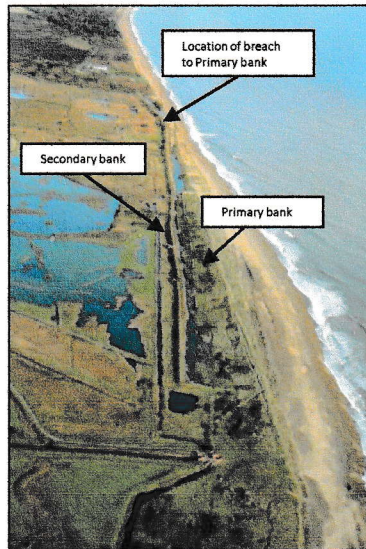


Project Background

What are we telling you about?

Several areas along the Suffolk coastline are at risk of flooding from the sea. One particular area is the Minsmere Valley, which supports important internationally designated flora and fauna and lies within the Suffolk Coast and Heaths Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

The valley is protected from coastal flooding by a line of sand dunes from Minsmere Cliffs in the north, to the Sizewell power station in the south (primary bank). A clay embankment which runs along the back of the dunes in the northern part of the site provides a second line of defence (secondary bank).

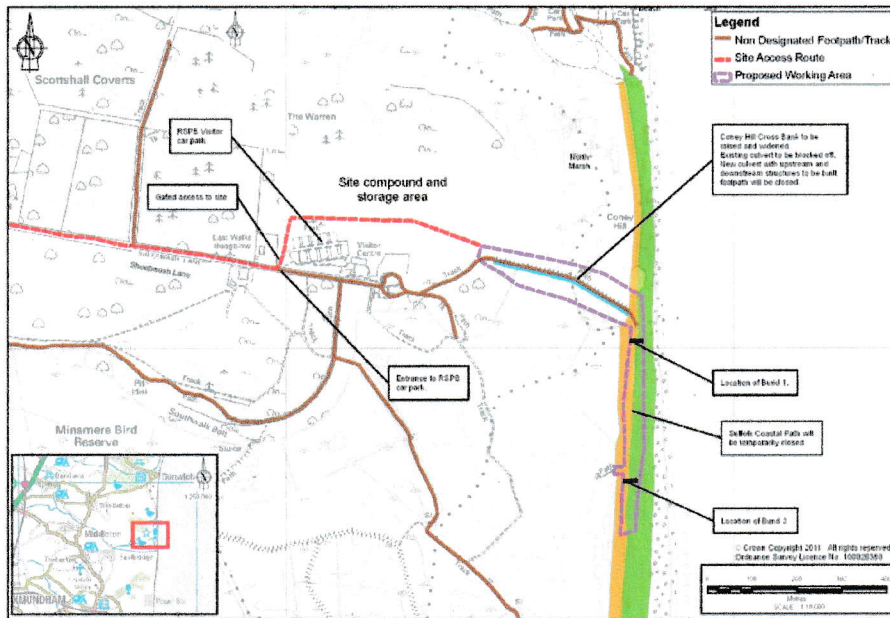


These coastal defences are under pressure from the sea and have suffered in recent years, most notably in the winter of 2006 and 2007 when storm surges breached the primary bank and caused permanent damage to the dunes.

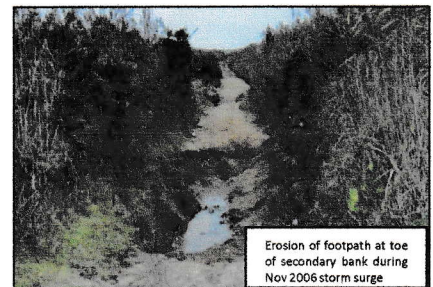


What will we be doing?

The plan is to allow the sea defences at the northern end of the valley to breach and the shingle habitat to move inland under natural processes in response to rising sea levels and readjustment of the coastline. To protect the majority of the flood plain from the sea, we are raising and improving the Coney Hill Cross Bank (also known as the North Wall) to create a new flood defence. A new water control structure will be constructed to enable the existing drainage to continue, but will be completely closed when storm surges are expected.



During the recent storm surge events, seawater that flowed through the breach site travelled southwards in the gap between the primary and secondary banks. This caused some erosion of the footpath at the toe of the secondary bank. Two bunds will therefore also be built connecting the primary and secondary banks just south of Coney Hill Cross Bank to control the movement of water in this area during storm surges.



How this will benefit you?

By undertaking the proposed works we will give continued protection from coastal flooding to the majority of the internationally important flora and fauna that live on the 246ha of Natura 2000 habitat that is important to RSPB Minsmere locally as a tourist attraction. 12 properties will also be protected from coastal flooding.

September Update

This is an update of the works as of September 2011. The works are being undertaken with Interserve as the principal contractor, whose site compound is located in the area to the north of the RSPB car park. We have fenced off our site compound and working areas. Please do not enter any area that has been fenced off, unless accompanied by a member of the site team.

What is happening on the coastal frontage?

On the 13 September we started work on the bunds between the primary and secondary defences on the coastal frontage. For your safety please do not enter the working area demarcated by the fencing.

With the agreement of Suffolk County Council, the footpath between the coastal defences has been closed temporarily and walkers are diverted along the crest of the primary defence. Access is still maintained to the East Hide and the Public Hide - please follow the signage and the instructions of site staff who will manage pedestrians and site traffic as they cross the area near the entrance to the East Hide.

To preserve the valuable coastal habitat, the top layer of sand /topsoil within the footprint of each bund will be removed and then replaced on top of the completed bunds.



How is work progressing on the North Wall?

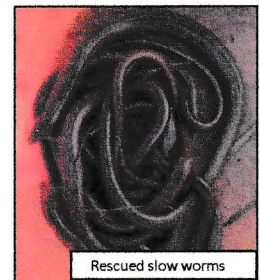


The footprint of an improved Coney Hill Cross Bank (North Wall) is in place. The placing of material and profiling of the new bank is expected to finish before the end of September. The construction of a new flow control structure will start soon, involving the laying of a new culvert, the installation of an outfall and the construction of an intake structure.

Sheet piling may be installed to construct a temporary cofferdam for safe construction of the flow control structure. There may be some noise from the installation of the sheet piles in September / October but this should take place over a short period.

How are we managing the sensitive environment we work in?

Due to the nature conservation value of the Minsmere site, in preparation for the works we have undertaken substantial environmental mitigation. In particular, the works are timed so that they are undertaken outside of the bird breeding season. Vegetation clearance has been undertaken to disperse the water voles to other parts of the site. Reptiles are common, and we have undertaken a programme of capture and relocation to other parts of the site. Fish have also been relocated so that they are not adversely affected by the lowering of water levels during construction.



How are we managing the material deliveries to the site?

The deliveries of material to site is expected to be complete by the end of September. We have worked hard with Suffolk County Council Highways, Suffolk Coastal District Council, Westleton Parish Council and the RSPB to develop suitable traffic management arrangements. Our access route from the A12 has been agreed as being the most suitable route to the site. Please adhere to the safety signage and any traffic signalling that is located along this route.

Can I still access the RSPB Minsmere Nature Reserve?

Throughout the works, the RSPB Minsmere Nature Reserve will remain open. However, during the works (between August 2011 and February 2012), some of the footpaths within the Minsmere Reserve will be restricted. Maintaining public safety is of utmost importance to us and therefore we request that you take note of any safety signage and follow any footpath diversion or verbal advice by a member of the site team.

How can I get involved or get in touch?

If you have any concerns about our works or would like some further information, please contact us as per the details below. We would also welcome pre-arranged community and school visits.

