

**PUBLIC CONSULTATION MEETING HELD AT THE BEACHCOMBER
ROOM, SOUTHWOLD PIER, SOUTHWOLD
AT 2PM ON MONDAY, 7 NOVEMBER 2005**

Bill Forbes, Area Manager of Anglian Region, Eastern Area of the Environment Agency welcomed everyone to the public meeting and thanked them for coming. He introduced his colleagues:-

Mark Johnson (MJ) – Area Flood Risk Manager
Nigel Pask (NP) – Project Manager
Mike Steen (MS) – Suffolk Estuaries Strategies Local Liaison
Sarah Sinclair (SS) - Black & Veatch Consultants
Debbie Sheldrake – Secretary

Bill Forbes said it is important to consult with as much of the local population as possible. The coastline has been dynamic for centuries. Climate change has exacerbated that situation. Sea levels are rising and we predict they will continue to rise. In addition, we predict there will be increased storminess which will add more frequent storm surges to the sea level, thereby increasing the risk of future flooding. We have an enormous challenge to face locally. The majority of people do not want change and want the EA to hold the line. We are listening but there is a conflict because at national level it is not seen as justifiable to hold the line everywhere. At consultation we have heard the messages and have looked at the solutions we know you favour. Some do not work and some cannot be justified. Consultation has informed the process. In 2004/05 the EA spent in the region of £355M on flood risk management. This year the figure is £466M. Within the region (Norfolk, Suffolk and Essex) we have a budget of £43M, comprised in part of £25M capital, £8M maintenance and £2M local levy. The EA's flood defence powers are permissive, that is discretionary. There is no statutory duty to provide flood risk management in the UK. Every pound spent has to be justified because it is tax payers' money. Therefore we always start with the do nothing option which identifies the impacts of what would happen if we did nothing. Then we look at the options and the benefits associated with the scheme. When we have a scheme we have to apply three tests: - (1) is it technically possible? (2) Is it environmentally acceptable? (3) Is it economically viable? To work this out we have to undertake an analysis given by the Government which requires us to calculate the cost of the scheme, together with the benefits associated with it. The Government will not consider a scheme where the benefits do not exceed the costs. There is a prioritisation of these schemes. This is a point scoring system which we have to apply to all the schemes we put forward for funding. Currently, unless the scheme scores 19 points on the Government scheme then none of the £25M capital expenditure can be spent on any of those schemes. The only uncertainty in the future is what the point scoring will be. The Government will set the level when it knows how much it will spend on flood risk management in the future. There is an additional test that we have to pass, which is your test, and that is planning permission. For almost all of our schemes we would look to apply to the local planning authority for permission to implement the scheme. If it is not wanted by the local community or local authority we would have to modify it.

BF handed over to Nigel Pask, Project Manager.

NP explained why a strategy is needed. The estuaries are very complex so we need to be able to understand how the estuary is changing. The east coast is under pressure. Changes in the estuary have a linkage with changes on the coast. We need a sustainable plan to form the vehicle for our bid for funding. The estuary as it is today is man made and man managed. We have two options: - (1) Continue to manage the estuary or (2) cease managing and allow the estuary to evolve by the influence of nature. Sea levels are rising and in the estuary this means increasing water levels. The amount of water going in and out of the estuary is increasing. We are getting a continuing loss of saltmarsh. The channels are widening. This means that the stability of the banks is being reduced. The estuary changes as more energy comes in the estuary and it will want to widen and deepen the channel. Probably the greatest influences of man's management are the two harbour arms which are very close together causing a high tidal velocity. The main problems in the estuary are between the two marshes upstream of the Baileys Bridge. Tinkers Marsh to the south and Reydon Marshes to the north. Endeavours have been made to raise and strengthen these defences in the past but have had limited success. If Reydon Marsh defence was to fail, the tide flooding in and out of this area would increase the velocity and flow by 100%. Tinkers Marsh is higher and smaller but it is a European designed site, a Special Protection Area (SPA). If it were to fail we would have a commitment to replace that area of habitat elsewhere. Our proposals in summary are as follows:-

- The northern harbour arm fixes the north of the estuary from Reydon Marshes to the sea.
- To retreat at Tinkers marsh to allow the river to widen south (and keep stress off Reydon Marshes to the north).
- Install a sill in the area of the Baileys Bridge to increase the lifespan of existing embankments upstream of the A12.
- In the medium term (20-50 years) we see Robinson's embankment being eroded by the channel southwards.
- In the longer term (50-100 years) rock groyne to replace the north harbour arm.
- The harbour mouth will widen due to failure of the south harbour arm.

