

Suffolk Coast & Heaths

Spring/Summer 2015

FREE

Suffolk Coast & Heaths

Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty



Focus on Estuaries

Pages 4 and 5

Woodbridge, Kyson point © Mike Page



Explore the AONB...

Cyclists at Butley Ferry



...marvel at the wildlife



...and get involved!

Pages 12 and 13

© Tony Pick

A message from our Chairman



Welcome to the spring-summer 2015 Suffolk Coast & Heaths Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) newspaper. We hope that you will enjoy reading about some of the projects conserving and enhancing this special area – and please pass the newspaper on to someone else once you've finished with it.

Thanks to partnership and community working, the AONB is recovering well from the tidal surge of 2013. Find out more in our Focus on Estuaries and a diary from a community group who demonstrate how working together really gets results.

The warmer weather brings more opportunities to get out and about and I hope that, like me, you will make the most of the walking and riding routes in the AONB. Turn to pages 8 and 9 for some inspiration including sustainable travel options and excerpts from guides to help you make the most of these landscapes and perhaps find somewhere new to explore.

On page 3 we bring you news from the Touching the Tide project, now in its final full year. 2014 brought some fantastic art workshops, community archaeology events, a wonderful animation and much more - find out how you can dive in this year!

The AONB continues to be a real draw for visitors – turn to page 10 to find out how Proximity (our latest EU funded project) is supporting tourism businesses in attracting visitors and celebrating the wonderful distinctiveness of the area.

Throughout the newspaper you will find examples of the work ongoing by the AONB and its partners. AONB volunteers also continue to work tirelessly and with the spring programme now well underway in both the Suffolk Coast & Heaths and Dedham Vale AONBs, the Countryside Officers will soon be planning for the autumn. There is always demand for new volunteers so if you feel inspired please get in touch – turn to page 7 for details.

Clr David Wood, Chairman
Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB Partnership

Boost for East Suffolk Tourism



An award of £490,000 from the Coastal Communities Fund (CCF) announced by the Department for Communities and Local Government will progress a project to boost tourism in the area.

The 'Developing Prospects on the Suffolk Coast: Economy, People, Environment' project aims to build a more robust tourism economy along the Suffolk Coast, developing key assets, delivering events and expanding activities to attract visitors during the shoulder and off-seasons. Tourism provides approximately one in every nine jobs in the area.



The project will be delivered by members of The Suffolk Coast Ltd Destination Management Organisation (DMO) and Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB, working alongside Suffolk Coastal and Waveney District Councils, and local organisations. Inspired by the AONB's Balance Tourism Strategy, the project comprises seven key strands:

- Establish an environmental volunteering holiday scheme - opportunities for visitors to engage in conservation projects
- Improve access, way finders and interpretation on the Southwold-Covehithe section of the Suffolk Coast Path
- Recruit and coordinate 'volunteer greeters' who will develop skills and a pathway to employment whilst providing visitors with an all-season experience
- Offer an enhanced membership package for the DMO to stimulate member businesses, enhance profitability and growth, and build tourism community confidence to attract visitors

- Develop a Future Foods Generations Group, with start-up support for SME's. Improve trading and marketing opportunities and create food trails to highlight the food offering on the Suffolk Coast
- Install a sculptural viewing platform at Snape Maltings and expand the familial and cultural offer
- Establish a children's film festival each February

Clr Andy Smith, Suffolk Coastal's Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member with responsibility for Economic Development said: "This is great news for the area. It will help us expand the scope of our work as the public and private sectors together build a stronger local tourist economy. Visitors and tourism businesses will benefit, and jobs will be created".

Bruce Provan, Waveney Council's Cabinet Member with responsibility for Economic Development and Tourism, said: "We are particularly pleased that this award will help us to greatly improve and secure the much-loved coastal path between Southwold and Covehithe, and to work with businesses in the Waveney area to improve the visitor experience."

For more information about The Suffolk Coast Ltd DMO visit www.thesuffolkcoast.co.uk

Schools Clean Up



Not only is litter horrible to look at, it is also dangerous for people and wildlife. Now, thanks to support from the Heritage Lottery Fund, Touching the Tide and the Marine Conservation Society are giving three schools the opportunity to investigate and address this issue.

After doing a beach clean and recording what they find, students will pin point a local issue and devise a real-world solution. They will meet with representatives from the water, plastic, packaging and recycling industries in the summer to summarise their findings and analyse the data.

The students will be able to explore their projects with one another and with the industry representatives via discussion forums on social media. The three groups will then present their ideas to a panel and the winning group will be supported by the MCS to realise their solution.

Once complete the success of the project will be assessed with a view to it being rolled out to schools across Suffolk. Watch this space to find out how they get on!



