

ALDE AND ORE COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP

FINAL MINUTES

MINUTES OF THE EIGHTEENTH MEETING OF THE ALDE AND ORE COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP HELD ON THURSDAY 27 MARCH 2025 AT 6.30PM AT ORFORD TOWN HALL

PRESENT:

Nominated representatives

Tim Beach (TB) Chairman	Cllr. Snape Parish Council
Jocelyn Bond (JB)	Cllr. Aldeburgh Town Council
Gary Wingrove (GW)	Cllr. Orford and Gedgrave PC and NOTT
Ben Coulter (BC)	(repr.) Butley, Capel St Andrew and Wantisden PC
Roger Dawson (RD)	Cllr. Hollesley PC
Tim Parker (TP)	Butley Chillesford
Edward Greenwell (EG)	ESWMB alternate
Alison Andrews (AA) Hon Secretary	Alde and Ore Association

Frances Barnwell (FB)	Vice Chairman AOCF
Chris Gill (CG)	Treasurer AOCF

ADVISERS/ATTENDEES:

Pete Roberts (PR)	East Suffolk Water Management Board (ESWMB)
David Kemp (DK)	Environment Agency
Jane Maxim (JM)	The Alde & Ore Estuary Trust (AOET)

MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC: 5 and 2 apologies

AGENDA

1. Apologies: Andrew Reid Cllr. Suffolk County Council; Tim Wilson Cllr. East Suffolk Council (Rendlesham and Orford Ward); Julia Ewart Cllr. East Suffolk Council; Peter McGinity Chillesford Parish Meeting; Boyton PC rep; Alan Hutson Iken PC; Bill Parker Sudbourne PC; Oliver Morgan Tunstall PC; Harry Young Business Repr; Jane Skepper ESWMB Alternate; Ed Boyle Natural England.

2. Declarations of interest: No new declarations of interest but Tim Beach wished to point out that he was representing Snape Parish Council and that would be relevant in PR's presentation.

3. Minutes of the meeting on 24 October 2024

These were approved. Proposer EG, seconder CG

4. Matters arising from the meeting on 27 June 2024 not otherwise on the agenda

- i. Re para 5.2 EG asked if there was anything further to report on water supplies and on changes in the regulation of abstraction points and licencing which might come about by 2028. PR said he would investigate and report back.
- ii. TB said that Giles Bloomfield who had attended a good many meetings as the adviser from the ESWMB had moved on to another position. He had contributed a very great deal to the development and roll-out of the estuary plan and his help on progressing the project had been very much appreciated.

5. UPDATE –ROLL OUT OF UPPER ESTUARY EMBANKMENT IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME and LOWER ESTUARY BUSINESS CASE

5.1 TB said that the project had moved on a great deal since the last meeting. The updating of costings and plan details foreseen in the last minutes and the projected meeting to take stock once the costings were known had been completed. It was a very complex project and the costings had gone up dramatically. This meant new considerations and decisions had to be taken over the next few months.

5.2 Pete Roberts, Project Delivery Engineer of ESWMB, the legal entity and risk management authority delivering the project, gave a full presentation of the progress of the project, the updated costings and decisions that had to be taken in the light of them. (Note: ESWMB is a branch within the organisation called Water Management

Alliance (WMA)).

5.3 *Work to date*: PR reported that the work completed to date included Aldeburgh Phase I, the middle 1500 m section of the river wall constructed to the necessary resilience standard with the soke dyke lying behind it in 2016/7; the appointment of a necessarily large Project Delivery team with a wide range of expertise; a number of legally required environmental surveys including on voles, birds at various seasons, snails and hedgehogs, providing essential baselining of the status of the estuary to underpin the various statutory licences which have to be obtained; Ground Investigation (extensive number of boreholes) of the construction areas to underpin the preliminary and detailed designs; permissions and permits to be drafted and submitted; advance environmental mitigation; costing work and preparations for tenders. Consultation and newsletters had been low key since the Open Day in October 2023 and the last updating newsletter had been in July 2024, because it was important to be sure about developing the details of the project: now consultations and information provision would step up again.

5.4 *Project overview and change*: PR said outline business case approval and the award of grants of £11.9 million in January 2023 were to cover the upper estuary, (FCs 06 Snape Maltings and Tunstall, 07, Snape Village, 10 Aldeburgh and 05 Iken). Preparatory work was undertaken enabling a greater understanding of what needed to be done, the next step was the costings update, from the original costings made in 2021/22 in November 2024. These revealed there had been a large increase in costs resulting from a range of factors including energy costs, Ukraine War, the impact of Sizewell C on local labour supplies and some redesigns following the ground investigation. This cost increase necessitated shaping the scope of the project from four to two Flood Cells, with a project cost estimate for FC06 and 07, covering Snape Maltings and Tunstall and Snape Village, of some £12.7 million. An application had now been put into the Environment Agency to change the scope of the project to allow the grant awarded to be used for the reshaped project. This was a collaborative partnership funded project and over £2million has to come from private non-government sources and EA requires this funding up front before works can start. The AOET had raised some of the £2m and, with part of the landowners' loan which they were paying for over 30 years, that funding requirement was being met. If EA agree to the change, work could start in FC 06 and 07 in September 2025 and be completed by Oct 2027.

