

Together we can make a difference!

As always, a big 'thank you' goes out to you all for your continued and unfaltering support. Our recent Christmas Open Meeting very clearly demonstrated that there is great concern within all local communities for the continued maintenance and improvements of our sea defences. Now more than ever it will be vitally important to ensure that the Marsh is kept firmly on the agenda of those Government Agencies who make the ultimate decisions about our flood defences and DOC will continue to keep this task its highest priority. It seems that funding of sea defence schemes has very much become a 'balancing act' between protecting the vulnerable and 'cost-benefit ratio' or 'outcome measures' which leaves rural communities pretty much at a disadvantage despite Government's reassurance. External funding contributions (which must now be sought to secure adequate flood defences) are far more difficult to obtain in areas which are already suffering from deprivation and the Marsh certainly falls within this category. A vicious cycle develops whereby potential flood risk results in lack of confidence, lack of investment by industry and thus halting or at least hindering the much needed regeneration for our area – not to mention the effect this continued uncertainty will have on our house insurance quotes! As taxpayers Government treats us as equals which unfortunately does not always seem to follow when coastal defence schemes are allocated funding and densely populated areas seem to present a better flood defence investment option in this complicated and at times rather confusing Government funding policy. The postponement of our sea defence schemes has already clearly demonstrated the disastrous consequences of this policy implementation. Only by working together can we ensure that our case is heard loud and clear by those who matter and with your continued support DOC hopes to achieve just that! Let us hope that 2012 will signal the start of more encouraging news for the Marsh.

Brigitte Bass/DOC-PR

If you want to join/support DOC to help defend the Marsh, please contact:-

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Defend Our Coast Association
www.defendourcoast.org.uk



Message from our Chairman

In 1948 Richard Church described the inhabitants of Romney Marsh as people who have been 'working at frantic speed for the last two thousand years building dykes of brushwood and rock'. While the brushwood of the past has been replaced with an award winning seawall at Dymchurch, DOC members have worked hard (and maybe just occasionally 'at frantic speed'!) during the year to continue the long Marsh tradition of vigilance over our sea defences. We still need to ensure that every part of our coastline is adequately protected.

At the end of November our Christmas event was attended by more people than ever before. Ian Nun from the Environment Agency gave a full and detailed presentation, which is now available on our website and is well worth a look. We were particularly grateful to Mr and Mrs Parker from the Camber Castle and ladies from Camber for providing excellent refreshments. A total of £296.50 was raised for DOCs funds (£146 from the auction and £150.50 from the raffle). A big thank you to all those who contributed in any way.

A great deal of DOCs work is done quietly in the background, negotiating with the Environment Agency, English Nature and other agencies, trying to maintain the commitment and funding for planned coastal defences. However, your views and concerns are vital to our campaigning work, and we are keen to enable relevant agencies to listen to you. We are therefore planning two Open Evenings where a representative of the Environment Agency will be on hand to listen to your concerns and answer questions. The first event will be in Rye in February 2012 (date and venue to be announced shortly) with a further event scheduled at the Assembly Rooms, New Romney on 14th March 2012. Look out for further details in the press and on our website.

'Storms to batter Britain within hours' is the headline on my computer as I write this. I only hope that when you read this you have still got your feet dry. We must always be vigilant until every part of the coast of Romney Marsh is adequately protected. Since its inception, DOC has become respected and listened to, not only by the Environment Agency, but at various levels in Government. However, effective campaigning is dependent on wide support, so if we are to be really effective we must increase our membership. The minimum membership fee is only £5 per year. A big thank you for your support if you are already a member, but please do your best to encourage your friends, family and colleagues to join DOC also. We must work together to defend and protect this very special part of England that we are privileged to live in.

My very best wishes to you and your families for Christmas and the New Year

Terry Preston
 December 2011

Technical Update by our Vice Chair David Oliver



I recently attended a meeting organised by the Environment Agency for interested parties to discuss a review of the Folkestone to Cliff End Strategy Scheme.

With the work at Dymchurch completed the remaining schemes need to be carried out before the whole marsh can be considered to have an adequate standard of protection. Cuts in Government spending has meant that the remaining schemes cannot be started until at least after 2015.

The EA are exploring other funding avenues as has been established in other areas whereby local communities and businesses contribute to the cost. Other options being explored are to pare the schemes to basic requirements and reduce schemes to smaller cells which might boost funding scores. One problem with the funding scoring is that allocation is based on residential property but does not appear to take into account businesses or other infrastructure.

It has been identified that with the dire condition of the Denge frontage additional work to protect the power station switch house by placing a piling wall from the Denge Main Sewer to the power station tsunami wall. The EA will now consider dredging the shoals in the tidal stretch of the River Rother as was traditionally done to reduce erosion to the banks of the tidal walls, this would be a cheaper option than realigning the existing walls.

It has also been proposed to construct a terminal groyne at Greatstone Outfall to prevent the continual blocking of the outfall with shingle.

Although it might be considered simplistic, it is a shame that government would rather allocate money for capital schemes than allow basic maintenance to be done annually thus reducing the need for future capital schemes.

