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# Suffolk Estuarine Strategies

## Blyth Estuary Strategy

### Introduction to the Strategy

June 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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# Introduction

The Environment Agency is responsible for managing the flood risk arising from rivers and the sea, in many areas.

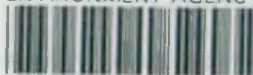
Prompted by growing concern over several areas in Suffolk that are susceptible to flooding, the Environment Agency has commissioned the development of long-term strategies to manage the flood defences for three of the Suffolk Estuaries: the Blyth, the Alde/Ore and the Deben. This project is known as the "Suffolk Estuarine Strategies". Flood management strategies will be developed over the next 2 years on a river-by-river basis starting with the Blyth estuary. This Consultation document sets out the proposed approach to the strategy in the Blyth estuary (Figure 1).

In the meantime, certain areas on the Blyth estuary have been identified which would benefit from prompt action through the development of flood defence improvement works. These areas encompass the Tinkers and Reydon Marshes and the length of river between Blyford Bridge and Blythburgh Bridge. A separate consultation document will be issued to address specific flood management proposals in these areas.



Figure 1 Location Pla

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# What is a Flood Management Strategy?

The Environment Agency is responsible for flood defences in the Blyth estuary.

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 and this approach allows us to manage the whole flood defence system more effectively.



Mouth of the Blyth Estuary and Southwold

# Why are we developing a Flood Management Strategy for the Blyth estuary?

The Blyth 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.

Earth banks running alongside the river channel provide flood defences to the Blyth estuary. These flood defences underpin a diverse environment that is a focus for the local population, tourism, agriculture, recreation and nature conservation.

The existing flood defences are deteriorating in condition and effectiveness due to natural processes. Future flood defence management needs to be considered very carefully to provide the most appropriate level of protection for residential properties, commercial activities and the environment.

The Environment Agency is therefore undertaking a review of the issues affecting flood defences in the Blyth estuary in order to determine and confirm a strategy for flood management to be implemented in the coming years.

# Existing flood defences

Existing flood defences run from Blyford Bridge to Blythburgh Bridge, and then from Tinkers and Reydon Marshes to Southwold Harbour. The area upstream of Tinkers Marsh used to be defended until around 40 years ago, when the banks failed.

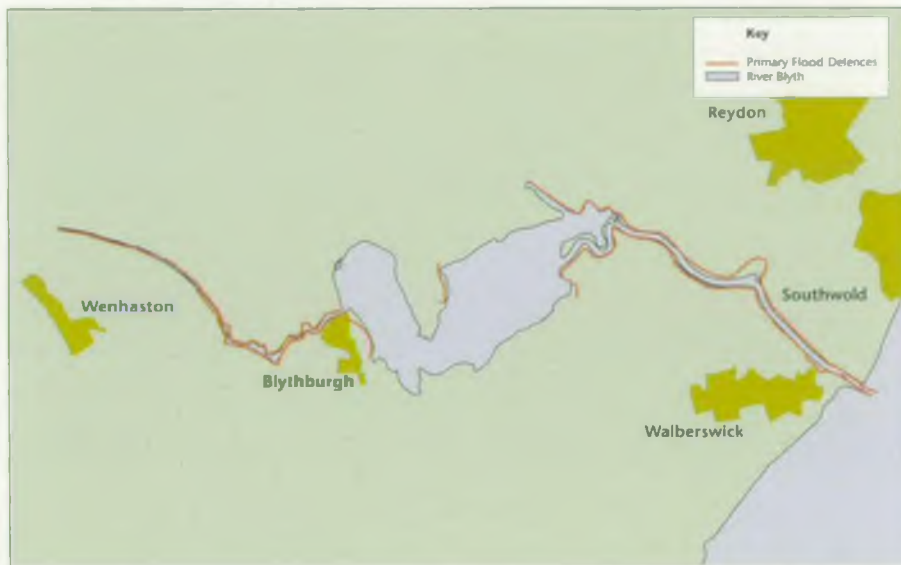


Figure 2 Map of defences

Many of the remaining defences are now deteriorating in condition. The saltmarsh is eroding, and the long term sustainability of these 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.

# Objectives of this consultation document

The objectives of this consultation document are to:

- Describe the flood defence issues in the Blyth 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.



# Environmental considerations within the Blyth estuary

The Blyth estuary is an important area for those who live and work there. It has ecological and landscape importance, and associated 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 Blyth estuary is a valuable resource for nature conservation, with parts of the estuary designated under European and National legislation.