5.5 He said doing the estuary is a long-term project and it was unavoidable to have to cut our cloth as to what was available in the current state of the country. Proceeding with FC06 and 07 would create a lot of benefit, given that the village was seriously flooded in 2013

5.6 *Current work*: PR then outlined the current focus of work, having reached the point he had described, which included a lot of essential background work. As well as the final financial and project scope approval from Environment Agency, ongoing preparatory work included public and landowner consultation; finalising design plans, pre-start environmental surveys; submission of Flood Risk Activity Permit (FRAP), Water Vole licence & other Natural England assents, (he mentioned ESWMB had developed a much cheaper and more cost effective method of vole surveys based on experience on the Aldeburgh wall which it was hoped Natural England would accept and which would save some money); bespoke waste permit application (for clay needing to be bought in or used), Public Rights of Way (PRoW) applications for temporary closures, followed by tendering & Contractor appointment FC06 works east of bridge. In addition, there was necessary completion of health & safety / project delivery documentation and other Contractor tender / appointments for FC07 phases.

5.7 PR showed slides illustrating the detailed plans for improved embankments for north, west and south of the river at Snape, some traditional clay walls, giving flood protection of 3.8 metres above AOD compared with 3metres now. This was mostly designed to fit in with the natural landscape but included demountable flood boards for about 130 metres along the river side at Snape Maltings, currently protection being 3 metre, which could be stored away for some 98% of the time and only used when there was a clear danger of flooding. He explained that technical consultants had found that, rather than the original proposed 1:3 back slope of the clay walls in this area, 1:4 was needed so that more clay needed to be brought in for Snape village and there would be a temporary stockpile near the Crown during 2026 to enable works completion by end 2027. Also there would be temporary closures of the paths to the north and south of the river at Snape, the time for those being kept to a minimum and would be fully advertised.

5.8 *Timing*: In summary the current aspirational time table was

FC06 Snape Maltings October 2025 – Summer 2026 (East of bridge),

Spring 2026 – Summer 2026 (West of bridge)

FC07 Snape Village September 2025 (new soke dyke, doing so at this time would enable the clay works to green

up and assist environmental protection whilst the adjacent walls were built the following year)

Sept / Oct 2025 advance environmental enhancement

April 2026 - Construction material import

Spring 2027 to end October 2027 embankment enhanced (1.1km)

FC10 Aldeburgh Spring 2027 to end October 2028 and FC05 Iken Spring 2028 to end October 2031, subject to sufficient ongoing funding (government grant and privately raised).

5.9 *Wider estuary work* : this would include fund raising to continue for FC10 and FC05, preparation of the Outline Business Case for FC10 in 2026, Ground Investigation work in lower estuary flood cells followed by analysis of Ground Investigation results and preliminary design to enable informed detailed costing exercise of lower estuary

5.10 *Community engagement*. PR moved onto the importance of Community engagement. This would include continuing to work with parishes and local communities to implement the plans, targeted stakeholder events such as this, and Launch Event for start of site works. There would be updated project website material for AOET / AOCP / ESWMB, regular social media, a web diary charting project progress, Project newsletters. There would also be continuing wider engagement on the remaining estuary walls from FC 10 and 05 in the Upper Estuary and from FC04 through the lower estuary.

Discussion:

5.11 In the discussion that followed, PR explained the work had to be done working through the flood cells in such a way to avoid flooding of properties occurring downstream while walls were being raised. The hydrological modelling done by HR Wallingford showed that the only way to achieve that was to start in the upper estuary at Snape. In this way only a few houses, 3 or 4, might be slightly more vulnerable in the construction period and provision would be made in consultation with the property owners to ensure that the necessary extra individual protection was installed but for even those properties the expected, but still remote likelihood, of higher flooding levels was only a few millimetres.

5.12 Questions were asked on the sums needed for the wider estuary. PR said that the funding necessary now, in the light of the costings was about £4 million for FC10 and on current plans £11million for Iken including a large amount for contingencies. Funding sources would still include various grants from government sources and private fundraising would be necessary too. RM commented that, as the entire upper estuary could now cost about £27 million compared with the estimate of 2022, then the Lower Estuary would cost a great deal more than the then projected £30 million.

5.13 JM explained that under earlier plans the Trust expected to find funds to meet a 10-20 % or so community contribution : that gap was now much wider because currently central government funds had been cut. We are in a very different situation now. The Trust had charged their fund-raising consultants to prepare a new strategy during the summer.

5.14 JB asked if it was possible to quantify the impact of the several energy projects being brought in the area as they could provide material for securing mitigation of costs. PR thought it would be possible as, for example, digger drivers were now being sought at £50,000 to £60,000 per annual salary compared with possibly less than half that two years ago, so the store of the local core of subcontractors, staff and machinery, were being poached and the cost of bought-in clay had gone up from £14 to £25 per tonne. TB said he had raised this issue with a senior local person on the SZC project, referring to the extra £25 million being supplied to the Benacre project: while that money was to ensure the A12 road was not closed, his contact recognised that should the Alde and Ore area flood because artificially high costs had prevented necessary flood defence work from going ahead was a point to be considered by all of the energy projects looking to work in the area not just SZC. So, there was potential to start that discussion.

