

Report to **Lead Cabinet Member for Economy, Transport and Environment**

Date **21 July 2011**

Report By **Director of Economy, Transport and Environment**

Title of Report **Cuckmere Estuary – revised policy on Flood Risk Management**

Purpose of Report **To recommend a policy on the future management of the Cuckmere Estuary**

RECOMMENDATIONS: the Lead Member is recommended to

- (1) welcome the consensus achieved through the Cuckmere Pathfinder project on the future management of the Estuary;**
 - (2) endorse the consensus decision; and**
 - (3) reflect the consensus achieved by adopting an updated policy for the County Council on the future management of the Cuckmere Estuary.**
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1. Financial Appraisal

1.1 The County Council has a mix of responsibilities within the Cuckmere Estuary, notably as land owner and as highways authority. The community's preferred approach to the future management of the Estuary, namely to maintain the defences and to investigate the engineered reactivation of the meanders, is likely to have no financial implications for the County Council in the short term (possibly up to 20 years), because the preferred approach is to maintain the Estuary in its current form. This would ensure that existing assets are protected from possible flood damage, and enable tenant farmers to keep operating within the Estuary.

2. Supporting Information

2.1 From April 2011 the Environment Agency (EA) began implementing its adopted Flood Risk Management Strategy for the Cuckmere Estuary, which was to end the maintenance of the flood defences within the Estuary. This was based on national guidance from the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA), which precludes using public money for flood management purposes unless there is significant risk to properties and/ or businesses. Dredging of the river mouth will continue, in order to reduce the risk of flooding upstream of the A259, until the river mouth becomes self-cleansing, estimated at up to 15 years. The EA will monitor change and provide advice on what steps might need to be taken to address particular issues, including those relating to Exceat Bridge and public footpaths, but responsibility for any issues arising would rest with the owners and/or other responsible parties.

2.2 The County Council has previously indicated its support for restoration of a more naturally functioning estuary, through endorsement in 2006 of the Selsey Bill to Beachy Head Shoreline Management Plan (SMP), the Cuckmere and Sussex Havens Catchment Flood Management Plan (CFMP), and in 2008 the Cuckmere Estuary Partnership's (CEP) Memorandum of Understanding (attached as appendix 1). This was primarily based on seeking a reduction in the need for hard engineering and increasing the flood storage capacity of the flood plain.

2.3 A programme of community engagement organised by the CEP in 2009 identified a number of community concerns with the approach being adopted by the EA and the CEP.

2.4 In December 2009 the County Council, supported by a range of partners, secured £250,000 of funding from DEFRA's Coastal Change Pathfinder programme to work with the community to address the concerns identified in 2009 and to reach consensus on how best to manage change at the Estuary. Research was commissioned to fill known evidence gaps on the heritage, landscape, visitors and economy of the Estuary, and a programme of community engagement was delivered between April 2010 and June 2011 to identify the options that the community wished to explore. Technical modelling work was commissioned to understand the likely outcome, and consequences, over the next 100 years of the different options. With this information, the community reached a consensus (there was not quite unanimous agreement, as per correspondence at

Appendix 3) on the way forward at an engagement event in June 2011 attended by over 120 delegates, namely to:

- 1) maintain the existing flood defences in the short term;
- 2) explore the reactivation of the meanders in the longer term.

Together, these options were considered to provide the best means of maintaining the meanders, which are the key aspect of the Estuary that the community values.

Appendix 2 provides a report on the engagement process and how consensus was achieved.

3. Comments/Appraisal

3.1 The research and technical modelling undertaken through the Cuckmere Pathfinder project has provided a wealth of additional information on the community's priorities and the likely consequences of different management options. Having achieved consensus on the way forward, there is now detailed work required to understand what engineering is needed to maintain the existing flood defences, the costs of doing so, and how this might be funded. The Project Board for the Pathfinder project, which is chaired by the County Council and includes members of the community, relevant landowners and statutory environmental bodies, is discussing the setting up of a 'Friends of Cuckmere' organisation, to be led by the community. The 'Friends of Cuckmere' would take a lead on developing and implementing the decision reached by consensus on the future management of the Estuary, supported appropriately by other organisations, including the County Council. The CEP, and the Project Board for the Pathfinder project, would no longer have a role and would be dissolved.

4. Environmental Issues

4.1 The estuary is a well-known, iconic landscape that is likely to be subject to change, due to the effects of climate change. The community reached a consensus that reflects the need for the Estuary to adapt to climate change in the longer term. This would cause a negative impact on heritage assets within the estuary, but would likely bring a positive impact on biodiversity.

5. Conclusion and Reason for Recommendation

5.1 In conclusion, it is recommended that the County Council endorses the consensus reached by the community by:

- a) revoking the Memorandum of Understanding signed previously;
- b) adopting a policy to work with the community, landowners and statutory environmental bodies to:
 - 1) maintain the existing flood defences in the short term;
 - 2) explore the reactivation of the meanders in the longer term.

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Director of Economy, Transport and Environment

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Local Member: Councillors Freeman and Lambert

Appendix 1: Cuckmere Estuary Partnership Memorandum of Understanding.

Appendix 2: Hopkins van Mill – Cuckmere Pathfinder Project: Report on the 'Planning for Change Public Event'.

Appendix 3: email correspondence from Tristram Hodgkinson and Dr Jill Rosser

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

None



CUCKMERE ESTUARY PROJECT
Memorandum of Understanding

The Cuckmere Estuary Project aims to return the floodplain south of the A259 to a naturally functioning estuary, maximising the benefits for people and wildlife. The long-term aim is to allow natural processes to shape the landscape and ecosystems of the estuary and reduce the need for the engineering of coastal processes, whilst increasing the flood storage capacity of the flood plain. A review of the management of the west beach and enhanced water level management in West Dean Brooks will also be carried out as part of the project, as deemed appropriate by the partnership, the latter as mitigation for potential effects of the project on the SSSI.

The following organisations are committed to working in partnership to promote and deliver the project. The National Trust are the main landowners of the floodplain on the west side of the river and have considerable experience of managing the existing interests of the site. Seaford Town Council are also landowners of the floodplain west of the river, with responsibilities for management of the wider area including Seaford Head Local Nature Reserve. The Town Council is responsible for the well being of the town and its residents. Natural England is a new Public Body bringing together English Nature and parts of the Countryside Agency and the Rural Development Service. Its purpose is to ensure that the natural environment is conserved, enhanced, and managed for the benefit of those present and future generations, thereby contributing to sustainable development. The South Downs Joint Committee works to protect, conserve and enhance the landscape of the South Downs. The SDJC is the managing agent for the flood plain on the eastern side of the river for East Sussex County Council, the sole landowner and the statutory Highway Authority with responsibility for all public rights of way and with a range of recreational and biodiversity objectives. Wealden District Council is the local planning authority for the east side of the Estuary. Responsibilities include planning, building control and economic regeneration. The Environment Agency has experience and statutory powers in relation to flood risk and water management and is the lead authority for the mudflat and saltmarsh Habitat Action Plans.

The partnership reflects the co-operation that already exists between the National Trust, Natural England, South Downs Joint Committee, East Sussex County Council, the Environment Agency and Seaford Town Council on the management of the Cuckmere estuary and provides a framework for future initiatives. It is not intended to inhibit the freedom of action of any of the signatory organisations or diminish their distinctive roles. However the partnership will take responsibility for:

1. Progressing with the evaluation, design and implementation of a scheme for the sustainable management of the estuary with due consideration of the impacts on flood risk, coastal processes and the local economy, and ecological, landscape, recreation and archaeological interests.
2. Engaging with other key stakeholders and the wider local community in developing such a scheme.
3. Actively promoting the project to stakeholders and members of the public to increase the understanding of and support for the work and the significant advantages of sustainable estuarine management, with the aim of increasing the public understanding of the long-term objectives for the wider lower estuary.
4. Establishing a programme to monitor the changes that occur as part of the implementation of the scheme in order to inform future management here and elsewhere.

Signed

.....for Natural England
for the Environment Agency
for the National Trust
for East Sussex County Council
for the South Downs Joint Committee
for Seaford Town Council
for Wealden District Council
 19 December 2008date



Cuckmere Pathfinder Project

Planning for Change Public Event

Held on 7 June 2011 at the Alfriston Memorial Hall

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1. Executive Summary

1.1 Background

Hopkins Van Mil was commissioned in April 2010 to run two *Sharing Understanding* working sessions and from November 2010, with Rhoden Green Marketing & Communications, to manage the community engagement and communications process for the Cuckmere Pathfinder Project¹. This work culminated in a public event, *Planning for Change* at the Cuckmere held on 7 June 2011, at which community members were invited to reach consensus on the future management options for the Cuckmere Estuary. Over 120 community members and stakeholders attended the event the findings of which are presented in this report.

1.2 The event

The event began with a summary of the background to the project and aims for the event. Participants then divided in to small groups for discussion on the community selected assessment criteria and options for the future. They were then given a score sheet (Appendix 7) through which there were supported to assess the options against the criteria.

1.3 The assessment findings

As a result of this process two options emerged as frontrunners: Option D (maintaining the existing defences) achieved the highest ranking with a score of 3159, followed by Option C (reactivating the meanders) with a score of 2953. As the assessment process allowed for individual scoring against each of the criteria it is important to see the detail behind the assessments which is given in Figure 1 on page 9.

At the end of the day participants came together in a plenary session to discuss the results of the community's assessment. In a transparent process the engagement team lead by Henrietta Hopkins of Hopkins Van Mil facilitated a discussion around the issue of consensus. Andy Robertson of East Sussex County Council, carefully checking back with the meeting at each stage, summarised where consensus had been reached. The overriding sentiment was that the meanders were the most highly-regarded feature of the Estuary. It was also agreed that maintaining the existing defences was the most popular option but that there was also significant interest in the option of reactivating the meanders, reflecting the overall interest in retaining these. It was agreed that the way forward was to maintain the existing defences while Option C (reactivating the meanders) was considered further.