EDF - Habitat Creation

EDF are creating a major new habitat in Leiston at a site extending from Abbey Road to Lovers Lane, on the edge of the Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB and Sizewell Marshes Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).

Up to 67 hectares (ha) of arable land (currently part of Aldhurst Farm) will be converted into wildlife habitat by lowering around 6ha of low-lying land in the valley. This will create the conditions needed for wetland habitat to benefit a variety of wildlife including water voles, otters, reptiles and birds, as well as rare plants. The excavated soil, which would include peat, will be spread across the surrounding fields to reduce the fertility of the soils and create conditions suitable for the establishment of a mosaic of acidic grassland and heathland over the rest of the site.

Once the new habitat has been established, EDF Energy intends to open up certain areas of the site for quiet public recreation, in a manner that would not compromise establishment of the biodiversity.

To find out more contact 0800 1976102 or sizewell@edfconsultation.info

Last Chance to Dive In!

Over the autumn and winter months Touching the Tide collaborated with local photographer Tony Pick to deliver a series of hugely popular photography courses. Despite being faced with some challenging weather conditions, the keen photographers all thoroughly enjoyed this chance to work in this incredible landscape and produced some impressive work.



At drop-in art workshops in October families explored the Suffolk coast, Touching the Tide, and Ipswich Museum's natural history collection as part of the Big Draw Campaign. There was a real sense of community, resulting in some great artwork, collaboration and conversations.

Local film company Greenspark made a great animation about this changing coast and what Touching the Tide has to offer...let Ray Girl and Mussel Boy take you on a journey at www.touchingthetide.org.uk. Over 6,000 people have seen the film and then explored our website so please help spread the word!



Digging Deep



generations buried alongside her, long after Christianity had eradicated the Gods she had worshipped. When the cemetery was in use it was a tidal island surrounded by saltmarsh, but was enclosed by river walls in the Mediaeval period to create grazing land. It is now part of Suffolk Wildlife Trust's Hazlewood Marshes nature reserve.

Touching the Tide is pleased to announce the findings from its archaeological excavation with Aldeburgh and District Local History Society at Barber's Point. This site on the banks of the Alde estuary was thought to be a very early Saxon Christian cemetery. Read on to find out what we discovered. If you'd like to hear more, you can join us in Aldeburgh on May 7th for an evening exploring the surprising finds - visit www.touchingthetide.org.uk for full event details.

St Botolph Christianised Suffolk in the early 600s AD. The nine graves found at Barber's Point date from c.600 to around 780, and so very surprisingly span the period from late Pagan into well-established Christianity. The earliest grave, nicknamed "Casket Girl", was buried with a box of personal treasures including some jewellery (already antique when she was buried), amber, and a cowrie shell from the Red Sea. She must have been a figure of some note to have subsequent

In September 2013 we knew that rising sea levels might eventually threaten our Saxons once again, but we never expected that a tidal surge would cut the island off only three months later...the river walls breached catastrophically, and Barber's Point is now once again surrounded by mudflats.

It's sad to see the old freshwater grazing marsh destroyed, but Touching the Tide has been helping Suffolk Wildlife Trust make the most of the new situation. The new intertidal habitats will be just as rich in wildlife but there will be different species to those there before. It's a nice closing of the circle, and a good example of how sometimes adapting to our changing coast can be a better option than fighting the rising sea.

This summer we will be digging in Dunwich – keep an eye on the Touching the Tide website for full details!



Check our Events page or follow us on Twitter @TouchingTheTide for details of future workshops and more, including the launch of our Martello Tower virtual fly-through and four guided walks during the Suffolk Walking Festival... **TOUCHING THE TIDE - WHAT WILL YOU BE DIVING INTO?**

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Rising seas and surging ice sheets have come and gone – discover the legacy for yourself with the 'Tides of Change' geology booklet written by Tim Holt-Wilson. Priced at £2.00 (+50p P&P) it's available from Touching the Tide (please make cheques payable to Suffolk County Council) and some local Tourist Information Centres and museums.

Black tailed godwits and dog on beach © Haidee Stephens



Disturbance - Make a difference

“A chilly December walk along the sea wall at Lower Holbrook with some hardy volunteers doing a bird survey opened my eyes to a few things”, reports Suffolk Estuaries Officer Haidee Stephens...have you ever wondered what birds do at night?

Waders, I discovered, are so governed by the need to find food that their lives are prescribed by the tides. Low tide exposes food-rich mud and you'll find them on the water's edge searching for worms and crustaceans, day or night. At high tide, the mud is covered and birds need to find somewhere to rest, and that's why in the winter you'll find lots of birds close to the coastal paths. They're desperate to

conserve their energy for the cold night ahead and just need some peace and quiet until the tide lets them back to hunt for food. What a hard life!

