



**MINUTES OF THE ALDE AND ORE ESTUARY PARTNERSHIP
HELD ON THURSDAY 23RD JANUARY 2014 IN ORFORD TOWN
HALL**

PRESENT	Edward Greenwell Guy Heald Alison Andrews Jane Burch David McGinity Brian Johnson Barry Leach Jane Marson Hugh Pilkington Richard Marson Rodney West Amanda Bettinson	(Chairman, Farmer Nominee) (Finance and Business) (A&O Association Nominee) (SCC) (Butley Parish Council Nominee) (Boyton and Bawdsey Parish Council Nominee) (Aldeburgh and Orford Business Associations Nominee) (Landowner Nominee) (Orford and Gedgrave Parish Council Nominee) (Aldeburgh Town Council Nominee) (Ecological Representative for RSPB, NT, SWT) (Partnership Secretary)
ADVISORS	Karen Thomas Isobel Steen Emma Hay Trazar Astley-Reid	(Environment Agency) (Environment Agency) (Natural England) (Suffolk Coast & Heaths Unit)
CONSULTANTS	Andrew Hawes	(Hawes Associates)
GUEST	Peter Riches	Agent for Crown Estates
APOLOGIES	Angie Mason & Lizzie Hammond Philippa Stewart Colin Chamberlain Bill Parker Frances Barnwell	(Householder Representative) (Iken Parish Council Nominee) (Iken Representative in lieu of Philippa Stewart) (SCDC) (Estuary Trust Trustee)

1. **The Chairman** welcomed Peter Riches, Agent to The Crown Estates, who attended to explain how The Crown Estates operated in the Estuary. Also Rodney West was welcomed who has joined the Partnership as the Ecological Representative and will cover RSPB, NT and SWT interests. **Action**

DECLARATION OF INTERESTS - None to declare

2. Peter Riches explained that the Crown Estates owned about 55% of the foreshore and almost all of the seabed around the UK. Although, as far as the Estuary was concerned The Crown Estate owned the river bed on the Alde with their boundary at Kings Marshes, but not on the Ore which was privately owned. (Hugh Pilkington noted that the New Orford Town Trust were in dispute with the Crown Estates over ownership of Stoney Ditch). Crown Estate moorings in the Alde were leased out to the Yacht Club, wildfowling and others. The Crown Estates do not have a policy of promoting moorings as they produce only a minor income stream. Andrew Hawes declared that he was on the Moorings Committee in Aldeburgh.

Crown Estates net profit is submitted to The Treasury and 50% of the marine income is awarded to the Coastal Community Fund from which the Heritage Lottery Fund and

Treasury allocate grants totalling about £3-4M. A smaller sum of about £900K is held by the Marine Stewardship Fund which is allocated half on research and half on direct works on Crown Estate land. Although Crown Estates do not fund coastal and river protection projects they would consider, and be interested in, experimental techniques with managed realignment (i.e. they were involved in the groyne project at Dunwich) and projects that show community benefit i.e. disabled access, footpath improvements and saltmarsh habitat creation.

The Crown Estates boundary is limited to the mean high tide mark. In the present case of Hazelwood Marsh, because of the major breaches on the wall in the December surge tide, the high tide line is, at present, further inland. The Crown Estates boundary could potentially default to this position should the breaches remain as they are. However, this default situation can be overridden in some circumstances. The Crown Estates view on Marine Conservation Zones was sought but although they would be consulted and involved in the process of whether an estuary was selected as a conservation zone, it did not have strong views. With regard to river and coastal management their stewardship is only on land or land relevant to Crown Estates land.

The Chairman thanked Peter Riches for attending the meeting and hoped that the Partnership could apply for a grant in some of the projects that were under consideration, in particular the footpath trial on the Aldeburgh Wall. Peter Riches email is Peter@mrallp.co.uk

3. PREVIOUS MINUTES

Minutes of 28th November 2013 were agreed, with the exception that the minutes of the private session should be altered to reflect that it was not the view of the Estuary Trust that a site for 100 houses **could** be considered, but that there might be less local objection to a few slightly larger sites than to a great many very small ones. The Partnership recognised that the uplift in land value per property was likely to be smaller for sites with several houses than for those with just one valuable property.

MATTERS ARISING

- i) KT agreed to send the crest level survey of Shingle Street to AH KT
- ii) BP reported that the RFCC had agreed the allocation of £50,000 to the AOEP; it was unclear how this was to be paid and exactly how this would be allocated, apart from covering the Consultant Engineer (AH) fees for the upgrade designs for each flood cell. **It was agreed that** BP should clarify the criteria. BP
- iii) Jane Burch (SCC) noted that bids for the capital funding programme need to be thought out so that the percentage of partnership funding can be agreed. The draft estuary plan should be agreed by Easter and the EA costs and contributions can then be put through the calculator. Any work on Hazelwood Marsh (see later) may well have to be tied in with this work. Richard Marson noted that ATC required £6K for a new pump on FC10 which could also be considered.
- iv) Evaluating the trial on the Orford wall was a necessity to feed into the footpath trial under discussion for the Aldeburgh wall. There was a discussion on height standards and although the partnership's standard was to reach wall resilience of 1:200 year event in 2050, the December 2013 surge as a 1:20 year event has shown that the effect will be different in various parts of the estuary.