1.4 Recommendations

The recommendations on ongoing dialogue are provided in full in Section 5 of this report. In summary they include:

- Building on this positive foundation to keep the dialogue going
- Continuing to placed the community at the heart of all decision making processes
- Maintaining a transparent and inclusive process for next steps
- Continuing the involvement of stakeholders to support initiatives such as the Friends of Cuckmere
- Maintaining good practice in communications as next steps are developed
- Ensuring an effective dialogue with DEFRA, potential funders and other stakeholders

The report concludes by thanking all those who gave their time and commitment to building consensus around the future management of the Cuckmere Estuary.

2. Introduction

2.1 Purpose of the Pathfinder Project

The purpose of the Cuckmere Pathfinder Project is for East Sussex County Council to work together with the local community to reach consensus on how best to manage change at the Cuckmere Estuary. The County Council wanted to ensure that everyone's views have been taken into account and all the options have been carefully considered in making decisions about the future of the Cuckmere. The £250,000 Pathfinder Project has been funded by DEFRA. This report summarises the discussion at the last community engagement event under the Pathfinder Project.

2.2 Engagement Plan

[Hopkins Van Mil: Creating Connections,](#) with [Rhoden Green Marketing and Communications,](#) was

¹ www.cuckmerepathfinder.org.uk

commissioned by East Sussex County Council to work with them on the design and implementation of the engagement and communication elements of the Pathfinder project. Hopkins Van Mil specialises in engagement and dialogue on environmental and cultural heritage issues. Two workshops were held in summer 2010 at which the Environment Agency presented its reasons for withdrawing current flood maintenance, and members of the community put forward alternative management solutions. These were the first in a series of workshops and events held as part of the Pathfinder Project, they culminate in this major public event which was held on 7 June. The full programme of intensive workshops and public events is given at Appendix 1.

2.3 Who is involved?

The Cuckmere Pathfinder Project is being managed by East Sussex County Council which works closely with the Project Board (see Appendix 2) comprising members of the community and the Cuckmere Estuary Partnership (CEP). The Project Board is informed by the work of the Community Forum and they have an overlapping membership. The Forum was established in November 2009 further to the recommendations that came from the community engagement events run in the same year. It has an extremely active role in working through options for the future management of the Estuary.

Importantly the community living in the villages and towns surrounding the Cuckmere have been involved. Community engagement was central to the Pathfinder Project at the Cuckmere and individuals and groups have responded very positively to being placed at the heart of the decision-making process. As the Pathfinder Project progressed it became increasingly clear that those who had been able to attend the evidence events and decision making workshops, and even make contributions between events, were very well equipped to go through the assessment process on 7 June. Those who had had a less intensive engagement with the process perhaps found the event more challenging in certain areas. As one participant in the latter position said,

'There wasn't time to make an informed decision on every point - 10 criteria and 7 options and information summaries and photos = too much to digest and absorb on the time allotted'

A participant who had been able to attend most of the Pathfinder events said,

'I feel that the management of the day, and indeed the whole process was terrific and the whole team should be congratulated.'

2.4 Background to the Planning for Change event

Participants at the Planning for Change event were invited to use an evidence based analysis when assessing the options against the criteria. It was an essential part of the Pathfinder process that the community agreed gaps in evidence, gaps which were filled by reports commissioned through the Pathfinder project. The reports initially explored the current situation at the Cuckmere Estuary and, in a second stage, the predicted impacts on the landscape, heritage assets, visitor / user numbers and the economy when considered against visual and technical modelling. In addition information was also provided on the impact of the options on the ecology of the Cuckmere Estuary.

It is important to note that the Options for the future of the Cuckmere Estuary were selected by the community. The Community Forum selected a range of options for further discussion, a process which took eighteen months to ensure that all those options which the community wished to take forward to the next stage had been included. On 14 December 2010 an intensive [workshop](#)² was held at which the community selected a short-list of six options plus the baseline of 'do minimum' as a benchmark through which to assess the others. In the intensive workshop on 8 March the community agreed the long-list of criteria, which was refined in to a workable and robust short-list of 10 criteria at the subsequent workshop on 12 April.

It is a very significant aspect of the Cuckmere Estuary Pathfinder Project that the community made their own decisions throughout the process.

3. Event content

3.1 Event Purpose

The purpose of this final Cuckmere Pathfinder Project event was for participants to reach consensus in the future management of the Cuckmere Estuary.

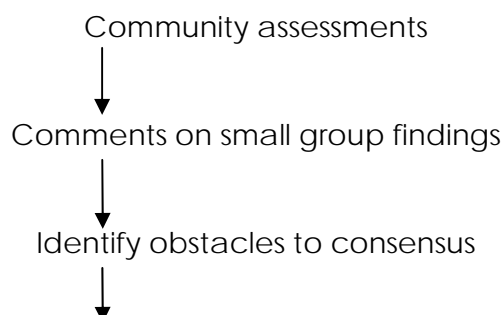
The event comprised an evidence catch up session for those who had either not taken part in previous workshops or events; or wanted to refresh their existing knowledge on the options and the criteria before the assessment process began.

The first introductory session explained the purpose of the Cuckmere Pathfinder Project and this particular event. Andy Robertson, Assistant Director - Policy Economy, Transport & Environment at East Sussex County Council emphasised that this process was evidence based as it was informed by reports commissioned through Pathfinder. He reminded participants that the assessment they would be carrying out during the session would use community selected options and criteria. Some time was spent explaining why cost was not an assessment criteria. Andy quoted from the report of the intensive workshop on 12 April at which participants said,

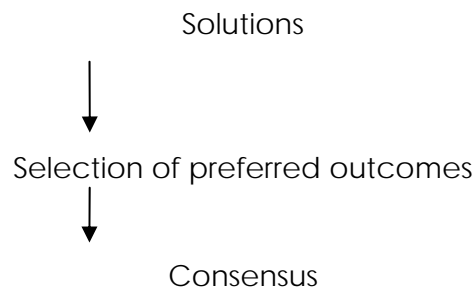
'Scoring cost benefits now is putting the cart before the horse'

and agreed that cost should come in to the business planning phase once a preferred option had been selected. He closed by highlighting the aim of the event as being to build consensus around a preferred option or set of outcomes.

This set the context for the small group discussions to clarify participants understanding of the criteria and options before moving in to the assessment process. The day ended with a discussion on the outcome of the community assessments; and a plenary session intended to build consensus which was described to participants as follows:



² All the reports on the workshops and public events are available for download at <http://www.cuckmerepathfinder.org.uk/About-project.aspx>



The full programme is available at Appendix 3 of this report. Transcripts of all discussions are included in Appendix 4.

3.2 Workshop Evaluation

137 people attended this public event drawn from local residents, the Community Forum, the Project Board, the Cuckmere Estuary Partnership, other statutory and non-statutory organisations. Each participant was asked to complete an evaluation form to assess whether the session had met people's needs. The full results of the evaluation are included in Appendix 5.

In summary, of those that completed an evaluation form:

- 73% heard about the event from direct communications from the Cuckmere Pathfinder team; with a further 14% from a friend, family member or colleague
- 92% felt that the event met its objectives
- 93% said that they found the evidence commissioned by the Pathfinder Project to be either very helpful or helpful
- 96% said they had enough opportunity to express their views;
- 84% found their round table facilitator to be either good or excellent.

Participants' comments on the event made on the evaluation forms are included in full at the end of Appendix 4.

4. Event findings

The participants were split evenly in to seven facilitated discussion groups to clarify their understanding of the options and the criteria. The full transcripts of each of the small group discussions can be found in Appendix 4 and comments made by participants in written responses after the event at Appendix 5. The following is a brief summary of the main findings of the discussion, drawing on participants' comments both during and after the event.

4.1 Comments and clarifications on the criteria

Participants comments on the criteria ranged from confirmation of detail such as,

'confirm that the criteria are not in order of priority'

and discussions on whether or not the criteria should have been weighted; to wider discussions on which criteria had been selected. The latter continued as a theme throughout the event and remained a discussion point in the final plenary session. The discussion focused on whether it would be helpful to remove some of the 'neutral criteria' to see how and whether that affected the outcome. The result of this discussion was summed up well by one participant who said,

'the community agreed the criteria so we can't change them.'

This led to a discussion in some groups about the process in which the community had been involved and led one participant to voice the views of many in saying,

'The process beyond today must continue to be transparent and open to the community.'

4.2 Comments and clarifications on the evidence

87% of participants who completed an evaluation form found the evidence catch-up session either very helpful or helpful in informing their decisions on the day. As already mentioned, 93% said that they found the evidence commissioned by the Pathfinder Project to be either very helpful or helpful. However, there were some comments made in the small group sessions about the impact assessments given in summary in the delegate pack. One participant considered how people were using the evidence provided,

'There is lots of brown³ on the impact assessment summaries but those elements are nevertheless scoring highly. Have we discounted the evidence or do we doubt it?'

Others felt that assessing an impact on an option in the short, medium or long-term could only be subjective,

'Colour coding system is very subjective - who decided? Option A p.12 one criteria assessment changed from brown to yellow over time - make your own judgements.'

'Decisions are subjective as some disagree with the expert evidence, how do you define, 'acceptable'.'

'Colour coding is misleading - presenting the opinions as fact, but it is not based on evidence, it's all opinion, modelling is as well'

So it is clear that whilst participants accepted that the process was evidence based and welcomed the opportunity to hear and understand the evidence, it was not universally trusted as the authoritative voice on the issues at hand.

4.2.1 North of the A259

One area of particular concern which has been raised throughout the Pathfinder project was that of flooding north of the A259.

One participant commented,

'The right-angled bend - no increase in flood risk upstream? This is not in line with present river channel theory.'

