

RESPONSES TO GENERAL FLOOD MANAGEMENT OPTIONS CONSULTATION DOCUMENT

1. INTRODUCTION

Table 1 provides a record of the consultation documents produced to date as part of the Deben Estuary Strategy.

Table 1 Deben Estuary Strategy Consultation Documents

Document Title	Date	Distribution	Number of comments received
A5 Document: The Deben Estuary Strategy: Introduction to the Strategy	February 2004	Statutory consultees and interested parties	26
A5 Leaflet: The Deben Estuary Strategy: General Flood Management Options Consultation Document	Late August to 13 th September 2004	Statutory consultees and interested parties. Also displayed at Aldeburgh, Leiston, Woodbridge and Saxmundham Public Libraries and various yacht clubs in the study area.	12

In addition to the Consultation Documents, a Public Exhibition was held on 26th February 2004.

The following provides a general summary of the feedback received from these periods of consultation.

The majority of consultees were members of the general public but comments were received from statutory consultees such as the National Trust, RSPB and English Heritage.

2. CONSULTATION FEEDBACK - 'INTRODUCTION TO THE STRATEGY'

The comments expressed by the consultees, received from the initial roll-out of SES in 2003 and from the Scoping stage of the Deben Estuary at the beginning of 2004 are summarised below.

General Concerns

- Effect of increased tidal flow at river mouth caused by increase in water volume resulting from managed re-alignment further upstream.
- If areas of farmland are allowed to flood it would lead to a larger volume of water entering and leaving the Deben through a very narrow entrance causing more erosion and greater movement of the shingle bar.

Specific Concerns

- At Waldringfield there is possible breaching of sea wall - loss of footpath and flooding of residential gardens. If breach too small, likely to result in mud flat rather than salt marsh.
- Dredging of shingle for the Harwich harbour expansion plus removal of parts of the shingle banks near the coast for aggregate affects the East Lane (Bawdsey) point which will eventually have dire consequences on the Deben estuary, further upstream plus Felixstowe sea front. This should be stopped. Erosion has occurred since Felixstowe port was established particularly since mid 70's.

- Changes in silting, flow patterns and access for navigation have damaged the Deben through Woodbridge. These are obviously and directly caused by unrestrained commercial activities: restriction of tidal flow by placing heavy iron floating structures across the foreshore (without planning consent) and dredging at least 3,000 cubic metres of mud into the tidal stream bed.
- The silting up of the channel when the banks are left breached. The increasing mud on what were shingle hard which are used for access. The pulling out of mud from yacht berths with a fishing boat pulling a 'sledge' may be the cause.
- Concern at the state of the sea wall in front of golf links and the lack of any long term planning for the strengthening of this very vulnerable piece of river bank. Failure of this bank would lead to the flooding of the hamlet of Felixstowe ferry.
- Erosion at southern end of East Lane and Bawdsey Quay and reduction in size over the last two years of Horsesands, just past the quay on Felixstowe side. It was broader, higher and longer at low tide. Lack of maintenance at East Lane in early 2003/4 and the long term projection of the effect of global warming on Bawdsey Ferry.
- Substantial loss in height of salt marsh. This is worst at Methersgate and the island created by Lodgers cut.

The objectives below are only from the responses received during the consultation period for the Scoping stage and others have been defined. A set of objectives for the Deben Estuary Strategy, taking onboard consultee responses, will be provided on the SES website shortly.

Objectives

- To maintain/improve marine fisheries within the estuary systems.
- To have pollution from sewage works, industry and larger craft kept to a minimum.
- To prevent the placement of restrictions to tidal flow and make more careful assessment of bank piling schemes where they may cause serious erosion e.g. Tide Mill Yacht Harbour.
- To prevent the restriction to navigations caused by illegal houseboats and sunken dry docks in the Wilford Reach.
- The protection of the general character of Felixstowe Ferry and its environment.
- Maintenance/establishment of pedestrian access along the length of the Deben estuary.
- Maintenance of existing habitats and landscape values.
- To maintain and improve navigation and access.
- Mitigation of any damaging impacts on the historic environment.
- Fullest maintenance of navigation along as much of the rivers as possible without excessive water flow speeds that would make sailing very difficult.
- The maintenance, where feasible in economic, social, technical and environmental terms of the nation's conservation interest of the estuary.
- Maintain the river free from silting, illegal dredging, restrictive development and commercialisation.
- To protect and improve the economic and recreational use of the upper reaches of the Deben e.g. the proposed re-introduction of the Woodbridge-Sutton Hoo ferry service, and tourist boat trips from Woodbridge.

