

Phase 3 Coastal Erosion Protection

Report from Jane Burch to be read by Derek Davis at Public Meeting on 7 February 2018

Back in 2008/9, Shotley Parish Council sought help from the Environment Agency, Suffolk County Council and Babergh District Council to deal with the problem of the eroding cliffs at Shotley Gate, running from the Bristol Arms, right along to the RSPB land.

Due to an anomaly in the Coast Protection Act, it was established at the time that **NO** statutory body had responsibility for this issue. In normal circumstances the district council would be responsible for managing coastal erosion. At the time advice was sought from Tim Yeo MP about rectifying this anomaly but the Parliamentary process to effect change could not be justified and BDC had reservations about taking on this additional responsibility.

With no one to help them, a group from the village set about a self-help project using tyres and rubble, which ran into difficulties with waste regulations. As a result, Suffolk County Council (Cllr Guy McGregor was Cabinet Member at the time and I, as the coastal officer), agreed to lead a partnership, working with the Parish Council, Environment Agency, Babergh DC, Natural England, AONB and others to raise funds and find technical solutions to the problem. The result was Phases 1 & 2 of the erosion project, completed in November 2010.

Behind the gabions which were laid to protect the cliff, a new footpath was established – with the Parish Council using their powers under Section 43 of the Highways Act. These powers were used to allow the PC to act as fund holder for the erosion project, based on the protection of paths within the cliffs. The footpath on the Definitive Map (i.e. which SCC is responsible for) had eroded away and now lies under water.

It was the intention to undertake Phase 3 of the project when funding could be found. However, due to concerns around the legality of the PC leading this work, it has not progressed. It is my understanding that they are still keen to do so if another body would lead the project. Their formal statement can be found here: <http://shotley.onesuffolk.net/assets/Uploads/News/Press-release-phase-3-final-Dec-17.pdf>

Recently, Storm Eleanor caused damage to some of the Phase 1 gabions, causing them to rotate, resulting in damage to the footpath. I was on site with the PC Chairman/Clerk two weeks ago and am working with them to find a technical solution to the problem. Once we have a better idea of what can be done, I have agreed to work with the PC to pull together the original group of statutory partners to find funding and expedite repairs. The intention was also to discuss Phase 3 at this meeting. The Council would expect Babergh District Council to be part of this partnership.

I would welcome your support and help as we can only solve these complex and costly issues if everyone is working together

Jane Burch

Flood & Coastal Policy Manager
Growth, Highways and Infrastructure Directorate