

Position Statement: Southmoor

September 2018

Key Roles & Responsibilities

Southmoor Landowner

Private land owners and homeowners have ultimate responsibility for protecting their own property and land from flooding and erosion and they must act within statutory planning regulations and other applicable legislation to do so. The seawall at Southmoor and Southmoor field is privately owned. Maintenance of these defences is at the discretion of the private landowner.

Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (Defra)

Defra has overall national responsibility for policy on flood and coastal erosion risk management (FCERM) in England. The department provides funding for flood and erosion risk management through grants to the Environment Agency, local authorities and internal drainage boards.

Environment Agency (EA)

The Environment Agency supervises and works with other organisations to manage the risk of flooding and coastal erosion in England. It also directly manages flood risk from main rivers, the sea and reservoirs. Historically, the privately owned coastal defence at Southmoor has been maintained by the EA. There is however, no legal obligation for the EA to undertake these works, and as such, the EA can stop maintaining these defences if the cost is judged to outweigh the benefits. Consequently, the EA have notified the private landowner at Southmoor that they will no longer maintain these defences.

Havant Borough Council (HBC)

HBC are a Risk Management Authority and have permissive powers to undertake coastal protection and flood defence works but only do so where there is a wide public benefit; such as flood risk to life and property. That is not the case at Southmoor. HBC do not have responsibility or any legal obligation to maintain the private defences at Southmoor.

HBC do however act to try and secure funding and deliver projects where there are sufficient benefits to the public, i.e. when there is a clear economic benefit to developing coastal defence works, when there is an appropriate engineering solution that is achievable and where environment legislation is not contravened.

Hampshire County Council

Hampshire County Council (HCC) is the Lead local flood authority and has the lead operational role in managing the risk of flooding from surface water and groundwater. They are also the Local Highway Authority (LHA).

HCC maintain the surface of the footpath at Southmoor. They also have the powers to make orders to divert or close a footpath if it becomes unsafe or constitutes a safety hazard. HCC are continuing with the current watching brief of the path, following the EA's notice that they are no longer maintaining the sea defences; namely, the path is inspected on a 4-monthly cycle. Should the erosion reach a point that the path is no longer navigable, then this right of access would be lost, and HCC would initially implement a Temporary Closure. HCC would probably look to negotiate a rolled back path, but this would be dependent on landowner's co-operation.

Utility Companies

Protection of utility infrastructure at Southmoor is the responsibility of the relevant asset owners.

The Southmoor Realignment Scheme

The EA secured funding from Government to appraise the options for a managed realignment scheme at Southmoor for the creation of new intertidal habitat and undertook this study in 2017/18. New intertidal habitat is much needed in the Solent region as a result of its ongoing loss through coastal squeeze. <http://www.escp.org.uk/what-coastal-squeeze>.

There are however, a number of major constraints within the site relating to important utilities infrastructure, including SSE, SGN, Southern Water and Portsmouth Water assets. Therefore, the escalating requirements needed to protect these assets in situ meant a decrease in the available land for potential habitat creation and a significant increase in scheme construction costs.

Following extensive option, environmental and economic appraisal, the scheme was deemed to be financially unviable and therefore has not been progressed any further by the EA. They withdrew the planning application for the Scheme in early 2018 and have notified HBC and other relevant parties that the scheme will not be going ahead as initially intended.

What's next

The Eastern Solent Coastal Partnership (ESCP), on behalf of HBC, will review the Southmoor scheme study outputs from a flood risk management perspective during the Langstone Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management (FCERM) Options Appraisal Study. They will not be trying to deliver the Managed Realignment Scheme as part of the Langstone Study and do not have the funding or remit to do so at this time.

The ESCP will continue to engage closely with the Southmoor landowner, the statutory authorities named in this document and other key stakeholders in order to provide the best available advice and information surrounding the ongoing issues.

If the landowner decides not to maintain the coastal defences at Southmoor then they may fail further over time.

Further Information

Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk – Roles and Responsibilities

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/flood-and-coastal-erosion-risk-management-authorities>

The Eastern Solent Coastal Partnership

<http://www.escp.org.uk/>

The Langstone FCERM Study

<https://www.escp.org.uk/langstone>

Havant Borough Council

<http://www.havant.gov.uk/>