Every time a noisy gaggle of walkers passes, or a dog barks and runs around off the lead exploring the water's edge, you'll see birds fly up, swirl around and come back to roost. Wasting their precious energy.

It's not often you find you can make a real difference on your own but this is one opportunity. By deciding to put your dog on a lead when on the sea wall you can be sure you are helping our birds, the World's birds, survive another winter on our beautiful estuaries.

Community Partnership Working for Coastal Defences

Bawdsey Coastal Partnership held their first public meeting in January. It attracted a healthy audience of 65 local residents, organisations, councils and agencies and generated some positive debate!

The partnership's clear objective is "facilitating the renewal and management of the sea defences on the 5 miles of the Suffolk coast from Shingle Street to the mouth of the Deben".

Currently, the three most vulnerable points along this stretch of coast (at Shingle Street, East Lane and Bawdsey Manor) are defended and repaired under emergency works on an 'as and when required' basis. The new partnership is seeking a more proactive approach with a long-term costed plan and the Environment Agency has commissioned an Options Study, which will present a range of engineering options.

The partnership has welcomed all ideas for raising funds - big, small, innovative and conservative - as the cost of these defence options is not expected to be fully funded by the Government Agencies. They will then consult with the community to balance the costs and benefits of alternative defence options to best sustain this special area of coast.

You can find out more at www.bawdseycoastalpartnership.org.uk

Below: Bawdsey © Gill Moon



Bait Digging and the Voluntary Code of Conduct

Digging worms from the muddy estuary shore to put bait on your own hook is an ancient right written in the Magna Carta; commercial bait-digging activity, however, needs the permission of the landowner.

These estuaries are designated as Special Protection Areas - the highest accolade possible for habitats supporting birds. Bait digging can disturb the birds that overwinter on these estuaries - these birds need to be left alone to find food and not waste energy flying around after being spooked.

A voluntary Code of Conduct, suggested initially by some of the local bait diggers and developed by landowners, agencies and the AONB, is in place each winter. Check the maps posted on notice boards near the estuary for the no-dig areas (between 1 Nov and 30 April) or download the leaflet from the Stour and Orwell pages of the AONB website.

Falkenham Marshes



Simon Read © Haidee Stephens

Much of Suffolk's special saltmarsh habitat can be found in the beautiful Deben estuary. Falkenham Marsh lies between the sea wall and the river channel near King's Fleet just up-river from Felixstowe Ferry and was historically, and until fairly recently, grazed by sheep. It is now cut off from the land by a widening channel which, if left unchecked, threatens to eat away at the saltmarsh itself.

Simon Read (professor of Fine Art, Deben barge dweller and now local expert in saltmarsh restoration) has been working at Falkenham to slow the erosion by experimenting with coir dams (coir is a coconut fibre waste product) and other biodegradable materials.

Saltmarsh is an essential part of the character of the estuary; it is home to birds such as redshank and black tailed godwit and a nursery area for fish such as bass. Thank you, Simon, for all your hard work!

BBC's Countryfile films at Levington

We were thrilled when BBC Countryfile said they'd like to film the new saltmarsh restoration site at Levington on the Orwell estuary. Suffolk Estuaries Officer Haidee Stephens joined them.

Presenter Ellie Harrison and the team squelched through the mud with marina owner Jonathan Dyke and myself, to film Andrew Excell of Suffolk Wildlife Trust construct a new coir 'sausage' dam. We then nipped across to the Deben estuary so they could get some shots of good quality saltmarsh to give an idea of 'before and after'.



into the estuary or disposed of on the land, but in summer 2014 large pipes were installed to send the silt from Suffolk Yacht Harbour's dredging vessel (named 'Muddy Boots'!), across the fields so it could be sprayed onto the saltmarsh near Levington Creek.

Volunteers and staff from Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB and Suffolk Wildlife Trust helped create a mesh of hazel faggots and made small dams with porous coir material shaped like large sausages on the saltmarsh itself to help hold the dredgings in place. The early results are astonishing and sediment build-up has already started to raise the level of the saltmarsh. In time, salt-tolerant plants will re-establish themselves and the area will return to salt marsh once again.

The project has the commitment of an estuary-wide partnership of funders and collaborators, including the Environment Agency, Suffolk Wildlife Trust, Suffolk Yacht Harbour, the AONB and The Veolia Environmental Trust through the Landfill Communities Fund. The Executive Director of The Veolia Environmental Trust Paul Taylor said: "We have been supporting environmental and community projects through the Landfill Communities Fund for over 17 years. This innovative scheme's restoration of an important habitat will benefit the local environment, the species that will call it home and visitors too."