NP asked assuming we are just looking at the flood risk management needs what are our constraints? The three tests BF mentioned earlier. If we do nothing the existing system will continue to work for some time but it will fail unexpectedly and if Reydon Marshes defence fails there will be major changes very quickly. If we do not put a sill in we will fail to get the maximum life out of the existing investment. The issues to date are:-

1. The sill – its position and its effect on navigation and siltation.
2. Robinsons Marshes – its flood risk, loss of footpath and cost of moorings.
3. Harbour arms and their long term future.
4. Upstream of the A12 loss of footpath on the embankment and change in flood risk.
5. Habitat replacement compensation for the habitat on Tinkers Marsh.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS:

Richard Steward - Walberswick

How much have you spent on the south bank of the Blyth over the last 10 years?

Question noted and a written response will be sent to Mr Steward.

Richard Steward - What will the width of the sill be and how much lower in depth will the water be at high water of 2.4metres?

SS replied that in some form or another, the sill will be the width of the river. It will have to cover the entire flow regime. The detailed design of the sill has not yet been undertaken. It is a strategic option. If it is accepted and receives funding the next stage will be to look at the design to determine the final location and the upstream and downstream benefits.

Richard Steward - In the Newsletter if the drawing is correct it shows the width at 13metres. This means blocking off 88% of the flow of the Blyth. If you put the sill near the harbour cottages during a tidal surge everything will be washed away behind it, including possibly the Baileys Bridge and the road.

SS said this is not correct because the sill is a porous rock structure and the aim is to slow down, not prevent the flow.

Pam Stringer – Blythburgh resident

Why do you not clean the river Blyth and put it back to its original depth? Would it not help houses in Blythburgh which get flooded every time there is a high tide?

MS said the river has never been dredged from Blythburgh to Wenhaston. Opening the river up would do nothing to relieve the stress in the harbour areas. We are looking to get rid of the freshwater flow. MS thought the cottages last flooded in 1953.

MJ said the occurrences of flooding of properties at Blythburgh were more likely to have been as a result of surface water run off from surrounding high ground.

Robin Buncombe – Walberswick Parish Council

If you are uncertain about the current design of the sill can you give examples of where similar sills have been installed in the UK?

SS said we are not uncertain but are doing more detailed studies. We are looking at something innovative. Sills have been used in a lot of fluvial rivers to control and contain flow for the last 150 years, but not specifically in tidal rivers in the UK.

Andrew Hall – Old Hall Farm, Reydon, Southwold

During the period of time before the sill is built the wall protecting the Reydon marshes is on the move. The piling was 6ft from the wall and has not been repaired during Mr Hall's time on the farm. The river bank is caving into the river and has lost 8" since last January. Would it not be sensible to put some temporary piling in now?

MJ said he had checked with the Agency workforce (Operations Delivery) what works have been done. Works have been carried out on the Reydon wall this year in addition to the survey works.

Andrew Hall said no works have been carried out this year – it was last year.

MS said the survey indicates there are some things we need to look at on the wall and need to get together to look at them. We are trying to put together a strategy in order to free up money to do things like Reydon wall. In the short term we will do small amounts of maintenance work.

David De Kretser

Mr De Kretser has nothing against birds and wildlife but proposals upstream of the Baileys Bridge are dependent on finding an alternative site. Is this scheme on hold until an alternative habitat is found and purchased?

NP said the legislation does propose that a replacement habitat should be in place before a habitat is lost. However, it is not holding up the scheme because this is the logic for the sill that is proposed. If a sill can be installed it will expand the life of Tinkers Marsh and buy time to look for a habitat. Overriding public interest is a default position so if we needed to do work prior to purchasing replacement habitat we would have to go through that procedure.

