**District Dispatch**

As I’m sure you’re all too aware, we are seeing more extreme weather events over recent years. This is why it’s so important that we are all able to plan and prepare.

We know that everyone in the district appreciates what a special place Chichester Harbour is, and what an internationally important site it is for migrating birds, and other wildlife. Unfortunately, with rising sea levels and coastal change, the risk to communities and property from tidal flooding and erosion will only increase over time.

This is why, in a recent Cabinet meeting, it was agreed that the council would bid for government money that would enable our coastal engineering service, Coastal Partners, to develop a plan that will help communities in the Chichester Harbour area to prepare for flooding and coastal change. The plan will also help to protect and restore the harbour’s habitats and ecosystems.

Although it’s not one of the council’s statutory duties, managing future coastal flooding and erosion is a key priority for us and we have permissive powers to undertake such works. Key to the success of this, will be working in partnership with all of those who have an interest and involvement in the harbour.

One of the major issues that we need to address is ‘coastal squeeze’. This is where important habitats are literally squeezed up against coastal defences as a result of rising sea levels and means that these habitats are at risk of being lost.

People were disappointed and upset, although perhaps not surprised, when Natural England classed the harbour environment as being in an ‘unfavourable, declining’ condition as a direct result of the pressures within the harbour. They estimate that the harbour has lost over 58% of its saltmarsh habitat since 1946 and continues to lose an average of 2.54 hectares of saltmarsh annually.

In order to reverse this decline and protect these vital habitats for the future, we really need to include them as an integral part of how we manage coastal flood and erosion risk in the future. This is where this plan is key, as it will take account of all these issues and how the different habitats interact with each other and the important features of each different habitat.

A business case will be submitted to the Environment Agency and, if successful, Coastal Partners would lead on preparing an Investment and Adaptation Plan for the harbour up to the year 2100 and beyond. The plan would be developed in partnership with both Chichester District Council and Havant Borough Council; regulators; other partner organisations; landowners; and the affected communities.

I have to stress that there is no guarantee that we will be successful with the bid for funding, but it is important that we are looking ahead and identifying solutions and possible funding opportunities. If we are able to proceed with the plan, our communities and partners will be at the heart of decision making at all stages of the plan.

There are many ways to keep up-to-date on the work of the council. You can view our latest news at: [**www.chichester.gov.uk/latestnews**](http://www.chichester.gov.uk/latestnews); you can read our magazine ‘initiatives’, which is delivered to every household three times a year; follow our social media channels; and you can now download our Chichester District Council app: [**www.chichester.gov.uk/chichesterdcapp**](http://www.chichester.gov.uk/chichesterdcapp). The app provides you with personalised notifications of updates to waste and recycling collections and you can also sign up for weekly reminders on when to put your bins out.

You can also sign up to our monthly email newsletter, initiatives+, for the latest updates straight to your inbox: [**www.chichester.gov.uk/newsalerts**](http://www.chichester.gov.uk/newsalerts). These newsletters include details of local events, as well as schemes and projects that benefit residents and businesses, so it’s definitely worth signing up if you haven’t already.

Best Wishes

Cllr Jonathan Brown

Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Environmental Strategy at Chichester District Council

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