And another said,

'the Alfriston road flooded to a depth of 6ft and it stayed like that for a week - are you saying that none of the options would prevent that'

The response from the consultants Capita Symonds was clear,

'The process we are involved in is not about defending Alfriston from flood, but to find the best option for the

³ In the delegate pack brown colouring was used to denote where the commissioned indicated that the effect of the option is broadly negative when compared with the baseline.

Estuary. I can confirm that there will be no additional risk from flooding as a result of any of the options being implemented.'

4.2.2 Sea-level rise

Discussions were also held in the small group and plenary discussions on the assumptions made by DEFRA on sea-level rise.

There was a plea from several directions during the discussion to,

'Monitor actual changes in sea level rise on the East Sussex coast'

as some people,

'May agree or disagree with the data'

4.2.3 Meanders

An important focus for a great deal of the discussion on 7 June was the meanders. As one participant after the event said,

'The outcome of the options assessment was fascinating. To my mind it illustrated and confirmed a clear wish for the meanders to remain an integral part of the landscape, whether it be through the maintenance of the existing defences, or through the more radical scheme of re-establishing the meanders as the main river channel.'

Others echoed this statement and wanted to ensure that they had understood the impact of each of the options on the meanders in the short, medium and long-term, in particular which of the options would cause the meanders to silt up. The range of views is summarised in these quotations from participants,

'Depends on whether they are dredged or not as to whether the meanders remain or not'

'Active meanders will slow the rate of the river down and cause silting'

'Priority to keep the meanders and to improve the flow'

'If meanders silt up we will be losing the beauty of the area'

'Options that look at meanders disappearing would have impact on the educational value'

As one participant very succinctly put it,

'Most people like the meanders'

and another,

'There are other salt marshes on the south coast, but the meanders are unique.'

A consistent theme throughout the discussion was therefore the retention of the meanders in some form as a vital part of the iconic landscape.

4.3 Options Assessment

Hopkins Van Mil worked hard with the Project Team and the Project Board to ensure that the assessment process was as straightforward as possible given the complex issues arising from both the selected options and criteria. In designing a tailored assessment process for the Cuckmere Pathfinder Project Hopkins Van Mil considered a range of methodologies⁴ for the assessment of the criteria against the options. Our intention was to find a solution which is:

- As straightforward as possible for all event participants;
- Practical within the budget, resources and time available;

⁴ For example: Communities & Local Government: Multi-Criteria Analysis; HM Treasury: Green Book; Environment Agency: Priority Score and Outcome Measure; New Economics Foundation: Social Return on Investment (SROI), Crowd Wise

- Suitable to fulfil the project aim of reaching consensus on how best to manage change at the Cuckmere Estuary at this final *Planning for Change* event.

The benefits of this process are:

- That it demonstrates the degree of consensus as it unfolds; if there is not enough consensus it shows the need for further discussion around an option;
- The process itself encourages a search for common ground;

The most significant benefit in this case was that the community agreed both the options and the criteria in advance. In many cases either one or both of these are imposed by others which leads to greater polarisation, in this very inclusive process consensus was more likely to be achieved.

Having said that there is no doubt that people still found the assessment process challenging. As one participant said on their evaluation form,

'The assessment process for some of us was absurd. For such an important decision, arbitrary and too hurried. Why did we not have somewhere also to state our preferred option and consider that vote too.'

Nevertheless, many participants expressed their satisfaction on the event and how the assessment process had worked,

'Well done. A lot of hard work has gone into this process'

'An amazing achievement!'

4.4 Consensus

After participants completed assessment sheets for each of the options against each of the criteria (please see Appendix 7 for a sample scoring sheet) the small groups were shown the results of the assessments. These are presented in terms of a very basic tally of the scores given to each option the results were as follows (see overleaf):

Option D: Maintain the existing defences at their current level	3159
Option C: Engineered reactivation of meanders & meandering creeks	2953
Option E: Sustain/improve the existing defences - longer term	2852
Option F: Sustain/improve the existing defences - shorter term	2766
Baseline	2638
Option A: Partial breach managed realignment	2315
Option B: Full breach managed realignment	2274

and as a line chart showing the options achievement against each of the criteria (figure 1), and then a bar chart of the total tally scores (figure 2). Participants were all given an opportunity to comment on the results in their small groups before moving to the final consensus building plenary session.

Participants expressed a range of views at the assessment results,

'The bar chart totals are less varied than they would have been a year ago, it shows how far the dialogue has come'.

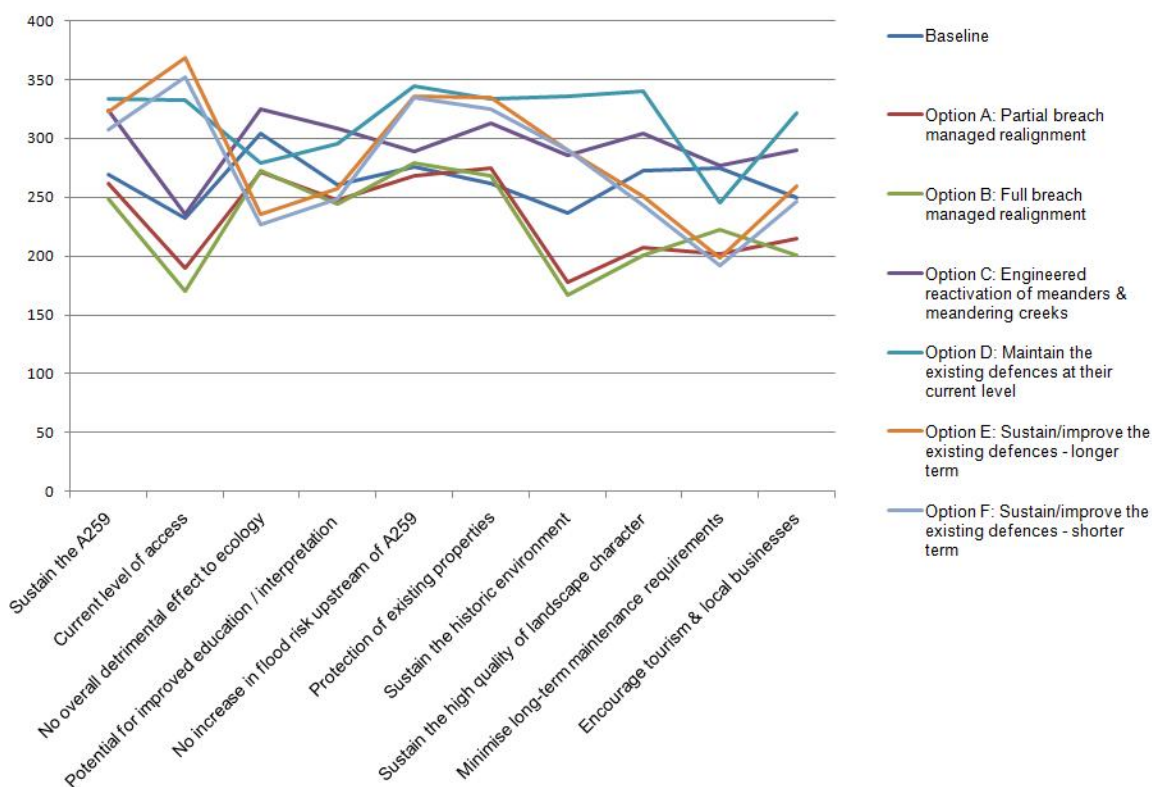


Figure 1: Assessment of the Options against each of the criteria

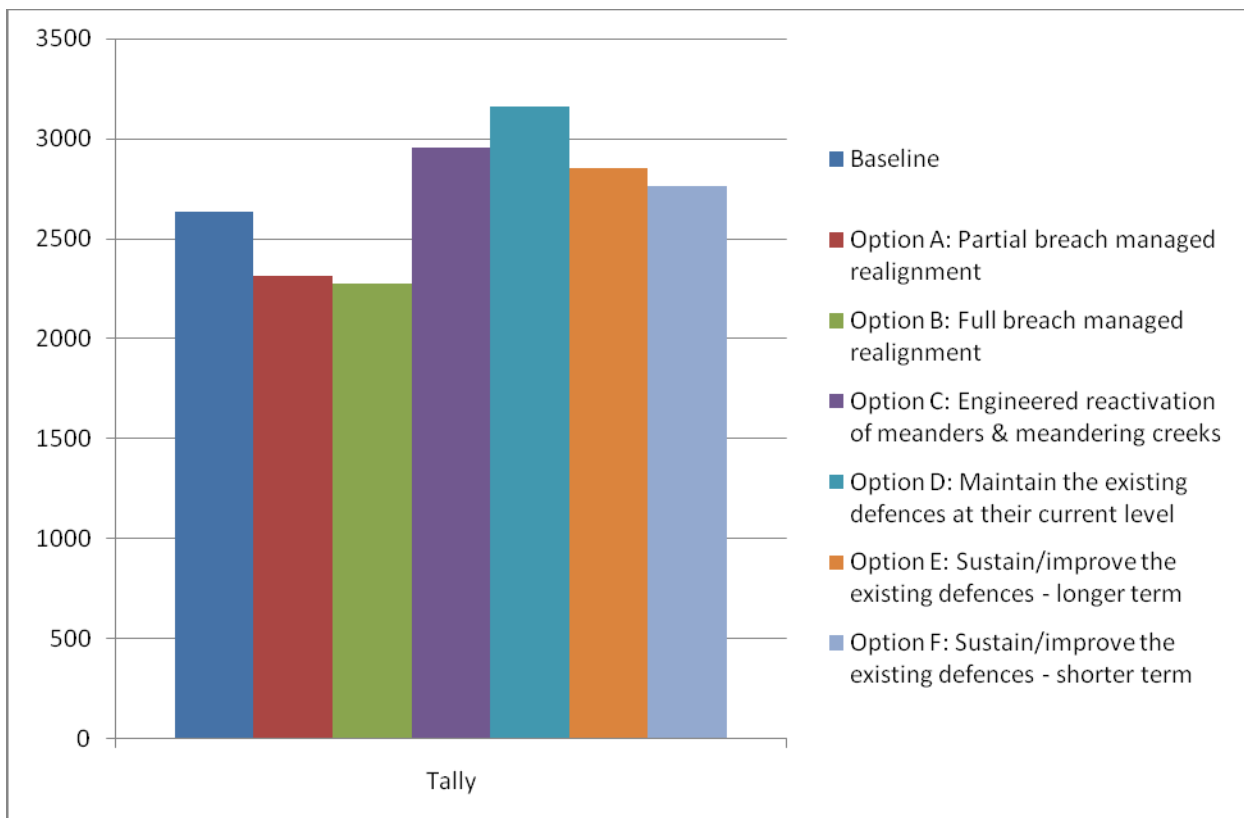


Figure 2: Tally of all the scores for each option

At this point some indications of the consensus to come were made, with other people expressing reservations or concerns,

'D is popular and buys time so that we could move to C later.'