The Countryfile programme was broadcast on 22 February 2015.



Countryfile being filmed at Levington

What's going on at Levington? Instead of being washed away by the tide, the dredgings from Suffolk Yacht Harbour are being used to help address the problem of saltmarsh erosion. This innovative approach uses sediment from the winter dredging programme to 'feed' the saltmarsh, year on year. Until now, silt dredged from the harbour was pumped out

Laying a faggot © Andrew Excell

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Respect, Protect and Enjoy!

There are 46 Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) throughout England, Wales and Northern Ireland...and in this region we have two! Linking the length of the Suffolk Coast to the Essex/Suffolk border through to the western source of the River Stour these AONBs are wonderful places to enjoy a range of recreation, but as protected landscapes we also ask you to respect them to help retain them for future generations.



The Dedham Vale AONB & Stour Valley Project and Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB together make an impressive combined total of over 370m²/640km² of iconic lowland landscape

In this edition we introduce you to some of the walking routes and other publications available from the two AONBs plus some tips on going green by using sustainable transport to explore these landscapes. We'd love to know what you'd like to see in future editions so please get in touch @suffolkaonb or via www.suffolkcoastandheaths.org



Making Time for Landscapes – AONB Volunteers go from strength to strength

People who take time out of their busy lives to make time for our landscapes are the backbone of the AONB volunteer schemes and the main reason we can achieve so much to conserve and enhance the areas, as well as support the future of the protected landscapes.

The Stour Valley Volunteers and the Suffolk Coast & Heaths Work Party Volunteers undertake a wide range of tasks in all weather conditions, offering their skills, energy and time to protect these landscapes. The tasks vary depending on the season, and consider the most appropriate time to plant hedges or clear an area where wildlife might breed, or when it might be too muddy to clear ditches. Both AONBs now offer a regular season by season series of tasks – find details on the Getting Involved sections of the websites.

Emulating the successful and well established Stour Valley Volunteer programme, the Suffolk Coast & Heaths Work party volunteers programme now also offers fortnightly tasks. This extends the previously 'ad hoc' opportunities, into a more targeted way of working. Both teams deliver AONB Management and Business Plan objectives, whilst recognising the needs of the local community, wildlife and economy.

Community groups and local organisations that may need a helping hand with site management are invited to contact us to suggest tasks that could be undertaken by volunteers, especially in Suffolk Coast & Heaths, who are also actively seeking volunteers to join the new Work Party Volunteers.

As well as the work party volunteering, both AONBs have footpath volunteers who help check the long distance footpaths, Coast & Estuary Wardens (see article right), and a planned pilot for Constable Country Wardens.

Getting hands-on

Peter Brown volunteers with us and wanted to pass on his experience of what it's like to be part of the team.

As a volunteer beach warden I keep an eye on the beach and close hinterland from just south of Sizewell to the Martello tower at Slaughden. I concentrate on erosion, particularly at Thorpeness, where the cliffs continue to fall at an alarming rate.

One small success was my identification of dangerous wooden protrusions among the groyne at Slaughden. Most of these (which were as much as three feet above the sand and shingle at low tide) were the remains of ages old groyne. Over years the sea had sharpened them such that anyone swimming between the existing groyne could have been in extreme danger. Photographs and my report were sent to the AONB, who had the wooden piles removed.

On a Christmas walk from Thorpeness to Sizewell, I spotted that high tides had shifted several of the large 'eco-bags' which had been placed at the foot of the cliffs at Thorpeness not many months previously, in an attempt to prevent further erosion. I estimate that each bag probably weighed 1.5 tons (1500 kgs), yet such had been the power of the sea that they had been moved about 20 metres across the beach.

I find that by taking photographs when I do my 'patrols' I am better able to determine where, and by how much, fresh erosion has occurred.



Rubbish is frequently a problem on that stretch of beach, both that which clearly emanates from ships, and that which results from carelessness by visitors to the beach who leave the remnants of their picnics and barbeques.

One of the pleasures of the task during the summer months is the number of spontaneous conversations I have with people on the beach. Frequently visitors to Suffolk, rather than locals, spot my AONB badge and ask me what I am doing. It is gratifying to receive complimentary comments about the high state of cleanliness of our Suffolk beaches.

Peter's full story can be seen at www.suffolkcoastandheaths.org (Getting Involved).

Erosion at Thorpeness ©Tony Pick

Leave Only Your Footprints

Wrabness Explorer

Wrabness is a quiet village on the Essex shore of the River Stour in the Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB wider project area. The parish includes miles of attractive countryside stretching down to the estuary and Stour Wood.

