

Environment Agency call for a new approach to flood and coastal resilience

Consultation response- advice to members

Responses need to be in by 4 July 2019

Members will want to ensure that any future government strategy takes account of the needs of the estuary as much as any other part of the country which will be liable to flooding and effects of sea level rise. The Environment Agency have provided a standard format for responses addressing each of the three aims, the 14 strategic objectives and the 36 steps (called measures) that might be taken achieve the objective and aims. It is not necessary to respond to every question asked, you only need to make comments where you wish a point to be considered. [Click here for form](#))

BUT IT IS IMPORTANT FOR ALL OUR VOICES TO BE HEARD. The Association will make comments, particularly in relation to the future of the estuary, but obviously individual members may have not only such points in mind but other aspects they want to express a view on.

Background: The Environment Agency draft strategy for flood risk and coastal erosion management for the period up to 2100 focusses on three *Ambitions-* to *promote resilience and adaptation* to climate change both for *places* and *infrastructure* such as roads, service supplies, water management in all its forms, and a *nation better informed* and in a position to understand the risks, what might be done to keep safe both at a coastal and community level and steps that individual residents can take to mitigate possible flooding.

Climate change is bringing more extreme weather patterns, more heavy winds and downpours, more drier periods in summer and wetter winters. This together with the fact that sea level is rising anyway because of isostatic rebalancing (the land in the south east of the UK is falling so sea level is rising while in the north the land is rising as the impact of the weight of the ice in last ice age is adjusted too) means that East Anglia is in the forefront of needing to make adjustments to the changing natural forces.

The Association has prepared a summary of the 64 page consultation document, [click here](#).

In responding to the consultation on the strategy for the future, from the point of view of the Alde and Ore Estuary, if your aims are to retain the estuary much as it is for as long as is reasonably possible, these are the sort of points you could make in responding to the consultation:-

In general

- The three high level ambitions, that is Places and Infrastructure resilient or adapted to climate change, flooding and coastal erosion risk and People aware and responsive to changes needed, are a good approach.
- We agree that there should be greater involvement of people in planning for their local future.

- We welcome there being greater coordination among all the bodies involved on water and coastal management.

Consultation content/approach

- The Objectives in the consultation document are for the periods to 2030, 2050 and ultimately 2100 but the steps to be taken, called Measures, mostly run only until 2026. There needs to be greater clarity as to what might happen when.
- The Measures are essentially steps, processes or types of action but reflect the proposed approach to be taken but there is little indication of what is expected at the end date.
- The strategy needs a greater focus on outputs as little may happen if process not results is focused on- for example, greater collaboration should help achieve a more seamless collective RMA response to flooding, or ensure that all bodies are involved in flood resilient/adaptation on projects not delivering their own solution in isolation. The document does not provide clarity as to what may be involved. There will need to be further consultations on methods, approaches and funding.

Policy development

- Any new policies need to take account of work already in hand to achieve adaptation and greater resilience.
- Policies cannot be single, once and for all decisions - adaptation will be needed from time to time over the entire century, as and when the needs become clearer to sea level rise and/or greater flood occurrences over the entire century.
- Policies and plans need to be framed in successive phases to meet the foreseeable future, say, to the next 25 years but bearing in mind the possibilities thereafter, but not closing to door to new or different methods of resilience and adaptation as natural circumstances emerge or new technical and water management innovations come forward

Financing flood and coastal erosion developments

- In providing grants to secure more sustainable communities, government criteria for eligibility should include all factors in relation to the well-being of an economy or area and so include the value of the natural environment (natural capital) , businesses as well as housing and peoples' lives.

- The consultation document says that £1billion a year is needed to fund the necessary changes and adaptations to defences, realignments or retreats of defences. This must be part of the government's annual expenditure budget.
- Government money is needed to support innovative approaches to flood risk and coastal erosion, such as a shingle or sand engine as well as the traditional methods such as groynes, or the well tried and tested clay walls as we have had around the estuary for centuries.

The Alde and Ore as an example

- We agree that resilience needs to be built into defences. It is not reasonable to keep water out at any cost but defences can be built to keep at bay normal and lesser extreme events but for extreme events, such as the 1953 surge, defences need to be built in a way to avoid breaches and to allow the water to be removed quickly provides, at least for estuaries, a model of a resilient and adaptive approach.
- The fact that, for the Alde and Ore Estuary, it has taken the community some 5 years to get a resilient plan into place, compatible with planning and environmental requirements, and will take 7-10 years to implement because of the limitations of working with the seasons and retaining biodiversity, should not mean that it is left out with any future strategy. Such local far sighted plans should continue to be eligible for their share of funding as well as new community provision and they can be valuable pilots for other areas.

Flood warnings

- Express appreciation of the significant changes in flood warning by the Environment Agency and the effort put into making sure people know what is happening and can take precautionary action. Further steps to ensure continuing community engagement and involvement in such actions and ensuring as many people are aware as possible of the risks and impacts of flooding should be on a continuing agenda for action.

RESPONSES

It will be very good if as many individual responses as possible are sent. If any member wishes to send a copy of their response to the Association or wants to suggest points to go in the Association response please email info@aldeandore.org.

Responses can be sent to the Environment Agency by email to

FCERMstrategy@environment-agency.gov.uk

or by post to Morena Staiano

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