

Protecting your community

Anglian (Eastern)

Regional Flood & Coastal Committee

A year in review: 2012-2013



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Chairman's welcome

Paul Hayden, Chairman

Anglian (Eastern) Regional Flood and Coastal Committee



January 2013 was the 60th anniversary of the 1953 floods that caused devastation and loss of life all along the East Coast. The anniversary provided a focus for commemorative events linking together the personal stories of those who survived the horrific events and the communities living in those areas today.

Despite huge investment and improvements in our coastal defences since 1953, both the Environment Agency and RFCC remain vigilant and continue to both scan the horizon to ensure flood defences remain fit for purpose in light of climatic changes and sea level rise, and to ensure that critical defences already in place are properly maintained.

We face an ever increasing demand for investment in flood and coastal defences and for protecting our environment. In the current economic climate it is therefore more important than ever that we spend our money wisely. The RFCC has been working together with Environment Agency colleagues to look for ways to maximise efficiency and partnership working to deliver improved outcomes at a lower cost. Examples include the TE2100 partnership, taking a strategic 100 year approach to replacement of the barriers and defences that protect Essex, Kent and London. This long term strategic partnership will deliver improved outcomes along with considerable savings in this multi-billion pound project

At the other extreme, we are working with individual farmers and land owners to identify common sense ways in which we can work together to improve maintenance of defences and reduce the red tape burden they face.

Another key objective for the RFCC has been to work with a wide range of partners to maximise the business and community benefits of investment in flood defences. Examples include the Ipswich Flood Defence Scheme which will not only to protect more than 3700 properties, but will protect vital infrastructure and businesses, safeguarding more than 4000 jobs.

Finally, I add my personal thanks to my Committee Members, the Environment Agency's officers and to our many partner organisations for their continued support for the important work that is carried out under the auspices of the committee.

What the Committee does

The flood risk management challenges in Anglian (Eastern) are considerable. Over 87,000 residential and commercial properties have been identified as being at risk of flooding. 11,000 are in the fluvial floodplain and 76,000 in the coastal floodplain.

Regional Flood and Coastal Committees (RFCCs) are committees set up by the government to decide on local priorities, raise local levies and approve programmes of work.

They support the Environment Agency and local authorities in working with communities and others to identify and raise funding

Protecting our coast



The coastline in the Eastern RFCC area is dynamic and the Environment Agency is responsible for 494km, of which 345km is seawall. Eastern Area as a whole has 800km of sea wall, 440km of which are in Essex alone; more than the total amount in Holland. This is because of the long Essex estuaries. The Environment Agency also maintains a further 409km of defences along the estuaries.

The coastline in the RFCC area is one of the fastest eroding coastlines in Europe. The unprotected soft cliffs at Pakefield, Kessingland and Dunwich are considered the fastest eroding sections of coast in Europe at a rate of 5m per year.

Of the 87,000 properties in the floodplain for the area, 76,000 of them are in the coastal floodplain. Coastal flooding is our highest risk.

