



## CABINET

Tuesday, 07 September 2021

<b>Subject</b>	Joint Coastal Projects Board
<b>Report by</b>	Councillor David Ritchie Cabinet Member with responsibility for Planning and Coastal Management
<b>Supporting Officer</b>	Sharon Bleese Coastal Manager (South) <a href="mailto:Sharon.bleese@eastsoffolk.gov.uk">Sharon.bleese@eastsoffolk.gov.uk</a> 07990 793662

Is the report Open or Exempt?	OPEN
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Category of Exempt Information and reason why it is <b>NOT</b> in the public interest to disclose the exempt information.	Not applicable
<b>Wards Affected:</b>	Gunton & St Margarets Aldeburgh and Leiston Kirkley and Pakefield Lothingland

## Purpose and high-level overview

### **Purpose of Report:**

Over the last two years Corton & Gunton, Pakefield and Thorpeness have experienced increased rates of erosion. This rate of erosion is impacting upon homes, businesses and the communities in these areas. Three projects have been initiated to capture and review data and evidence around coastal processes and to assess options. In addition, Shoreline Management Plan policies are being examined.

Partial project governance has been established. A Project Team has been established for each project. For the Pakefield and Thorpeness projects there are established community steering groups. The Suffolk Coast Forum has provided overview of progress to date and will continue to do so to completion.

Establishing a full, clear open, honest and transparent governance structure is crucial to decision making. Best practice for other projects such as the Gorleston to Lowestoft Coastal Strategy has ensured that decisions made about future coastal management are open to scrutiny, giving confidence to communities and statutory partners such as the Environment Agency and Natural England.

This paper, referring to Appendix 1. Draft Terms of Reference sets out the aims and objectives of a proposed joint coastal project board. It acknowledges that a project level board for each geographical area is likely to require commitment of time and attendance from a similar pool of Members, officers and partners. The paper then seeks to minimise that commitment whilst retaining a comprehensive route for decision making.

The commitment to attend a joint Board would be four meetings per year. Separate boards for each project would result, for some Members, officers and partners, in a further eight meetings per year.

### **Options:**

Option 1. A Joint Coastal Project Board is formed to complete the governance structure for projects in progress in Corton & Gunton, Pakefield and Thorpeness. This would limit attendance to four Board meetings per annum.

Option 2. The formation of three separate Project Boards, covering the project areas.

Option 3. No Project Boards are formed for these project areas and governance is restricted to the main project team, community steering groups and overview from the Suffolk Coast Forum members.

### **Recommendation/s:**

That Cabinet approves the formation of a single Joint Coastal Project Board to provide scrutiny and guidance to the three on-going projects in Corton & Gunton, Pakefield and Thorpeness. This will be an executive group with no financial/budgetary responsibilities but would provide recommendations to Cabinet at relevant stages in each project's progress. The Joint Coastal Project Board would comprise of Members covering the interests of the coastal communities involved. It is suggested that the following Members would constitute the Board's make-up, supported by senior officers:

Cllr David Ritchie; Cllr Mary Rudd; Cllr Keith Patience (representing Lowestoft Town Council); Cllr Peter Byatt; Cllr Tony Cooper; Cllr Russ Rainger; Cllr Tom Daly.

## Corporate Impact Assessment

### **Governance:**

Partial project governance has been established. A Project Team has been established for each project. For the Pakefield and Thorpeness projects there are established community steering groups. The Suffolk Coast Forum has provided overview of progress to date and will continue to do so to completion.

### **ESC policies and strategies that directly apply to the proposal:**

East Suffolk Council Constitution

East Suffolk Strategic Plan

East Suffolk Economic Growth Plan

### **Environmental:**

Environmental studies and surveys and in some cases a full Environmental Impact Assessment will be carried out as appropriate. Liaison with critical organisations such as the Environment Agency, Suffolk Wildlife Trust, the RSPB and Natural England are on-going.

### **Equalities and Diversity:**

An Equality Impact Assessment is being undertaken for each project. The development of the appraisal work being undertaken has no impact. This may change as the impacts are further assessed once a preferred option has been identified, particularly if this means a significant change. Any option identified however, will be open to public scrutiny and seeks to enhance and enable inclusive growth and enhance community development.

### **Financial:**

No implications

### **Human Resources:**

No resource implications for the recommendation included in this report

### **ICT:**

No implications.

### **Legal:**

No legal implications for the recommendation included in this report.

### **Risk:**

Each project has a full developed risk register. The Joint Coastal Project Board will regularly review that register with the Project team.

### **External Consultees:**

We have consulted with the community steering groups in Pakefield and Thorpeness, partners and the Suffolk Coast Forum, setting out the benefits of a formal governance structure. Feedback has been positive, with community members supporting the need for such a board formation. The community steering group for Corton to Gunton has yet to be formed as the project here has not progressed sufficiently at this stage.

