The Deben Estuary Partnership Newsletter

Spring 2011

Deben Estuary Partnership RAMSHOLT WALL PROJECT Graham Henderson

The Deben Estuary Partnership (DEP), is working to solve the problem of damage and erosion to some 30metres of the Ramsholt Marsh river wall at the north end of "The Rocks". The concrete facing blocks and clay have been washed away and urgent works are needed to protect the footpath, the freshwater marshes and land behind.

With technical guidance from the Environment Agency (EA), practical work from landowners, advice from Natural England (NE) and Suffolk Coast and Heaths AONB Unit (SCHU), and the support of the local Parish Council a way forward has been found. Contractors' prices for the repair have been obtained and it is intended that the work will be carried out this summer after the breeding season for birds.

The DEP see this small project as an example of partnership working between the EA, landowners, SCHU, the local community, NE and District and County Councils. It is intended that this partnership approach will be the prototype for other wall work that is required on the Deben estuary.

Suffolk Wildlife Trust has also kindly donated and erected three owl boxes on site to help the DEP to add wildlife benefit to this project.

YOUR ESTUARY NEEDS YOU ! A CALL FOR VOLUNTEER WARDENS

Do you enjoy walking? Are you observant? Would you like to know more about how you can help to manage the coast and estuary area? If so why not become a Volunteer Coast and Estuary warden? Suffolk Coast and Heaths AONB Unit rely on the valuable help of volunteer wardens recording their observations of specific stretches of coast and estuary For more information please contact – *Lynn.Allen@suffolk.gov.uk* **01394 384948**

ENVIRONMENT AGENCY WORKS AT FELIXSTOWE FERRY Mark Johnson from the EA

Many of you who have visited Felixstowe Ferry recently will have seen further works being undertaken to the river defences adjacent to the golf course. This section of the river has been a 'pinch point' for some years and this has necessitated a number of interventions. We have been regularly monitoring the defences here and, following the continued erosion of the shingle and settlement of parts of the rock revetment, we needed to instigate remedial works at very short notice. This has entailed some shingle recycling to replenish the area most eroded, plus importation of around 2,000 tonnes of clay to reinforce the back of the wall.

In the next few months we are planning to import a further delivery of rock to strengthen the most exposed defences and will continue to monitor the defences closely. We would like to thank Felixstowe Ferry Golf Club and members of the Felixstowe Ferry community for their cooperation and support during these most recent activities.

Looking to the future, we are continuing to consider longer term options to protect the community of Felixstowe Ferry. The issues are complex and likely to be expensive, but we want to continue to work with the community to try and find a satisfactory solution. A variety of funding sources will need to be explored.

Do you want to learn more about the Deben? How the river works, why the river mouth matters, what are flood cells, who are the MMO and Crown Estates and what do they do?

<u>We are planning :</u>

- **a series of evening classes on a range of estuary matters. These will be led by local experts as well as the EA and other organisations and will be aimed at giving information in readiness for publication of the Deben Estuary Plan**
- **a meeting with the Marine Management Organisation which will look at dredging and the new licensing changes coming into place in April.**

If you are interested in either of these events please get in contact with Trazar Astley-Reid

FOOTPATHS SURVEY MAKES PROGRESS

Neil Montgomery

The DEP **Access Group** is working on the protection and improvement of the Public Rights of Way both alongside the Deben and in the wider estuary valley.

The group has now assessed the amenity value of most of the footpaths and has prioritised four areas most in need of attention. This work is integrated with the Flood Risk Assessment being undertaken by the EA.

The work also links in with the Suffolk Coast and Heaths AONB` "Balance Project" which was awarded €503,000 by the European Union to improve interpretation and access to the AONB. One such project, in partnership with the National Trust and Suffolk County Council, hopes to create a better public footpath linking Melton railway station to the Sutton Hoo Heritage Site.

The Access Group is also looking at other problems and opportunities in the estuary. These include the poor condition of the path along Martlesham Creek towards Waldringfield, the need for better signposting of access points for visitors, and more waymarks to help walkers keep to the correct path.

SUTTON HOO SALTMARSH RESTORATION TRIAL

Simon Read

There has been a lot of concern over the continuing loss of saltmarsh especially in the Deben estuary which has 40% of Suffolk's saltmarsh.

Over the winter, the DEP have carried out works to restore the diminishing saltmarsh below Sutton Hoo in collaboration with the EA, NE, SCHU and, more importantly, with help from community volunteers

When you walk between Melton and Woodbridge, you will see, on the opposite side of the river, the top of two barriers made up of bags filled with silt and covered with a geotextile sheet, which partly close a breach in the old wall. Fence structures in weak places along the wall are also visible. The purpose of these structures is to slow down the flow of water through the site on the ebb tide, and allow some of the silt to be deposited. As the sediment slowly increases we hope that the saltmarsh will gradually regenerate. With the help of the National Trust, the site will be monitored and a record kept of what happens.

This is very much a pioneering project. The Sutton Hoo National Trust site is trialling new ways of managing saltmarsh. A recent visit from David Collins, Independent Advisor to the EA, welcomed the work and was impressed with its scope and potential.

The DEP have been very lucky in gaining support and finance for projects but funding for any work within the estuary will be increasingly difficult to find. Seeking innovative new ways to raise money will be needed.

Contacting us:

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FORTHCOMING DEBEN ESTUARY STRATEGY

The EA's Deben Estuary Plan is expected to be published towards the end of the year. The Environmental Assessment Scoping Document has been drafted, consulted on and is now on the EA's web site. The data that will inform the final strategy is being collected and assessed. The DEP's Data Group has been able to comment on and contribute to this process this has been a new and welcome approach.

"We believe that if an Estuary Plan is to be accepted then local people must have confidence in the accuracy of the facts and figures that have gone into its formation. Working in conjunction with the EA, we have learnt what data will be included: the height of the walls, the value of agricultural land, irrigation and water abstraction, and benefit from tourism.

"Thanks to some key work done by DEP members we have been able to offer additional information. Not only knowledge of what is happening at the Knolls, but also interpretation of data on river wall heights, tourism information and the value of agricultural land which will feed into the 'cost benefit' assessment of each flood cell – a key component of the strategy" ***Christine Block,*** Chair, Deben Estuary Partnership

The EA are seeking ways to improve communications and feedback on estuary plan matters. In future it is likely that work done by the EA will be in partnership with others and, maybe, some of what we have done here may facilitate change.