

The Deben Estuary Partnership Newsletter

Issue 2: Autumn 2009

Progress to date and the next steps

Since our spring newsletter we have made steady progress with some of the important issues highlighted by you at the first forum.

Positive links with the Environment Agency (EA) have meant that there is now a process by which landowners can act to maintain their river walls without having to wait for scarce EA funding. (You may have noticed the improved state of the wall below Sutton Hoo where the top of an uneven bank and failing block work have been corrected by the landowner, linking with recent maintenance work done by the EA).

Carrying forward the same principles of partnership, we want to work with Natural England (NE) and other groups to focus on the importance you give to safeguarding the peace and natural beauty of the Deben. To this end we invited Suffolk County Council officers to come to Hemley in early summer and teach us more about the interlinking landscape features of the wider estuary.

We found the morning very inspiring. The next step must be to draw Parish Councils and local residents into the debate. The special qualities of the environment can help protect its historic heritage whilst remaining an important place for wildlife. At the same time giving pleasure to more visitors, offering recreational activities and provide the economic opportunities needed by everyone who depends on the area for their livelihood.

Starting the debate on how to balance these conflicting demands must be our next task. To this end we are holding a **Second Forum** on **November 28th**. This will be a morning event held at **Waldringfield Village Hall 10.00am – 1.00pm**.

We want to talk about the diverse challenges to the estuary, so ...**Please put 28th November in your diary**.

Christine Block Chair, Deben Estuary Partnership

Working Groups start to pick up the challenges - the threat to saltmarsh



The DEP has set up a working group to identify and explore the possibilities of managing and restoring areas of eroding salt marsh on the River Deben. The thinking behind the group is that if we can find sites where we can reduce erosion or promote salt marsh growth, then there will be many benefits such as protecting the character of the river landscape, reducing erosion on river walls and so minimising maintenance costs, increasing wildlife habitats – the high water roosts for birds and nursery habitats for fish.

We need to use the expertise of river users, and work with the EA, NE and other groups to look at solutions that will not have knock on effects elsewhere in the river system. We have already learnt a lot from the RDA's project at Woodbridge and we know that proposals need to be practicable and affordable.

We will be talking to landowners and meeting the EA and NE to examine some potential sites, look at funding opportunities and develop an action plan.

Restoring saltmarsh will be an exciting project that we want local people to become involved with. Progress will be reported to the November Forum.

Trazar Astley-Reid Estuaries Officer

Making connections, establishing links

Views from: The River Deben Association

The River Deben Association has been an eager participant in the activities of the DEP. We have three committee members who are members of the DEP. We are aware of the many pressures on the river, particularly the potential failure of some of the banks. We also need to reconcile the different and varied interests of other river users in our activities.

An interesting observation from our visit to Hemley was that estuary is regarded as including not just the river but also the hinterland up to the break of slope. This presents a holistic way in how we think of the river. Up to now the RDA has commented on planning issues directly affecting the waterway. If we adopt this new approach our remit would extend considerably and we will need to discuss this.

Ed Stanford *RDA*

From **Nick Collinson**, Suffolk Coast and Heaths AONB Manager, comes the important view that **“the landscape of the Deben is not merely a sum of its parts, agriculture, saltmarsh, mudflats: It is also how man has shaped the environment, a sense of place, and cultural importance that encompasses the meaning of landscape”**.

Sharing and improving knowledge

The EA, working with consultants, are drawing up an Estuarine Strategy for the Deben and other Suffolk estuaries.

With this in mind the DEP and EA have drawn together a small Data Group to exchange information about the hydrology of the river. By sharing data and local knowledge the aim is to find a common basis for understanding how the river works, and to share this agreed knowledge with river users and communities.

As a step towards the Strategy the EA have recently had the height and width of all the banks measured. This data will be presented as a graph corresponding to measured points on maps of each part of the river.

Ensuring we are in the flow

Internal Drainage Boards (IDBs) have been in operation for over 80 years and are responsible for maintaining drainage from farmland via ditches and watercourses, to local rivers. This work has been funded by a drainage levy on landowners together with a contribution from local District Councils. (IDBs are not responsible for maintenance of main rivers - this lies with the Environment Agency.)

For many years the Deben Boards consisted of two distinct areas, The Upper Deben IDB which had responsibility from Debenham to Melton and the Lower Deben IDB with responsibility from Melton to Felixstowe Ferry. The Deben IDB has now become part of the East Suffolk IDB.

The East Suffolk IDB now covers all water-courses leading into the rivers Deben, Alde and Blyth. Locally the Deben IDB still plays an important consultative role ensuring that front line information reaches the regional body.

To create improved and ongoing liaison, the Deben IDB has now co-opted representation from the DEP onto their committee.

Graham Henderson *SCAR*

What does the DEP stand for?

Encompassing aspirations in a few words is a difficult job. We have put forward the following:

Mission Statement

To safeguard the Deben estuary from degradation by creating management partnerships of all the interested parties, particularly local communities, working together so that future generations may continue to benefit.

Those involved with the DEP: Trazar Astley-Reid, Christine Block, James Foscett, Graham Henderson, Neil Montgomery, Melanie Poole, Simon Reed, Robert Simper, Ed Stanford, Bill Waring, John White

Supported by: Bill Parker, ICZM Officer - who is sharing the lessons we are learning more widely along the Suffolk coast and estuaries through the Suffolk Coastal Futures Project, Mike Steen, EA and John Jackson, NE.

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