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Suffolk Estuarine Strategies

Alde and Ore Estuary Strategy

Introduction to the Strategy

October 2003



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The Environment Agency is the leading public body protecting and improving the environment in England and Wales.

It's our job to make sure that air, land and water are looked after by everyone in today's society, so that tomorrow's generations inherit a cleaner, healthier world.

Our work includes tackling flooding and pollution incidents, reducing industry's impacts on the environment, cleaning up rivers, coastal waters and contaminated land, and improving wildlife habitats.

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What is a Flood Management Strategy?

The Environment Agency has permissive powers to build, improve or maintain many of the flood defences in the Alde and Ore estuary within the context of government funding requirements.

The Government encourages operating bodies such as the Environment Agency to consider flood defence in an integrated and sustainable way by looking at the whole of each estuary rather than individual sections. A long term plan, known as a Flood Management Strategy, is developed and sets out the policy and objectives for flood defence taking into account a broad range of local interests and issues. Within this framework we can make decisions about providing the most appropriate flood defences. This approach allows us to manage the whole flood defence system more effectively.



Photo 1 Aldeburgh Marshes

Why are we developing a Flood Management Strategy for the Alde and Ore estuary?

The Alde and Ore estuary has been managed and altered by humans for many centuries. Much of the land next to the estuary has been reclaimed over the past 200 years.

Flood embankments running alongside the river channel provide flood protection to this reclaimed land. A diverse environment has developed on the reclaimed floodplain that supports features of nature conservation interest and activities such as tourism, recreation and agriculture.

Existing flood defences run along extensive stretches of the Alde and Ore estuary. In many places earth embankments protect agricultural, residential and environmentally important locations, whilst the towns of Aldeburgh and Orford host harder concrete and rock revetments compared to the earth embankments. Historically, the estuary was defended through its entire length. However after the surge of 1953 some of the defences, particularly around Iken and at Long Reach, failed and were abandoned in the 1960's after it became unviable to continue to repair them.

Existing flood defences



Figure 2 Flood Defences

Some of the remaining defences are now deteriorating. Channel alignments are changing, areas of saltmarsh are eroding, and the long-term sustainability of the flood defences is in question. Sea levels are also rising; the effect of this will be to increase the risk of flooding and to increase the rate of defence deterioration.

Future flood defence management therefore needs to be considered very carefully to provide the most appropriate level of protection for residential properties, commercial activities and the environment. In order to do this the Environment Agency is undertaking a review of the issues affecting flood defences in the Alde and Ore estuary. This will determine and confirm a strategy for flood management to be implemented in the coming years.

Objectives of this consultation document

The objectives of this consultation document are to:

- Describe the flood defence issues in the Alde and Ore estuary and set out the approach to the study
- Seek the views of interested and affected parties on the study and on potential future flood management objectives for the estuary
- Identify key concerns of individuals and organisations
- Seek environmental and technical data for the study area



Photo 2 Hazlewood Marshes



Photo 3 Butley River at Butley Marshes

Environmental considerations within the Alde and Ore estuary

The Alde and Ore estuary is an important area for those who live and work there. It has ecological and landscape importance, and associated economic, social and amenity value for the local community and tourists alike.

It will be critical for the development of any flood management strategy to consider these varied interests and to try and reach a balance between them within the constraints of national policy and legislation.

The Alde and Ore estuary is a valuable resource for nature conservation, with the majority of the estuary designated under European (EU) and National legislation.

Any flood management options within or adjacent to these sites of high conservation and landscape value have the potential to adversely affect the features of interest, or conversely, provide opportunities for enhancement.

The estuary provides a setting for important features related to residential and commercial land use, archaeology, recreation and tourism and water quality, whilst navigation is of particular importance to commercial and recreational stakeholders on the Alde and Ore. The impacts of the flood management strategy on these features will be a core consideration in its development; a key component of the Alde and Ore estuary strategy will be an environmental appraisal of the proposed options.

The Alde and Ore Special Protection Area (SPA) and Ramsar Site is an internationally important site for birds, covering the Alde and Ore and Butley rivers, Havergate Island and Orford Ness. The SPA designation protects a variety of bird populations and their supporting habitats. The species include avocet, little tern, marsh harrier, sandwich tern, lesser black-backed gull, and a whole host of seabirds and wetland birds.



Figure 3 Special Protection Area

The estuary also contains two sites designated as Special Areas of Conservation [SAC], the Alde and Butley Estuaries SAC and the Orfordness - Shingle Street SAC. The SAC designation protects the numerous habitats and species found here under EU and UK law. In combination, these SACs contain the largest vegetated shingle spit in Europe and one of the largest areas of brackish marsh in Suffolk. Additionally, they are one of the richest sites for brackish coastal lagoons in the UK. These valuable features are set within a mosaic of other EU priority habitats including intertidal mudflats, saltmarsh and a reedbed swamp.