'Disappointed but not surprised about option D because people are naturally conservative.'

'Very pleased that option C is second as it is challenging and imaginative.'

'The rating suggests that the meanders are key'

'People have been over-influenced by the pictures.'

The groups then came together for a final plenary session at which a range of views were aired on the assessment process and the possible outcome. The discussion on the obstacles to consensus began on a positive note with one participant stating,

'There was quite a lot of consensus with C and D being very close highlighting that the meanders are very important as is environmental enhancement and access'.

There was also a great willingness in the room to recognise that the iterative process of the Cuckmere discussions over months and years had recognised the importance of underlying issues such as the protection of the Coastguard cottages, the protection of the A259 and no increase in flooding north of the A259 as a result of implementing any of the options. One participant summed this up by saying,

'There is now consensus on these areas, they are recognised as important. We should recognise the progress that has been made.'

The full transcript of the plenary session is available at Appendix 4, what was clear was that with certain caveats, and acceptance that this is the beginning of a process of further exploration and community involvement, consensus was found on Option D being a short-term solution with Option C being the longer-term preference.

As one participant commented,

'The top two options have a similar product, they keep the meanders, although one involves heavy engineering and the other a light touch'.

It was therefore emphasised by everyone that whatever the solution in the long-term the meanders needed to have a central place in the planning for change solution. There was also a plea in the short-term for,

'Intelligent maintenance.'

which is an issue that has been a long-running theme in the engagement event discussions.

In summarising the consensus reached, Andy Robertson emphasised that clearly,

'People value the meanders. Option D has come out as the preferred option for the short-term with Option C in the longer term with caveats including the need to explore C further.'

5. Next steps

5.1 An iterative process

The community engagement plan developed objectively by Hopkins Van Mil to support the community's role in the decision making process has been deliberately iterative. The plan has enabled the community to decide which evidence gaps needed filling; agree options for further modelling work; hear and understand all the available evidence and confirm the criteria through which the options were assessed at this event. It is a credit to all those involved and their commitment to finding a solution, that consensus was reached on 7 June.

5.2 Action on this event

At the event East Sussex County Council gave an assurance that the hard work done by all those involved in the Pathfinder Project, at all levels would result in action being taken. The following steps were outlined:

1. The result of the Planning for Change event would be taken to the Cabinet Member of the County Council for formal member endorsement of the conclusion
2. A final report will go to DEFRA
3. A business case and fundraising strategy will then be developed.

The Council welcomed the community led initiative to establish a Friends of Cuckmere to support the development of the next steps. Participants were encouraged to sign up to the Friends idea and were informed that they would be contacted in the late summer with further information.

Participants were also encouraged to take part in the Celebrate Cuckmere event taking place from 10 June (www.celebratecuckmere.com)

5.3 Function of this report

This report is a summary of the discussion on 7 June. It will be sent to the Project Board for comment, made available via the Cuckmere Pathfinder website to all those who attended the event and used to inform the final report submitted to DEFRA at the end of the Pathfinder project. The media will be informed of the report via a press release and follow up telephone calls.

5.4 HVM recommendations

Hopkins Van Mil has been extremely impressed with the commitment shown by members of the community in attending the public events and intensive workshops; taking time to understand the issues and feeding back constructively working effectively together to achieve consensus.

5.4.1 Dialogue

We strongly recommended that from this very positive foundation all those involved should keep the dialogue going. This means ensuring whatever processes that follow the outcome of these discussions:

- the community continue to be placed at the heart of all decision making processes
- the process remains transparent and inclusive
- continued involvement is given by all stakeholders where appropriate to community initiatives such as the Friends of Cuckmere

5.4.2 Communications

It would be a very positive step if this report and further communications on the outcomes are sent directly to all those who signed up to attend this final event. It is important that they are kept closely informed of the results of their work on 7 June. It is also important that the good practice in communications is maintained after the Cuckmere Pathfinder project is finished this might include:

- Continuing to issue newsletters on perhaps a quarterly basis
- Managing the existing website as a resource to post updates and further information as required
- Maintaining the stakeholder map so that current information is held on those that wish to be kept informed of next steps
- Support for the Friends of Cuckmere to hold information sharing and other community events as necessary.

5.4.3

We recommend that the event findings and outcomes should be disseminated effectively through the report to DEFRA and in follow up meetings with DEFRA officials. the Pathfinder programme funded by DEFRA has demonstrated the power of community engagement in reaching consensus, facilitating effective dialogue with the community and their partners; ensuring processes are open and transparent. Wider dissemination of the Cuckmere Pathfinder as a case study of participative community engagement would be a sensible idea in promoting best practice more widely.

6. Thank you

Hopkins Van Mil and Rhoden Green would like to thank all those who took part in the workshops and events which comprised the Cuckmere Pathfinder Project. Everyone contributed their views so positively and openly when complex issues and processes were being discussed, and took time to understand other people's views. We would also like to thank the Project Board and the Community Forum members of which have worked tirelessly on a voluntary basis to ensure the success of the Pathfinder Project. Other members of the community took a great deal of their own time to attend events and write post-event comments and we are extremely grateful to them too.

The team at East Sussex County Council have been a pleasure to work with. They have demonstrated enormous enlightenment in working with the community and placing them at the heart of the decision making process.

Hopkins Van Mil 29 June 2011

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Appendix 1

Timeline for intensive workshops and public events

14 December 2010	Options Identification (Intensive Workshop)
8 February 2011	Landscape, Visitors, Heritage and Economy of the Cuckmere: Evidence Presentation Stage 1 (Public Event)
8 March 2011	Assessment criteria agreement (Intensive Workshop)
5 April 2011	Landscape, Visitors, Heritage and Economy of the Cuckmere: Evidence Presentation Stage 2 (Public Event)
12 April 2011	Options Assessment Pilot (Intensive Workshop)
7 June 2011	Planning for Change at the Cuckmere (Public Event)

Appendix 2

The Pathfinder Project Board

The Pathfinder Project is led by a project board made up of local residents and members of the County Council and Cuckmere Estuary Partnership (CEP). The members are:

- Michael Ann, Cuckmere Community Forum
- Jane Cecil, National Trust, CEP
- Alan Edgar, Cuckmere Community Forum
- Councillor John Freeman, Seaford Town Council and CEP
- Richard Mann, Cuckmere Community Forum
- Carolyn McCourt, Cuckmere Community Forum and CEP
- Andy Robertson, East Sussex County Council (Chairman)
- Chris Wick, Environment Agency and CEP
- Tony Whitbread, Sussex Wildlife Trust

Appendix 3



Cuckmere Pathfinder Project Public Event - Planning for Change at the Cuckmere Alfriston Memorial Hall, Alfriston 7 June 2011 - Programme

Evidence catch up session (see invitation letter)	12.00-12.45
Registration	12.30-13.00
Lunch & Display Review Session This is an opportunity for participants to have lunch, review information and displays on the options and talk to those who have specialist knowledge on the issues on a one-to-one basis	13.00-14.00
1. Introductory Remarks <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ A short welcome by East Sussex County Council○ An introduction to the Pathfinder Project & this event	14.00-14.15
2. Facilitated Options Review <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Baseline○ Option A: Partial breach managed realignment (EA)○ Option B: Full breach managed realignment (EA)○ Option C: Engineered reactivation of meanders & meandering creeks○ Option D: Maintain the existing defences (EA Option 2a)○ Option E: Sustain the existing defences (EA Option 2b)○ Option F: Sustain the existing defences	14.15-15.30 (with break)
3. Facilitated Options Assessment Session <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Individual and group assessments	15.30-15.50
Break - opportunities for informal discussion	15.50-16.40
4. Assessment Session Continued <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Community assessment revealed to small group○ Small group comments recorded○ Short-listing options and preparation for plenary session	16.40-17.30
5. Plenary session <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Summary of reaction to community assessment○ Consensus building discussion	17.30-18.45
	18.50-19.00

Appendix 4

Appendix 3: Transcripts of Small Group Discussions

Group 1 (HH)

Discussion recorded by facilitator onto flip chart paper

Option Review Session - main points

- Confirm that the criteria are not in order of priority
- This is taken from a people's perspective instead of landscape or ecology
- Baseline is a notional option - it flags up what do nothing would look like
- Crunch points - there isn't a keep it as it is option
- EA rationale
 - Maintain river mouth until self-clearing
 - Baseline is an option plus enhancements
- Group agreed not to discuss costs now as not an assessment criteria

Option A

- Protection of properties - the issue is not flooding but outflanking
- Capita response: extending the existing wall further up the valley
- It is recognised that the more work you do on the river mouth - there will be movement on the west beach
- Capita response: the west beach will be denuded and move back a bit
- Properties protection, clarification of what that means