3. CONSULTATION FEEDBACK - ‘GENERAL FLOOD MANAGEMENT OPTIONS’

A simple analysis was undertaken on the comments expressed by the consultees on acceptable and unacceptable options; scoring each one according to how many times the option was mentioned.

Question - “Are there any options that you would find unacceptable?”

As can be seen in Figure 1 below – ‘No Active Intervention’ (NAI) was mentioned the most in the responses to this question. This was followed by ‘Managed Realignment’ (MR).

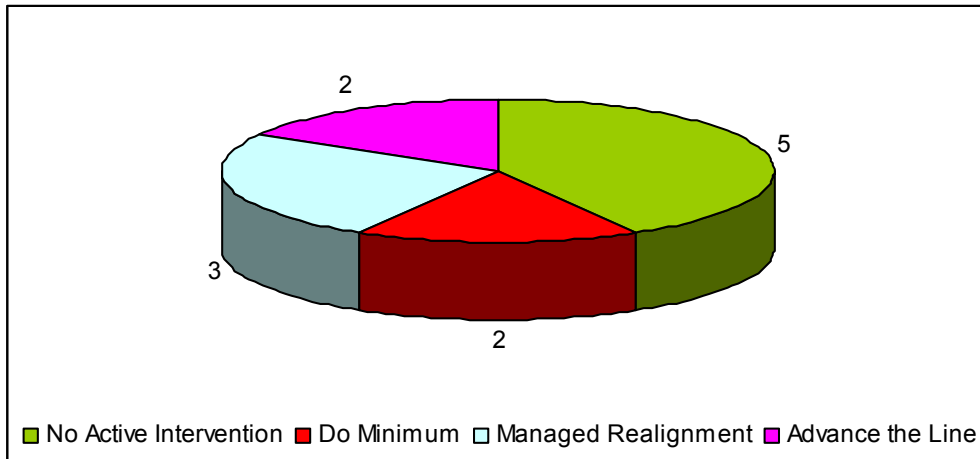


Figure 1 – Options considered unacceptable

Comments on options of No Active Intervention (NAI), Do Minimum (DM) and Managed Realignment (MR)

- The entrance to the river as it is at present offers little scope for alteration to accommodate an increased tidal prism and this must be addressed. The increased tidal prism will affect the rate of flow and therefore the stability of the entrance and exacerbate the effects of erosion
- These options may lead to considerable flooding of prime arable farmland and several low lying houses. Also breaches in the bank would cut through a well used public footpath along the river.

Comments on Advance the Line (ATL) option

- This is unlikely to be favourable from a conservation viewpoint.

General comments on options

- Any option involving damage or destruction of significant archaeological deposits or sites or listed buildings.
- Anything that interferes with irrigation abstraction points and any loss of farmland without compensation.

Question - “Please list which options you would find acceptable?”

Figure 2 below shows that – ‘Hold the Line’ (HTL) is the preferred acceptable option. This was followed by ‘Managed Realignment’ (MR) and a moveable tidal barrier at the estuary mouth.

