

Potters Bridge Discussion – February 2024

Adhoc agency meeting on 14/02/24 at Southwold Sailing Club.

Present:- Cllr David Beavan ESC, Cllr Michael Ladd SCC, Gary Watson EA, Adam Burrows NE, Madeline Fallon CPE, Simon Flunder Southwold Town Mayor, David Panther Reydon PC, Cllr Paul Ashton ESC.

Short term

How do we stop Potters Bridge flooding next autumn?

Problem - Over summer, the outfall usually becomes blocked so that autumn rains cannot drain out to sea. Once the level in the broad exceeds 1.5m AOD the road starts to flood. If the outfall is clear the summer level is 1.2m and the winter level 1.4m.

EA Solution – ensure that the outfall is clear as soon as rain arrives. The landowner dug the outfall on Friday a week after it reached 1.5m, but it drained only slowly to 1.65m and after heavy rain overnight Saturday the beach breached again at 1300 on Sunday.

KPI – The outfall should be clear when broad level reaches 1.5m AOD.

Problem - Heavy rainfall runs down the road and cannot drain into the broad.

SCC Solution – regularly clear drains and grips, inspect and clear the bridge this summer.

KPI – inspect bridge, dig out grips and clear tidal flap by 01/09/24, then monthly checks on road drains through winter.

Medium Term

Failure to dig the outfall in time causes the beach to breach so that the broad becomes tidal. The lowest part of the road is only 1.4m AOD at the sides. 1.6m in the centre, below spring surge tides of up to 2m in the winter, so periodic flooding is inevitable. This is also more likely with sea level rise and if the ridge at the beach retreats and lowers. Broad levels are presently a tidal 1.3m (2100 Feb 18th 2024), partly saline and fluctuating by 0.75m daily which damages the habitat.

Solutions

- *Install real time depth warning signs at Wrentham and Reydon crossroads for vulnerable small cars, yet larger vehicles including ambulances can still pass – cost £23k.*
- *Encourage farmers to extract excess winter rainfall to irrigation reservoirs up the Wren catchment.*
- *Install a sill at the bridge to maintain 1.4m steady depth in the reedbeds above the bridge for wildlife habitat.*

Long term

Both main routes into Southwold and Reydon are below spring high water at Wolsey Bridge and Potters Bridge. It will be uneconomic to build bridges back to sound ground so that traffic will divert through Wangford Road which is unsustainable. *Can we link Halesworth Road to the A12 through the Wangford quarry site when it closes, for example?*

NB Potters Bridge is unlikely to be “lost” soon. At worst it will last as a tidal ford for probably the next 50 years.