

Collapse of seawall at Sluice No. 2 - South Woodham Ferrers

Background

On Saturday 24 August 2024 a large hole appeared in the seawall adjacent to sluice number 2 at South Woodham Ferrers on the River Crouch, passing underneath a popular public footpath that will form part of the King Charles III Coastal Path. Consequently, it has had to be closed with immediate effect until further notice. At a meeting with the Environment Agency (EA) and the local ranger the EA representative stated that the hole would be repaired but was unable to give a date.

The problem was brought to the attention of the Crouch Valley Coastal Community Team Steering Committee to enable them to facilitate a proper timely repair of the sluice and seawall by the Environment Agency and Essex County Council, which may otherwise be deferred due to budgetary constraints. The CVCCT will monitor progress on your behalf.

Causation of the hole

- It has since been determined that Sluice No 2 is not maintained by the Environment Agency and has not for approximately over a year.
- The sluice has been defective since at least 2018 and the Environment Agency have chosen not to repair the sluice and consequently removed the flap valve from the sluice. It is not clear whether this decision was consulted upon or made public.
- The deterioration of the sluice has caused erosion around the sluice pipe resulting in a cavity undermining the sea wall and ultimately in this large hole appearing.

Problem Statement

- Under normal circumstances, the hole is just above High Water mark of Hullbridge tides on the River Crouch, however, with the Equinox Spring Tides approaching in October. The height of the tides were in danger of overtopping the hole, threatening the integrity of the primary seawall that surrounds South Woodham Ferrers.
- The surrounding land is owned by Essex County Council and leased to Partyman (Marsh Farm Animal Adventures) and South Woodham Ferrers Yacht Club
- The photograph below shows the hole with a person just visible inside, which indicates the depth.
- The footpath can be seen above the hole, it is used by about 150 people per day except on a Saturday Park run when it is used by about 250 people.

Below are photos of the hole itself with a person inside to show the size and the barrier preventing access.

