

NEWSLETTER

Cuckmere Estuary Pathfinder Project

Issue 4

7 June 2011 – Planning for Change at the Cuckmere

On **7 June 2011** we will be holding the last in our series of public meetings, at which members of the community will decide the best approach to managing change at the Cuckmere Estuary. The event is **open to everyone** and we are urging anyone with an interest in the future of the Cuckmere to sign up to take part at www.cuckmerepathfinder.org.uk. The event will be held in Alfriston War Memorial Hall, starting at 12.30pm. Further information is on page 4 of this newsletter.

The Pathfinder Project is based on detailed and often complex information about the long-term management of the Cuckmere Estuary. This issue of the newsletter contains information about a series of 'catch-up' sessions to help anyone planning to attend event on 7 June event to get to grips with the issues (see page 4), as well as a recap on the story so far, and news about our latest evidence event and new modelling which has been commissioned as part of the Pathfinder Project.



The story so far...

The purpose of the Cuckmere Pathfinder Project is for East Sussex County Council to work with the local community to reach consensus on how best to manage change at the Cuckmere Estuary.

The focus of the Project is a series of engagement events at which members of the community work alongside the Council, landowners and other statutory bodies to identify the different options, and together come up with a preferred approach for the future of the Cuckmere Estuary. The Project has involved the following stages.

Sharing understanding

Stage 1 was to give those involved in the project the chance to learn more about the reasons for the Environment Agency's decision to withdraw flood maintenance and to present evidence for alternative options. This took place in the spring of 2010.

Agreeing the options

Stage 2 was to agree a shortlist of possible options for the future management of the estuary, in the light of the Environment Agency's decision (*see box below*). This took place at a community workshop on 14 December 2010.

Options for the Cuckmere

The following seven options have been agreed by members of the community. A full description is available on the Pathfinder website, and in Issue 3 of this newsletter.

- Baseline (do nothing)
- Option A: Partial breach of the flood defences.
- Option B: Full breach of the flood defences.
- Option C: Engineered reactivation of meanders
- Option D: Maintain the existing defences
- Option E: Sustain/improve the existing defences – longer term.
- Option F: Sustain/improve the existing defences – shorter term.

Reviewing the evidence

Stage 3 has been to commission and assess new research on the economy, landscape, visitors and heritage of the Cuckmere. Technical and visual modelling has also been commissioned in order to help assess the likely impact of the different future management options. The research and modelling were presented at two public events on 8 February and 5 April 2011 (see page 3).

Setting the assessment criteria

Stage 4 has been to agree the criteria against which the different options for the future should be assessed (*see box below*). The criteria were discussed at an intensive workshop held on 8 March 2011 and confirmed as part of the workshop held on 12 April 2011.

Assessment criteria

The following list of criteria will be used to assess each of the seven options.

1. Sustain the A259.
2. Maintain the current level of access for all in the Estuary.
3. No overall detrimental effect to ecology, ideally an enhancement.
4. Potential for improved education and better interpretation of the Estuary.
5. No increase in flood risk upstream of the A259.
6. Protection of existing properties.
7. Sustain the historic environment.
8. Sustain the high quality of the landscape character.
9. Minimise maintenance requirements.
10. Encourage tourism and local business.

Testing and piloting

Stage 5 has been to pilot and test the options against the criteria, using the evidence from the modelling and the research studies. This took place in a workshop held on 12 April 2011.

Agreeing the approach together

Stage 6 will be the major public meeting to be held on 7 June 2011, at which everyone will have a chance to assess the seven options and to share their views on the best approach to planning for change at the Cuckmere.

Second public evidence event held

A second evidence event was held on 5 April 2011 at which further new research on the landscape, visitors, heritage and economy was presented. While the first research event (held on 8 February) looked at the current situation of the Cuckmere, this second event examined what might happen in future.