## Strategic Plan Priorities

Select the priorities of the <a href="#">Strategic Plan</a> which are supported by this proposal: (Select only one primary and as many secondary as appropriate)		Primary priority	Secondary priorities
<b>T01</b>	<b>Growing our Economy</b>		
P01	Build the right environment for East Suffolk	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P02	Attract and stimulate inward investment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
P03	Maximise and grow the unique selling points of East Suffolk	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
P04	Business partnerships	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P05	Support and deliver infrastructure	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>T02</b>	<b>Enabling our Communities</b>		
P06	Community Partnerships	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P07	Taking positive action on what matters most	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
P08	Maximising health, well-being and safety in our District	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P09	Community Pride	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>T03</b>	<b>Maintaining Financial Sustainability</b>		
P10	Organisational design and streamlining services	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P11	Making best use of and investing in our assets	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P12	Being commercially astute	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P13	Optimising our financial investments and grant opportunities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P14	Review service delivery with partners	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>T04</b>	<b>Delivering Digital Transformation</b>		
P15	Digital by default	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P16	Lean and efficient streamlined services	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P17	Effective use of data	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P18	Skills and training	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P19	District-wide digital infrastructure	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>T05</b>	<b>Caring for our Environment</b>		
P20	Lead by example	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P21	Minimise waste, reuse materials, increase recycling	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P22	Renewable energy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P23	Protection, education and influence	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>XXX</b>	<b>Governance</b>		
XXX	How ESC governs itself as an authority	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**How does this proposal support the priorities selected?**

### Growing our Economy

#### 1. Attract and stimulate inward investment

In the 2019 House of Lords Select Committee on the regeneration of coastal towns it was recognised that, to attract inward investment into coastal areas, it is crucial to manage coastal change. Managing coastal change effectively requires a periodic review of evidence, data and policy to ensure that the right decisions are being made for the future of that area and that protection or adaptation maximises opportunities for future growth

to the local economy. The proposed Joint Coastal Projects Board will provide overview of the current review process, keeping local economy as one of the important areas of focus.

## **2. Maximise and grow the unique selling points of East Suffolk**

Arguably, the jewel in East Suffolk's crown is its beautiful coast; wild and untouched in some areas and developed to accommodate the growth of coastal communities in others. Whether natural or populated, the coast requires review and management to ensure that actions taken or plans for adaptation enhance this most unique of selling points. The proposed Joint Coastal Projects Board will provide overview of the current review process, keeping the coastal environment as one of the important areas of focus.

### **Enabling our communities**

#### **1. Taking positive action on what matters most.**

Our coastal communities need to feel reassured that we are supporting the management of the Suffolk coast. Suffolk has one of the fastest eroding coastlines in western Europe. The 2021 Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report recognises the increased risk to coastal communities of increased erosion. The projects in Corton & Gunton, Pakefield and Thorpeness are conducting important reviews of coastal processes and determining options for the future of those coastal communities. The proposed Joint Coastal Projects Board will provide overview of the current review process, keeping coastal change and potential options for coastal communities as critical areas of focus.

### **Caring for our environment**

#### **1. Protection, education and influence**

As previously mentioned, our coastal communities need to feel reassured that we are supporting the management of the Suffolk coast. Managing the coast is not necessarily building hard defences; this may not be an appropriate course of action. Coastal processes, environmental considerations and financial constraints may mean that, longer-term, we will need to work with our coastal communities to create options for an alternative future, an adaptation of their community. Adopting adaptation pathways takes time. Coastal communities need to feel that they are architects of change not victims of change. This means working closely with them to explore data, evidence and potential options. The proposed Joint Coastal Projects Board will provide overview of the current review process in Corton & Gunton, Pakefield and Thorpeness, supporting conversations around coastal change and potential options for coastal communities as critical areas of focus.

## Background and Justification for Recommendation

1	Background facts
1.1	<p>Over the last two years Corton &amp; Gunton, Pakefield and Thorpeness have experienced increased rates of erosion. This rate of erosion is impacting upon homes, businesses and the communities in these areas. Three projects have been initiated to capture and review data and evidence around coastal processes and to assess options. In addition, Shoreline Management Plan policies are being examined.</p>
1.2	<p>There is an urgency amongst the communities in these areas to move forward swiftly to identify what options are available. Project start for each area was impacted upon by delays caused by COVID 19. However, all projects have made good progress since November 2020 despite those difficult circumstances.</p>
1.3	<p>In 2016 the Environment Agency approved the Gorleston to Lowestoft Coastal Strategy. This was then approved by Waveney District Council Cabinet. The coastal strategy reviewed the management intent of the Shoreline Management Plans 6 and 7, covering the coast from Gorleston in the north to Pakefield in the south.</p> <p>The coastal strategy made recommendations for management actions based upon data gathered in 2014. Since then, erosion in <b>Corton and Gunton</b> has increased. The erosion in Gunton exposed oil on the beach from a spill from the Eleni V in the late 1970s. Anglian Water has critical infrastructure in this area, serving Lowestoft and Corton, which may potentially be impacted by the continued erosion.</p> <p>The initial options appraisal for the Corton &amp; Gunton project began in November 2020, focusing first on Gunton and working in partnership with Anglian Water.</p> <p>At the time of approval in 2016 <b>Pakefield</b> benefitted from a significant beach. The recommendations of the coastal strategy therefore focused on the monitoring of beach levels suggesting if beach levels deteriorated to:</p> <p>If partnership funding is available: design new works, obtain permission and construct.</p> <p>If partnership funding is not available: carry out regular assessment of the erosion; engage with the local community on impacts and way forward; if necessary, develop adaptation and exit strategies.</p> <p>Over the four years since the approval of the coastal strategy beach levels at Pakefield have deteriorated significantly. This is largely due to Benacre Ness moving north at an approximate rate of 50 to 80m per annum, bringing with it a period of erosion ahead of the beach building again.</p> <p>Mott MacDonald were contracted in February 2021 to begin an options appraisal and Shoreline Management Plan review. Pakefield also continues to be regularly monitored by the Coastal Partnership East engineering team.</p>
1.4	<p><b>Thorpeness</b> has experienced long periods of erosion. In 1976 gabion baskets were put in place by Suffolk County Council. In 2010 the community worked with Suffolk Coastal District Council and contributed funds to install geo-textile bags to help slow the erosion to the northern end of Thorpeness beach. This intervention was</p>

