

SUFFOLK COAST AGAINST RETREAT (SCAR)

DRAFT Minutes of the Annual General Meeting

At Riverside Centre, Stratford St Andrew

6 March 2010 10 am - coffee; 10.30 start

Present: John Fell Clark, Peter Boggis, Paul England, Simon Read, Andy Smith, Martin Clarke, David Robb, Marianne Fellowes, A Roger Warren, J B Paton, Tim Voelcker, Brian Johnson, Daisy Cooper, Christine Block, Richard Steward, Sue Allen, Andrew St Joseph, Ian Bradbury, Barbara Priestman, David Webb, Pat Robbins, Victor Gordon, Juliet Gordon, Brian Hardisty, Marian Hardisty, Therese Coffey, Anne Page, Graham Henderson, John Gummer

1 Welcome

The Chairman welcomed all those attending, but especially Mr and Mrs Brian Hardisty, Chair and Secretary of the new coastal action group at Hopton on Sea; and Daisy Cooper PPC for the Liberal Democrats and Therese Coffey PPC for the Conservative Party in Suffolk Coastal.

2 Apologies were noted from: Gerry Matthews, Michael Clark, Jeremy Schofield, Peter Aldous, Anthony Coe, RFDC Anglian Eastern, John Rea Price, Minsmere, Julian Walker, now retired from Waveney DC, Jane Burch, Pat Gowen, Bill Parker, Edward Greenwell, Elizabeth Cooper

3 Minutes of previous AGM — March 28 2009 These were agreed

4 Chairman's Report and Accounts

The attached report and accounts were presented and adopted, with the addition of news from the southernmost part of the coast, reported by Cllr Andy Smith, that it seemed likely that the Environment Agency would fund the Central Felixstowe Defence Scheme.

5 Reports from Suffolk Estuaries:

Blyth — Sue Allen

Sue Allen thanked all those who had sent messages in support of the successful planning application for work on the Blyth River walls.

She described her own work in addition to the Blyth Estuary Group, sitting on Waveney District Council and the new Pathfinders management group.

She said the Shoreline Management Plan had moved a long way towards what people wanted but she could not vote for it, due to lack of concern for the road out of Southwold, and also for Easton Marsh, by the car park. The SMP would come before Waveney DC late in March

with possible legal challenges.

SA reported further that the Harbour Trust was moving forward with prospective Trustees being sought. The Harbour Wall needed £3m for a rebuilding which would not be rock revetment. There was current pressure from Trustees and local communities for piling the length of the north wall, with WDC seemingly beginning to agree. Changing the route now would need a further £1m.

She noted that Andrew Blois of the local Country Landowners Association, had met the Shadow Environment Secretary about the Blyth, and Suffolk more generally.

Finally SA said that the Blyth Estuary Group wanted a sluice for the river at the A12 and a meeting was pending with the EA. Sue Allen thanked John Gummer for all the help he had given in Whitehall and Westminster.

Points made in discussion included:

John Gummer said the interconnection between various elements at Southwold - harbour, car park, water, estuary - was complex and had never been fully understood. DEFRA proved to have got the science wrong and this was a good example of how a small group of people could make a big difference.

The Suffolk representatives on the Regional Flood Defence Committee were not as well equipped as those from Norfolk and Essex. SCC should review the position. Andy Smith said it was a weakness of the existing system that no District Councillors were involved. There might be potential change — through the Floods Bill, now in House of Lords, which reinforced and widened the role of RFD Committees, to take on coastal erosion. It suggested that membership be composed locally.

John Gummer pointed out that Andy Smith had been the most quoted adviser to the Floods Bill (Select) Committee and was very influential. Any improvements would be down to Andy Smith. The Alde and Ore Association had also been helpful.

Covehithe

John Gummer said better input was needed from English Heritage in respect of the Church at Covehithe. It was relatively easy to say let the cliff go, as the SMP proposed, as not many people live there. However the Benacre Estate and Edward Vere Nichol were seeking to change the SMP status from No Active Intervention, to Managed Retreat to enable partial defence to be negotiated. All should fight for the medieval church, with its interesting reduction and the Estate House; these were worth saving and fighting for. No sacrifices of history and culture should be permitted and Covehithe could be a totemic example of what SCAR was trying to save.

Easton Bavents

Peter Boggis reported that the EA was studying the sea wall failure north of Corton, with Great Yarmouth council involved. The most recent inspection had revealed improved beach levels. Major breach management plans were proposed for next winter at Lowestoft South Beach.

He described the present state of the Easton Bavents cliff, with loss likely to increase. One property is only 4.5m from the cliff and at great risk, with slow action from the relevant authorities. He recounted the most recent legal setback, announcing an appeal to the Supreme Court **had been rejected**.