David De Kretser - What will happen in the 0-25 year period? What happens downstream to the south sea wall and Robinsons Marsh?

NP said the short term is 0-20 years, medium term is 20-50 years and long term is 50-100 years. The main assets south of the Baileys Bridge are on the Southwold side. Blackshore cottages, together with the public house, sailing club and businesses on the frontage are all sited in front of the flood defences so any flood defences they enjoy are through their own provision. With sea level rise they will be open to a greater risk. On the Robinsons Marshes and Walberswick side of the channel, that channel will want to widen and our logic is to allow the channel to widen on the south side. Currently the bank on the Robinsons Marshes side is set back with a salt marsh, then after 200-300 metres the bank is closer to the channel.

Ray Leighton – Suffolk County Council/Suffolk Coastal District Council

At the beginning of the consultation there were 6 options. We imagined that all had some advantages and disadvantages. Results of the consultation show that option 5 was the most acceptable and least unacceptable. In terms of cost option 5 was exactly the same as options 4 and 6. Why was option 5 turned down and option 4 in combination with option 6 chosen?

SS said all of the 6 options have merit and all at option shortlisting stage were considered as building blocks, which involved combining 2 or more of them. We consulted and got a lot of favourable feedback for option 5, which was a sill type structure that narrowed rather than shallowed the river. The point of the shortlisting process was to get feedback on the favourable options and concerns on the impacts of any of the options. When we looked at option 5 in more detail we found it did not work very well. Narrowing rather than shallowing the river made it act almost like a slingshot. It would not have reduced the flows in the way we needed it to. The narrowing sill worked a lot better. When we go to detailed design it may be that a combination of narrowing and shallowing may work.

Mr Leighton explained that he meant the Hold the Line element of Option 5. SS explained that Hold the Line proved not to be a viable option on further study, due to the pressure for river widening you could not hold the river on both sides in the constricted area.

Michael Palmer – Dunwich Parish Council

Because this is about global warming and sea level rise how can you do a survey of the Blyth estuary without taking into consideration the fact that you cannot continue to repair the shingle bank?

MJ said in terms of Dunwich to Walberswick Marshes we are concerned about management of the shingle ridge and are addressing it in a study that has been initiated. There is one important point in terms of the priority scoring system. If a defence is protecting a European site there is an exemption so work can be progressed.

SS said early in the study we did look at the Dunwich to Walberswick bank and Dingle Marshes to assess whether they should be included in the study. The fact that the coastal defences are in poor condition confirmed that the priority study should be a coastal based study. The 2 flood plains are separate at the moment and because of the Dunwich sluice they will remain separate.

David Webb – Walberswick Parish Council and WCLC

Option 5 actually says advance by narrowing the estuary. The difference between option 5 and option 6 is that option 6 allows for Tinkers Marsh to be realigned.

SS said further study showed that option 6 and option 4 would in the main allow Tinkers and Robinsons Marshes to widen.

David Webb - This was not put out to consultation.

SS advised that in the short listing consultation we said “*During the next stages of the strategy study (shortlisting and appraisal of a preferred option) the shortlisted options and any combination of these options, will be subject to detailed technical, economic and environmental assessment to identify a preferred overall strategy for the estuary*”. We always had the intention of looking at the options in combination to find what works best.

David Webb - Where is the logic of saying we need to reduce the flow of water in the estuary to protect Reydon Marshes if as the sea levels rise the volume of the water will increase so the later stages of the strategy will have to deal with the river trying to widen. If you restrict the mouth of the harbour you would restrict the volume of water getting in.

SS said although the harbour is narrow, flow is not restricted at the moment.

David Webb - What rate is sea level rise?

SS advised that the Government figure we use is 6mm per year averaged out over 100 years. It is a relatively slow rise at the moment although there is land tilt as well on the east coast. With time sea level rise will increase exponentially.

In response to Mr Webb’s question “How much has the sea risen in the last 50 years” a gentleman who did not give his name answered 169mm (which is 3.38mm per year).

BF said we have to plan for the future and we need to take the best advice currently available. We would be accused of being negligent if we did not take into consideration the Government rules and advice on sea level rise.