Figure 4 Special Areas of Conservation

The Alde and Ore estuary complex is also designated under national legislation as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) for its nature conservation value. This gives protection to the patchwork of estuarine and coastal habitats that support the wide variety of birds, important aquatic plant communities and rare invertebrates found there. The Alde and Ore estuary also forms part of the Suffolk Coasts and Heaths Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), a designation highlighting its landscape value.



Figure 5 Sites of Special Scientific Interest

Orfordness-Havergate National Nature Reserve (NNR) lies just south of Aldeburgh on the Suffolk coast. The shingle spit extends southwards for more than 10 miles to Shingle Street, and is separated from the mainland by the River Alde.



Figure 6 National Nature Reserve

What is the approach to the Alde and Ore estuary strategy study?

The Alde and Ore estuary is the second of the Suffolk Estuarine Strategies studies to be undertaken.

Initially, the future behaviour of the river will be predicted using a computer model of the estuary. This will help us to identify options for managing the defences in the future, and look at how those options will affect the estuary and its flood management objectives over time.

Consultation with organisations and individuals who are interested and/or affected by the proposed strategy will be undertaken at these key stages. The parties to be consulted are listed at the end of this document. There are a number of key stages throughout the programme, as shown in Table 1, over the page.



Photo 4 Gedgrave Marshes



Photo 5 Butley River south of Cook's Burn

Outline of the consultation process

Table 1 | Outline of the Consultation Process

Stage in Programme	Consultation Opportunity	Timescale
Introduction to the Alde and Ore estuary study	Initial consultation with the local community, landowners, statutory authorities and other parties	Autumn 2003
Initial appraisal of options for the Alde and Ore estuary	Presentation of the various scheme options in the form of a public consultation document. Consultation with organisations and individuals who expressed an interest in response to the previous consultation. Public exhibition to present the various scheme options	Winter 2003/4
Appraisal of preferred option for the Alde and Ore estuary	Presentation of the preferred option in the form of a public consultation document. Consultation with organisations and individuals who expressed an interest in response to the previous consultation document	Summer 2004
Publication of Alde and Ore estuary strategy	Advertisement in local newspapers. Public exhibition of Alde and Ore estuary strategy Report available for public comment.	Autumn 2004
Approval of Alde and Ore estuary strategy	Period for review of strategy by Defra and other statutory consultees	From Winter 2004
Alde and Ore estuary strategy implementation	Implementation of the Alde and Ore estuary strategy findings and recommendations	Following approvals

Who will be consulted about the Alde and Ore estuary strategy study?

The following groups will be contacted during the present and future consultations, as well as the general public:

Alde and Ore Planning Partnership	CEFAS, Centre for Environment, Fisheries, and Aqua-culture Science
Alde and Ore Wildfowlers Association	Chillesford Parish Council
Alderton Hollesley and Bawdsey IDB	Country Land and Business Association
Aldeburgh Golf Club	Countryside Agency
Aldeburgh Productions	Crown Estate
Aldeburgh Town Council	Defra, Department of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
Aldeburgh Yacht Club	Department for Transport
Anglian Water plc.	East Anglia Fisherman's Association
Anglian Wildfowlers Association	Eastern Sea Fisheries
Barker Gotlee	East Suffolk Water Abstractors Group
Bawdsey Parish Council	East Suffolk Water Ski Club
Boyton Hall Farms	English Heritage
Boyton Parish Council	English Nature
British Association for Shooting and Conservation	Environment Agency
British Canoe Union	Essex and Suffolk Water Company
British Telecom	Friends of the rivers Alde and Ore
British Trust for Ornithology	Friston Parish Council
Butley Parish Council	

Hollesley Parish Council
Iken Parish Council
Internal Drainage Boards
Local clubs
Local conservancy bodies
Local landowners and businesses
Marine Estates
Maritime and Coastguard Agency
National Grid
National Monuments Record Centre
National Trust
New Orford and Gedgrave Parish Council
New Orford Town Trust
NFU, National Farmers Union
Norfolk and Suffolk Anglers
Norfolk and Suffolk Local Flood Defence Committee (LFDC)
Orford Sailing Club
Ramblers Associations
RDS, Rural Development Service
RNLI, Royal National Lifeboat Institution
RYA, Royal Yachting Association
RSPB, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
Shingle Street Association
Snape Parish Council
Strutt and Parker
Sudbourne Parish Council
Suffolk Coastal District Council
Suffolk Coasts and Heaths Project
Suffolk County Anglers Association
Suffolk County Council
Suffolk Preservation Society
Suffolk Underwater Studies Group
Suffolk Wildlife Trust
The Alde and Ore Association
Transco
Voluntary and special interest groups
Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust

Consultation contact

As part of the introduction to the Alde and Ore strategy, we are seeking everyone's views on the study and on potential future management objectives for the estuary. If anyone has any comments, or would like to raise any key issues or concerns, or are able to provide any useful information in the development of the strategy, please let us know by using the enclosed comments form.

Alternatively, you can contact the project team at the following address:

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