Options A & C

- The right-angled bend - no increase in flood risk upstream? This is not in line with present river channel theory
- How can we make comparisons with what the river was doing 100 years, we need to look to the future now
- Alfriston road flooded to a depth of 6ft and it stayed like that for a week - are you saying that none of the options would prevent that?
- Capita response: the process we are involved in is not about defending Alfriston from flood, but to find the best option for the estuary, but I can confirm that there will be no additional risk from flooding as a result of any of the options being implemented
- Raising of A259 - would bridge be made in to a 2 lane road? What happens at the corner?
- Capita response: there are no plans to widen the road in any of the options
- It is unfair that Option C has been labelled as the 'raising the road' option, it could be applied to any or none of the options

Options C

- Illustration at low tide shows the river empty. I don't think that will ever be the case
- Extraction requires that the minimum level is nevertheless maintained in the river
- It is surprising that the options that I would expect to demonstrate water in the meanders in the mid-term are not demonstrating that in the animations
- Depends on whether they are dredged or not as to whether the meanders remain or not
- Active meanders will slow the rate of the river down and cause silting
- Q: what is the best option to get the best wildlife outcome?
- County Ecologist response: the best outcome from an ecology point of view is that which creates a diverse environment of saltmarsh / mudflat / grassland
- It creates a mosaic of wildlife with a range of species represented
- It considers the impacts not just for the estuary but for the wider area

Options Assessment Session - main points

- Bar chart totals are less varied than they would have been a year ago - it shows how far the dialogue has come
- All 8 criteria having equal weight - this is not the case
- Option C is unique - the issue is whether you are for or against Option C
- Difference between C and the baseline is not too great
- Can we remove options A & B? - Agreed - Yes
- Options D and C are chalk and cheese - it's not logical
- We could remove the neutral criteria and see what happens to the scoring?
 - Sustain A259

- No increase in flood-risk north of A259
- Protection of existing properties
- Comment: There should be no agency views on the criteria
- Community agreed the criteria so we can't change them
- Access / historic environment are pulling A & B down
- Disabled access - important to ensure this is maintained for Option C
- Lots of brown on the impact assessment summaries but those elements are nevertheless scoring highly - have we discounted the evidence / or do we doubt it?

Group 2 (SL)

Discussion recorded by facilitator onto flip chart paper

Option Review Session - main points

- Process beyond today must continue to be transparent and open to the community
- Community input into the specification of options and then competitive tendering against these options (e.g. E.A. can be very expensive)
- Work on river mouth an additional cost depending on the option

Criteria

- Sustain (historic environment) - maintain as far possible as what it is today

Baseline

- Currently doing nothing
- Do minimum is the regular maintenance that should have been done over recent years
- River mouth to be kept clear
- Proper maintenance has not been happening (intelligent maintenance) in recent years
- Baseline maintenance
- This is the start point it should be black and white
- Except clearing the mouth there will be no maintenance

All options

- Options do not take in to account of a storm event (all options)
- Options A, B and C reports refer to success of alignment e.g. saltmarsh creation is 'likely' - 51% - 49% may not happen; there is a risk that you won't get saltmarsh / different views
- No research which shows what happens if saltmarsh is not created?
- Is this reversible?
- Info bases assumptions on sea level rises (DEFRA figures) but these figures have been wrong so far
- Some people may agree or disagree with the data

Option A

- Pictorial representation in long-term appears wrong / should be saltmarsh or mud - not green
- The foreshortening on the animations means that you can hardly see the sea
- Any breach of a footpath (closed / flooded) under any option would result in a public enquiry = cost!
- Problematic if movement of a footpath & then an alternative is not found

Option C

- Q: Why for this option is A259 on stilts?

Option E

- Sea level rise data
- Logic for this option is based on sea level rise - adapts to what changes happen
- Different views on width needed to raise
- A259 stilts - could be taken out of the option
- DEFRA figures used because the most authoritative figures - they are 100 year figures, will not be a straight line but that's how it is presented

Options Assessment Session - main points

- Surprised the results are so close
- Option C & D contradictions so surprised so close in ranking
- What difference would it make to remove following criteria?:
 - Sustain the A259
 - Education
 - Flooding North of A259

- Surprised on high score of Option C
- Group removed options A & B as the lowest scoring
- Option C - highest possible cost and scored highly on ecology
- Baseline - disorganised breach
- What has been effect of tactical voting for Option C by environmental lobby?
- Suggestion - knock out option C as the result of tactical voting, it looks like an anomaly
- C may be more acceptable without raising of A259
- D - maintenance (really good) and competitive quoting for work and preferably not by the Environment Agency
- If not maintained cost passed on to councils and landowners
- Monitor actual changes in sea level rise on the East Sussex coast
- Maintaining the river
- Maintaining rights of way and footpath
- Should have spent money on consultation on maintenance

Group 3 (RH)

Discussion recorded by facilitator onto flip chart paper

Option Review Session - main points

- Criteria have not been weighted or ranked (mathematical modelling could have been used)
- Decisions are subjective as some disagree with expert evidence e.g. how do you define 'acceptable'
- Colour coding system very subjective - who decided? e.g. Option A p.12 one criteria assessment changes from brown to yellow over time - make your own judgements
- Query re: farmer not being included but actually they have been consulted
- Each option has long / medium / short-term impacts - can we score on all 3?
- Short of time for individual score sheets, also not enough delegate packs for everyone
- Timing of this meeting suits retired people - where are the younger ones?
- Is there an option for consulting more younger / working people?
- It would have been extremely useful for everyone present to have been shown the computer visualisations of all the options as many people did not understand the implications of the options and how they would change the valley
- Not possible to provide footbridges over the breaches even tho' some thought it was?

Assessment session - key points

- Most people like the meanders
- C&D very different?
 - some say images for C were misleading (high tide picture)
- It wasn't voting - people should have assessed against the criteria
- D is popular and buys time can move into C later
- Nothing can ever remain static - some meanders are very stagnant
- E&F are similar - why not merge them?
- Please don't remove A & B from future consideration because losing an opportunity to create great ecological resource in the valley
 - Ecological value is diminished by option D
 - Discussed flooding cell C as a pilot - compromise on Option D but some felt this was not viable (EA 2003)
- We don't have enough detailed knowledge to pick out elements to merge options
- There are other salt marshes on the south coast but the meanders are unique
- National picture is that we are losing salt marshes and they are a valuable habitat
- Some felt options A & B risked losing the meanders
- With Option D still needs to consider if dredging is needed in the short-term
 - Stagnant water at the moment

Group 4 (AvM)

Discussion recorded by facilitator onto flip chart paper

Options Review Session - main points

- Education is not a criteria - it is underlying all other criteria
- Options that look at meanders disappearing would have impact on the educational value
- Iconic feature with significance
- Educational value attracting schools / visitors from miles away
- All public bodies have a duty to conserve and enhance the natural environment
- Sustain: not happy with should be 'enhance' for all even Sustain the A259 as that's a statutory duty too
- Colour coding is misleading - presenting the opinions as fact, but it is not based on evidence, it's all opinion, modelling is as well
- Should have been left uncoloured
- Introduction by Andy Robertson was steering opinion - by highlighting the heritage value
- It would have been better to say this might happen instead of this will happen based on evidence; or this is likely to happen
- Which of the options are reversible once we proceed?

Long-term baseline

- Visual images: 1 & 2 showing grass however process wouldn't allow river to connect again but meanders will form somewhere again
- Cut lined with blocks will eventually break up if it is not maintained
- The whole valley floor will have concrete blocks scattered around. Concrete blocks are not completely solid but where will they end up?
- It will be hideous
- Capita response: they're likely to settle into the bottom. Bits of concrete may wash out onto beach but velocity isn't high enough in the cut
- River mouth will be kept open and bridge will be protected
- Responsibility for the culverts south of bridge = EA

Option F

- Was always meant as a short-term solution to buy time and see how things pan out

Option B

- As in Option A: meanders will not disappear, they will appear somewhere

Option C

- Canoe park lost from photos in medium & long-term - is that accurate?
- Filling in the Cut near the Galleon will be with soft soil? Will be eaten away by the river
- Not necessarily

Education

- Immense potential for education under Option C; you would see different things at different times

Option D

- Doesn't show meanders silting up and should do as that is what will happen

Option Assessment Session - main points

- Disappointed but not surprised about option D because people are naturally conservative
- However if we keep building up the banks it will impact negatively on the wildlife as an increase in visitors to the valley is inevitable
- Very pleased option C is second as it is challenging and imaginative
- Option D possibly for the short-term and then Option C?
- Only 10% difference between D and C. If education evidence review had been done Option C could have scored more highly
- 1 person relieved to see that Options D and E were first and third
- Option D is interesting as that is what the EA said they cannot do - much harder to find funding for as retaining status quo. The more imaginative the solution the easier to find £.
- The differences between the options are not sufficiently significant to warrant removal / retention
- Point has been made that all options that retain the naturalness of the estuary should be retained. Some said this may not be practical

Group 5 (AR)

Discussion recorded by facilitator onto flip chart paper

Option Review Session - main points

- Do the criteria have the same order of importance?
- Cost is still an issue
- Have we identified what / how big an issue local business is?
- Are we saying that there will be no increase in flood risk?
- Should the criteria be about an active decrease in flood risk?
- Effect on marine fish in estuary?

Education

- How big will the bend be? Will it be adequate
- Is / what is the definition of acceptable?
- What is the definition of 'sustain'
- what is the future status of the A259
- What is the effect on the future traffic management plans?
- What plans are there for the Exceat Bridge? Does it need replacing?

Maintaining Access

- Level of access
- Is there an access plan?

Ecology

- Will the farming element be removed?

Education

- Is there a balance between health and safety and keeping the natural environment
- All options provide a pathway to education
- Does this imply an increase in visitors?

Protection of existing properties

- Does this imply existing properties

Historic environment

- What is the historic environment?
- What weighting should be given - eco versus commercial

Options

A:

- High value on water being maintained in the meanders
- Why do we need to do anything?

B:

- Is it possible to flood only the west side without affecting the east side?
- Can you ensure the meanders have water in the medium to long-term?
- Is there data on the effects on agriculture?