The Explorer presents two walks (2.2 and 4.2 miles), highlights of which include All Saints Church, dating from the Norman period and the River Stour – look out for migrating Brent geese, grey plover and greenshank. Download the full Wrabness Explorer plus many others on the Publications pages of our website.



Sustainable Travel around the AONBs

What would we do without our car to take us to the seaside or to visit local attractions? Many of us cannot imagine how we would get from A (home) to B (somewhere to enjoy a walk) and back without using a car. It can be possible and it can also really make a difference to the quality of the places we visit in our Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

You can walk, cycle, use the bus, train or ferry - see our helpful hints on these two pages. And when you do need to use your car please make sure you park respectfully (especially in small villages) and in designated car parks, and enjoy it all at a more leisurely pace!

Suffolk Links – linking people to places by bus



This fully accessible bus can collect passengers from railway stations, scheduled bus services which stop at nearby villages or even caravan sites and take them to a number of popular destinations not otherwise accessible by public transport including RSPB Minsmere, National Trust sites Dunwich Heath and Sutton Hoo, and Orford Castle. Three Suffolk Links services (Wilford, Alde and Blyth) cover the Bawdsey to Walberswick coast while another two take you to Nayland, Stoke by Nayland, and to the upper Stour Valley.

Suffolk Links is available all year round, Monday to Saturday 7.00am to 7.00pm and must be pre-booked. For more information including area maps please visit the Buses page at www.suffolkonboard.com and click on Suffolk Links.

Dedham Vale Hopper – see Constable Country without a car!

Throughout the summer months the Hopper wends its way around Constable Country, linking Manningtree train station to places on its circuit such as East Bergholt, Flatford, Stratford St Mary, and Dedham.

Enjoy the scenery, the wide skies and riverside meadows of the Dedham Vale AONB as you are taken into the heart of Constable Country. The ticket is valid for as many journeys as you like all day long so you can incorporate a walk or boat trip between sections! Download the 2015 timetable from the Dedham Vale AONB Publications pages or pick up a copy from local Tourist Information Centres.

Four Ferries of the Suffolk Coast

Over the summer season why not try the four ferries of the AONB? (Harwich, Bawdsey, Butley and Walberswick) – a great way to enjoy Suffolk's beautiful coast and estuaries. Download the 2015 timetable from the Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB Publications pages or pick up a copy from local Tourist Information Centres.



©Suffolk Coast DMO

Cycling – Enjoy the Area... at your own pace

What better way to experience the real beauty and diversity of an AONB than cycling? It's healthy for you, good for the environment, and creates little disturbance. We're currently working on some new Explorer Cycling Guides around the Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB – they'll be available to download from our website soon!

Top Tips For Good Cycling!

- Follow the Highway and Countryside Codes
- Ride in single file to let vehicles overtake if the road is busy or narrow
- Give way to pedestrians, wheelchair users and horse riders
- Ring your bell or call out (to horse riders) to warn others of your approach
- Acknowledge people who give way to you
- Try to reach the start of the journey by bike or public transport
- Cycle on roads, byways, bridleways or cycle paths – not on public footpaths



Bringing down the wires

Since 2005 UK Power Networks has used a special allowance from the industry regulator Ofgem to replace overhead wires with underground cable in AONBs and National Parks. The projects are chosen by a regional steering group of landscape and environment specialists, including the Dedham Vale and Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB, and chaired by Natural England.

Several schemes have been completed across both AONBs. These have contributed to UKPN's total of removing over 40km of overhead wires across the protected landscapes of the eastern region which also includes the Norfolk Coast AONB, The Broads and part of the Chilterns AONB.

The announcement that a further £9.7 million from Ofgem to be spent in the region is welcomed and the team are now looking at potential schemes for the period 2015 to 2023. Local communities are encouraged to come forward with ideas for consideration. For more information, please contact Paula Booth on 01394 384948 or paula.booth@suffolk.gov.uk



LEADER Project

LEADER is a rural development programme that benefits the rural economy by supporting projects with a business or community focus in a coherent geographical area. In order to draw down the LEADER funds, each area must submit a Local Development Strategy to DEFRA. In Suffolk/ Essex we have submitted two Strategies – one for the 'Heritage Coast' and one for the 'Wool Towns'.

The Heritage Coast covers the coastal and surrounding area of Suffolk and north Essex (Tendring district). Its priorities are:

- To ensure vibrant local communities with attractive opportunities and effective services;
- To support the creation and growth of sustainable rural businesses;
- To conserve and enhance the unique environment and the natural resources of the area.

