

Notes from meeting between Reydon Parish Council and the Environment Agency on 22nd January 2024

Present: Cllr Pamela Cyprien; Cllr Dexter Kirk; Cllr David Panther; Kellie Fisher, Regional Manager, Environment Agency

Kellie Fisher is a geotechnical engineer with responsibility for managing the East Anglian coastline from the Wash to the Thames Estuary.

Reydon Parish Councillors had the opportunity to discuss concerns regarding flooding at Potters Bridge and the associated disruption to the local transport infrastructure. Discussion included concerns relating to the difficulties caused for the Environment Agency regarding the obstructive behaviour of the landowner preventing access to maintain the outflow from Easton Broad.

The East Anglian Coastal Group publish shoreline management policies that provide the intent of management for different sections of the coast: *East Anglia Coastal Group | SMP 7* (<https://www.eastangliacoastalgroup.org/smp-7>).

Two policies are relevant to the coastline within the parish of Reydon:

PDZ 2 – Benacre Ness to Easton Broad.

PDZ 3 – Easton Broad to Dunwich Cliffs.

The executive summary for the Suffolk Shoreline Management Plan (SMP 7) (January 2010) states on pages 10 and 11:

“Infrastructure. The main risk to the road system is from flooding. Only locally at Lowestoft and along the sea front at Felixstowe are main roads at risk from erosion; these would be protected under the plan. The A12 is at flood risk to the back of Kessingland Levels and at Blythburgh. In both these places the plan envisages continued defence of the road. Access to Southwold is at risk from flooding and this access would continue to be defended. At Potters Bridge the risk is mainly from river flooding. This is a continuing risk and the plan acknowledges the need for discussion between the Environment and Highways Authority. Other critical service infrastructure has been identified in developing the plan. The flood risk to this infrastructure would be managed. There is no critical service infrastructure at risk from erosion.”

It is notable that the policy acknowledges the need for a discussion between the Environment Agency and Highways Authority. This is a statement from January 2010. In January 2024, a joint statement between Suffolk County Council and the Environment Agency was issued:

“Suffolk County Council and Environment Agency’s joint statement – Potters Bridge

“Officers from Suffolk County Council and Environment Agency met to discuss the ongoing coastal flooding affecting the B1127 at Potters Bridge.

“Both bodies are working collaboratively on options to help alleviate flood risk in the area which will be consulted on in due course and led by Suffolk County Council.

“In the short to medium term a commitment has been made to help alleviate the issues here by Suffolk Highways improving road signage, clearing and jetting highway drainage and cutting channels into the verge to help water drain away from the road when there is heavy rain or a tidal surge.

“This will be supported by the Environment Agency’s ongoing efforts to keep the channel clear at the beach to allow water to flow to the sea.”

Natural England commissions the EA to manage water levels in the marshes and reedbeds in order to maintain this nationally significant habitat. This is the primary purpose for the Environment Agency’s intervention in managing water levels at Easton Broad. This work also

contributes to reducing the length of time water is on the road and is beneficial to reducing flooding on the highway. There is no additional intervention that the EA may take as the road at Potters Bridge is below the level of the beach.

Any interventions that the Environment Agency take must satisfy three key criteria. The intervention must be:

1. Technically feasible.
2. Environmentally acceptable.
3. Economically desirable.

Regarding the landowner obstructing access to the beach outflow, the EA necessarily has to be seen as conciliatory and follow reasonable procedures in order to achieve a legal order to permit access to carry out the necessary works.

The landowner has applied for a permit to undertake the works to keep the outflow clear. If this application is successful, works will be monitored by Natural England and the Environment Agency. Further interventions will be made if the water levels are not satisfactorily managed. The landowner has to pay for the permit, but receives no remuneration for doing this work.