

MPs are united on Cuckmere issue

by **Laura Sonier**

LIB DEM MP Norman Baker and Tory MP Nigel Waterson have teamed up to save the Cuckmere Estuary.

The Seaford and Eastbourne MPs have again called on the Environment Agency to secure independent validation of its controversial plans to allow the picturesque estuary to flood.

If allowed to happen, this would destroy the famous meanders, which are a well-known and much-loved feature of Sussex.

The call comes after elected members on both Lib Dem Lewes District and Conservative Wealden District councils overruled officer advice and voted instead to give permission to a planning application submitted by concerned locals which would raise the existing defences as an alternative to the Agency's plans, and so protect the famous landscape.

Mr Baker has had a meeting with Rupert Clubb, the Sussex area manager for the Environment Agency.

Mr Baker said, "The Environment Agency's plans are very controversial, and I made it plain to Mr Clubb that they cannot simply be bulldozed through, given the disquiet felt by elected representatives at all levels.

"The Agency's plans need to be



tested in an independent forum, and if they are as scientifically sensible as the Agency maintains, then that process will validate them.

"I have also made it plain to Mr Clubb that if the Agency does not concede an independent assessment process then they can expect a strong public campaign to be launched in protest."

Mr Waterson added, "The existing landscape and wildlife are a unique

aspect of our coastline, attracting 450,000 visitors a year.

"Nature cannot be allowed to take its course by flooding the valley without a full and transparent inquiry."

A recent Parliamentary question from Mr Baker revealed that the Agency has already spent close on £500,000 on its plans to flood the valley without any external approval.

laura.sonier@trbeckett.co.uk