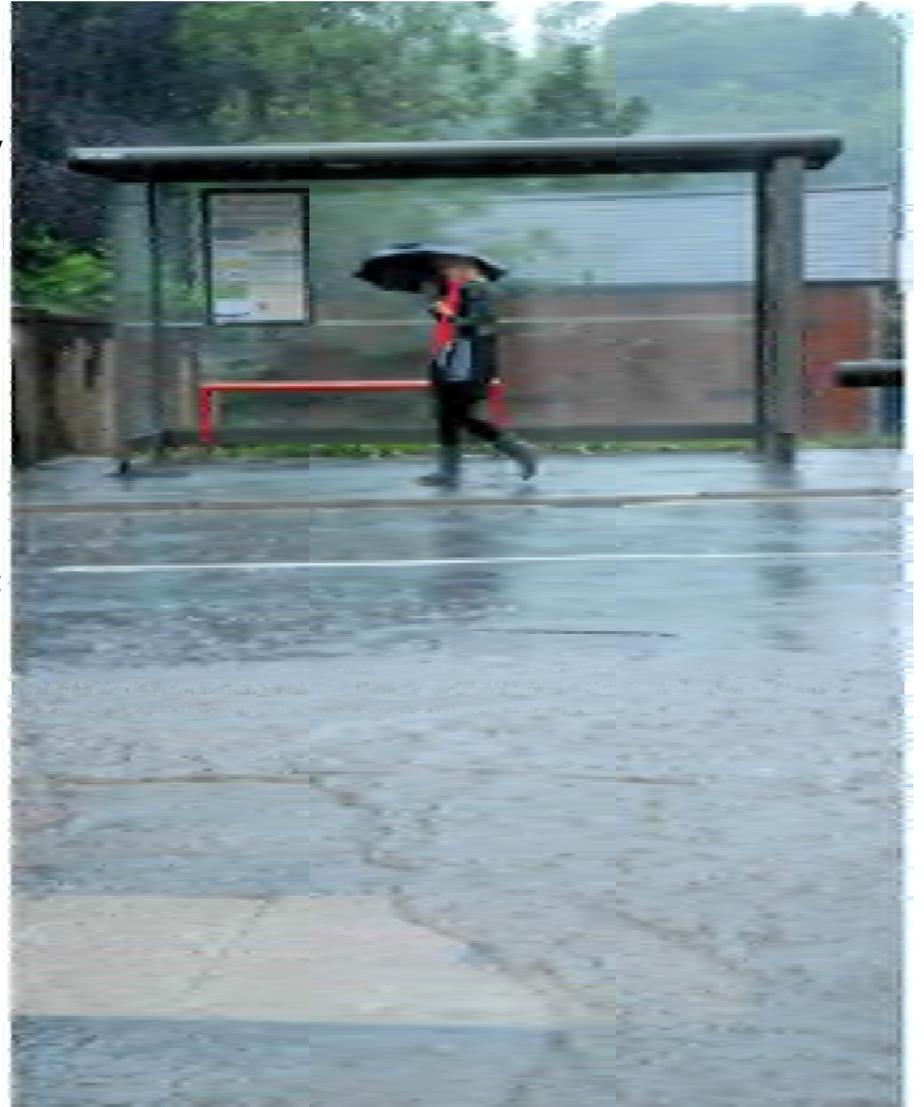
Drought to flood

The number of flood warnings increased throughout Thursday 3 May. Eventually 15 flood warnings were issued, covering the watercourses from the River Chelmer in the south to the River Gipping in the north. This area included, the Rivers Chelmer, Brain, Colne, Stour, Box, Brett and Gipping.

The dry winter of 2011-12 came to an abrupt end in April 2012 in what was considered by the Met Office to be the wettest April on record, with rain falling almost every day. This ensured that by the end of the month the top of the soil was saturated.

On Sunday 29 April, significant rainfall fell on Suffolk and Essex with the highest amounts in South Essex (between 20mm and 40mm depending on location). This triggered 13 flood alerts and 2 flood warnings. The two flood warnings were issued for the River Wid - which saw the highest levels recorded at our gauge - and for Chelmsford as this water made its way down stream.

A band of rain passed over Suffolk and Essex during the early hours of Thursday 3 May. At least 15mm was experienced over a wide area, and many places received over 30mm. This amount of rainfall, falling on a saturated catchment caused significant disruption.



Community engagement

Deben Estuary Plan



The community-led estuary plan is progressing under Suffolk Coastal District Council's (SCDCs) Core Strategy document (ref. policy SP30). The Environment Agency are working with Suffolk County Council who is leading on the Sustainability Appraisal aspect of this work which will include a Strategic Environmental Assessment and Appropriate Assessments and the Environment Agency will lead on Water Framework Directive appraisal.

To complement this work the Deben estuary is now one of the pilots for the National Defra Ecosystems Services (ES) project and is collating all the evidence gathered by community groups to build a clearer picture of benefits and potential beneficiaries throughout the estuary. This will greatly assist the funding framework that will accompany the plan. It will also feed valuable information on the ES approach back to Defra.

Throughout May the Environment Agency have met almost all the Deben landowners individually with the DEP to explain the plan process and the initial economic assessments. Where we have robustly uneconomic walls we have shared this with landowners and explained their potential options. We are supporting one group of landowners to maintain their own defences in one such location.

One significant new trend in incident response, highlighted by the events of 2012, is the use of **social media**.

Use of Facebook and Twitter was monitored closely, and the Environment Agency's communications teams worked hard to proactively provide up to date information and responses, and to gather valuable local information.

Protecting communities

The Anglian (Eastern) Regional Flood & Coastal Committee (RFCC) supports the Environment Agency, Lead Local Flood Authorities and other Risk Management Authorities to reduce flood risk across the Eastern RFCC area, by building flood defences, maintaining river channels and flood defence structures, promoting the take up of the Environment Agency flood warning service and by helping communities prepare for potential flooding. Below is a selection of our work from 2012/13.

In 2012/13:

The total budget for flood and coastal risk management work in the Eastern RFCC area was £47 million, which was made up of Flood Defence Grant in Aid, IDB precepts, General Drainage Charges and funding secured from Local Levy and external contributions.

2012/13 saw the first full year of implementation of the new Partnership approach to funding. The new approach is designed to provide money to more projects by requiring that part of the project costs are found from alternative sources including local communities and businesses that will benefit.