C:

- Is it possible to have some running water under the bridge (aesthetic)?
- How obtrusive will the hard engineering be?
- Why won't this reduce visitor numbers

D:

- Who would maintain the existing defences - is this the nearest option to adaptive management?

E and F:

- How wide are banks?
- What happens if sea level changes
- What is the extent of how green it will be?

Options Assessment Session - main points

Comments / thoughts / surprises?

- Re-assessing
- Appalling
- Will overflow if banks remain as they are
- Naive
- Option A should be removed as not sure on its long-term effects
- Option D should go as the most dangerous option
- There is no sense in delaying a decision
- Discussion about water in the meanders
- Maintain visual aspect while restoring the river
- 50% of the group satisfied with this result

- Partial blocking of the cut providing a flow into the meanders
- Needs to be a bolt on / stand alone on the west beach to try and stop the water going around the back of the coastguard cottages
- Priority to keep the meanders and to improve the flow
- Essential to include the above in option D
- Essential to maintain access to the area e.g. waling from option E

Group 6 (BJ)

Discussion recorded by facilitator onto flip chart paper

Options Review Session - main points

- The summary in the information pack excludes part of a quotation. It should say, 'for every school that comes to Sussex Wildlife Trust there are a further 2 that come independently: total therefore 20-25,000 per annum

Options Assessment Session main points

Option D

- Pictures do not show silting of meanders, nor does the text
- Some 'hold the line' options do show silting but not D - why not?
- Surprised top 2 being D and C - they are so different
- good that people have recognised the need for maintenance - surprise that F is 4th and that sad that B is last
- Is D chosen for the sake of the meanders - it was previously suggested that Option D would not do this

Option C

- Is depicted without showing that the meanders require major work on tributaries and arteries - this is a concern
- Pictures are misleading
- shape of the meanders will change as water gushes due to alterations
- It is a capital intense option
- In the short-term it has a large environmental impact
- Wildlife are encouraged to return quickly by C

General points

- Rating suggest meanders are key
- People have been over-influenced by the pictures.

Group 7 (HI)

Discussion recorded by facilitator onto flip chart paper

Options Review Session - main points

The group started by asking questions of clarification relating to the criteria.

- Sustain the A259 – includes keep the sea away and build up
- Maintain current levels of access – will concrete path be raised? Footpaths will be diverted onto the valley sides, it is a matter of opinion whether this is satisfactory
- Discussion about cost, concern expressed that it is not a criteria and also understanding
- Page 19 of briefing pack – average tide, why end section on right not silting up?
- Briefing pack – consultants have assessed the EA options

Meanders and wider discussion

- if meanders silt up we will be losing the beauty of the area
- One person said their preference was status quo, with provision for change – change as the need arises
- You would have to engineer the meanders to sustain them
- differing views on timescale, and whether passing a legacy to future generations the status quo is maintained
- meanders could be dredged

What happens to the meanders under different options?

- If the sea doesn't go in they will silt up – A, D, E and F
- They will be tidal if the river flows and will stay clear (differing views expressed whether they would move) – C
- They will silt up quickly if they become flooded B
- (option B flooding meanders, option A does not flood meanders)
- It is difficult to look 100 years in the future
- People will weight criteria differently? Value one criteria more than another? The possibility of weighting criteria was discussed at an early stage and felt to be too complicated
- We may end up taking key concerns / ideas and including in a final, different, solution
- What is going to happen to the preferred option?
- Council need to know what the community prefer, 1-2 favoured options, with the backing of others they can do more/take forward
- Differing views in the group whether they preferred there to be a long term solution, or to go for a short term option and then make changes

Options Assessment session

Reflections on overall scores and group shortlist of options

- Interesting full breach (B) came 7th
- People are nervous, they're keeping things as they area
- Clear view against A&B; perhaps they were not defined enough
- The end result of C & B is similar re: overall management, except you keep the meanders in both
- Interesting D preferred to E, as D is short term option
- E better as it gives a long term solution
- Perhaps due to uncertainty about sea level rise
- D plus dredging meanders is total satisfaction?
- but is this possible?
- could the soil be used for another purpose?
- D scored low on maintaining heritage, but this relates to potential archaeology. So in reality the important areas are on the edge. There it is a theoretical concern rather than a real one
- Not sure comfortable discounting any of the options as the numbers are too small, community hasn't discounted any
- But there were always going to be small differences as 3 was neutral
- Not surprised by the result, people like things to stay the same way visually
- There is a desire for status quo now
- I think it will be – base line first, then D and in long term C
- Concern if D & C are selected that cost and sustainability are not addressed
- The group decided their short list would be C and D (with more preferring C to D), E was the third on the short list but only included if helpful in plenary. However, this was only a rough feel and it was pointed out that 2 people had had to leave

Transcripts of Plenary Sessions

HH's group

- Scores quite close
- Should criteria have weight
- Option C seen as unique - some for, some against
- Line graph for C and the Baseline not so far apart
- Should some of the criteria be removed was asked in the group, but they decided by the community so agreed they should stay
- Option C - important to ensure disabled access
- Brown shading in delegate pack but those options nevertheless scored highly. Is this because people are ignoring or mistrusting the evidence despite this being an evidence-based process?
- Options A & B should be removed

AvM's group

- More visitors = negative bank erosion
- Please option C is retained
- Option D and then move to C
- If education evidence provided through C might have been higher
- Option D - harder to find funding for maintaining status quo
- Differences not significant enough to remove an option
- All options that retain naturalness of the Estuary should be retained

RH's group

- Difference between D & C
- Long - term option for (C) might have been misleading
- Not just about voting for your favourite option
- option D popular now - retains meanders and buys time
- Others split
- A&B wanted to retain as may lose ecological enhancement
- A retains meanders as they are now
- Proposal - flood Cell C as a pilot
- Option D - dredging or no dredging?
- Range of opinions
- Meanders are seen as unique and that's why came out top

BJ's group

- Option D - pictures don't show silting of meander
- Hold the line - some show silting
- Surprise C & D top 2 as so different
- Picture for options for C
- Options C suggestion will change shape of meanders
 - Short-term impact
 - Encourages wildlife to return fast
- Option D - has it been chosen for the meanders? Recognises the need for maintenance
- Some lack of confidence in the pictures

AR's group

- Partially blocking cut
- Protect the meanders which are being artificially maintained
- Retain access
- 50% happy that D came out on top
- Removal suggestions:
 - C & D merging
- D, E, C (group rank)

SL's group

- B & C are contradictions
- Removal of criteria - would that make a difference?
- Removal of A&B

HI's group

- C favoured, then D, then E
- If we drop A & E what do we lose in terms of cost and sustainability

Obstacles to Consensus - plenary discussion

- There was quite a lot of consensus
- C & D very close
 - meanders very important (D)
 - Environmental enhancement (C)
 - Access (E)
- There is an obstacle in focusing too much on options rather than principles
- National issue - how is this reported in the media? Will option D be seen as public view rather than institutional favourite which might be option C?

- Obstacle fight versus artificial and natural
- Short-term D
- And C which is more long-term
- Mandate to find the money
- If a result is selected that is different to what has been voted for it will be a problem!
- Recognise that obstacles already dealt with in previous sessions are:
 - Protection of coastguard cottages
 - Protection of A259
 - Upstream of A259
- There is now consensus on those areas, they are recognised as important. We should recognise the progress that has been made.
- Suggestion made to remove the three non-defining criteria, this was discussed and as with the previous small group discussions it was agreed that this was not possible as the community had agreed the assessment criteria previously
- Obstacle in timeframe selection:
 - Baseline - v. short-term
 - Option D - short-term
 - Option C - long-term as required
- Why a democratic process and now talking about obstacles?
- The top two options have a similar product, they keep the meanders. Although one involves heavy engineering and the other a light touch
- It's easy to want to change the rules, don't let's change them
- We have something we can take away to funders, with backing of select "more important people" in the community
- Good intelligent maintenance hasn't happened
- Sea level rises have not happened if we look at 10 year figures for Newhaven
- Maintain estuary in short-term; monitor sea level rises and move to C if necessary
- Top 2 options similar in that they maintain the meanders (in different ways)
- Fear of change in the landscape & how to manage the change is an obstacle to consensus
- Concern that this meeting is only accessible to a certain demographic
- D - no flow in meanders, but don't seem to silt up whereas in E & F they do
- Overtopping in future in D which is why they appear 'wetter'
- Only option that maintains the meanders is C
- It would not cost a lot to dredge and sluice the meanders
- People may not have understood that C is the only option for functioning meanders
- Far easier to fund an imaginative option like C rather than a maintenance option like D
- Polarised views and therefore the two top options are the extremes
- Option A is a partial breach - a shame as it's a compromise
- Option D & C - both maintain the meanders albeit in different ways
- Bigger scheme like Option C could attract sustainability levy, EU money, lottery etc

Mid-Point	Summary	of	Plenary	Session
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- People value the meanders
- People recognise D & C have come out on top for whatever reasons
- Process has been transparent & therefore cannot be ignored
- Option D: preserves what we have but maybe not for long-term / forever
- Interest in Option C - but some questions about cost etc. but may need understanding on what it will look like in terms of footpaths etc.
- So it looks like we have consensus around:
 - In the short-term - Option D
 - While doing that - look at Option C as possible long-term option to address whether an attractive package for long-term funding can be found while exploring / addressing the queries about the option and whether it delivers what we think it does

Further discussion on the summary

- I haven't looked at Option C, but my main concern is you are doing away with what the Dutch did in 1845. Major concern about flooding - bogs, marshes and flooded roads. There has been no evaluation or

understanding. I'm very concerned, I love the valley and the meanders. There hasn't been a proper evaluation of why meanders are beautiful... North of A259 won't be affected... not true....

