

Happisburgh Community Planning Event

Event details

Date: 24th April 2010 Time: 10:00 - 14:00

Venue: The Wenn Evans Centre

Intended for and open to the general public

Format: interactive displays staffed by NNDC and assisted by members of the Happisburgh Pathfinder Liaison Group. A walking tour of the cliff top was also undertaken in order to discuss issues relating to the removal of beach debris.

Publicity

The event was widely publicised within the local community by posters and leaflets distributed by the Local Liaison Group. The local Parish Newsletter helped to publicise the event and a news release resulted in articles in the EDP and North Norfolk News, together with items on BBC Radio Norfolk and North Norfolk Radio.

Aim and Objectives

The purpose of the event was to help the community of Happisburgh to understand the nature of the Happisburgh Pathfinder projects and how they or their local environment might be affected by them. The event also sought to gather feedback on the physical projects that will take place 'on the ground' in Happisburgh and the process of implementing them.

Report of the event

Overview

It was a bright sunny Saturday in Happisburgh and over one hundred and fifty people came out to attend the exhibition. Most stayed for a long period of time, taking full advantage of the opportunity to ask questions and provide feedback on the displays.

There was generally a very positive atmosphere in the room and feedback suggested that the displays were well presented and the event was very worthwhile.

- *Excellent and informative very useful seeing all the maps.*
- *So good to see constructive action after such a long campaign.*
- *Will be splendid to see the beach and cliff-top area improved after so long!*
- *All ideas good.*
- *A well presented Open Day.*
- *The work involved in presenting the Pathfinder Project to the village is very good.*
- *The idea of the stickers and colours gives people a say.*

The group of people who joined the Coast Protection Engineer on the cliff top discussed options for the removal of beach debris and the replacement rocks, rubble and the remnants of the sea defences. This was considered helpful in reaching a shared understanding of some of the key issues for this sensitive project.

Feedback on specific projects

Properties at risk within the first SMP epoch (up to 2025)

The main purpose of this display was to inform people about this project rather than to gather feedback. Those who are directly affected by this project are involved in its development and implementation and the wider community need to be kept informed of its progress. Lots of discussion took place about the nature, timing and funding for this project, particularly with the residents of Beach Road. The only written comment queried the date at which this project had been agreed.

From the discussions (and through the written comments) it is apparent that there was some misunderstanding amongst local people about how this project would affect the owners of the

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various properties involved. Concern was expressed that not enough money had been made available and about which properties this project would apply to (one person suggesting that it should extend to a vacant plot beyond that shown on the plan). Other comments related to the value that would be associated with the properties that are sought to be demolished.

"If home owners can't afford to move away the rest of the project will falter."

"Owners must have full market value if they bought when the government policy was 'hold the line'"

This misunderstanding seemed to stem from rumours that are circulating locally; in response the owners/ occupants of those properties were encouraged to contact the Coastal Management Team Directly, or via the Liaison Group, in order to get the true picture, rather than relying on rumour or conjecture.

Action: ensure that regular contact is made with those directly affected by this project.

Purchase and lease of properties beyond the first SMP epoch

Options for implementing this project are at the very early stages of development and so the main purpose of this display was to inform people rather than to gather feedback. There was plenty of discussion about the possible ways of developing this and the only written comment received (from a Bacton resident) suggested that:

"this is a key mechanism for all of the coastal communities LONG TERM and if embedded in management would off-set so many future problems and enable all communities to continue for as long as viable."

Cliff top enhancement

There was a lot of discussion and enthusiasm about this project and some interesting ideas put forward. The key concern was about the land on the cliff top adjacent to Happisburgh car park, which is being used for dismantling scrap cars. Many people complained that this was unsightly and created the impression that the area is uncared for, suggesting that it must be removed before any other progress can be made.

The following feedback was gathered

- *Make benches out of old sea defences*
- *Provide an information board re: local wildlife, wildflowers, fossils etc.*
- *Provide play facilities for young children*
- *Get Happisburgh School and local youth groups involved in planning the area*
- *Move 'Road Ahead Closed' sign to Beach Road junction, to stop vehicles driving halfway, then reversing back*

Re-provision of the car park and public conveniences

This project attracted a lot of attention and some very useful feedback, however, in response to the question about whether the car park and WC should be temporary (and closer to the beach) or permanent (and further back) very few responses were received. Although the majority favoured a permanent site, it was pointed out that the toilets need to be easily accessible for beach users.

Concern was expressed about the suitability of Beach Road to accommodate more traffic. Although the current car park is accessed from this road, and any new car park is likely to have to be approximately an equivalent size, it is probable (indeed hoped) that the area will become more attractive to visitors, which would lead to more traffic generation. On the other hand, a reduction in vehicular movements would result from the demolition of houses on Beach Road. These issues would be a key consideration in the determination of a planning application and local residents would be consulted through that process.

Provision of a new beach access ramp

There was a lot of enthusiasm for the provision of a beach access ramp and the issues raised were to do with how convenient it would be for caravan site occupants and its proximity to the car park and WCs. One query was raised about whether the existing beach steps would be maintained - it is expected that they will be moved back as the cliff recedes. There was some discussion about whether the access ramp should be parallel to the cliff or perpendicular to it. The key consideration will be the sustainability of the ramp in the face of erosion.

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Removal of Beach Debris

This is a very sensitive project and one that attracted a great deal of feedback and discussion. In order to gauge the local feeling on this project the display posed the question: *'to what extent should the beach debris be removed'*. The response was as follows.