David Oliver

The Environment Agency reports:- Project Updates – November 2011

Dungeness Borrow Pit

The Environment Agency and EDF have submitted a new planning application to Kent County Council to extract shingle from the Dungeness Borrow Pit, covering the period from 2011 to 2023.

We are aware of local concerns about restricted access to the beach during works. We would like to reassure local residents and beach users that whilst there will have to be some restrictions on the beach in order to do the works safely, the only area of the beach that will need to be completely closed off to the public is the loading area during works (around 200 metres at any one time). The rest of the beach will remain open to the public and we have the flexibility to shift this area on the beach as required. We will work with local beach users to minimise the disruption as much as possible.

Whilst we have proposed that shingle recycling will take place annually between October and March, we will not need to work continuously during this time. The amount and duration of works needed is dependent on the weather and shingle movements around the Ness. Having permission to work within this period will give us the flexibility to do further recharge works if a winter storm damages the shingle defences.

We appreciate DOC's ongoing support for this application and hope to receive KCC's decision on the application early next year.

Future funding for capital schemes

We have submitted our local 2012-13 programme of work for prioritisation within the national funding allocation. The indicative allocation is currently being considered by the Southern Regional Flood and Coastal Committee (RFCC).

These are *indicative* allocations only and, as in previous years, the allocations may change in the light of feedback from Committees and Local Authorities. The final allocation will be agreed by the RFCCs and the Environment Agency Board by the end of Feb 2012.

Environment Agency Report cont'd.

Schemes on Romney Marsh

The remaining schemes from the Folkestone to Cliff End Strategy are Broomhill Sands, Romney Sands, Hythe Ranges, Lydd Ranges and Rother Tidal Walls East.

Unfortunately none of these schemes have been awarded funding in the 2012/13 indicative allocation. At the moment these schemes have been deferred for at least four years. We have a plan in place to maintain the frontage in the interim and are investigating what we can do to try to gain government funding sooner, further detail is below.

This year, Defra announced a new approach to funding schemes: Flood and Coastal Resilience Partnership Funding. This approach seeks to spread government funds across a larger number of schemes by seeking external contributions. We are now reviewing the costs and benefits of all the remaining schemes to see where external contributions may help with funding and whether we can find ways to reduce the costs of the schemes to gain government funding sooner.

We hope to meet with representatives from Natural England, DOC and our consultants to look at how we can adapt our current options to enable the schemes to be funded sooner.

If you would like to know more about the new funding approach, more information can be found on the Defra website: <http://archive.defra.gov.uk/environment/flooding/funding/documents/flood-coastal-resilience-intro-guide.pdf>

Hythe Ranges, Lydd Ranges and Broomhill Sands schemes

Shepway District Council have managed parts of this frontage for many years and have detailed knowledge and experience of how the beach functions. We are working together to use this knowledge to deliver the best schemes possible. The cost savings this will deliver may mean that we are likely to gain government funding sooner.

In the meantime, we have £600,000 funding per year from 2011/12 to 2015/16 to continue maintenance between Camber and Dungeness.

If we are successful in our planning application to recycle shingle from the Dungeness Borrow Pit, the cost of the recycling work will reduce by half and we will be able to spend this money doing further works along the frontage.

Romney Sands Coastal Defences

We have done further work on the Romney Sands Coastal Defence scheme and found that we are able to deliver this sooner and more effectively by breaking it into two phases:

1. New terminal groyne near the RNLI station and outfall. This will stop the shingle drift to the south. We have funds to design and construct the terminal groyne in 2012/13.
2. Shingle replenishment from the new terminal groyne to Pirates Spring.

Delivering the work in this way spreads the cost and will allow us to evaluate the performance of the groyne before we commit funds to shingle replenishment.

Jury's Gap refurbishment

Whilst there is no funding in the indicative allocation for the refurbishment work in 2012/13, we expect that these works will be funded in 2013/14 for completion in 2014/15.

This work will improve the standard of protection to local residents and meet climate change predictions. We will keep DOC informed of the progress of the allocation.

Ongoing maintenance

Now we have gained approval to spend £600,000 to improve the standard of protection with shingle recycling and reprofiling works. We expect to start works along the Broomhill and Denge frontages in November.

Rye Harbour Western Training Wall

We are planning to rebuild the Rye Harbour Western Training Wall, which maintains navigation into the harbour. An investigation this summer showed the condition of the wall to be worse than we previously thought so we need to act now to prevent a catastrophic failure. The works will last approximately three months and we hope to start on site in January, as long as we are granted the necessary permissions.

The harbour is crucial to the town of Rye, its people and economy. Rebuilding the wall now will ensure the sustainability of the harbour for at least the next 50 years.

Unfortunately, the project will involve some very heavy machinery; the noise is likely to be loud and will carry for some distance. We will also need to bring in large quantities of material to complete the task so there may be an increase in the amount of traffic on the roads nearby.

Local people and businesses owners have made helpful suggestions at a recent drop in session about how we can reduce the impact. If you have any questions, concerns or suggestions about on how we can minimise disruption please contact James Bates at: ryeharbourwtw@environment-agency.gov.uk.