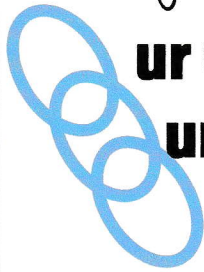
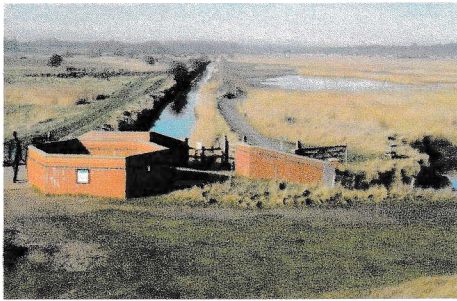


John for comit



**ur Coast
ur Homes
ur Jobs**



Minsmere Levels Stakeholders Group. Newsletter No 3. April 2009.

1. Public Meeting 3rd October, 2008.

Ian Hart, Engineer with the newly formed Suffolk Internal Drainage Board, outlined his long experience of working on the rivers & land drainage, and pointed out the differing roles of the Drainage Board & Environment Agency, then reviewed the problems of Minsmere Levels. He likened the roles to our road system: the county council manages the main road, the EA manages the New Cut and the sluice, whilst as the District council has responsibility for the minor roads, the IDB has responsibility for the lesser rivers & drains which feed into the New Cut. The IDB's main drain, No 7, runs parallel to the New Cut, this has been neglected over the years and much work is needed, priority has been given to a particularly damaged down-stream area for immediate work. The EA's responsibility for the sluice & main drain does not carry any obligation to carry out repairs or remedial work, the decision for any maintenance is purely down to what they chose to do or not do as they see fit. All work is limited by funding.

2. Environment Agency Presentation 21st November 2009.

The EA presented their proposals for 'Managing Flood Risk at Minsmere' over the next five years at a public walk-in held in Sizewell Sports Hall. Representatives of the EA and Black & Veatch (the consultants) outlined their proposals to 'manage the increasing risk of flooding from the sea and to provide continued and sustainable protection to people, property and the special landscape and wildlife of the Minsmere valley' following the storm surges of November 2006 and November 2007. They identify that the most urgent work is to counter the increasing flood risk from the sea due to future loss of the sea flood defences through erosion in the north of the levels.

B&V predict that the sea banks at the north end will breach and the shingle habitat will move inland under natural processes. It is not envisaged that the northern end of the levels will become tidal, but it will experience more frequent overtopping in the long term. The EA propose to raise and improve the existing Coney Hill cross bank (or North Wall) so that any sea flooding due to storm surges will be restricted to the North Marsh. They will make minor improvements to the secondary defences and the sluice to ensure that the site is adequately protected against flood risk in the short term. They will continue to monitor the condition of the sea defences and coastal erosion processes to inform future decisions. MLSG approached the EA and B&V at their presentation and asked if they could give a more structured presentation to MLSG; and they both agreed to attend, see below.

3. Public meeting 6th February 2009.

The EA (Stuart Barbrook and Giles Bloomfield) and Black & Veatch (Alexandra Schofield) gave a very clear and informative presentation on their proposals for the short term work on the North wall, see above, and explained more about their understanding of the coastal processes. A series of detailed beach measurements over several years showed

that the two storm surges (in 2006, 2007) have moved shingle up the beach, but the surge overtopping had removed a lot of the clay infill, reducing the overall strength of the sea defences. It is clear that future storm surges are likely to increase overtopping or even breach the northern part of the sand dune defences. Currently this would lead to probable salt water inundation of the whole marsh area of the RSPB site. By raising and strengthening the north wall, this inundation should be limited to the North Marsh area, which would become saline in the longer term.

Giles Bloomfield also commented that the present sluice was reaching the end of its life. Alex Schofield noted that a diver's inspection of the sluice showed possibly 5 to 15 years life left. Members stressed that there is a need to consider both the river flooding and sea flooding, and that the sluice was a major factor in both.

4. Suffolk Coast Against Retreat : SCAR meeting 28th March 2009.

SCAR was founded to try to coordinate and circulate information amongst the various action groups interested in coastal protection along the Suffolk coast. The Blyth and Alde & Ore are the largest groups with large and active memberships taking local actions to resist abandoning land to the sea. However since last summer's meeting organised by Suffolk Coastal, another group has formed for the Deben Estuary. John Rea Price and Dave Robb attended the SCAR meeting on behalf of MLSG, and John gave an overview of our group interests and activities.

