



# WALBERSWICK SEA DEFENCE GROUP

Public anxiety about flooding has risen sharply during the past year and the Government in the form of Defra and the Environment Agency are struggling to cope with the aftermath of inland and coastal floods. They have promised more money but it will never be enough. Meanwhile, the Sea Defence Group have been learning more and more about the constraints under which any body trying to maintain or improve sea defences will be forced to work, not least of which are the various wildlife habitat directives and EU regulations. As Walberswick is under threat from both the sea and the river, it is clear that any solution will need to involve the Blyth Strategy Group and the Sea Defence Group: links between the two are being strengthened.

On 9<sup>th</sup> November, the subject was again brought to everybody's attention when a combination of low atmospheric pressure over the North Sea and very strong north westerly winds around the north of Scotland generated tidal surge in the North Sea. Luckily the passage of this surge down the east coast of England did not quite coincide with the spring high tide, so the combined water height was slightly less than feared. Nevertheless, Walberswick was affected by sea water coming from two directions: from the coast and from the River Blyth. The sea flowed in over the shingle bank, as it did last year, and covered the marshes and the car parks. In the river, the Tinkers Marsh defences were breached and the resultant flood water washed away considerable sections of the Bailey Bridge Road. The river overflowed the flood bank on the Walberswick side, opposite the Harbour Inn, and this caused a partial collapse of the bank. The web-site contains pictures – see [www.walberswickseadefence.org.uk](http://www.walberswickseadefence.org.uk) Since the event, the Environment Agency has been working hard to restore public access between Walberswick and Southwold and anticipates it will finish by Christmas. (During the repairs some of the telephone cables that link parts of Walberswick to the Southwold exchange were severed: it took 3 days to repair them.) It is believed that the Environment Agency plans to increase the height and width of the track to make it a flood defence bank, but this has not been officially confirmed. The car parks and the marshes between Walberswick and Dunwich drained quite quickly but some footpaths in the area are still impassable.

Since its formation in December 2006 the Sea Defence Group has been working towards the achievement of the objective agreed to in a public meeting last December and set out in the April Newsletter, viz “... *to do whatever it takes to save the village of Walberswick and as much of its surroundings as possible.*” To that end we have:

- approached two national experts in the field of barrier beaches and are in the process of engaging one of them to advise us on the best form of protection for the beach, reed beds, marshes and outskirts of the village
- obtained the services of a top London legal firm (free) to advise us what consents we would need in order to defend ourselves
- come to believe that it may not be practicable to rebuild the shingle ridge on a regular basis
- joined SCAR (Suffolk Coast Against Retreat) a group of representatives from local communities, headed by John Gummer MP, to put political pressure on the Government to take more positive steps to save the coastline
- set up a web site to inform those who are concerned about the future of this unique area and interested in the activities of the Sea Defence Group
- joined with others to point out the lack of 'joined-up thinking' demonstrated in plans to spend huge sums of money to protect or divert the A12 when a cheaper option would be to retain the defences that prevent the sea flowing up river in the first place
- supported the development of the Parish Council's Emergency Plan

The money that has been spent so far has come from the Trust and from some wonderful fund-raising initiatives: the sales of Walberswick Bags (designed and sold by village people), donations from the Walberswick Artists' exhibition, the Jennings Weekend and sales of the video of the Walberswick Scroll.

At the moment we are exploring all the options to come up with a proposed solution, at which point the money you have pledged will be called in to pay for engineering designs, PR and physical construction.

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