Debra Shipley – Walberswick resident

There is a certain level of incompetence to offer alternatives to the community and when the preferred options come back say we have not thought it through enough. When you gave your opening presentation you suggested the bottom line was planning permission will be required. This will clearly be turned down. Will you make modifications again and again until it is passed or listen to local people now?

BF said we always listen to local people. If the local population do not want what we are presenting we will not do it. The worst possible position would be to not agree and to have to react to some event in the future. We did say within the document that we would consider combinations of all the options. We have put forward what we think is a combination of the best options.

Lady in front row

Has sufficient attention been paid to what will happen to Walberswick if the south harbour arm is lost?

NP advised that this is not the EA's piling. However, being a responsible organisation, we have investigated whether the piling would influence flood risk. We have modelled the impact on the estuary if the south harbour arm is lost. We have looked at the structure and talked to the people who manage it and it does not have an infinite life. It is under stress and not in the best of order. The value is not worth the likely cost of replacing it.

We recognise this was not a very good answer and provide the following additional information:-

The Blyth Strategy shows that the southern harbour arm does not serve a flood defence role. It is a navigation structure, managing the navigational channel and is the responsibility of the Harbour Authority(Waveney DC). Its loss would result in the harbour mouth widening southwards and some potential loss of beach.

Richard Steward

The south pier had rock put in about 10 years ago. You can put more rock in and it would probably last 150 years.

NP said we are trying to maximise what our predecessors have invested in.

We recognise this was not a very good answer and provide the following additional information:-

As stated above, the south harbour arm is the responsibility of the Harbour Authority. We would be very happy to work in partnership with them if they wish to retain this or a similar structure.

Peter Barrow?? – Dunwich Town Meeting

As a Dunwich resident, Mr Barrow said the marsh between Dunwich and Walberswick is important to both villages and has a significant effect on the sea defences. As an engineer, Mr Barrow said he does not understand the concept of the sill. Upstream of the sill the water will slow but there is not much property

upstream. Down stream there are houses and businesses. If you slow the river at the Baileys Bridge then it will create enormous pressure from the bridge to the sea. In the last hour or so of the tide the river is falling if you stop the natural process Blackshore and Walberswick will be under pressure. If the south pier goes Walberswick will be at much more threat.

NP said the properties at risk if the channel was to widen are downstream of the Baileys Bridge. The greatest risk to the properties is if Reydon Marshes defence was to fail. This would approximately double the tidal prism. That would have a detrimental effect. The banks have been built on weak ground with weak material and to do any serious work will take careful engineering otherwise the risk of foundation failures will be high.

Peter Bayman

At the present time the river is restricted significantly at the entrance. This was done some years ago to limit the amount of water coming in. You are limiting the amount of water going upstream in the area of the Walberswick car park. If you allow the south pier to go you will increase water, which means the marshes and Blackshore will flood.

NP said you have illustrated the enormous threat this part of the country is under.

Pauline Garnell

The problem that Walberswick may be flooded appears to be outside the remit of what you are doing. At Dunwich there are problems and Peter Boggis is doing his own thing. Is anyone communicating on these issues?

BF advised that there are Shoreline Management Plans, in which the EA is a partner. The first SMPs were produced in the 1990s. Almost without exception, the SMPs have a Hold the Line policy. The EA and local authorities have not been able to achieve this. The second round of SMPs is beginning when, from the EA's point of view, they will be more realistic in the constraints of what we can do.

MJ advised that Suffolk Coastal District Council will be the lead authority for the Suffolk coastal SMP. Delivery of this is likely to be about 18 months to 2 years.

Evelyn Hastings

What is the projected effect on Walberswick beach if the mouth is widened?

SS said the studies have found that the north harbour arm acts as a fixing point for the existing line and we need to keep this in place.

Lady in front row

Has advice been taken from the Dutch?

BF reported that we are part of the European initiatives and we liaise with the Dutch. It is a statutory duty in Holland to maintain flood defences to a certain level. The Dutch now have a problem with being able to effect the statutory duty.

Neil Murray - Walberswick

I have heard very little objection to the sill either narrowing or shallowing the river. Can you find out if it will work and let us know? Why is it necessary to let Tinkers and Robinsons Marshes go with the sill in place?