Forward Look to 2013/14

The FCERM programme for 2013/14 has 112 projects totalling £37.7 million from FCRM GiA, Local Levy and other external contributions for EA, LLFAs and IDBs.

2. Cromer Coast Protection Scheme

The coastal town of Cromer is situated on steep cliffs which have been protected against erosion by the sea since defences were first built in the mid 19th Century. The existing sea wall and groynes are now in very poor condition, with a high risk of failure which would lead to loss of properties and critical infrastructure. Regeneration of this coastal frontage is important to maintain the income from tourism which provides essential support for the local economy.

North Norfolk District Council are promoting a major improvement scheme to refurbish the seawall and provide a new groyne to restore beach levels. The work is due to start on site in November and will take two years to complete.



Maintenance and Reconditioning Programme



In addition to building new flood defences, a great deal of work is done each year to maintain existing assets, both on a day to day basis, and during bigger reconditioning projects.

Regular maintenance is essential as it allows flood defences and flood risk structures to continue to perform effectively.

In the Eastern RFCC area the Environment Agency maintains:

- 2,993 km of main river flood defences (which includes culverts, and flood walls and 800km of sea walls
- 98km of raised flood defences.

8,944km² of Eastern area is in a flood risk area, with 87,000 properties in the floodplain.



7. Clacton & Holland Scheme

This is a Local Authority led project to deliver a £30 million coast protection scheme along 5km of the Clacton coastal frontage.

The scheme was successful in achieving additional funding from the national "growth and acceleration fund" this year which has enabled the planned construction of these essential works to be brought forward. The project not only provides protection to over 3000 homes, 185 commercial properties and critical infrastructure but also delivers significant tourism growth opportunities for the area.

The project follows the new partnership funding approach with significant contributions from Tendring District Council and Essex County Council, which are necessary to supplement the available Flood Defence Grant in Aid to deliver the scheme.

1. Great Yarmouth Sea Defences

Flood defences in Great Yarmouth are in serious deterioration, with the condition of the piled quays forming a vital part of the flood defence structures alongside the tidal river. These defences reduce the risk of flooding to over 2000 homes and a failure of these defences during a surge tide event would result in rapid flooding with depths in excess of 2 metres. External contributions are required in order to progress with this project.

The Environment Agency, Great Yarmouth Borough Council and other stakeholders are working together to secure the external funding contribution required for the scheme to be approved, and a commitment to working in partnership for future phases. The scheme has been recommended to receive part of the Government's special Growth and Acceleration Fund allowing projects to begin earlier than would otherwise be possible. The start date is dependent on securing external funding.



Flood Forecasting, Modelling and Mapping

Significant work goes on to model flood risk, develop forecasts to predict flooding, provide flood warnings and, where possible, introduce other preventative measures.

3. Tunstall Flood Alleviation Scheme

Tunstall suffers from a combination of ordinary watercourse and surface water flooding due to the local geology, topography and minimal drainage in the area. Surface water runoff used to be captured by ponds and small watercourses that also had inline holding ponds. Over the years due to development these storing ponds have been filled in and their numbers and size have reduced.

The catchment area is around 57ha in total and is drained by a single watercourse running west to east. The village has seen numerous incidents over the last 5 years, with the worst in the summers of 2009 and 2012 where 3-5 properties flooded internally. Options are being assessed ranging from installing swales and enlarging on-line storage ponds to improving the highways drains and channel clearance. The total cost of the scheme should be in the region of £20-25K. Local landowners have agreed to undertake some of the channel clearance and maintenance work which makes up £10-15k of the total cost. It is hoped that work will commence in the autumn 2013.



4. Needham Market

Approximately 9 properties flooded in Needham market in May 2012 from surface water and a number of properties came very close to flooding from the River Gipping. The Environment Agency is working closely with the Suffolk Flood Risk Management Partnership to explore the cause of the flooding and outline some potential options to mitigate the risk.

6. Chelmsford Flood Alleviation Scheme

Chelmsford lies at the junction of three rivers, the Wid, Can and Chelmer. The area suffered widespread flooding in 2000 and 2001. The most recent problems occurred in February 2009, when a severe flood warning was issued for the town and numerous roads, gardens and open spaces were flooded. The preferred scheme for alleviation of flooding in Chelmsford is to construct a flood storage embankment across the River Wid at Margaretting, 6km south of Chelmsford. In addition the preferred scheme also recommended works to provide greater protection to Chelmer Village.

A planning application was submitted in August 2012 and approved in February 2013. During this time the design of the scheme was developed and further engagement with the local community took place. The planning process followed by Chelmsford Borough Council is now subject to a judicial review. Construction of the flood storage area cannot proceed until the review has been completed, expected late 2014. A new wall in Chelmer Village started in July 2012 and was completed in June 2013. It now provides flood alleviation to 125 properties.