New modelling

The research predictions presented on 5 April were based on new modelling by Capita Symonds, commissioned as part of the Pathfinder project. The modelling uses a detailed hydraulic study of the Cuckmere, alongside a geomorphological and ecological review, to explore the likely short, medium and long term impacts of different flood risk management options. For each option it provides an assessment of the likely changes to the estuary morphology and the subsequent changes to flooding, vegetation, habitats and assets in the estuary.

The modelling report includes a series of maps showing the likely extent of inundations for a range of tide and river conditions. Images are also available, to help people see how the estuary might look in the short, medium and long term for each of the management options.

Copies of all reports are available at www.cuckmerepathfinder.org.uk

Celebrate Cuckmere Exhibition

10-19 June 2011

Seven Sisters Country Park
(and other venues in Seaford)

An exhibition celebrating Cuckmere's beautiful and dynamic landscape will be held at the Seven Sisters Country Park and at various venues in Seaford this June. The exhibition is timed to coincide with the culmination of the Pathfinder Project.

The aim of the exhibition is to actively engage the local and wider community in an appreciation of one of Britain's most iconic coastal landmarks. Artists - both amateur and professional - are invited to submit work inspired by the Cuckmere Valley. The submissions can take the form of paintings, photographs, embroideries, sculptures, poetry or prose and reflect Cuckmere's past, present or future. Works can be old, new, for sale or on loan.

Other events planned for the Celebration include the opportunity to take tea at the Coastguard Cottages, guided walks around Cuckmere, art classes by the beach, historical and environmental talks, an evening of Cuckmere inspired poetry and music and a flotilla of boats meeting in Cuckmere bay on the final Sunday.

Dates of the exhibition are 10-19 June 2011. Details of submission dates and general exhibition information is available at: www.celebrate-cuckmere.co.uk



Public Event: Planning for Change at the Cuckmere, 7 June 2011

12.30-19.00pm

This major public event is a chance for everyone to consider the options and have their say about the future of the Cuckmere.

The event will begin with an opportunity to review the information gathered through the Pathfinder project. After a short introduction from the County Council, delegates will break out into small facilitated groups to carefully consider each of the seven options, and to then assess them against the list of criteria agreed by members of the community.

The outcome of this assessment will be tallied and announced. If there is no clear preference initially, delegates will be asked to review the most popular options again, and together reach a consensus for the future.

The decision reached on 7 June 2011 will form the basis of future policy towards the Cuckmere Estuary.

Booking your place

The event will be held at Alfriston War Memorial Hall. Catering will be provided. Anyone interested in attending this event is asked to register by Friday 27 May in order to make our planning for catering and facilities possible. Please note that, as space is limited, if you do not register in advance your place at this event cannot be guaranteed.

Once you have registered you will be sent a delegate pack. We would ask you to read this carefully, prior to the event.

For further information or to register for this event, please use the enclosed booking form, email lucy@hopkinsvanmil.co.uk or call Lucy Auger on 07985 659425, by Friday 27 May.

Making an informed decision

It is important that any decision about the future of the Cuckmere is based on evidence and facts. We are asking anyone who is planning to attend the 7 June event to read carefully through their delegate packs (these will be sent out in advance of the event), and to visit the website and read through the research reports and community comments.

Catch-up sessions

We are also offering several catch-up sessions at which members of the Pathfinder team will be available to answer questions and provide information on the process, the selected options, the assessment criteria and the evidence.

- From 28 May to 3 June there will be a display on the project and the evidence which informs it at the Seven Sisters Country Park Visitor Centre.
- On Tuesday 31 May and Friday 3 June, from 10am to 12pm Andy Arnold the Team Manager for Environmental Advice at ESCC will be running a catch-up session at the Seven Sisters Visitor Centre, giving an opportunity for you to ask questions about the project.
- From 12 to 12.45pm on 7 June at Alfriston Memorial Hall Andy Arnold and Andy Robertson, Assistant Director – Policy in the Economy, Transport & Environment Department, ESCC will also be running catch up sessions.

All the evidence reports are available from www.cuckmerepathfinder.org.uk, where you can also gain access to the database of research that existed prior to the Cuckmere Pathfinder project and feedback on the research from members of the community.