Mr Boggis said that NE were being slow in discussing acceptable proposals with him. It was agreed that SCAR would pursue the matter with NE.

Easton Bavents and Broad had been upgraded from NAI to MR in the Shoreline Management Plan. This was welcome, but Mr Boggis was continuing to challenge its lawfulness.

Minsmere Stakeholders Group — David Robb

Mr Robb reminded the meeting that their group was small with some 40 members, concerned with sea levels, saltmarsh, inland water, main river, and main drainage around Minsmere. The EA had proved poor managers, but the new Internal Drainage Board had raised funds and the major ditch was now dug out, giving good flood control. The EA was maintaining the flowing river. There had been a drain cut running through the marsh area, waterproofed with plastic sheeting. This was now uncovering and the EA wanted to remove it, but the cost would be high.

A new cut was discharging, via a Sluice, into the sea. If the Sluice were closed then the river could not get out. If left open, sea water would come in. The SMP wanted Managed Retreat down to the soft sea defences at Minsmere cliffs. But these were holding well at present, at relatively low cost. Cliffs to the north were eroding with shingle building up on the beach. The Sluice was built 200 years ago and though repaired since, the latest survey, now ten years old, said it had a 15 year life. EA divers were surveying currently.

Major landowners including the RSPB were concerned to maintain the sea wall. They had agreed MR for a small part of the northern end, with small clay wall, to stop sea water coming into the main reserve. To the south, local interests want Hold the Line, not the proposed MR.

The Group thought any proposal at Sizewell should include local benefits. The Power Stations would be on higher ground, and could become an island. Investment was required to resist this. There must be benefits, even though the population might be small.

John Gummer said the Minsmere Sluice must be included in the the local benefits to be made by Sizewell developers, for which he was **discussing** with EDF.

Andy Smith said the best defence for Sizewell would be to work with all local interests and maintain natural defences on the whole coast. EDF seemed to be in agreement so far.

SR asked about compensatory habitats for RSPB land lost to sea at Minsmere. The RSPB were buying land elsewhere. The northern end of their wall was likely to break in 10 -15 years.

Alde and Ore — David Andren

DA reported that there were now 1750 A and O members from Thorpeness to Shingle Street. The most contentious point over the past year concerned the proposed abandonment of Orford Lighthouse by Trinity House given the likely coastal erosion and cost of

maintenance. He said that although it was a Historic Grade 2 listed building loved by all, there would be no appeal, since it was not integral to the rivers.

Natural England had agreed to a soft beach defence at Thorpeness such as that at Dunwich, and Andrew Hawes was putting it together.

The full Shoreline Management report now covered everything wanted by the A and O.

Aldeburgh coasts and estuaries strategies had been developing since 1999. They needed wider economic and social input. 1250 properties were in danger of flooding, and had now been valued, to establish whether national funding would be available. There were disagreements over the valuation of agricultural land. DA said the Alde and Ore Futures pilot was proving a good new approach to these issues. The project's aims were broader than previously, with a reduced timescale.

Anne Page reported that following discussion between the Shingle Street Settlement Company, and Natural England, and action by residents, NE were now in the process of prosecuting parties for damaging the Shingle Street Site of Special Scientific Interest.

Deben Estuary Group — Christine Block

Cllr Block said DEG was widening its focus to include the environment and economic issues; and was trying for a better relationship with NE. A big issue was saltmarsh regeneration.

DEB was exchanging technical information and local knowledge with the EA, as the Estuary Strategy emerged, with a formal DEB/EA working party progressing steadily.

A new group had been formed on land management with landowners getting the right to mend their own river walls, and also making wider progress.

A helpful connection had grown up with Bawdsey Primary School involving children in environmental projects. DEB now had a forum, webpage, newsletter, and access group.

All hands were thinking about funding and private/public funding partnerships. Money was available for case studies, from the EA.

East Lane - the major scheme there was now complete and Cllr Block reiterated appreciation of the contribution made by landowners and Suffolk Coastal District Council.

In autumn, strong south easterly winds had caused further problems with the EA now doing remedial work. The SMP's designation of East Lane as an area to HTL enabled such work.

Felixstowe Ferry

Graham Henderson said work was required to the coastal/river estuary defences.

Andy Smith said it was necessary to try to build and maintain a promontory against currents in the Deben Mouth. The Deben River Mouth might be a useful candidate for SCAR-supported realignment, to show that SCAR was not simply against any change.

6 Election of Officers 2010/2011: John Gummer took the chair and, there being no other nominations, proposed the re-election for a further year of Graham Henderson as Chair, Sue Allen and David Andren as Deputy Chairs, Anne Page as Secretary, and Paul England, John Fell Clark, Simon Read and Gerry Matthews as Executive Committee Members.