The Wool Towns covers an area of south Suffolk (taking in the majority of Babergh district area and parts of Mid Suffolk) and north Essex (the Braintree district area). Its priorities are:

- Promote the sustainable economic growth of rural businesses;
- Maintain and improve the range of quality of services and ensure access to them;
- Promote sustainable management of natural resources, integrating environmental, economic and social needs.

An announcement is expected soon regarding LEADER funding. In the meantime we're encouraging the development of projects which will be ready to apply for funding soon. For more information and to submit a project proposal form please visit: www.suffolk.gov.uk/your-council/finance/funding/leader-rural-development/



© Cathy Shelbourne

Proximity - Outstanding Landscapes and Local Distinctiveness

Our two protected landscapes recently received European funding for supporting tourism businesses to market our local distinctiveness more effectively through the AONB-led Proximity project. We believe that visitors enjoy these AONBs simply because they are outstanding landscapes where they can enjoy a walk, a view and good facilities. And more importantly for the local visitor economy, they will continue to make repeat visits and explore the variety of amenities in the areas because of these things.

The role of the AONB is to work with, encourage, and support local tourism businesses, as the AONBs are not (and should not be!) tourism organisations. Businesses

and those working in the tourism industry are the local experts - most closely in touch with visitors - they know that tourists are increasingly interested in the 'local story', be it history, landscape or culture.

Through the EU Proximity project we ran a couple of workshops and awareness sessions, introducing the coast and countryside of these AONBs. We are now offering everyone who works with visitors the opportunity (free of course - thank you funders!) to do a fun and fact-filled quiz to boost knowledge about the natural environment and help answer visitor queries with confidence! The interactive quiz, tailored specifically to the AONB environment and unique local landscape, will cover sustainable

tourism issues, wildlife and habitat, local community and landscape.

Proximity - supporting tourism businesses to attract nearby visitors. How do we encourage visitors on our doorstep to holiday closer to home?

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Spot the Birdie!

Sitting between Aldeburgh and Thorpeness is RSPB North Warren. Thanks to funding from HSBC, the RSPB has built four new viewing platforms there, affording superb views across the marshes. The creation of new scrapes (shallow pools) in front of these platforms allows ducks and wading birds to feed whilst new ditches and sluices provide further improvements in water control. Record counts of roosting black-tailed godwits this winter were an indication of the success of this work.

For details about visiting see www.rspb.org.uk/northwarren

BBC Springwatch returns

The BBC Springwatch team is set to return to RSPB Minsmere in late May or early June. Which species will be the stars this time? Will they be able to compete with the drama of Grub the tawny owl and the cuteness of the bittern chicks?

Keep up with news from Minsmere at www.rspb.org.uk/minsmere



Sutton Heath Sappers

Living, working and training in the AONB

The AONB is home to the British Army's 23 Engineer Regiment (Air Assault) based at Sutton Heath and ready to deploy anywhere in the world at short notice. This high readiness role demands that troops are able to move quickly over long distances and varying terrain on foot, carrying all the equipment they will need to survive and fight in places such as Iraq and Afghanistan.

Physical fitness and stamina are key attributes of our soldiers and this requires a lot of training. Whilst some is carried out within Rock Barracks and on Woodbridge Airfield, it is the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty around the base that plays a key role as a training resource. Troops train daily on the tracks and paths around the heath: running, marching with equipment, sometimes even carrying logs and stretchers to simulate the rigours of battle. This is no doubt quite a sight for locals or tourists out and about taking a countryside walk.

The Heath is also great place to relax and enjoy spare time. Dog walking and family picnics are popular among soldiers and their families, while members of the Regiment will often be spotted watching the wildlife on the heath or at the coast.

Lt Col John Clark MBE Royal Engineers, Commanding Officer emphasises how privileged the regiment feels to be based at Sutton Heath: "The area of outstanding natural beauty around us provides both an excellent training area and a wonderful setting for our sport and leisure, and we place great value on our relationships with the local communities that have been a great support to us over the last decade of deployments"

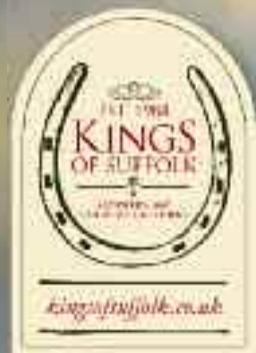


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The East Suffolk Catchment Partnership

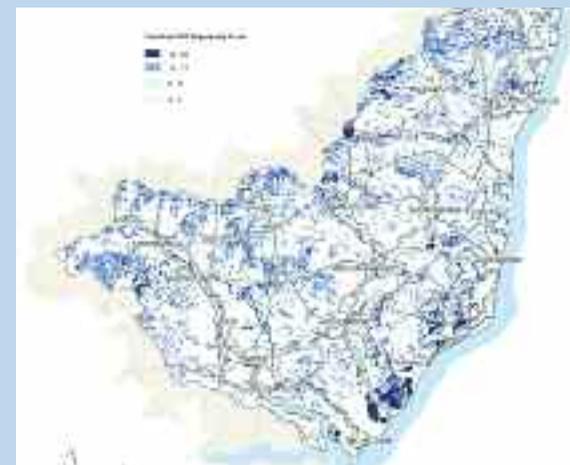
Formed in December 2013, the East Suffolk Catchment Partnership works with the AONB and the Deben Estuary Partnership plus others to make a real improvement to the river environment.