Parts of the Blyth estuary (Tinkers Marshes and Hen reedbeds) are contained within the Minsmere to Walberswick Special Protection Area [SPA] and Ramsar Site. This is an internationally important site for birds including bittern, marsh harrier, hen harrier, avocet, gadwall, shoveler, teal and European white-fronted goose. The Minsmere to Walberswick Heaths and Marshes Site of Special Scientific Interest [SSSI] covers the same area as the SPA and, additionally, Southwold Town Marshes. The saltmarsh, grazing marshes, reedbeds and mudflats of the SSSI support a wide variety of wildfowl and waders together with important aquatic plant communities and rare invertebrates.

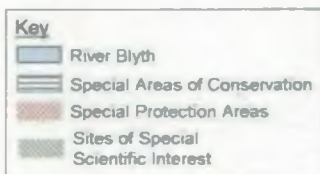
Any flood management options within or adjacent to these sites of high conservation and landscape value have the potential to adversely affect the features of interest, or conversely, provide opportunities for enhancement.



The Blyth estuary also forms part of the Suffolk Coasts and Heaths Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), a designation highlighting its landscape value. The estuary also provides a setting for important features related to residential and commercial land use, archaeology, recreation and tourism and water quality. The impacts of the flood management strategy on these features will be a core consideration in its development, therefore a key component of the Blyth estuary strategy will be an environmental appraisal of the proposed options.



Figure 3 Conservation area



# What is the approach to the Blyth estuary strategy study?

The Blyth estuary is the first of the Suffolk Estuarine Strategies studies to be undertaken. There are a number of key stages throughout the programme, as shown in Table 1.

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



Table 1

## Outline of the Consultation Process

Stage in Programme	Consultation Opportunity	Timescale
Introduction to the Blyth estuary study	Initial consultation with the local community, landowners, statutory authorities and other parties	Summer 2003
Initial appraisal of options for the Blyth 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	Autumn 2003
Appraisal of preferred option for the Blyth 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	Spring 2004
Publication of Blyth estuary strategy	Advertisement in local newspapers. Public exhibition of River Blyth Estuary strategy Report available for public comment	Summer 2004
Approval of Blyth estuary strategy	Period for review of strategy by Defra and other statutory consultees	From Autumn 2004
Blyth estuary strategy implementation	Implementation of the Blyth Estuary Strategy review findings and recommendations	Following approvals

# Consultees

The following groups will be contacted during the present and future consultations:

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| Anglian Water plc.  | English Nature   |
| Anglian Wildfowlers Association                                   | Environment Agency                                     |
| Blyford Parish Council  | Essex and Suffolk Water Company                        |
| Blythburgh Parish Council   | General public   |
| Blyth Forum   | Internal Drainage Boards                               |
| British Association for Shooting and Conservation                 | Local conservancy bodies                               |
| British Canoe Union   | Local landowners and businesses                        |
| British Telecom   | Maritime and Coastguard Agency                         |
| British Trust for Ornithology                                     | National Farmers Union                                 |
| CEFAS, Centre for Environment, Fisheries, and Aquaculture Science | National Grid  |
| Country Land and Business Association                             | National Monuments Record Centre                       |
| Countryside Agency  | National Trust   |
| Crown Estate  | Norfolk and Suffolk Anglers - Consultative Association |
| Department of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs             | Ramblers Associations / local clubs                    |
| Department for Transport  | RDS, Suffolk River Valleys ESA                         |
| East Anglia Fisherman's Association                               | Reydon Parish Council                                  |
| Eastern Sea Fisheries   | River Blyth Navigation Committee                       |
| East Suffolk Water Ski Club                                       | RNLI   |
| English Heritage  | Royal Yachting Association                             |
|   | Royal Society for the Protection of Birds              |
|   | Southwold Golf Club                                    |

Southwold Harbour Authority  
Southwold Harbour Users group  
Southwold Sailing Club  
Southwold Town 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  
Transco

Voluntary and special interest groups  
Walberswick Common Lands Charity  
Walberswick Parish Council  
Wangford with Henham Parish Council  
Waveney District Council  
Wenhaston and Mells Hamlet Parish Council  
Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust

# Consultation contact

If you have any queries or issues you wish to discuss regarding the future of flood management in the Blyth estuary, or are able to provide any information that you feel will be useful to the development of the Blyth estuary strategy, please contact:

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