5.15 DK commented that PR had done a first-class job in sorting out the figures for the revised project making the best use of data on properties likely to be flooded (which carried the highest weight in the grant-in aid calculations) and another set of factors called Outline Measure 1 which included other unique features and agriculture that might be lost, although under Treasury rules these were only counted at 5-6% of their value. He warned that EA giving permission to shrink the first project to 2 flood cells for a similar grant in aid was not a given. Also, the Flood Risk Activity Permit was still to be granted; the applications needed to show that all the necessary environmental mitigations had been done, which he thought was the case here, and that the plan identified ways around greater flooding risk for those few properties mentioned.

5.16 Also, he mentioned that the number of pots of government funding that could be called on to help different aspects of such a complex project had shrunk greatly given the government's position on funding generally.

5.17 TP asked whether any inspections of river walls were ever made and mentioned damage to the walls from vehicles on the road side of the river at Butley. DK responded that EA had a team not only of local officers who did annual surveys to the walls but also one of asset inspectors who scored all walls and the results reported nationally (mentioning that England has to assess more kilometres of wall than the Netherlands). ESWMB also

inspected the pumping stations in the estuary. There was also the annual survey by the River Defence team run by the Alde and Ore Association that reported their findings to EA to help promote action where it was needed.

5.18 TB summarised by saying that even in 2014 the same challenges as now were being faced, the same issue was do we do something or let it all go or, as now, the choice of taking a route of not starting work until all the funds were raised or to take the money that was available and work cell by cell rather than lose the significant grant pot that had already been approved. Working in this way would also enable exploring alternative ways of delivering the flood protection and that was another whole piece of work for a working group we maybe need to do. BC agreed that there was no question that the work had to start at the top of the estuary. PR added that we are now the closest we have ever been to doing something. He thanked PR for his very clear and extensive presentation.

6. Iken Clay

6.1 TB reported that the Court Case about the deposited clay at Iken had been delayed but was in progress and so far, the Prosecuting Barrister was still going through making the case, the defence had yet to start. Sentencing might take place in April once all the evidence had been considered, and hopefully after that the matter would be closed. It was already acknowledged by the Environment Agency that the deposited clay was of a quality suitable for use in the river walls, although a licence would be needed to use it.

6.2 In relation to achieving licences, he said that the approach to our new MP Jenny Riddell- Carpenter, initiated by Edward Greenwell, had now resulted in a Minister, accompanied by JR-C MP, shortly visiting EA to discuss, among other matters, improving the speed at which licences and permits were issued.

7. Communications

7.1 PR had already covered much on communications in his update of the project, particularly an Open Day on 7 April 2025 at Snape Village Hall, dealing with the forthcoming works in FC06 and FC07.

7.2 Noted that the next joint AOET/AOCP/ESWMB Updating Newsletter (the last one was July 2024) would be issued within the next couple of weeks.

7.3 AOCP were, following feedback, reviewing its website.

8. Finance

8.1 CG presented the Report of the Accounts for the AOCP for the year-ended 31 December 2024. Receipts were simply interest on the Building Society Account of £421 and a possible grant from EA had not yet arrived. Expenditure had been light with £660 spent on publicity and the website, and £673 as AOCP's contribution to the October 2023 Open Day. This gave a deficit for the year of £911 but, given reserves, the closing balance was £14,964. During the year it had been possible to transfer some restricted funds to the unrestricted fund leaving only one restricted fund for Saltings restoration of £5333. The accounts were noted.

8.2 DK said that the the Treasury had changed the process for giving small grants, such as the £2,500 for the AOCP administration. He expected this to be operating soon so that AOCP might expect £2,500 in 2025 and again in £2026. This good news was appreciated.

9. Election of Officers.

TB said that the current officers had now served for five years and despite asking on several occasions there had been no volunteers to come forward and take up any of the officer post. FB said that the Constitution allowed for members to serve for five continuous years and after that for a further two separate years.

The meeting unanimously agreed that the current officers should be re-elected - Tim Beach as Chair, Frances Barnwell as Vice Chair, Alison Andrews as Hon Secretary and Chris Gill as Treasurer.

10. Any Other Business

10.1 AA reported on a request by a member of the public who attended regularly, Charles Croydon made on behalf of the Suffolk Coast and Heaths National Landscape (previously AONB) for land owners who would like to join in development of new habitats such as wetlands, by providing the land and NL providing the volunteers to implement the plans.

10.2 Also, the 4 Rivers Programme, led by the Deben Climate Centre, mentioned at the last meeting, was still being developed and it was noted that the item could be taken at the next meeting if there were relevant developments.

11. Date of Next Meeting: the next quarterly meeting of the AOCP would be on Thursday 26 June at 6.30pm, hopefully again in Orford Town Hall.

23.4.2025

Approved 27th November 2025