Membership is open to anyone with an interest in the future of our rivers and environment and includes the Environment Agency, water companies, farmers, councillors and environmental groups.

It has recently completed a series of workshops to identify which parts of the catchment provide important 'ecosystem services' like filtering water, slowing down floods or providing beautiful wildlife and habitats to enjoy, and which parts need improving or protecting. All of this information has been translated into 'Ecosystem Service Opportunity Maps' (pictured)

These maps show us where catchment improvement projects like river restoration, cattle fencing or tree planting will have the biggest benefit on the greatest number of 'ecosystem services'.

Using the maps, the East Suffolk Catchment Partnership is



Areas shown in blue are 'Ecosystem Service hotspots' where catchment improvement projects will make the most difference.

deciding which projects will benefit the most ecosystem services and therefore make the biggest difference to our lives. The top scoring projects will be taken forward with partners later this year.

So, if you live in an 'ecosystem service hot spot', look out for one of our Catchment Partnership improvement projects.

For more information or if you would like to join the East Suffolk Catchment Partnership contact info@essexsuffolkriverstrust.org

Fencing for the fledglings

A fence designed to improve the breeding success of birds like lapwing and redshank, is being erected at Suffolk Wildlife Trust's Trimley Marshes nature reserve near Felixstowe.

The fence (1.5metre high and 2km long) was funded by a grant of over £20k awarded by The Veolia Environmental Trust through the Landfill Communities Fund plus a grant from the AONB's Sustainable Development Fund towards materials. Built



© A Excell, Suffolk Wildlife Trust

by Kiwi Contractors, the fence will protect breeding wading birds from disturbance.

Wintering geese, including brent and greylags, will also benefit as the fencing will allow them to graze the marshes without disturbance, helping them maximise calories and survive the harsh winter conditions.

Site manager Andrew Excell says "The new fence will give the birds in the grazing marsh more protection from ground predators. This will allow them to settle on their nests and incubate their eggs to full term which is about 3-4 weeks. Young lapwing can't fly until they are about 5-6 weeks old and for the first 20 days need parents to protect them".

The Executive Director of The Veolia Environmental Trust, Paul Taylor, adds, "Although our grant is financing a simple solution, it will hopefully have a positive impact on bird populations by letting adults and fledglings feed and thrive in a safer environment."

The Veolia Environmental Trust's grant will also fund four tern rafts which will be situated in the scrapes and used by nesting terns later on in the year.



Boardwalk Repairs

Scribing for the Sandlings

The Sandlings heaths, set in the outstanding landscape of the Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB, is a source of inspiration to countless artists, writers and musicians.

In 2014 the RSPB launched a competition to celebrate the importance of the Sandlings. Children living in and nearby the Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB were invited to respond to the heath as a wild and wonderful place using their imagination to create artwork, photographs, poetry or short stories.

Congratulations to 9 year old Erin Barbrook who submitted the winning entry in the poetry category with 'Stone Curlew':



Stone Curlew © Jon Evans

Is it there, watching?
The Yellow eye all wide and round
Nearly always on the ground
Waves forever crashing
But only a few
Are like the Stone Curlew

Is it there?
Always watching
The Yellow eye all wide and round
Terns calling, waves splashing
But all eyes are on
The stone curlew



Our Enjoying Heathland leaflet was updated as part of this RSPB Futurescapes project, supported by the EU Life+ fund. Free to download from our website, this publication details the heaths and the wildlife to be found there.

Treading the Boards Again at Levington Creek

Levington & Stratton Hall Parish Council is pleased to announce the completion of repairs to the Creek Wall Footpath: "Following extensive flooding our community and visitors were deprived of this footpath for almost a year so are extremely glad to be able to enjoy this wonderfully scenic walk again".

The repairs proved extremely difficult to execute because of the huge amount of the Creek wall that was washed away by the daily tides. The Parish Council is extremely grateful to the landowner (Stephen Rackham) who acted quickly to rebuild the wall at considerable expense to himself. Initially the repairs seemed impossible, with so many engineering problems to overcome. The breach was repaired using a JCB, piling and manual labour. It was only after the third attempt that repairs held.