SS said we are sure it will work. We do not have detailed design of exact dimensions. In time the effect will be drowned out by sea level rise. Tinkers Marsh has to go to ease the pressure on Reydon Marshes.

Richard Steward

We all want Robinsons Marshes kept. Please do not keep repeating that Tinkers Marsh must be replaced.

David Webb

In your documentation you say the estimated cost over 100 years for the strategy is £47M. Could you give us a breakdown on the costings, eg individual cost of building a defensive wall around Reydon Marshes. We have spent 2 ½ years and a considerable amount of money on this strategy. That time and money could have been spent on defending Reydon marsh.

SS said unless we have a strategy in place as a mechanism for funding there would be no funding. The costings when we did the consultation were well in excess of £40M. We are now working on reducing the costs. We can give a detailed breakdown over the 100 year life span where we build in a Government assessed level of risk.

Robin Buncombe – Walberswick Parish Council

You stated that you could not repair Reydon Marshes defence in any other regime. The study is required before funding can be obtained to do the repairs. This would be revenue expenditure, which does not need to go through the priority scoring system.

NP advised that the concept of capital and revenue was lost to the EA last April. All expenditure now has to be justified.

Robin Buncombe – Funding is available for emergency repairs which is what Reydon Marshes needs.

BF said if we want to have a long term plan for the estuary we have to look at this strategy. If you are asking if works to maintain Reydon marsh in the short term can be done the answer is yes, if it is included in the long term strategy. We are not trying to mislead you in any way. The EA splits the money given by the Government into revenue and capital.

Richard Scott – Walberswick

Which pot of money was used for the pedestrian flyover which appeared in Walberswick? What is it for and how much did it cost?

MS said he believed it was meant to provide pedestrian access over the dune system but could not provide a detailed response. A written response will be provided to Mr Scott.

Action required by MS/NP

Sue Allen – Southwold Town Council / Waveney

Waveney have a responsibility for Walberswick as they manage both sides of the river. With regard to the Walberswick south wall there are talks going on about getting harbour management back locally. The business plan of the harbour lands committee does include money to rebuild the south wall. Are you going to work with this or say it is not worth doing?

NP said the crux of the matter is whether the south harbour arm is maintained it will help to extend the life of the existing Robinsons wall. If you look at the cost of rebuilding (and the view of the wall from the riverside is deceptive), from the work we have done the benefits from flood reduction in Walberswick are not there. We see

the north harbour arm as a positive interest. We would be happy to pursue talks about the south harbour arm with Sue Allen in future partnerships.

John Nicholls – Walberswick

In a proposal to let Robinsons Marshes go in due course there is some reference to what defence may be constructed. Can you tell us about that?

SS said we are not expecting anything adverse to happen to Robinsons Marshes in the short term. Any proposed works would have to meet the criteria to meet the point scoring system.

Oliver Knowland

Are you giving sufficient economic weight to the users of the river and users of Walberswick beach? There is a huge amount of recreational resource and we are not comfortable this has been properly costed. Broadly speaking we are happy with a sill but uncomfortable with the loss of Robinsons Marshes which would increase the flows in the river. Why it is so difficult to hold the line on that site? Are you properly costing the benefit of river users or more worried about birds upstream?

NP said we have looked at the value to landscape, tourism and recreation. We have looked at it from the sailing perspective and looked at the potential for owners to keep boats abroad. The economic argument is based on users of the estuary. We are working exceptionally hard to maximise the value to the UK economy and the richness of the estuary.

BF said with regard to birds and habitat against people, the consultation is about proper balance. Quality of life is enhanced by getting a proper balance.

David De Kretser

The harbour is used 365 days a year. All the moorings on the south side will be lost. Anyone who goes to Blackshore at high tide will see the water is very high. It seems you are asking them to take their own protection measures. Why do you not have a policy to protect the Blackshore side?

NP explained that the properties at Blackshore are very low but by definition need access to the river and they take the risk of working there to make their businesses viable. They manage by storing things at higher levels. They would not be able to manage if there was a 15 metre floodgate. Those businesses have doubled within the zone in front of the flood defences.