Extent of debris removal	Number of people supporting
All that is an eyesore	15
Anything that has no significant impact on the rate of erosion	15
Only that which is a hazard and has no benefit	16
None of it	0

In relation to the specific types of beach debris the following feedback was received.

	Remove	Retain	Comments
Old concrete filled pipes	15	2	<p>These pipes have saved a lot of erosion & should be replaced by rocks to fill any gaps.</p> <p>These pipes catch debris which then acts as a defence, removal would lead to further erosion.</p> <p>I don't agree with above comment.</p> <p>These have done good job protecting the cliff, could they be tidied, relocated and used?</p>
Old Lifeboat Ramp	6	8	
Revetment uprights	10	6	
Revetment	2	15	Remove <u>all</u> the debris, put more rocks back, and allow the sea to <u>replenish</u> the shore.
Old Groynes	21	2	
Sheet Piles	19	4	

Comments about the redundant defences and beach debris

- *Grade cliff-top like at Bacton gasworks.*
- *Remove scrap on the beach - danger to swimmers, walkers etc.*
- *Eyesore makes Happisburgh look like war zone.*
- *Clean the beach of all rubbish!*
- *Proper sea defences please before removing anything.*
- *Cut timber defences down to 1 metre, cap sharp metal (cutting level), remove nothing.*
- *Many comments were made about the potential for the debris that is removed to be turned into something that makes a positive contribution to the local environment, e.g. public art, perhaps on the cliff top, at the end of the Pathfinder project.*

The future of Manor Farm Caravan Park

A number of questions were posed in relation to the value of the caravan park to the village and also about the options for its relocation. The feedback is given below

Do you agree that it is important to try to retain the park in the village of Happisburgh (on an alternative site)?	
Yes	59
No	3
No opinion	0

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Comments

- *If the caravan park is moved inland no one will want a caravan on it.*
- *The caravan park is an eyesore – the village is better off without it! If allowed to stay it needs a radical new look – plant some trees, no rows of white plastic boxes!*
- *(regarding comment above) The caravan park is typical of many in Norfolk and is enjoyed by many. This is narrow-minded as the park brings business to the village and enjoyment to the occupants.*
- *If the caravan park is moved out of the village – the shop, the pub and the church will all suffer.*

Comments in relation to specific sites

- *It does not need to move completely for at least 10 -15 years. It's a good position.*
- *The location is the attraction therefore the site should be moved as needed to the adjacent camping field (away from cliff-edge)*
- *Caravan site should be left where 'it' is, with vans moved sideways (as at present)*
- *Definitely not behind school*
- *On cliff-top in front of village hall to retain the park in the village*
- *Caravan park needs easy access to the beach (ramp)*
- *Either: immediately N.E. (adjoining towards Coast Watch) OR S.W. toward Cart Gap near Doggett's Lane.*
- *Relocate to Doggett's Lane*
- *Not at Doggett's Lane*

Coastal Heritage Project

A separate display was set up by Norfolk Landscape Archaeology, the organisation managing this project. They are running an open day specifically about this project; however the following comments were gathered.

- *Please link with the school & pass this heritage on to the kids of the village.*
- *Heritage is also about recent history.*
- *There could be a project capturing histories of living people of Happisburgh.*
- *This can become a cross generational legacy for the future.*

Comments about the need for sea defences

- *LET'S HAVE MORE ROCKS!*
- *I feel sad that there are no plans for slowing the actual erosion as there are in other areas of coastline and I'm sure villagers would contribute financially once again.*
- *See no plans for slowing or stopping erosion OR for residents of Beach Road. Will your plans be a waste of money if you do not attempt to stop erosion? Will all just be lost.*

Miscellaneous

Wildlife

- *Sandmartins SSSI low light.*
- *SSSI and Sandmartins need to be considered.*

Environment

- *Placing a skip somewhere on cliff-top for rubbish which could be brought up from the beach.*
- *Would be interested to have a skip in place for beach cleans.*
- *Would like a dog bin located at the steps.*

Coastguard

- *When more visitors are attracted to new car park and beach access will this not confirm the importance of including local Coastguard?*
- *It is so very important to re-locate the HM Coastguard station ASAP. Due to the condition of the road it could be closed at anytime and lives will be put at risk!*
- *We need a coastguard station in Happisburgh.*
- *There has been a coastguard station in Happisburgh for more than 100 years it would be a great shame to see this lost and lives could be put in DANGER.*

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Miscellaneous

- *The cliff draws ever closer over the years, and there is still not the political will to properly invest in our future. We need an MP to live here.*
- *All these ideas are very good BUT they cannot be done until you look after the residents of Beach Road properly.*
- *There isn't sufficient money to do the projects properly.*
- *Disappointment that no one takes responsibility for almost destroying a beautiful village.*
- *Happisburgh needs to work with NNDC who must have a difficult task to balance all the requirements of 'coastal management'.*
- *Make Beach Road one way and a little wider.*
- *What about the coastal path that is going around the UK?*
- *What about the Lord of the Manor - will he object?*
- *After an early surge of confidence, people are beginning to feel it's time for the usual retractions.*
- *Blighting of hopes. Perhaps this time will be different?!*

Liaison Group

One display provided information about the process of implementing the projects and involving and communicating with local people through the Liaison Group. The following comments were received:

- *Emails would be helpful contact etc*
- *ALL MEN – NOT REPRESENTING 50% of population*
- *Bit sexist! Also needs representation from Beach Road where all the action is!*
- *Need someone from the school. Families and kids are important to the future.*
- *Youth representatives? It is our future.*