Repairs to the surface of the footpath proved similarly difficult. There was uncertainty regarding the stability of the breach repair for some time, with movement occurring whilst the repair settled. The all-clear to commence the surface repairs finally came in September. These works were coordinated and organised by Suffolk County Council and carried out by professional contractors because of the complexity of the repairs.

The flooded land has been drained of salt water for approximately six months and is showing signs of recovery. Restoration of habitat to its previous state may take many years but early signs are encouraging.

The Journey towards a Deben Estuary Plan

In 2012 the Environment Agency (EA), the Deben Estuary Partnership (DEP) and the Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB, with help from the River Deben Association agreed on a new approach to estuary management and set about producing an Estuary Plan for the Deben.

Since then we've seen the DEP's initial report, technical studies by the EA and comprehensive reports on estuary ornithology and access to and around the river. The opinions and aspirations of locals and visitors have also been sought and considered.

This Estuary Plan has broken new ground in allowing local people greater opportunity to influence policy and the actions that will govern the way forward. The next step will be for both the District and County Councils to receive the Plan – recognising that this is not just a report but a document that can guide the integrated systems that make up the Deben Estuary.

To find out more and read the Plan visit www.debenestuarypartnership.co.uk



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From Flood Disaster to Flood Defence

5th December 2013 is a date that won't be forgotten by many on the east coast, ravaged by the worst flood in sixty years.

Donna Morgan presents excerpts from her diary of the events and the work of the Waldringfield Flood Defence Group (WFDG).



By mid-November the river footpath fronting The Quay is reinforced with a concrete base, ready for the wall.



The tidal surge swamps homes and business premises at Waldringfield on the River Deben and spurs a community into action.



Week 12 and brickwork begins. The next month sees the river wall take shape and by mid-December the framework for the floodgates is in place.



Residents join forces with the Environment Agency to deliver a flood defence design and, with the support of Suffolk Coastal District Council and Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB, begins fundraising. WFDG is formalised and in summer 2014 wins their bid from the Coastal Communities Fund for £600,000+, making up their shortfall for a £million project.



Gates and stop-logs are fitted as a temporary measure, later to be removed for final finishes. WFDG Chairman, Jon Wilkins, comments: "Most importantly, the residents have protection for Christmas." It takes a further month into the new year to complete.



Work begins September 2014. Five weeks later piling is complete to strengthen the boatyard and northern perimeter.



Two months into the project, the boatyard nears completion with the construction of concrete flood walls.



Karen Thomas, Senior Coastal Advisor for the Environment Agency, said: "We are pleased to have supported this Group in both their Coastal Community Funding bid and the development of a flood defence scheme. The community has shown tremendous resilience and organisation. To deliver a new flood defence project in one year is unprecedented, a great example of what communities can achieve."

See the full diary at waldringfieldflooddefencegroup.onesuffolk.net

The Suffolk Walking Festival

9th - 31st May 2015

The Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB is a haven for wildlife and a beautiful, tranquil place for walkers to explore. The Suffolk Walking Festival has a packed programme of over 90 walks, many of them along the coast, which will help you discover the delights of this Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

You can join free **Health Walks** around Alton Water and Dunwich Heath; learn about **Radar and Redshanks** at Bawdsey; follow in Benjamin Britten's footsteps on an eight mile hike near Aldeburgh; stroll **Across the Marshes to the Castle** at Orford and walk **From River to Reservoir** on the Shotley Peninsula. All the walks are guided and offer a fun and sociable way to see the area at its very best.

To find out about these and many other walks, and to book your tickets, please visit www.suffolkwalkingfestival.co.uk



Wildlife and Nature at the Suffolk Show!

Two ways to enjoy nature will be promoted at the Suffolk Show this year, and both encourage people to 'be wild' explorers, see www.suffolkshow.co.uk.

Wanted: Nature Detectives

Oakland Hall Day Nursery has devised a discovery nature trail for 3-9 year olds visiting the Countryside Village area at the Show.

Children can have fun playing detective to track insects and learn how to trace trees with help of the Nursery's specially trained and qualified teachers at this forest school experience. The sessions are bookable on the day and are free.

Go for a Wild 30!

Suffolk Wildlife Trust, as usual to be found in the Wildlife Area, will be introducing their Wild 30 Campaign #wild30 Twitter tag - encouraging people to spend 30 wild minutes each day throughout June. They'll be highlighting the Trust's 50 nature reserves as places to get your daily dose, as well as courses and events during the year. For further details visit www.suffolkwildlifetrust.org

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