management Plan. The audience was asked to rank key 5 issues in order of importance of most significance on their quality of life; Reduced broadband, mobile phone and TV signal and access to public transport and public services were both highly rated at 44% of the audience thought they were either the most or second most important issue of the 5. Marianne highlighted the work that had been undertaken on identification of the areas preparedness for emergency planning and initiating work with young people to involve them in the future of the area.

Which of the geographic areas listed below do you live in, or closest to? (Please select only one response)



Businesses

Peter Watson (Joint Chair) representing the business community highlighted the vulnerability of many businesses to a major flood event and quoted from the Shoreline Management Plan (www.suffolksmp2.org.uk) of a scenario of 'No Active Intervention'. The tourism businesses are depended on maintenance of the desirability and confidence in the area and if this is lost it would be potentially disastrous for property prices, employment and the long term viability of businesses and communities in the area.

Tim Rowan-Robinson (Joint Chair) highlighted the need for businesses to think more widely of the 'brand' of the businesses around the Alde and Ore and plan better collectively not only for potential emergency response but also other key issues such as the 'offer of the area' linking in with the work of the Environment Group, the importance of broad band access and green transport infrastructure.

Cllr Andy Smith (Chair of the Conference) clarified that the current Shoreline Management Plan which is currently undergoing an approval process has identified that at Slaughden the plan is to 'hold the line' at Slaughden in the short term and for the medium and longer will be dependent on the outcome of the ACES and Futures project.

Landowners and Fisheries

Jane Marson (Chair) highlighted that the landowners were very much on the front line of flooding issues and the need to improve the estuary walls to withstand the impact of a major flood event. Work undertaken has identified that not only the height but also the shape of the sea wall is important. Initial estimates have identified 14 of the 42km of sea wall in urgent need of improvement work. New techniques and learning from the recovery from hurricane Katrina in New Orleans has identified a highly cost effective techniques to improve defences to protect from a 1:20 event that would cost in excess of £1m where as the value of the area that could be lost is estimated at over £15m and the reduction in the value of land due to salt intrusion over £25m.



Work is also underway to identify the real value fresh water marshes both ecologically and environmentally, these areas are outside the designated areas but are vitally important for wildlife.

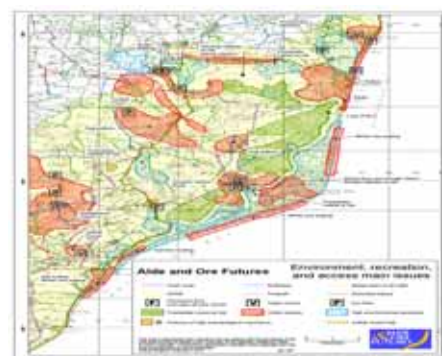
An additional contribution to the group has been made on behalf of fisheries who have particular concerns should there be a breach at Slaughden including the anticipated loss of oyster beds, as well as the expected loss of fishing and tourism businesses.

The landowner group has also started to look at some of the practical issues with emergency planning and what can be done to protect vital assets and recovery after a major event. This links to the same issues as within the communities and business groups.

The final point highlighted by Jane was that a major flood event could happen at any time and time is short to take action.

Environment, Recreation and Access

Tony Butler (Chair) highlighted that this group was very diverse, made up of local NGOs, recreational user groups, local authorities and community representatives. It was agreed that there needs to be a strategic approach to managing recreation and access in the context of a very sensitive environment. There needs to be a balanced view of the full range of interests. Recommendations specifically included; the development of quiet lanes based on local community requirements, improvements to access and recreational infrastructure and the further development of promoting local foods produced in the Alde and Ore landscape. A map was produced to pull all the information on the area together.



Culture and Arts

Drawn from a diverse group of artists the Arts Topic Area looked at the landscape from different perspectives and felt they could offer an unexplored 'emotional view of the area'. They identified that the language used about the coast was 'Churchillian' in style and this frames arguments in a language that evokes feelings of invasion and threat. Landscape values are not just economic and questions about the use of 'rock armour' which preserve one value but can destroy another. Artists have the ability to frame the language about landscape and interpret it, creating criteria for the notion of beauty. There are opportunities to create 'an emotional equation' that contribute to the conversation about the overall future of the area.



Chairs of Topic Groups and ACES Project Manager waiting for questions from the floor
From left to right: Tim Rowan-Robinson, Peter Watson, Marianne Fellowes, Jane Marson, Simon Allam (ACES Project Manager), Lawrence Edwards and Tony Butler

Feedback to the Chairs:

The following observations were made:

- The recreation map needs to show the recreational boating at sea as well as in the estuary
- The work of Futures needs to take into account the importance of the sea as well as the land

Shared Objectives

Bill Parker highlighted the progress made to-date on identifying shared objectives. The development of shared objectives can focus the effort of local authorities, agencies, NGOs, communities etc. A draft summary of the themes and the objectives within these themes was proposed. These were summarised in to 10 broad themes, each with a number of specific objectives:

- Better decision making
- Strengthen our communities
- Action through funding
- Access to information technology
- Ready for an emergency
- Managing our assets
- Valuing and Planning
- Local business prospers
- Housing needs are met
- Public transport

Workshop1 – Comments on the Shared Objectives

As this was the first 'cut' the conference was asked to comment via 'workshop1' The conference was arranged in tables and each table was asked to provide feedback on the proposed objectives – the responses can be summarised as follows:

- Need to focus on fewer objectives
- Identification of local aspirations is key
- Appropriate language and terminology are important to help people understand the issues and solutions.
- Access to information needs to be improved
- Young people need to be fully involved with the process
- More consultation on shared objectives is required and its time to get on with action

Full list of objectives and the responses from the workshop is available on the website.

