



# CPE COVID-19 Community Update

Welcome to our second community update during this difficult time for us all. Henry Ford once reflected that coming together is a beginning, keeping together is progress but that working together is success. We are all finding new and sometimes innovative ways of staying in touch with our families, with our colleagues and with our communities. We have come together; we are keeping together: and in my view working better together when we move through this current crisis is almost inevitable.

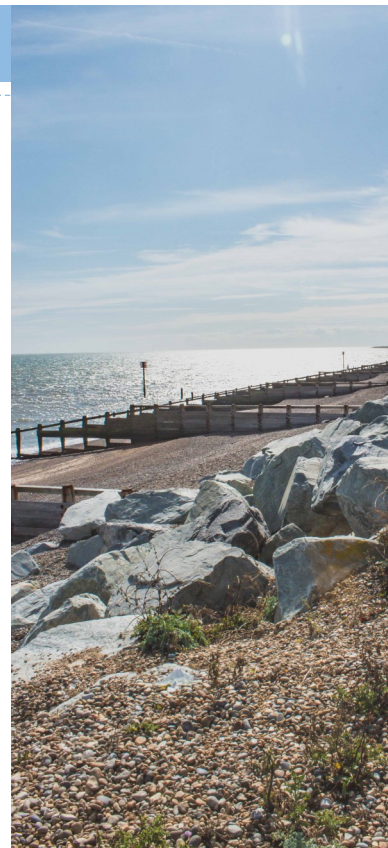
The CPE team continue to be fully committed to delivering our most critical work and supporting our most vulnerable coastal communities and businesses. We are all prepared to deploy to wider council needs to support the COVID-19 tasks as they arise.

We know how important our coast is for people's health and well-being and I know many of us have been greatly missing being able to spend time on the coast. The Government's easing of the exercise restrictions this week means that we will now be able to visit our beaches and estuaries again. Our operational teams have been continuing to inspect our coastal assets, cliffs and beaches and plan for a safe, accessible coast.

I hope that you find our latest update both helpful and informative. If you any questions, please do get in touch.

Stay safe and well.

Karen Thomas, Head of Coastal Partnership East



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## Introduction

Our focus is on the wellbeing of staff and our operatives and how we can best serve our coastal communities and wider council needs to get through this situation.

Like many councils, organisations and businesses around the country our virtual team working is developing well, and we are monitoring team health and well-being.

In terms of local authority COVID-19 needs to support communities and businesses; we have volunteered staff where they are needed. For example, for North Norfolk District Council, some of our team have been re-deployed to help with Community Hub needs in customer services roles: communicating with shielded and vulnerable people. Our work programmes mean that we that have full workloads, but we will continue to be flexible where our local authorities need our support to provide help to communities during the current COVID-19 situation.



## Working on the coast

In relation to coastal protection work and delivering emergency and routine tasks alongside capital projects like Lowestoft, we have identified several key areas where we anticipate future challenges. We are in regular discussion with our key contractors at WMA, Renosteel and Balfour Beatty to ensure that we plan what we can still do and what we will need to be ready to do post-lock-down.

Following current Government guidelines, we have been able to complete urgent works to coastal defences for East Suffolk Council at Felixstowe and Lowestoft and supporting works on beach and cliff access in Norfolk. We are also exploring, with Great Yarmouth Borough Council, the need for works at South Denes sea wall in Great Yarmouth. This is following an unprecedented beach lowering episode that led to the exposure of a concrete defence currently protecting a large area that has been used as a wind turbine storage facility.

We have continued to monitor the most at-risk locations in terms of people and property. These include Gunton, Pakefield and Trimingham and where we have a significant capital monitoring commitment at Bacton. We have had regular winds from the east and waves and recent high spring tides have continued to lower beaches across our frontage. That said, we are now coming out of the winter working period so risks of surges and significant erosion events has subsided.

Preparations for breeding bird surveys have been made for the Bacton to Mundesley frontage, specifically recording breeding Sand Martins although also identifying ground nesting birds such as Ringed Plover. In this area signage encouraging people to keep their dogs on leads has been erected alongside areas roped off to protect ground nesting birds.

In Lowestoft, in partnership with Suffolk County Council and the WMA, we have supported the water vole mitigation work progressing for the Velda Close element of the Lowestoft Flood Risk Management Project. As previously reported, the Property Level Resilience element of the pluvial/fluvial works has been postponed. We continue to work with our contractor Balfour Beatty to source operatives to undertake the ground investigation that we need to implement ahead of flood wall construction later this year.

We are considering bringing forward the development for a capital scheme at Gunton, Lowestoft following beach lowering that has exposed relict oil disposal and erosion to the frontage, increasing risk to Anglian Water infrastructure. We are working with Anglian Water to better understand their needs for their infrastructure and whether we can align future investment in a potential scheme for this frontage.



## Funding and finance

We have been reviewing our partnership funding and finances to enable us to understand any possible impacts to our approach to funding our works. During this current situation engaging beneficiaries and funders is more challenging. In addition, and like many other businesses and organisations, we are facing the possibilities of increased costs due to COVID-19. Both these factors have the potential to impact upon our programme of works.

## Engaging with our communities

With the co-operation of our partners and communities, we have been able to set up good communication routes, particularly our most vulnerable people on the coast, using a combination of virtual and more traditional communications tools. We are also developing innovative ways to engage and gain feedback from those we work with, to ensure we maintain open and transparent dialogue and decision-making, particularly through our coastal forums.

We continue to engage with partner projects like Broadland Futures Initiative and the Collaborative Learning project in Hemsby, partnering with the Environment Agency and Icarus. We anticipate that the Sizewell C development consent order will be proceeding as planned albeit with a delayed start. We are ready to consider both the technical information we receive and support East Suffolk Council in holding EDF to account around their public consultation and engagement if lock-down continues. We are also inputting to a National Environment Audit on Wind Energy and will make representations about the challenges and opportunities of this burgeoning industry on our coast.

## National work

Over the coming months there will be the national of the Environment Agency's FCERM 2050 strategy, which will set our national policy framework. We have now received the new FCERM Flood Defence Grant in Aid Partnership funding calculator guidance and are reviewing this in terms of existing and future coastal management investment from Defra and the Environment Agency.

We are also working with the Environment Agency on the Shoreline Management Plan Refresh and will need to consider the output of the resulting health checks. We are working with Defra family partners to take part in online/telecon meetings regarding national advice on flood and coastal matters, for example the Regional Flood and Coast Committee and the Local Government Association Coastal Special Interest Group.

## Preparing for the future

Through our senior leadership and management teams we are raising the potential issue of our contractual work post COVID 19 and the potential impact to access to services and supplies as the country returns to work and there is additional demand. We will use all routes available to highlight to Government the need to be prepared so that we can continue to provide vital services and future protection to our coastal communities.

In addition to our immediate planning focus on COVID-19 and its impacts, we continue to work on the longer term management of the CPE coastal zone in the face of both seasonal and longer term coastal change. Plans for traditional defences, adaptation and resilience approaches are all still being developed within our 10 year programme of works and we will refresh these over the coming months as we review and implement the outcomes of the FCERM 2050 strategy and SMP Refresh.

