

Introduction

Over the next three financial years we will be preparing business cases for the four remaining coastal flood defence schemes to reduce flood risk to Romney Marsh. We began talking to local communities about this work in November this year, and will be doing regular newsletter updates throughout the project. This is the first of our newsletters.

Background

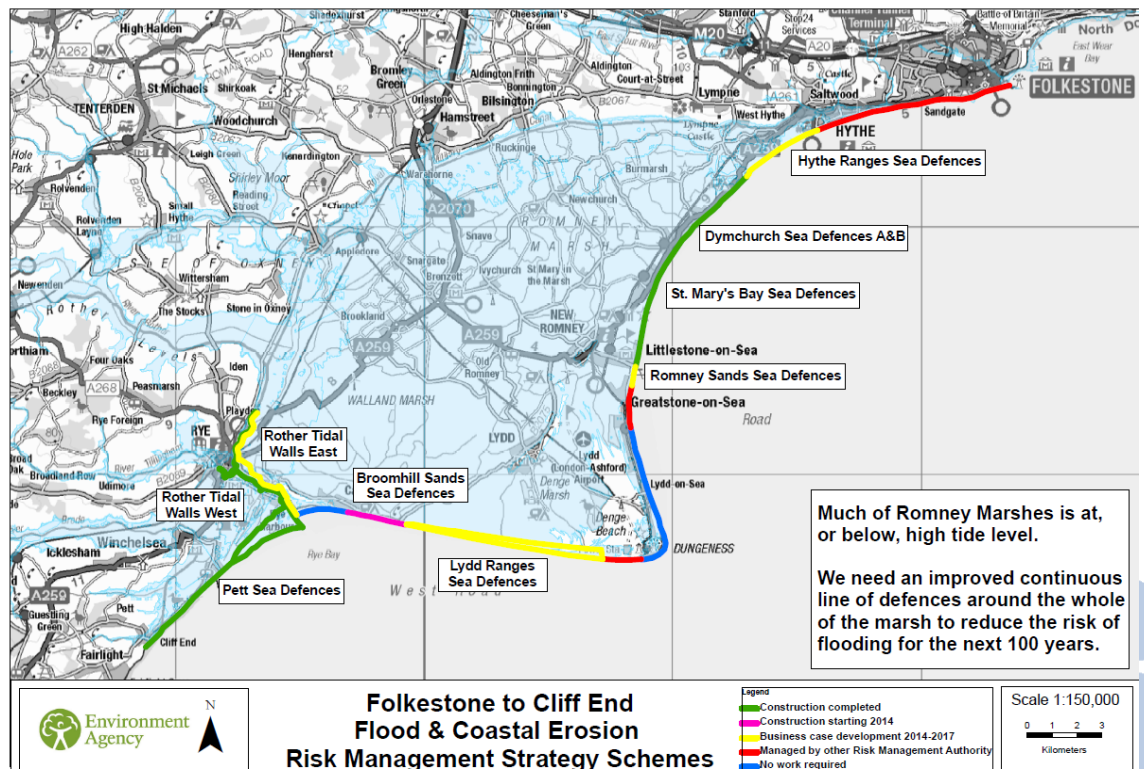
Much of Romney Marsh is below the present day high tide level and 14,500 homes, 700 businesses and nationally important critical infrastructure are at risk of flooding. Climate change and rising sea levels mean the number of people affected by flooding and erosion will increase significantly in the coming years if no new defences are constructed.

In our Folkestone to Cliff End Strategy (FoCES), we set out plans to manage flood and erosion risks along the coastline of Romney Marsh over the next 100 years, taking the predicted impacts of climate change into account. Some of the existing defences are reaching the end of their design life, leaving areas at an increased risk of flooding. The strategy identified how we can improve the existing defences to reduce flood risk to Romney Marsh to a 0.5% chance in any year for a 100 year period.

We have already completed several projects around the marsh at a value of £100 million (coloured green on the map below). These include new defences on the western bank of the tidal River Rother (2006), and a new seawall at Dymchurch (2011). But to ensure the entire marsh is protected from tidal flooding, five further schemes need to be constructed.

We are currently building the £30million Broomhill Sands Coastal Defences (the pink line on the map) between Camber and Jury's Gap. We expect to complete this by winter 2015.

For the four remaining projects (coloured yellow) we are developing business cases to determine the most effective way to construct the new defences.



These projects are located at Lydd Ranges, Hythe Ranges, Romney Sands (Greatstone) and the eastern bank of the tidal River Rother, and their construction is likely to cost around £100million.

Business cases

In order to gain funding to construct the schemes we must demonstrate the reduction in flood risk that they will provide, how the defences could be constructed and how we will make best use of public money. This is set out in the business cases.

We will also investigate the environmental impact of the new schemes, and how we could mitigate it. We will look at the construction materials and where these can be sourced from, and how we can improve the amenity, environment and aesthetics of the existing coastal defences.

Due to the complexity and scale of the projects, this work will take approximately 3 years. Once these are complete, we will then move to the design and construction phase, and seek planning permission for the Lydd Ranges and Rother Tidal Walls East schemes.



Flood bank erosion on the tidal River Rother

Currently, our indicative funding programme shows construction planned for between 2018 and 2022 for all the remaining projects. However, future funding is allocated each year and projects are prioritised nationally based on the reduction in flood risk they provide, and how much external funding they have sourced.

To help ensure we receive funding to complete the schemes, we are working with a variety of organisations to source potential external funding. Many of these negotiations rely on more detailed information which will be produced through the business cases.

How you can get involved

These defences will be part of your community, so it is important to us that local people and groups are involved in their development.

Some elements of the project cannot be influenced, such as Government funding and our legal obligations. However, there are aspects such as construction materials, amenity use and visual appearance that local communities may be able to help shape.



Emergency repairs to defences at Hythe Ranges

We will set up a Community Engagement Group for each of the four remaining projects where local representatives will work with the project team to help the flood risk solution fit with the local community. Over the coming months we will be running 4 drop in sessions to present the proposals for each of the schemes. If you are interested attending one of the drop in sessions or sitting on one of the community groups (or all of them) please email us at romneyschemes@environment-agency.gov.uk to find out more.

Rother Tidal Walls public drop in session

Our first public drop in session will be at the School Creative Centre on New Road, Rye on the 2 March between midday and 8pm to present options for the Rother Tidal Walls East scheme.

Please come along and talk to us about your ideas for the project and give us feedback on the proposals.

Get in touch

If you want any more information on the four remaining projects, have any questions, or would like to be added to our email distribution list, please call us on 03708 506506 or email us at:

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