The Way Forward

In order for the themes and shared objectives to be addressed, proposed actions have been identified. These have been split into those actions that needed to be lead by local authorities or agencies (with the support of local community) and those that could be undertaken by the individual or community group (with the support of local authorities or agencies).



The feedback from the conference will be shape the final drafting of the proposed shared objectives that will be agreed by a joint meeting of the Chairs of the Topic Areas and the Suffolk Coast Futures Steering group. This will form the basis of actions for the Alde and Ore Futures project. The full details are available from the website.

The Way Forward

Draft proposals discussed at the conference were:

Common Themes	What will the Topic Area, Local Authorities and agencies lead on?	What can I and my community do?
Better decisions are made for the future	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Suffolk Coast Futures (SCF) will work on how to reconcile different objectives and policies, through the 'Suffolk Governance Model' Alde and Ore Futures is to develop a management and investment plan with local communities and interest groups taking into account the SMP. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contribute to specific consultations as they arise. This will include ACES and the final phase of the Alde and Ore Futures project.
Strengthen our communities though enabling individuals and organisations to contribute to long term future of the area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communities Topic Area will be leading on work with young people supporting existing work undertaken by the Local Strategic Partnership A review on how communication can be improved will be undertaken 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Find out more information www.suffolkcoastfutures.org.uk Actively support the work of your Parish Council Respond to consultations on the "Have your say" section of the Suffolk Coastal website to: www.suffolkcoastal.gov.uk/yourcouncil/haveyoursay/
Enable action through access to funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create a new 'task and finish' Topic Area working group is to be set up to look at the entire issue of multiple source funding for coastal issues - lead by Suffolk Coast Futures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If you have specialist knowledge or expertise volunteer to work on the project via the Conference feedback form
Access to information technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create a new 'task and finish' Topic Area group to tackle this issue. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Register your broadband needs online at www.erebusonline.org.uk and encourage others to do the same
Ready for an emergency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop an area wide emergency plan network lead by the Communities Topic Area and supported by Suffolk Joint Emergency Planning Unit'. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage your parish council or business to participate Sign up to the EA Flood Warnings Direct www.environment-agency.gov.uk/homeandleisure/floods/38289.aspx or Floodline on 0845 988 1188.
Manage our vulnerable assets.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Environment Agency (EA) through the ACES project will work with landowners and interested parties to develop a flood risk management strategy for the estuary. Landowners Topic Area will work with the EA, Natural England (NE) and SCDC within the context of the ACES project on making the sea walls more resilient. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Respond to the draft ACES community wide public consultation early in 2011
Valuing and Planning for the best use of the special local environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Environment, Recreation and Access Topic Area will recommend how to deliver a strategic overview of the area. The Landowners working with NE are commissioning a report on ecological value of the freshwater marsh areas behind seawalls. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Join the Coast and Estuary Wardens scheme run by AONB Unit Tel: 01394 384948 for details
Local businesses can prosper with local skilled people and the areas assets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Led by the Business Topic Area, aim to develop the concept of a brand for the area around the Alde and Ore Expand the work of the Heritage Coast Towns Initiative to co-ordinate business activity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Individual businesses can support the Business Topic Area and the Heritage Coast Towns Initiative.
Appropriate housing needs are being met for local people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SCDC are working with Housing Associations and other interested partners on new opportunities for low cost housing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with your Parish Council to undertake housing needs survey this may also form part of a Parish Plan.
Public transport meets the needs of those who work, live and visit the area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Suffolk County Council to consult with Parish Councils in late spring on proposals for new passenger transport provision that meets local needs in the area. Including specific services for young people in rural areas. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contact your Parish Council with your ideas and comments. Use the local bus service Develop green travel plans, support is available from Greenest County

Workshop 2 – How to improve communication

Communication between local authorities / agencies and the local community is vital. The conference was asked to provide feedback as to how they would like to engage in dialogue on future progress from this project and the feedback would be used in the development of work Alde and Ore Futures work.

The feedback highlights included:

- The importance of local and parish magazines
- Improved utilisation of local press
- Use of road-shows and one-off events
- Development of interactive media and social networking sites
- The importance of schools and parish councils

The full details of the feedback are available from the website.

Alde and Ore inspiring

Closing the conference Nick Collinson (Manager of Suffolk Coast and Heaths Unit) presented a perspective on the landscape around the estuary. He highlighted that landscape 'records' our footprint on the natural environment, the way we have shaped and used the land around us creates a landscape that expresses the natural environment, as well as our culture, the economy and our history. The area is landscape is rich with spectacular wildlife, with commercial activity, beauty and tranquillity, a high demand for recreation and it changes and will continue to do so but it also tells stories of our past. The Suffolk

Coast and Heaths AONB is 40 this year and is an important protected landscape in a region that is poorly represented. Landscape can be defined through Landscape Character Assessment which captures its 'sense of place'. Landscapes matter as they provide a history of our relationship with the land, a sense of place that has a strong sense of public ownership and supports tourism to the value of £166 million a year. Nick concluded with the Alde and Ore has a special landscape, it's a jewel locally and nationally, there are clearly challenges ahead as the landscape continues to change



Postscript:

Of the 101 attendees 68 participants returned the event feedback forms. There were a series of questions to which the response could be – Excellent, Good, Average, Poor:

- 76% found the conference overall to be excellent or good.
- 88% felt the Topic Area feedback was excellent or good.
- 62% felt the 'what we do next' was excellent or good.

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