

1. Launch of Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB Management Plan

The new 5 year AONB management plan outlining how partners intend to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the area was launched at the Thorpeness Hotel and Golf club. The Partnership heard presentations from Dr Therese Coffey MP; Julian Roughton (CEO of Suffolk Wildlife Trust); Elspeth Gibson (Public Health Suffolk); Alex Paul (Director of Sales and Marketing, Gough Hotels) on different aspects of interest in the AONB in an event chaired by the Partnership Chairman, Cllr David Wood. The new management plan can be downloaded at: <http://www.suffolkcoastandheaths.org/about-us/aonb-management-plan/>

2. Environment Agency Community Drop in Sessions post Tidal Surge

The Suffolk Estuaries Officer from the Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB team was on hand to support Environment Agency staff in answering questions from members of the public relating to the recent storm surge. The five sessions across the AONB were well attended having been advertised on the AONB's website.

3. AONB grants for 2014/15 Now open for applications

The Sustainable Development Fund, Amenity and Accessibility Fund and Community and Conservation Fund are now all open for applications. Over £60,000 is available in grants. Details at: <http://www.suffolkcoastandheaths.org/grants-and-funding/> Please use your contacts to promote these funds.

4. AONB Review

Following anticipated reductions in funding the Joint Advisory Committee took the decision to restructure the AONB team. A new team will work across both Suffolk County Council hosted AONBs. The selection process for the new team was completed on 6 Feb 2014 and will be operational from 14 April 2014. It will initially be based at Melton Highways Depot (current base for the Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB team).

5. Permitted Development Changes in Protected Landscapes

The Telegraph reported a senior source that Government 'Ministers will shelve plans to make it easier to change the use of agricultural buildings in protected areas'. See <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/earth/hands-off-our-land/10661308/National-parks-to-be-exempt-from-unwanted-barn-conversions.html>

6. Volunteer activity

Volunteers from the Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB have been active on tasks including coppicing and creating bundles for use in Saltmarsh projects. Volunteers have noted the excellent organisation of the tasks.

7. Tourism Conference

The INTERREG 2 Seas Programme Authorities and the cluster partners have organised a tourism conference: "Why Travel Further? How can we encourage the visitors on our doorstep to holiday closer to home?" on Thursday 3rd April 2014 at Ashford International Hotel. Details of free event at: http://www.visitkentresearch.co.uk/Why_Travel_Further_Tourism_Conference/why_travel_further_tourism_conference_registration.htm

8. Suffolk Walking Festival

Bookings for this popular annual event will include several walks on the Suffolk Coast. See details at: <http://suffolkwalkingfestival.co.uk/>

9. News from the National Association for AONBs (NAAONB)

- The NAAONB has negotiated AONB boundaries be put on Google maps: See <https://maps.google.co.uk/maps> and scroll up the Suffolk Coast.
- The Association has secured £10,000 from the Heritage Lottery Fund for a Landscapes Leadership programme to support AONB partnerships to develop relationships with the corporate sector and social enterprises; grow 'friends of' groups and share best practice.
- The Landscapes for Life 2014 conference will take place in Penrith from 8-10 July. The theme is to be 'Sharing, Learning and Inspiring'. Further details soon.

10. Port of Felixstowe Quay Extension

The Port of Felixstowe has received consent from the Marine management Organisation for an extension of its newest container handling facility.

Simon Amstutz, Interim Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB Manager, 28 February 2014