	<p>designed to last up to 20 years. Unfortunately, the increased erosion here has meant that the geo-textile bags have lasted less than 10 years.</p> <p>Royal Haskoning DHV were contracted in February 2021 to develop options for this frontage. It is accepted by the local community that any option will not be a long-term solution. The pressure on coastal processes and the need for a defence to be removed before it is detrimental to natural processes, means that the design life will be for no longer than 25 years with continual monitoring.</p> <p>The well-established community steering group (now a Community Interest Company) are raising funds to progress with a rock revetment.</p>
1.5	It is note-worthy that all three projects are part of the Norfolk and Suffolk Coast Transition Programme (NSCT); either as a pilot area or a twinned area. NSCT was awarded £8.4m as a winning bid as part of Defra's Innovative Resilience Fund.

## 2 Current position

2.1	Partial project governance has been established for all three projects. A Project Team has been established. For the Pakefield and Thorpeness projects there are established community steering groups. The Suffolk Coast Forum has provided overview of progress to date and will continue to do so to completion.
2.2	Establishing a full, clear open, honest and transparent governance structure is crucial to decision making. Best practice for other projects such as the Gorleston to Lowestoft Coastal Strategy has ensured that decisions made about future coastal management are open to scrutiny, giving confidence to communities and statutory partners such as the Environment Agency and Natural England.
2.3	The projects for Corton & Gunton, Pakefield and Thorpeness are developing. They are at a crucial stage and would benefit from the additional advice and scrutiny that would be provided by a Project Board, ensuring a robust, clear and transparent governance structure.

## 3 How to address current situation

3.1	Option 1, forming a Joint Coastal Project Board, provides the best possible outcome for all three projects. The resource implications for Members, officers and partners are significantly less and therefore more likely to be possible in line with other commitment.
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## 4 Reason/s for recommendation

4.1	The implementation of Option 1, the formation of a Joint Coastal Project Board, would support the Project Team in ensuring that critical pathways are met, and progress is made through the project stages in a timely manner. Meeting those critical pathways is vital in ensuring that the right actions and options are identified. Each of the projects have vulnerable, eroding frontages. Homes and
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	<p>businesses are at risk and that risk heightens each winter. It is therefore essential that we move forward swiftly with identifying options that are technically feasible, environmentally sound and economically possible.</p> <p>It may not always be possible to defend eroding frontages. Adaptation pathways may need to be explored. Long-term master-planning may be a sensible approach. Options development as part of a project structure benefits from the scrutiny and challenge of a robust governance structure.</p>
4.2	<p>Best practice gathered from other coastal projects in East Suffolk such as the Gorleston to Lowestoft Coastal Strategy and the Lowestoft Flood Risk Management Project demonstrates that a robust governance structure supports decision making and aids liaison with partner organisations. In addition, communities and partners are reassured that decision making is sound when supported by good project governance.</p>

## Appendices

### Appendices:

<b>Appendix A</b>	Draft Terms of Reference
<b>Appendix B</b>	Corton & Gunton project programme
<b>Appendix C</b>	Pakefield project programme
<b>Appendix D</b>	Thorpeness project programme
<b>Appendix E</b>	Norfolk and Suffolk Coast Transition Plan Expression of Interest

### Background reference papers:

Date	Type	Available From
	Gorleston to Lowestoft Coastal Strategy	<a href="http://www.coasteast.org.uk/projects">www.coasteast.org.uk/projects</a>
	Shoreline Management Plan 7 – Lowestoft Ness to Landguard Point	<a href="http://shorelinemanagementplan7.suffolksmp2.org.uk">Shoreline Management Plan 7 (suffolksmp2.org.uk)</a>
	Pakefield progress report	<a href="http://www.coasteast.org.uk/projects">www.coasteast.org.uk/projects</a>
	Thorpeness progress report	<a href="http://www.coasteast.org.uk/projects">www.coasteast.org.uk/projects</a>