David De Kretser - The response then looked at the risks and said they are prepared to take the risks and you are prepared to let them. You have said it will get worse over the years. The water on occasion at high tide laps over the access road. Are you prepared to let those properties go?

NP said there is no business case to move the defence in that area.

BF said we cannot protect every house and property. Every pound spent on flood risk management has to be justified.

Wendy Maner - Halesworth County Council

Thanked the Agency officers for coming to the meeting and answering questions. Ms Maner referred to the paper, which outlines the implications of the preferred option, and states that there will be the loss of existing public footpaths at Tinkers Marsh, A12 and Robinsons Marshes. As Chairman of the Rights of

Way Committee at the Council Ms Maner requested confirmation that where it is possible footpaths will be sustained.

NP and MS had met with the 2 parish councils from Ms Maner's ward the previous week and the same point was strongly made by the PC representatives. NP confirmed that where possible existing footpaths will be sustained and where this is not possible the Agency would aim to put other footpaths into place.

Ted Drake – Reydon

How confident are you that Might's Bridge would survive in the event of a significant water surge?

NP referred to works where we are in partnership with Waveney. The project policy includes for a grass bank on the river side of Might's bridge to protect it from more extreme events.

Miles Jackson

In all the earlier options hold the line was mentioned. This has disappeared. This will mean ending up with more flooding and loss of habitat. How will you replace what you take away at Tinkers Marsh?

SS said that unfortunately upstream of the A12 the defences are very low so any significant surge would overtop them. There are very few properties within the floodplain. There is unfortunately no economic case for defences upstream of the A12. The impact on habitat has been discussed with organisations such as English Nature. It is expected, with the changes in the estuary, that the habitats upstream will change and that brackish or tidal habitats will replace them.

The habitat at Tinkers Marsh is an SPA and part of the reason it cannot be kept in place is that the statutory authorities accept that freshwater grazing marsh in the middle of a tidal estuary is not sustainable. The habitat will be recreated somewhere where it is more sustainable.

MJ advised that one of our DEFRA targets is to recreate habitats.

Claudia Granger-Taylor – Blackshore Cottages

As a resident of the cottages Ms Granger-Taylor is very aware of the natural phenomenon and that they will have to deal with more flooding events. They are worried the sill might cause more of these events. If they are put at more risk of flooding by the sill it is not acceptable to not provide defences. Will the sill be like a dam so that if there was a huge surge, water would spill out sideways on to Blackshore?

SS stressed that there is categorically no increased risk of flooding to Blackshore cottages from the sill. If at any stage in future studies this was shown to be the case the EA would not do it. Whilst the EA would not be improving the standard of defence they would be protecting it from erosion. The sill has been modelled. Representatives of Southwold Sailing club have been offered the opportunity to see a demonstration of the sill to alleviate their fears. SS hopes that after the demonstration these people will come back to the community and tell them how the sill would work. In the case of a huge surge the sill would not have any impact.

Michael Vaughan?

Two years ago the shingle wall between Dunwich and Walberswick breached and considerable damage was done with the increase in salt. It is about to

breach now and a little bit of effort in maintaining it would stop that breach. Can you maintain the wall and stop it breaching?

MJ said there is a problem with the shingle ridge in terms of sustainability. The material on the ridges is reduced. The problem with maintenance is having the material to provide the defence. We work with English Nature to try to gain approvals and have their permission to undertake the routine maintenance as we have done in the past.

Michael Vaughan?

Is the sill porous and if so how long will that porosity last before becoming a solid structure?

SS advised the sill is a porous rock structure. We will know more when we look at the detailed design. We have been using a 4 dimensional model.

Michael Vaughan - Are you using silt laden water?

SS advised that silt laden water has not been used for modelling at this stage but will be in the future.

David Webb

We were promised we would be able to see the modelling of the harbour area running some time ago but never did. It would give us more confidence had we been given that opportunity earlier. If you are looking at relocating freshwater grazing marsh from Tinkers why not select Robinsons Marshes?

SS said there is a presumption against creating or maintaining freshwater habitat in the tidal estuary. Currently the defences at Robinsons Marshes are expected to have approximately a 20 year life span. We have allowed a cost within the 100 year strategy. When it comes time to implement it the rules may not be the same and it remains to be seen whether it will still be justifiable.

