# Alde & Ore Estuary Embankment Improvements

East Suffolk Water Management Board

Autumn 2026

## Assessing the condition of the estuary's flood defences

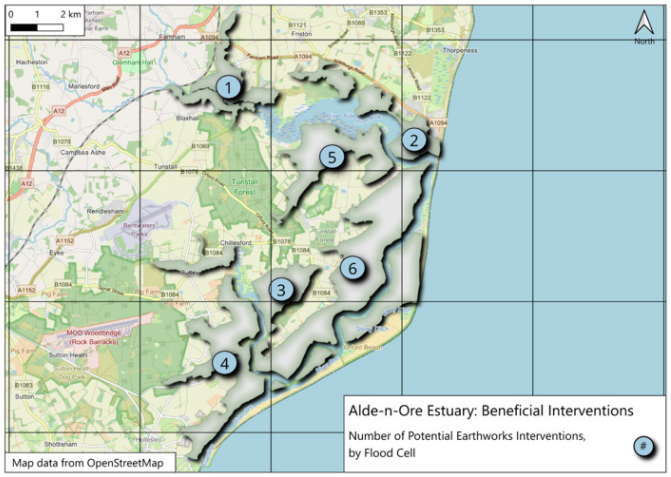
A detailed assessment of all flood defences throughout the Alde and Ore estuary has been completed. It has shown that carefully targeted works in some 20 locations would significantly improve our defences and reduce the likelihood of failure.

The assessment was thorough, including examinations of the condition of the front-facing blockwork, the height and width of embankments and the steepness of their slopes. The output is an accurate profile of the embankments, along their length, at one-metre intervals.

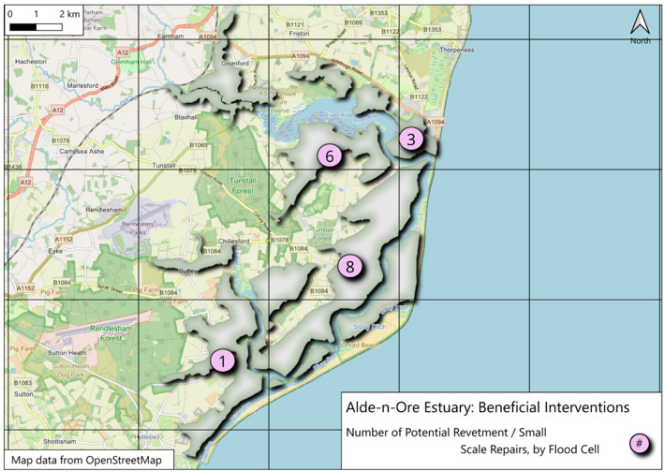
The purpose of the assessment was to give us the information we need to understand which parts of the embankments are most vulnerable to breaching during extreme tidal conditions, and what improvements would help them withstand these conditions.

Using the assessment data has allowed us to develop a computer model that helps us understand how and why flood defences might breach during extreme tides, and which physical characteristics make them more resilient. For example, embankments with sufficient width, suitable slopes and sound front-facing blockwork are generally better able to withstand extreme tidal conditions.

We have used detailed computer simulations to assess how likely different sections of the flood defences are to breach under a range of extreme tidal conditions, taking account of their current condition. In engineering terms, this is known as fragility. Put simply, it describes how likely a section of flood defence is to fail (breach) at a particular water level, based on its condition and physical characteristics. This allows us to identify the sections that are most vulnerable and where work could make the greatest difference.




Map 1: The potential number of Earthwork interventions by Flood Cell




Map 2: The potential number of Revetment and Small Scale Repairs by Flood Cell

## What happens next?

Our currently agreed five-year programme requires funding of £500,000 per year. This is expected to allow us to complete approximately 50% of the highest priority work over the five-year period.

We will continue to seek additional funding and work with partners to secure further investment, with the aim of carrying out as much of the identified work as possible.

Over the coming weeks, we will begin sharing the findings of our assessment with project partners and stakeholders. We will also be making more information available to the public through presentations and a formal launch event for the work programme.



Image (Right) Butley River Embankment, Alde & Ore Estuary, credit WMA

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## Project Timeline 2026 - 2027

**Nov 26**

Presentation of method and approach at the Alde & Ore Community Partnership meeting.

Introduction to the work completed to-date, including specifics relating to the methodology that has been developed and applied. Description of how the work will be delivered across different interventions

An opportunity for the community to ask questions about the approach, and understand what the assessment tells us about current health of the estuary.

**Dec 26 - Apr 27**

Complete planning activity such as securing consents and licences required, design works, access arrangements and enabling works.

Gain Approval from the Environment Agency.

**Feb 27**

Formal launch of the work programme, including detail about the 2027/28 work activities, and the 5 year programme.

An All-Stakeholder event, where members of the community can come to ask officers directly about the current condition of the Estuary, the programme of work, and to provide feedback to the project team.

**Apr 27**

Break-ground on 2027/28 programme

## Developing a plan

We have looked at the homes, businesses, agricultural land, recreation facilities and tourism activities that benefit from the protection provided by the flood defences. Using established industry methods, we have estimated the financial benefits of reducing the risk of breaches and protecting these important local assets. This helps us understand where work would deliver the greatest benefits to local communities.

By bringing all this information together, we have developed a prioritised list of locations for work.

We have also been able to determine the nature of the works required. This could range from repairing damaged front-facing blockwork, for example, to raising sections of embankment that are too low, or increasing the width or improving the slope of embankments. The nature of the works will determine how soon we might be able to start, how long the work will take, which permissions may be needed to proceed, and where we need longer to prepare for works before they can start.

All this information will shape our plan, which will need to be approved by the Environment Agency before we begin. We also need to retain enough flexibility to be responsive to any changes driven by unexpected weather events. We are still on track for the first phase of works to start in Spring 2027.

### Get involved

This information is to let you know about the vital work we are doing in your community. Please contact us if you would like to discuss this in more detail. We will keep you up to date with any further developments.

### Partnership Contacts

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### VISIT OUR PROJECT WEBPAGE

www.wlma.org.uk/projects/alde-ore-estuary-maintenance

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