Gunton Warren Beach

Location

Gunton Warren beach lies between the end of the sea wall at Links Road and Corton. Above the beach are the cliffs and cliff top of Gunton Warren, some housing and a caravan park now open 52 weeks a year.

State of the Beach and Current Protection

Managed Realignment has been the policy adopted for this beach in recent years or as most local people see it managed retreat due to the increased loss of beach since this policy was adopted. The loss of beach material has been most marked this year. Also the Beast from the East in 2018 removed between 4 – 8m during a prolonged spell of strong winds and heavy seas from the NE quadrant. In February the profile of the beach included a much raised sand cliff of nearly 2 metres height and the oil deposits from the Eleni V, oil that washed ashore in May 1978 and buried, became visible.

Groynes were built to protect this section of beach and the sea wall in the late 1960s. Evidence of the success of these groynes was in the stepped nature of the beach with a build-up of sand to the north of the groynes, especially if they had side shuttering. These groynes have not been maintained in the last decade or longer and many to the south of the beach are now nearby useless as they have no side shuttering and are no longer on the beach at high tide, see photo to the right. Indeed, the Gorleston to Lowestoft Coastal Strategy Document describes them thus, “The remains of old redundant timber and steel groynes exist throughout the full length of Gunton Warren” It also states that the current situation in 2016 is of there being a generally stable beach, now

a very questionable statement. It is understood from a previous head of coastal management for WDC, that there was no intent to maintain the groynes, which date about 35 years; only hard defences in way of permanent housing would be maintained.

Where the sea wall was reinforced south of the steps at Corton, the cliff face is now slipping over the concrete wall – nothing to do with the action by the sea, just instability of the ground. Indeed, it is understood that an ex-Corton Parish Councillor is of the opinion that water drainage in Corton was seriously compromised with earlier building development, as the ground water from Corton flows westward and when channels were disrupted, it led to water seeping from the cliff and undermining its stability.

The correlation between the reduction in the effectiveness of the groynes and the increase in loss of beach is marked.

Has the construction of the Outer Harbour at Great Yarmouth adversely affected the deposition of material southward? Interestingly, the Suffolk Growth Board webinar on Water Issues that was attended by Councillor Butler, a couple of weeks ago, highlighted the pumping station at Latimer Dam. The beach there has migrated northward toward Kessingland, contrary to the longshore drift that one would expect from Shingle Street south of Aldeburgh.

It is understood that beach loss in Gunton has exceeded that modelled by the managed realignment policy. How can further beach loss be justified? The proposed policy of No Active Interference to be introduced for this area from 2025 will not reduce the beach loss but hasten it. Why is this beach between the town of Lowestoft and the large village of Corton seen as sacrificial to the sea? Surely a shorter coast line between the two settlements is less of a threat and more manageable that a longer coast caused by erosion inland and the creation of a bay? Surely some soft engineering techniques such as beach stabilisation, beach nourishment could be considered. Even better, for many locals, would be some hard engineering work to reinstate the effectiveness of the groynes.

Further, the erosion of this beach will in the long term endanger the road between Corton and Gunton and the holiday park north of Tramps' Alley. This was envisaged in the 2013 document prepared by Waveney District Council see maps 3 and 4 at this link, https://www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/assets/Planning/Waveney-Local-Plan/Supplementary-Planning-Documents/Development-and-Coastal-Change/05-Draft-Development-and-Coastal-Change-SPD.pdf?fbclid=IwAR16Dlh65EOtEnguSe84mNDGkd4LVfeVrI-F8rroc9DM7y0_ciGl-3iaHhE .

The sea is known to come around obstacles, so if the beach to the north of Links Road is further eroded then the Denes and Links Road will be more likely to flood in the future. The erosion north of Links Road threatens to undermine the end of the sea wall, much as happened at Kiddies Corner on South Beach. This will mean further expenditure to protect land nearer the heart of the town. There is contaminated land here due to the north of the Denes being a household rubbish tip for much of the mid-20th century. What sort of contamination is unknown, as records of deposits were not thorough, but it has been said that waste from the local hospital was deposited there.

Importance

1. **Sewage pipes** were installed under part of this beach when the new sewage treatment works were constructed at Corton. The pipes run across the Links Road car park, under Links Road then across the beach, before going up the cliff near the entrance to the car park at the Dip Farm playing fields. Surely these pipes cannot be threatened by erosion, since the town's sewage travels to and from the Corton treatment plant to the Ness Point pumping station.
2. Gunton Warren is **a local nature reserve** with the heathlands on the top of the cliff being home to both bell heather and ling and the beach with the largest colony of sea holly on the Suffolk coast, sea kale and yellow horned poppy. The cliffs are also a site of special scientific interest.

   This is a quote from the Suffolk Wildlife Trust page about Gunton Warren

   "*As the only remaining section of the coast that retains a full suite of coastal habitats from mobile shingle, to sand dunes and vegetated cliff slope, to lowland heath on the cliff top, Gunton Warren is unique now in Suffolk. The fact that it has survived along one of the most heavily developed and modified parts of the coast at Lowestoft is extraordinary. "*
   It continues further down:
   "The gorse on site supports a wealth of species from breeding populations of linnet and greenfinch to the tiny, jewel-bright green hairstreak butterfly which is best seen in early June. The vegetated shingle found at Gunton Warren is an internationally rare habitat and Suffolk Wildlife Trust volunteers have fenced off some areas to protect them from trampling."
   The area is home to sand burrowing antlions and is important during migration for birds after a long flight over the North Sea to rest and recuperate. Also in spring for birds to wait for the correct wind and weather conditions before migrating back to the continent.
3. Fishermen from Corton **launch their longshore boats** from this beach, as the beach at Corton is no longer suitable for this.
4. Although the area behind the beach is not heavily populated it is important **in linking north Lowestoft to Corton and Hopton**. Indeed, consider how many routes there are between Lowestoft and Yarmouth. I would suggest there are only 3 routes, the A47, the route through Lound to Bradwell and this route along the coast road to Hopton and then along the A47. Population growth is proposed at the Garden Village, which will increase traffic to a certain extent along Corton Road and towards Hopton, that latter stretch being the 1/1A bus route.
5. Also in the absence of a cycle path along the A47 in Suffolk, the coast road, including Corton Road is **important for commuting cyclists** from Yarmouth to Lowestoft and vice versa. It is a travesty that a proper cycle track has never been provided

alongside the dual carriageway. It is a long way around on a twisting country lane from Corton to Hopton, and not without danger to cyclists on a bus route.

6. It also provides **valued public open space and is part of a green corridor** from Corton down to the new park at The Ness.

https://www.coasteast.org.uk/media/1351/gorleston-to-lowestoft-main-strategy_final.pdf

https://www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/assets/Planning/Waveney-Local-Plan/Supplementary-Planning-Documents/Development-and-Coastal-Change/05-Draft-Development-and-Coastal-Change-SPD.pdf?fbclid=IwAR16Dlh65EOtEnguSe84mNDGkd4LVfeVrI-F8rroc9DM7y0_ciGl-3iaHhE