



## Thorpeness Community Survey – Summary of Findings

This report summarises the results of the Thorpeness community survey (September 2025). The survey was undertaken as part of the Resilient Coasts project and aimed to explore:

- what people value about Thorpeness
- people’s priorities – both short and long-term
- understanding about coastal erosion and coastal flood risk
- views on current action and the types of action needed
- responsibilities in relation to coastal erosion and coastal flooding
- people’s willingness to get involved in planning for the future.

### 1. Who responded to the survey

- A total of 240 people responded to the survey of whom 18% were permanent residents, and 82% were non-residents (second / holiday homeowners or regular visitors).
- Over half of permanent residents have lived in Thorpeness for more than 20 years.
- Around 42% own a second or holiday home, with over half of that group spending more than two months a year in the village.
- Eleven percent work locally, in sectors such as tourism, building-related trades, consultancy, and digital services.

### 2. Why people visit Thorpeness

People are drawn to Thorpeness for its charm, tranquillity, and family connections. The village’s character, The Meare, and the coastal setting make it stand out from other resorts.

- The unique design of the village, including The Meare and the House in the Clouds, gives it a special appeal.
- Many visitors have been coming for generations and value its peaceful, family atmosphere.
- Recreation opportunities such as boating, golf, tennis, and walking are key attractions.
- The natural environment, wildlife, and scenery add to the experience.

### 3. Favourite places

- The Meare – the most frequently mentioned place, linked to boating, regattas, wildlife and family memories.
- The beach – valued for its peace, wild beauty, swimming and walking.

- People’s homes – the favourite place for many for sentimental value, a sense of peace and sanctuary.
- Specific venues – various places in Thorpeness were mentioned and all seen as important social / leisure spaces, or community hubs.
- Many people simply value the village as a whole for its uniqueness and distinctive charm.

#### 4. Community life

Respondents most often described Thorpeness as friendly, welcoming, supportive, and unique. It is seen as safe and special, with strong community spirit. However, several people noted challenges such as the seasonal nature of life and a decline in the number of full-time residents within the village.

#### 5. Use of the beach

- Ninety-five percent of respondents visit the beach, with many doing so daily or several times a week.
- Common activities include swimming, walking, dog walking, and relaxing.
- People value the beach for being peaceful, natural, and unspoilt.
- Most choose Thorpeness Beach because it is close, less crowded than other beaches, and part of their family tradition.

#### 6. Priorities for the future

When asked to select their top priorities for the next five years, respondents highlighted the following as the top four priorities:

- Planning how to adapt to coastal erosion (81%)
- Managing flood risk (60%)
- Maintaining a sustainable community in Thorpeness (58%)
- The natural environment (52%)

Sixty-five percent of respondents think these priorities will remain the same in 20 years’ time. Of the 117 comments on this question coastal erosion and flooding were mentioned by the majority of people, as a continuing or worsening priority, often with references that other priorities could become irrelevant if coastal erosion / coastal flooding was not addressed. Many respondents expressed concern over the potential impact on the village of Sizewell C and other major infrastructure projects as well as concern about holiday rental properties and second homes displacing permanent residents.

#### 7. Climate change and coastal risks

- Most respondents (93%) believe that climate change is happening, with around half saying it results from both human and natural causes, and 42% saying it is mainly caused by human activity.
- Thirty-two percent of respondents considered themselves ‘well informed’ about coastal erosion and 25% for coastal flooding. The majority of respondents though (44%) said that they ‘understood a fair amount but feel the need to know more’ for both coastal erosion and coastal flooding and 21% said

they ‘understand a bit’ about coastal erosion. For coastal flooding this figure was slightly higher at 27%.

- The survey included an optional question asking people to rate their level of worry or anxiety about coastal erosion and coastal flooding. Of the 234 people that responded to this question, 49% said that they ‘quite often feel anxious and worried’ about coastal erosion, and 6% said it was having a noticeable impact on their mental health. For coastal flooding, just under half of respondents (49%) said that they ‘sometimes feel anxious and worried, but it’s not a top concern’ and 38% said they ‘quite often feel anxious and worried.’
- While some respondents may be directly affected by coastal erosion or coastal flooding, many people expressed concern about potential impacts on the community, the loss of facilities and heritage and frustration at the lack of progress, or availability of funding for coastal protection measures.
- A few responses commented that in their view erosion is a natural cycle and accept it as inevitable.

## 8. Actions and information

The survey asked how people thought the village should respond to risks associated with increased coastal erosion or coastal flooding in Thorpeness and the actions that might be needed.

- Sixty-two percent of respondents believe Thorpeness should prepare for many possible scenarios rather than waiting for certainty.
- Nearly four in five people (79%) say they have little or no information about possible coastal actions or plans.
- When asked for suggestions of actions, or the support needed, people most often called for improved sea defences such as rock armour and beach management, funding and financial support, faster decisions, clearer communication, inclusion of residents in decisions and a long-term plan supported by government funding.
- Some also mentioned the need for mental health and financial support for affected residents, establishing potential partnerships with large infrastructure providers, including Sizewell C and 1% of respondents said that no action was needed and that there should be managed retreat of the coast.
- Most respondents (57%) considered progress in addressing coastal erosion and coastal flooding to be too slow, but 37% thought that ‘lots of good work was happening, but we don’t have the resources to implement decisions.’

## 9. Who should take responsibility?

While some respondents say that retreat of the coast is inevitable, most say that coordinated action is needed, with shared responsibility between government agencies, energy companies, residents and local businesses.

Most people (more than 84%) think that Suffolk County Council, East Suffolk Council, the Environment Agency, and the UK Government should take the lead in responding to erosion and flooding. Around half (48%) also said the Parish Council and utility companies have a significant responsibility and 76% of

respondents who answered this question (n=238) thought that residents, homeowners and landlords had some or significant responsibility.

## 10. Getting involved

There are relatively low levels of direct involvement in planning for the future among respondents: 15% have participated in climate-related planning activities, and 23% in local neighbourhood consultations. Around one in four respondents said they would be willing to get directly involved in future coastal planning or adaptation work, and a further 41% said they might be willing to get involved. To support involvement, 63% of respondents said they wanted to know more about what options are available to help Thorpeness adapt to future changes and over 55% of respondents wanted to know more about how Thorpeness is being affected by coastal erosion and coastal flooding – both now and in the future.

## 11. Businesses

Among business respondents (n=31), 86% said they have not received enough information to help them plan future investment. Many business respondents said they would like clearer information, communications, practical guidance and coordinated action.

## 12. Next Steps

This summary provides an initial, high-level overview of the survey results. Further detailed analysis is being undertaken now and a report, containing further detail will be produced later this year.

Icarus, October 2025

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*If you would like more information on the project, please email: [resilientcoasts@eastssuffolk.gov.uk](mailto:resilientcoasts@eastssuffolk.gov.uk)*