This was agreed and all hands thanked for their past performance.

7 Remarks – Rt Hon John Gummer PC MP

The outgoing Member of Parliament said SCAR had done useful work in bringing coastal groups together to provide a collective voice to the major agencies and authorities.

Sizewell: local people were generally supportive of a local nuclear power station. But JG had told EDF that there should be a proper return to the local communities. His four major candidates for EDF local expenditure were:

- a by-pass for four villages on the A12 to ensure good access to Lowestoft and avoid bottlenecks, eg at Blythburgh
- the temporary accommodation for construction workers to become long-term social housing afterwards, in concert with local authorities. Social housing had become JG's most important local issue, as young people could not afford the properties prices required to stay in the area, and the demography of the constituency was skewed towards older people.
- extension of sea defences beyond the power station complex and dealing with off-shore wind issues such as the capacity of overhead lines to handle new power supplies. The sea coast must be properly protected.
- use of the sea for transporting construction materials.

JG was holding meetings with Lord Smith on a regular basis; he was trying to keep the Conservative Party on track with its "locality" issues.

He looked forward to continuing as SCAR President into the new era.

Anne Page proposed a vote of thanks to John Gummer for his long and diligent service to Suffolk Coastal constituency, and for founding SCAR and leading it to a strong position as a voice for the coast.

This was approved with acclaim.

8 Future programme for SCAR: Priorities for the Incoming Government

The Chairman welcomed two Prospective Parliamentary Candidates for Suffolk Coastal — Therese Coffey and Daisy Cooper. He and David Andren proposed priorities for both an incoming Government, and for SCAR's next year. The Chairman's paper is attached at the end.

Points made in discussion included:

from Daisy Cooper the thought that Liberal Democrat policies complemented the SCAR policy proposals

from Therese Coffey that sea defences were priority for her and for Nick Herbert, the Shadow Environment Minister

from Andy Smith that core points from SMP should be a focus for future work — the ICZM approach was good especially for estuary plans. SMPs should have realistic time scales and should not pre-empt maintenance work needing doing in less than 100 years.

from the Chairman a promise that SCAR would continue to communicate with all bodies; trying to influence NE and EA for good local results, and opposing bad decisions.

He said SCAR would continue to lead on coastal defence with national bodies, pressing for money to be spent on maintaining and renewing hard and soft defences, rather than on continuous consultation.

He felt that the lack of funding seemed to be causing Government to abandon the coast and hide behind EU directives.

We must work together with all local bodies, including IDBs, to create local funding.

9 Sea Level Rise

Richard Steward drew attention to a recent document apparently showing no current acceleration in sea level rise. He felt that the lowest estimated should be adopted until there was evident change. DEFRA used the medium estimate for their work.

10 Suffolk Coasts and Heaths

Andy Smith suggested that SCAR recognise the AOB organisation as a major ally, drawing attention to the interest of Nick Collinson, the new SCHU director, in landscape quality.

This year was the 40th anniversary of SCHU. Aldeburgh Food Festival would conclude many celebrations.

11 Hopton Coastal Action Group

Brian Hardisty reported on work at Hopton, just over the Suffolk/Norfolk boundary, where there was a new report on the harbour. An Action Group had been set up to pressure the councils and challenge the SMP.

The meeting was closed at 1 pm.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT FOR SCAR AGM – 6 MARCH 2010.

From Graham Henderson

I would like to start my report this year by welcoming all new members to SCAR and particularly our newest recruits, Brian Hardisty and his wife, Chairman and Secretary of Hopton Coastal Action Group, Norfolk.

Later on this agenda we shall have the opportunity of a discussion as to where SCAR will be going in the year ahead.

As a preliminary to that, I think it important to reiterate SCAR's current function.

In simple terms we form a liaison between organisations or individuals attempting to defend the Suffolk coast and estuaries. Membership can be a group with many members such as the Alde & Ore Association, or an individual such as Paul England from Easton Bavents. Sharing knowledge and communicating helps to build strength for everyone.

SCAR communicates with a range of public authorities from District Councils to National Bodies. Your executive has continued to liaise this year with the Environment Agency, with Natural England, Suffolk Coastal and Waveney District Councils and Suffolk County Council. With Anglia Eastern Region Flood Defence Committee, With the Internal Drainage Boards, with Defra and with the County Land and Business Association.

We have become members of the Coastal Community Forum established last year by CoastNet. They have arranged London meetings with the All Party Parliamentary Committee, with the Environment Minister, and recently with Natural England.

Members of the Executive have taken part in all these meetings. We were asked to contribute to the consultation with Scott Wilson to help set up the Community Action and Planning Workshop (CAPE) for Defra, which we believe contributed to the Pathfinder funding programme.