- Experts say there won't be flooding, but we aren't trusting the information, therefore need more time [further exploration needed on this issue]
- But evidence shows A259 not flooding but perhaps people don't trust the evidence
- The Victorians built the Cut for a reason and it's important to explore it's relation to flooding north of A259
- Flooding upstream - this is caused by rainwater and water from chalk and it could also be down to non-functioning sluices
- Meanders are artificially managed now
- Further information is needed on reality of an active meander system [further exploration needed on this issue]
- Option D - are they going to defend sea levels?
- Meanders as exist today (artificial), and as part of an active river system, they are different. Working river that meanders and changes
- What we have now is dead
- Interesting comments, option D is a farce, we can't do nothing
- Is there the potential for a new hybrid super-option for conglomeration? The meanders would be key in that
- None of the options suggest the meanders being breached?
- If we engineer the meanders they will not look as they do now
- Intelligent maintenance required
- Look at the reality of sea level rises and what that means [further exploration needed on this issue]
- Maintain - keep some of the water in the cut to feed the meanders
- Meanders don't hold their shape forever, they turn in to Oxbow lakes
- Look at D and C. There is another form of consensus - Option D & E & F - looking more imaginatively at the defences
- We had a vote, shouldn't go over again
- Excellent evidence reports as part of the process, especially archaeology report
- The national importance of the Cuckmere can be used for imaginative funding bids

Closing Summary

- People value the meanders
- Option D has come out as the preferred option for the short-term with Option C in the longer term with caveats including:
 - Look at C and variations on it in more detail
 - Value the meanders and protect what we have
 - Explore C further and its variations
- Heartfelt thank you to everyone involved, lived and breathed it, positive discussion and debate, recognising legitimate aspirations of others

Next Steps

- Assurance that what has been done will sit on the shelf
- Today's results will go to the Cabinet Member of the County Council for formal member endorsement of the conclusion
- Report will go to DEFRA - we want to trumpet this project as an exemplar Pathfinder project which might (perhaps) help with future funding
- We then need to move to the business case and fundraising strategy to identify who will fund the work. It is important that the community leads in taking this forward to the next step with the initiative to set up Friends of Cuckmere
- Participants are invited to add their names to the Friends of Cuckmere list
- Celebrate Cuckmere exhibition starting on 10 June (www.celebratecuckmere.com) do support it.

Thank you for your valuable contributions.

Appendix 5 - Participants Comments Received via Email

Comment A:

Notes Arising from the Cuckmere Pathfinder Project Meeting 7 June 2011

The East Sussex County Council Team and its Consultants should be congratulated for conducting the complexities of the Pathfinder Project so effectively and establishing a consensus view from the widely diverging aspirations of all those who have participated over recent months.

I am sure I echo the ardent wish of the majority that the many hours of deliberation that have resulted in a favoured solution will, in the first instance, be formally recognised by the elected Membership of ESCC and subsequently accepted for financial support at Central Government and elsewhere.

The outcome of the options assessment was fascinating. To my mind it illustrated and confirmed a clear wish for the meanders to remain an integral part of the landscape, whether it be through the maintenance of the existing defences, or through the more radical scheme of re-establishing the meanders as the main river channel. This conclusion was also reflected in the third and fourth choices leaving the options for the deliberate breaching of the tidal banks as much less favoured solutions.

May I say that from a river hydraulics stance I believe the choice of maintaining the existing defences has some merit, **provided the outflow to the sea remains unimpeded**. This not only means the periodic control of littoral drift across the mouth must continue but also the maintenance and eventual renewal of the river training walls. However, in progressing this option, I felt that many present did not grasp the significance of having to undertake some work on the meanders themselves. As they currently stand they play no part in the operational river regime, yet they are the focal point of attraction for so many. I refer to the fact that over many years natural processes are causing the meanders to silt up and consequently some judicious dredging will be required, come what may, to sustain this iconic feature.

Again from a river hydraulics point of view the option to restore the meanders to a main river function must be treated with extreme caution. Setting aside the cost issues, the meanders would need to be dredged out to the depth of the existing bed level of the cut and the sheer practicalities of achieving this would lead to a significant increase in the width of the channel at flood plain level. I remain very doubtful that there is enough space to achieve this without the enlarged channels merging in places and in effect creating ox bows. Also major protective work would be required for the adjacent A259. I realise this has not been chosen as the preferred option but I just wished to emphasise the significant engineering challenge it poses along with the detrimental effect it would have on the landscape until the work had been given a chance to mature. I would estimate at least 8/10 years of serious detriment. Any consideration of this option must be accompanied by a strong engineering input, and there would be a serious risk of destroying the very feature that everyone seeks to retain!

On the other hand if the favoured option was adopted quickly **and** some modest suction dredging undertaken through the meanders with improved river sluices at Exceat Bridge and at the southern end of the cut, the meanders would remain fresh, not attract reed growth and they would retain their traditional appearance.

In conclusion I feel a fair measure of common sense has prevailed. There has been wide recognition of the unique landscape features of the estuary, the archaeological aspects have been recognised and the work needed to realise the chosen option should not have a major visual impact. The ability of the current main river to fulfil its drainage objective has not been compromised, although routine maintenance and dredging will still be needed throughout the tidal reach for drainage standards to be sustained. The chosen route has not precluded the chance of selective tidal bank raising at some stage in the future as and when the predicted rise in tidal really materialises. I do however wonder if an opportunity has been lost by setting aside some of the features in options E and F. They both include an element of improvement rather than simply addressing deferred maintenance and funding, scarce as it may be, might be more forthcoming if linked to improvements. Perhaps other factors such as the uniqueness of the landscape features and the 'National Importance' of the archaeological history within the estuary could assist in forthcoming funding debates.

I truly hope the efforts of so many people will be recognised by DEFRA and others as being a precursor to similar Projects that touch the sole of local communities. Here at the River Cuckmere I am convinced that there is wide support to ensure that the joys of the natural environment, currently enjoyed by us, are sustained for future generations to appreciate. We all have a responsibility for this. Once it is gone it is probably gone forever!

John Foxley MBE

C Eng MICE MCIWEM C WEM C Env

Comment B

June 7th meeting conclusions

Amidst the slight euphoria which engulfed the meeting at 6.45 last evening when it appeared that there might be some degree of common agreement about the way forward, no-one seems to have noticed, or at least voiced, the potential impact on the canoe barn and it's role in the leisure/sport activities in the valley - including me!

The need to retain and protect the canoe barn seems to have been one of the "givens" included in the "protection of existing properties" criterion, but whilst the barn might be saved, the opportunities for canoe instruction would be effectively eliminated if the placid lagoon which exists at the moment were incorporated into what would become for part of the tidal cycle of a fast flowing river system. Whilst fast flowing water is good for slalom canoe work, calm water is essential for the basic tuition work which comprises much of the current work of the canoe barn.

I would be grateful if these comments could be fed in to whomsoever will be taking the proposals forward.

Comment C

After yesterday's meeting there were some points I would have liked to have made but time was pressing and I'd already had a go! I would be glad if you could pass these comments on.

I'd like to congratulate Andy on his masterly summing up, a truly great job which, I felt, summarised the feelings in the room.

I also feel that the management of the day, and indeed the whole process was terrific and the whole team should be congratulated.

1. Someone commented on the "demography" of the participants. I have to agree that many of us (including me!) were of the older generation. Chatting to others there was a strong belief in the preservation of our heritage for generations to come. This makes me think that our age was irrelevant.

2. Although the "voting" was evidence based and, I am sure, that others, like me, had considered the evidence from the impressive research when considering the options. I regret to say, however, that many of us, from no knowledge base or technical expertise, had doubts about the expert advice that work south of the A259 would not have influence on the flood risk north of the road. While I must accept the expert opinion I, and many others, had a gut feeling that free flowing water south of the bridge must help drainage from higher up stream. This may have influenced the way we voted.

Thank you all once again; I look forward now to joining the "Friends of Cuckmere"!

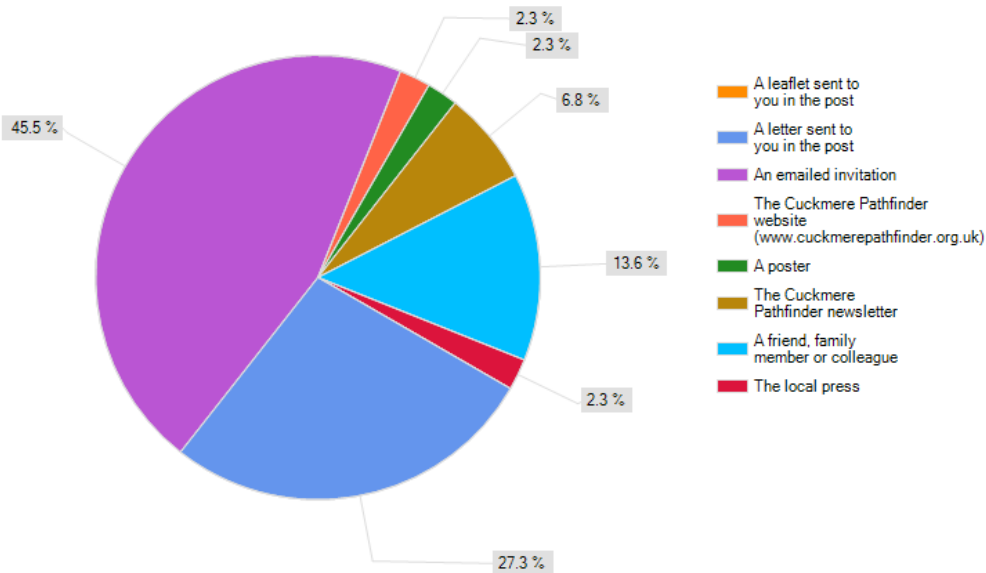
Comment D

Dear Henrietta Hopkins and Colleagues,
I just wish to take this opportunity to thank you and your team for the excellent work you have done, and in providing all those who attended the Cuckmere Pathfinder Project with such comprehensive and well managed information and data. The Cuckmere Estuary project is of course highly complex, and whilst we all found areas to take issue with the criteria and data presented overall was very balanced, as a result I firmly feel that it has helped the entire Community of interested parties to move to a new and potentially conclusive phase, whereby a definitive position may finally be reached. So once again thank you all for your sterling work.