It is clear that local groups can take effective preventive actions; the Blythe group are reconstructing river walls and pushing for work on Southold harbour wall. There was an interesting presentation by Stephen Hawes who developed the 'sausage' shaped beach defences under Dunwich cliff, which have been in place for 2 years and have raised the beach by about 1 metre by accumulating sand and shingle but without the scour generated by timber groynes. Simon Read described building about 80 metre of timber frame silt and mud traps at a bend on the Deben river bank at Sutton Hoo, opposite Woodbridge quay, to stop river bank erosion. However this structure has only just been completed so there are no longer term assessments of its effects.

5. Shoreline Management Plan to Stakeholders. 31st March

Following our attendance at last summer's Suffolk Estuary and Coast Conference at Southwold [see 2nd newsletter] MLSG were registered as stakeholders in the development of the Shoreline Management Plan, This was due to be circulated in November but was finally made available to Stakeholders on 31st March, and three MLSG members, John Keeble, John Rea Price and Steve Brett attended. This was the first of a series of workshops to discuss the latest proposals for the future strategic management of the coast between Lowestoft Ness and Felixstowe Landguard Point. It was chaired by Mark Johnston of the E.A. with a detailed presentation by Greg Guthrie, senior consultant with Royal Haskoning who has drawn together the proposals for the whole of this coast, working from local studies undertaken by other consultants, Black and Veatch in the case of Minsmere.

Overall strategy of the Consultants approach to coastal management:

The SMP is primarily about coastal defence, about the management of physical process, but in the context of other factors – e.g. social, economic. The overarching theme is sustainability, i.e. a short, medium and long (i.e. 100 year) strategy which, although continually modified in the light of events and new science, can be maintained without dramatic changes of direction. The 100 year timeframe will be divided into steps of 20 year, and it is essential that the objectives of each step are compatible and fit together. Programmes will be determined by what is technically feasible, financial possible and legally permissible. A fundamental principle is to manage the coastline, but reduce to a

minimum the reliance on defences. The overall strategy is: 'to allow the coastline to behave as naturally as possible – interference disrupts natural processes – e.g. the supply of sediment, creates pinch and pressure points elsewhere, which succumb, and return the pressure to the place that man has been attempting to protect.' The models underpinning the proposed strategy have been developed from data assembled over 20 years by the Environment Agency (EA) and its consultants. Different scenarios have been appraised, and alternatives examined. The exercise is seriously constrained by the very limited understanding of how the coast works, and further complicated by the imponderables of any rise in sea level.

Detail proposal: Dunwich Cliffs to Thorpeness Zone 4

This stretch is orientated North-South to a remarkable extent, and is also very stable, relatively. A prominent feature are two banks immediately off-shore running up from Thorpeness. Sediment tends to stay on the sea bed, but is very gently pushing the coastline back. It is a very natural stretch of coastline, the sediment a source of stability, creating dunes which allow the beach to very gradually roll back. The rate of erosion is very slow, greater in the north around Dunwich cliffs. There is a bulge around the sluice, partly because of its function as a groyne, but probably also because this is a point at which there is a gap in the two off-shore banks.

The ways in which the sluice is managed will have to adapt. It will be affected by changes in the accumulation of sediment, and the sluice should not become a major groyne. Sea level rise will result in more frequent tidal locking, with an increased risk of inland flooding. A powered pump could become necessary. In a 100 year time frame, there may be breaches (the strategy document circulated at the meeting spelt this out in more detail, indicating that the Minsmere valley will ultimately almost certainly become estuarine and that the stretch of coast either side of the sluice was scheduled for 'managed re-alignment'). However, the abandonment of the North Marsh (as proposed in the recent EA Minsmere consultation, and the re-alignment of those defences, should reduce some pressure around the sluice.

For the Sizewell Power Stations, an objective should be to protect the area to the rear of them from flooding – the stations themselves being on higher ground and thus not at risk.

The current SMP proposals for the Minsmere Sluice are shown as '**Managed Retreat**', but with '**No Active Intervention**' to the north and south of the sluice. We are very concerned that the importance of the sluice to both river discharge and coastal defence is under-stressed in this proposal and will be submitting comments to emphasise the importance of action NOW to plan for the repair or replacement of the sluice BEFORE it fails.

ACTION: MLSG members will be able to contribute their opinions of these proposals, initially as stakeholders by the end of April, and in the summer as members of the public when the proposals are open for public comment.

6. Next Stakeholder Group Meeting:

7.30 pm Friday 26th June in Theberton Jubilee Hall.

7. Annual Subscription.

Currently we have 38 paid up members and again ask for a minimum **£5** annual subscription, to help cover expenses and generate a fighting fund. Please complete and send the attached form with payment (cheque or cash) to:

Contact. : John Rea Price

1 Old Stores Gardens, Eastbridge, Leiston, Suffolk. IP16 4SJ.

Telephone: 01728 635 083 Email: John.Reaprice@btinternet.com