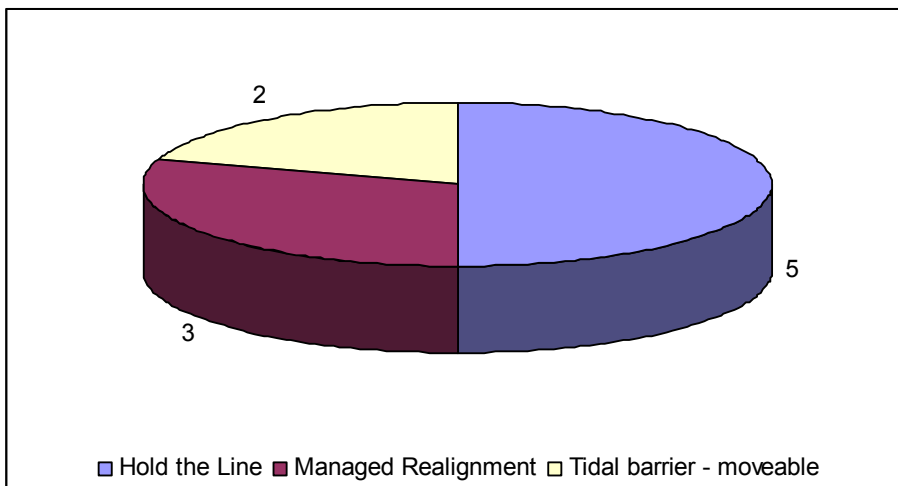


Figure 2 – Options considered acceptable

Comments on Hold the Line (HTL) option

- Implement this option where excessive inundation of viable farmland is likely to occur, as well as around settlements.

Comments on Managed Realignment (MR) option

- This option would be better from a fisheries perspective as it retains juvenile habitat (Eastern Sea Fisheries Joint Committee).
- This would be acceptable if it can be ameliorated not to have a detrimental effect upon the rest of the estuary re: rates of flow/erosion.
- This option should only be pursued through partnership with local landowners to identify best land for saltmarsh creation and should not be subject to compulsory purchase. It should be recognised that MR is for the wider public benefit because it increases the sustainability of existing defences and makes them more economic to maintain. Should be recognised in incentives to landowners.

Consultation Feedback Section

Nearly half of the consultees found out about the Strategy through direct consultation and word of mouth; with the effectiveness of means of notification of the Strategy’s development shown in the figure below.

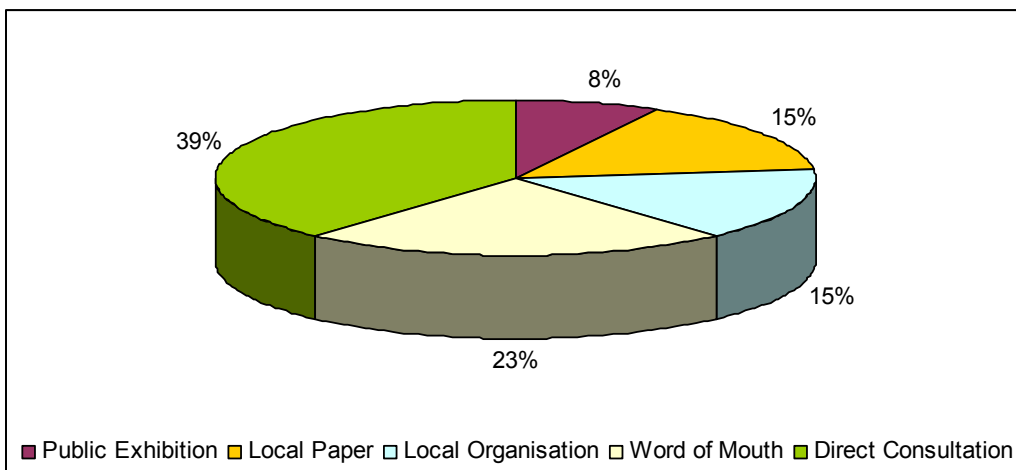


Figure 3 – Means of notification

On the whole the consultees think that the consultation process is providing a clear insight into the development of the strategies and that the majority found it easy, with only a couple finding it difficult to submit comments.

Expectation from Consultation Process

A summary of the responses to the question asking what peoples expectation of the consultation process is provided below:

- It is important to be kept 'in the loop'. But it seems that the priorities are already set and we do have the impression that as consultees we are not in a position to radically affect the strategy but only to alter details.
- If suggestions are not followed a clear explanation of why they have not been should be provided.
- To be given the opportunity to comment in the hope that if consultees had strong opinions they would be able to influence decisions.
- Due consideration for the historic environment.
- Clear communication, opportunity to comment and for feedback.
- That the Environment Agency will be very reluctant to carry out proper maintenance or spend capital.
- It is important to consult directly with those whose homes and businesses will be affected - not just organisations who represent them.
- A good, sensible plan taking into account the economic & environmental consequences of flooding the Deben estuary.