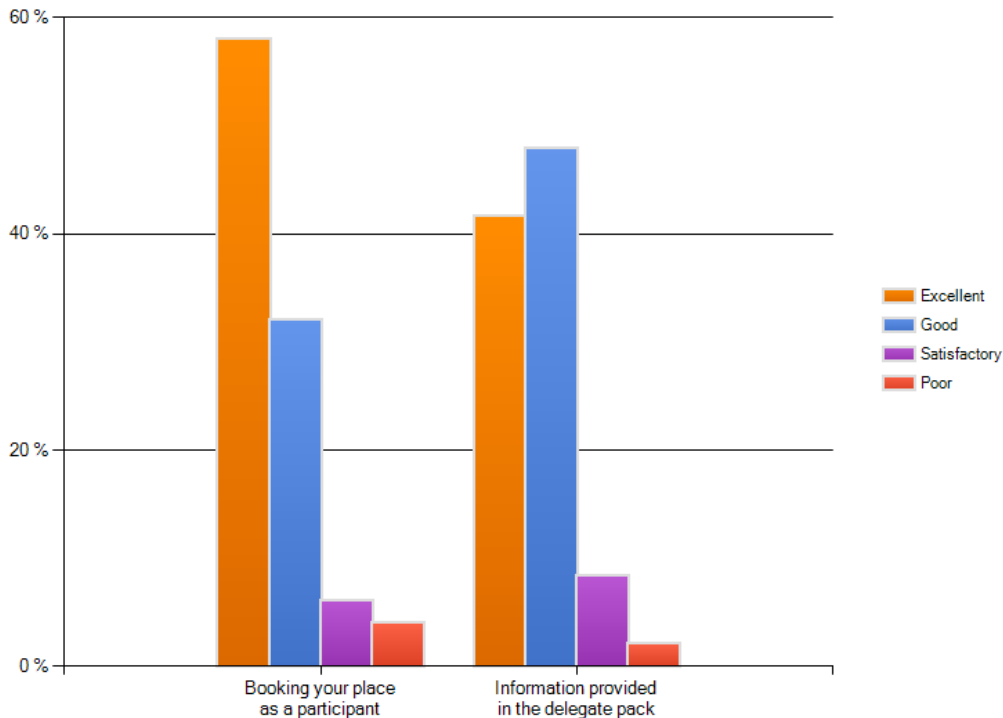
Appendix 6 - Event Summary Evaluation

96% of participants said they had enough opportunity to express their views.

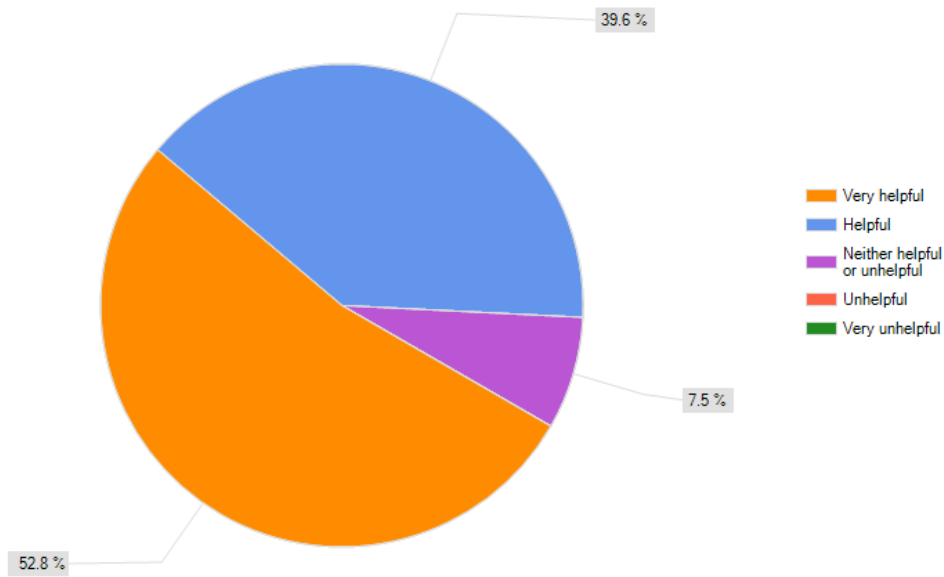
How did you find out about today's event? (please tick one box)



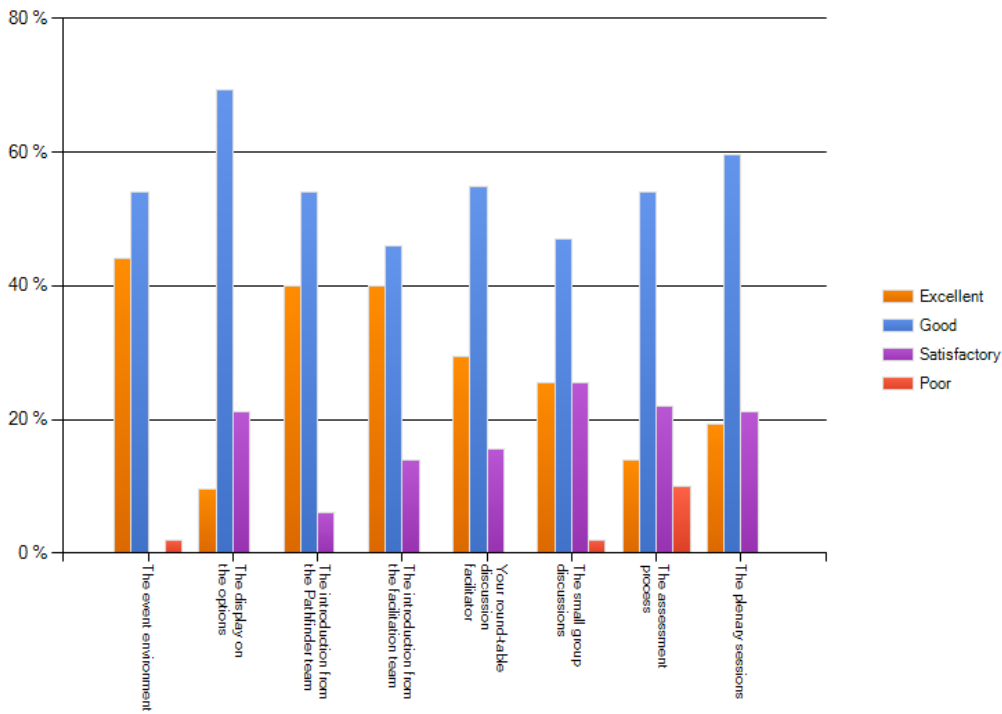
How did you find the following pre-event activity?



How helpful was the evidence commissioned by the Pathfinder Project to you in making your assessments today?



How did you find the following during the event?



Appendix 7: Sample Assessment Sheet

	Sustain the A259	Maintain the current level of access for all in the Estuary	No overall detrimental effect to ecology, ideally an enhancement	Potential for improved education & better interpretation of the Estuary	No increase in flood risk upstream of the A259	Protection of existing properties	Sustain the historic environment	Sustain the high quality of the landscape character	To minimise long-term maintenance requirements	Encourage tourism & local businesses
Baseline										
Option A: Partial breach managed realignment										
Option B: Full breach managed realignment										
Option C: Engineered reactivation of meanders & meandering creeks										
Option D: Maintain the existing defences at their current level										
Option E: Sustain/improve the existing defences - longer term										
Option F: Sustain/improve the existing defences - shorter term										

Scoring

- 0 = does not achieve against the criteria
- 1 = achieves very little against the criteria
- 2 = achieves little against the criteria
- 3 = neither achieves or does not achieve against the criteria (or if you do not know whether the criteria has been met or not)
- 4 = achieves against the criteria
- 5 = achieves at all levels against the criteria

Appendix 3: Email from Tristram Hodgkinson and Dr Jill Rosser received 28 June 2011

I am emailing you on behalf of Jill Rosser and I, on the assumption you still have responsibility for Pathfinder matters after its close, but if this is wrong do please advise. We wish to request some information further to the 7 June meeting, as follows.

1. Steve Ankers wrote a long letter to the Sussex Express on 24 June, which followed prior correspondence from us, from Cuckmere Valley Parish Council, and from Andy Robertson. He refers to "the meeting notes widely circulated last Friday" which appear to contain some important information. We would have liked to see these and would be grateful if you would now send us a copy. Please also copy us in on any further such circulars or notes, for which we have not de-registered.
2. In his letter to Sussex Express on 17 June, Rodney Castleden referred, as we infer the meeting notes also do, to the line graph of option scores by individual criteria. Neither Jill nor I have seen this graph, which was not available for perusal by either of our groups on 7 June. We would be grateful now to receive copies.
3. At the meeting on 7 June, but before the first formal session, we spoke to Andy Robertson on a few points. We requested a list of delegates to the 7 June meeting, with organisation names where known. Andy said he was willing to provide this, and would progress this after the meeting. We would be grateful now to see that list.

We are content to receive the information by return email only, if this is easiest.

You and Andy Robertson will be aware from our letter to Sussex Express, to which Andy Robertson replied, that we do not accept his account, at the end of the plenary session, of what was decided by the meeting. Neither do we accept the account given in ESCC's press release soon after the meeting. As we have not stated this direct to ESCC, please take this email as our notification to this effect.

If the matter is put before the Lead Member for E, T and E, or councillors in committee, in cabinet or otherwise, we would be grateful if you would notify them of our objection. As you are aware, Cuckmere Valley Parish Council also object to Andy Robertson's account, and we trust this will also be drawn to the attention of any relevant councillors.

With our thanks, yours sincerely

Tristram Hodgkinson and Dr Jill Rosser

(Committee and Options Group, Cuckmere Estuary Community Forum, 2009 - 2010)