

Annual Report 2013/14

Appendix 3 – Responding to the Tidal Surge

During the course of the extreme storm-driven tidal surge that hit the east coast over 5/6 December 2013 the small, sometimes vulnerable communities dotted along the 45 mile-long coastline of North Norfolk, much of it exposed salt-marsh, sand dune or soft low cliff, were badly hit: 364 properties were evacuated, 152 homes and businesses flooded and coastal assets such as ramps, promenades, toilets and cafes severely damaged. The estimated repair and recovery costs for the council were in a region of £3m.

Our aim was to ensure that everyone who needed help, physical, emotional or financial, received it, from the most appropriate quarter. This demanded close co-operation between the public services, utilities and many volunteers involved, and a shared determination to continue to work until all the work had been done. And, with a tourism dependent economy, we had to be able to tell the world that North Norfolk was ‘open for business’ notwithstanding the gloomy news reports.

Despite sea defences having held well in the main, homes and businesses had been flooded or damaged along 45 miles of vulnerable coastline; roads were impassable or had been washed away; the sea had encroached up to two miles inland at some points. There was not only alternative accommodation to be found for some, there were whole communities to be supported and reassured, and the self-confidence of a whole district to be restored, quickly.

All those in need of accommodation were found it— and all affected households and businesses were visited within days. The council’s housing, coastal, environmental and resilience teams were on hand during the event and in the most affected areas for up to two weeks afterwards, 24 hours a day.



Above: Before and after at Mundesley

Cromer's iconic end of pier show was re-opened within a week of the event despite much of the pier's wooden decking having been stripped away— hugely symbolic in showing that North Norfolk was 'open for business'. In the following weeks and months promenades have been repaired and re-opened, seaside chalets, cafes and kiosks rebuilt, and lost street furniture replaced.

Together with the regional newspaper, the Eastern Daily Press, and other affected coastal councils, NNDC launched the Norfolk and Lowestoft Flood Appeal; over £200,000 has been raised and distributed to those in need. And further assistance has been provided through central government's Flood Support Schemes to help households and businesses build their resilience for the future.

The reputation of the District Council has been significantly heightened as a direct result of its immediate and positive response to the event. Efforts are now underway to formulate a mutually supportive 'buddy' system through the Norfolk Resilience Forum and to build local community resilience and associated capabilities still further, promoting self-reliance and reducing dependence on statutory bodies, in preparation for equally or even more extreme events in the future.



Above: Walcott soon after the storm



Above: Repairs taking place at Walcott