Richard Steward

The Robinsons bank has one area of 30 metres which will require piling very soon. Will the EA do anything about this? Nigel Pask has sent a letter advising if it breached a business case would be needed before it can be built up. How long would it take for a business case to be made and would it be successful?

NP said the team has worked extensively here to manage the estuary for the long term. There are constraints within which we have to operate. The 30 metres piling would probably cost about £100,000 and where are the benefits?

Richard Steward – Could we raise the money and do it ourselves?

NP said you are not appreciating the investment rules we have to work to. If the money could be raised and it does not compromise other people's interests it is possible.

BF said this is the situation on a lot of the coastline. There is always the option for the landowner taking action to protect their property.

Robin Buncombe

When we looked at the options when they were published we asked if we could maintain it if we wanted to and were told we are not allowed to. Now you are changing your mind.

BF said if that was stated at the time Government policy has evolved because of the coastline in the east of England. The Government has had to come up with the guidance that we give the landowner two years notice that we will stop defending their land.

Sue Allen

Buss Creek to the sea is covered by a statutory 1933 Government Act. Southwold is a Haven port so how do you overcome the Act?

NP said we have always looked for participation and have not been advised of any communication regarding this. We have identified what we are proposing as not impacting but we would be pleased to have a copy of the legislation.

Sue Allen agreed to send to Nigel Pask and asked how long the next part of the consultation will take?

NP advised it had been intended to complete the consultation by the middle of October. Previously a 5 week consultation period was found to work well. The deadline for responses in this round is now the end of November. NP is not aware that this is causing problems. The responses will be published. It is anticipated the EA's studies will be completed early next year.

Sue Allen

Thanked the EA for delaying the end of the consultation period and holding the public meeting.

David Webb

If we adopt the most preferred option 5 it seems the other bits of options 4 and 6 are all further downstream. We could at a later stage see how the estuary is working and reconsider if necessary.

NP said in reality that is what we will be doing and whilst the objective is to look 100 years ahead the funding is only for 5 years. The strategy will need to be reviewed over 5 years to get the next tranche of funding available.

Mr Denny

We are approaching the high tide period and if something is not done to the wall immediately Reydon Marshes will be under water. The EA closes down for a month over Christmas.

BF assured those present that the EA does not close over the Christmas period.

Mr Denny

The wall Mr Hall referred to was built in the 1960s. In the event that Mr Hall is correct and it does breach this winter what are you going to do about it?

MJ said it is very difficult to access. A robust business case to justify work would have to be made.

Gentleman?

If Reydon Marsh defence does breach you will sit and watch it?

MJ said no there are many different scenarios and it is difficult to give specific advice in advance of such scenarios.

Are you going to repair the breach if it breaches? I have seen it breached and repaired twice before.

MJ said we cannot rush in because of difficulty in access.

Lady?

Would the wall be repaired?

BF said the strategy is about long term plans for the estuary. We do not want Reydon Marshes defence to fail in the short or long term. If it needs maintenance it will be done. Our engineers are inspecting our assets. The EA will take on board the information from the inspections and if work needs doing before Christmas we will do it.

Richard Steward

Regarding the Walberswick to Southwold footpath. Can you give us a categorical assurance you will maintain this footpath particularly given that Tinkers Marsh may be breached. If you let Tinkers Marsh breach it will flow into Robinsons Marshes.

NP said the railway embankment was built for railway purposes. Where the strength of the strategy comes in are the intangibles, ie people's usage rather than bricks and mortar are driving our study. The footpath is important for residents and visitors. I expect we would review why the pipe is there and if there is a drainage need for the pipe being there.

Richard Steward

The pipe underneath the pathway is the only drainage from Tinkers Marsh and goes to the sluice about 200 yards downstream. In order to maintain Robinsons Marshes you would have to build up the pathway by 0.7 metres. A new bank would have to have a concrete top.

NP said Mr Steward had illustrated the benefit of ensuring any new bank is resilient to overtopping.

BF thanked everyone for their interest in the study. Notes of the meeting will be circulated to the Town Councils and Parish Councils. Any questions not adequately answered will receive written responses.