Before I assess the coastline to pick up issues not separately on the agenda, I will review major highlights of the past busy year.

SMP 2 Sub cell 3c

The Suffolk Shoreline Management Plan has been debated, consulted about and agreed by both SCDC and SCC in recent weeks. It has not yet been approved by Waveney DC pending a decision on a challenge by the solicitors for Peter Boggis, Parkinson Wright. They have challenged the SMP on the grounds of non-compliance with the EU Habitats Directive. SCAR and other Estuary Groups also lodged objections to the final draft.

ICZM

On 26 March at Snape, a conference is organised to receive reports from the various committees of the Alde and Ore Futures project, part of the Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) plan being managed by Suffolk Futures.

Natural England

Last October, some of your Executive met Dr Helen Phillips CEO of Natural England. The forthright views some of us put forward at that meeting led towards a meeting this week with the Regional Director Shaun Thomas, which was very positive. A further meeting is planned for later this month with Executives and Board members of the organisation (Jim Smyllie and Tony Hams). We are making an effort to build bridges with them to enable us to influence their thinking and to work together.

Essex and S Suffolk SMP

We are also attending meetings to monitor the Essex & South Suffolk SMP covering the Orwell and Stour Rivers. This will soon be out for consultation.

County Land and Business Association

My final activity of past year was a helicopter flight down the coast from Happisburgh to Clacton, with Nick Herbert the Shadow Environment Minister, and Nikki Currie of the Country Landowners' Association. This flight was laid on by SCAR for the CLA and is by far the best way to view coastal problems,

I understand that a follow up meeting in London with the CLA was very positive.

Current situations

Looking at the current situation on the Suffolk coastline, starting from Lowestoft, the only area with apparent problems where we have no contact is Corton — beneficiary of a Defra pathfinder grant of £1.25m, which we understand is to be spent on improved beach and access, and planning change with the community.

We as SCAR would like to make contact with any group representing the Corton community.

Moving South we come to the Benacre Estates and Covehithe, where Edward Vere Nichol is trying to defend six miles of coastline, utilising soft sea defences similar to the ones being trialled at Dunwich, as we learned at last year's AGM. Edward steers his own ship but keeps in touch with SCAR.

I believe that there are plans to use these same soft sea defences at Thorpeness.

And so to Easton Bavents, where Paul England is challenging the spending of £300,000 of Defra Pathfinder money on consultation, with no cash for practical help, such as costs of demolishing property falling over the cliff.

David McGinnis is the new man for Waveney DC, managing the £1.55m funds for this and the Corton spend. We are not convinced that this large sum of Defra money will be spent wisely.

Now down to Southwold and the Blyth. Sue Allen will cover the current activity of the Blyth Estuary Group and the Harbour Wall problems. David Andren will update us on the Alde and Ore and Thorpeness, David Robb will cover Minsmere and Christine Block the Deben, East Lane and Felixstowe Ferry.

All your executive committee are constantly on email and attending meetings, throughout the year and I thank them all for their unpaid diligence.

SCAR ACCOUNTS 2009-10

Graham Henderson

At the AGM 2009, I reported that we had £383.78 in our account following the major spend in the previous year on setting up our web site.

During this last year we have had donations of £330. Of these £130 was from individuals and £200 from organisations.

We have only spent £53.00 during the year: £30.00 for last year's AGM venue and £23.00 on fees for the CoastNet conference.

We have £660.78 in the bank and an unrepresented cheque for £99.65 for our website updates during the year. This leaves us with £561.13 in hand.

I thank those who have made donations during the year. We presently ask for a donation from individuals of £10 and £50 from organisations, and look forward to further contributions this year.

SCAR FUTURES - 2010

Graham Henderson, Chairman, writes:

Aims and Objectives for the year ahead

- 1 We must continue to communicate with all bodies.
- 2 The future is our joint challenge so we must continue to influence the views of Natural England, the Environment Agency and local authorities to help them deepen their integration into local communities. We must continue to oppose any bad decisions. We must help them spend money wisely on defence and maintenance work, consulting appropriately but rapidly.
- 3 Sometimes it seems that limited funding causes the Government to abandon the coast and hide behind Climate Change and the European Habitats Directive. Whatever the truth, we must recognise that there will be little, if any, funding from government in the next few years. Consequently we must work together creatively to engender funding specifically for coastal and river wall improvements and saltmarsh reinstatement.
- 4 Specifically, we need to return control of defences to the local community with initiatives driven by ICZM and the councils; involving other local groups such as SCAR members and local landowners in decision-making.
- 5 We must make sure that the Defra Pathfinder Grant is spent sensibly.
- 6 We must support private initiatives for soft sea defences.