4. ESTUARY PLAN FOR SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISAL

AA highlighted the issues to be included in the Estuary Plan which would be submitted for the Sustainability Appraisal.

- i) **It was agreed** that the broader the area of engagement was, the better. The Boundary map should include Blaxhall, Wantisden, Farnham and Aldringham cum Thorpeness and should be based on Parish boundaries. The Chairman

undertook to discuss this with the Parish Chairmen's concerned.

EG

- It was questioned whether Knodishall, should be included due to possible use of irrigated water from aquifers from within the boundary. **It was agreed** Richard Pipe should be asked to what extent irrigated water was used in this parish
- It was agreed that the **EA** should advise on the issue of flooding from the sea or river in Aldringham and Thorpeness
- ii) The Strategic aims **were agreed** with the insertion that the EA will '...maintain **and enhance...**' and the constitution is no longer referred to as Interim in the notes.
- iii) Additional items to be included in the Flood Cell data were: oyster beds, if possible homes should be categorised as permanent, holiday homes and rentals. To show the greater value for the estuary economy it was felt important to show agricultural and grassland including economically useless agricultural land. It was felt difficult to put a price on the uniqueness and intangible values of the area but it would be useful to cover the historic landscape in some way and include listed buildings and architectural features. Infrastructure of roads and electricity should be included separately. It was agreed that KT would submit an information request to SCC to identify listed buildings etc.
- iv) The Economic Survey the A&O Association had commissioned would be included when it was received in final form (draft now available)

KT

KT

5. **DECEMBER 2013 SURGE UPDATE AND HAZLEWOOD MARSH**

The Partnership was grateful to Peter Roberts, Environment Engineer, who joined the meeting for this item. With regard to Hazlewood Marsh, he informed the meeting that the EA were discussing with Suffolk Wildlife Trust and Natural England how best to deal with the condition of Hazlewood Marsh, a protected freshwater site, where at present the 100 acre site is totally inundated with tidal water. Although no properties were flooded local landowners and the Golf Club have land that remains under water.

Damage to the wall is catastrophic. There are two main breaches through which water escapes at low tide but fills again at high tide and several areas where the wall has collapsed on the landward side leaving only the revetments on the river side still standing. [Photos on www.aoep.co.uk] The EA are unable to reinstate the wall 'at any cost' and a number of options are being considered which include i) plugging the breaches with 1 tonne sand bags to enable the land to be drained, ii) compensatory habitat elsewhere (at present there is only 1 pair of marsh harriers and some, not abundant, avocets) and Hazlewood Marsh then could be used as intertidal habitat iii) fully reinstate the wall with an increased crest and back slope to enable easy maintenance on a new shorter line iv) consider a longer term position of managed realignment. It was noted that even if the freshwater site was lost there were opportunities for new brackish lagoons and possibly controlled overtopping, which will create a new area for hides, footpaths etc as a public asset, and this could potentially be enhanced by the Crown Estates Communities Fund.

The main concern at present is to establish to what extent the velocity and volume of water in the estuary will change with this additional area under water, and whether there will be significant effects on other flood cells. (The RSPB are also evaluating Havergate which was also breached with 1 ½ Million cubic metres of water and this could be used as flood storage for the estuary as new walls may be built slightly lower allowing overtopping about twice a year.) The EA were preparing to place a bid to fund a model review to enable further understanding of the impacts of these breaches, however the A&O Association were happy to provide funds for a survey from Professor Pye, an independent scientist, who could evaluate the future impacts both for Hazlewood Marsh and the whole estuary.

The EA had scheduled a meeting to discuss the situation with local landowners in early February at which the AOEP would be represented, but no decision would be taken on

the course to take until all research, options and costs, including the provision of additional habitat elsewhere if this was necessary, had been fully assessed.

AA

It was agreed that Alison Andrews should contact Prof. Pye to discuss the parameters of his study.

The Environment Agency had arranged a number of Drop-ins (as detailed in the attached poster) to answer questions and concerns from the community and to encourage parishes to continue work on their Emergency Plans. Please ensure the poster is made available to everyone to encourage local attendance.

PARISHES

6. FOOTPATHS AND FC1 UPDATE

On more general aspects of the surge, Andrew Hawes discussed wall shapes and heights and informed the Partnership that he would be resubmitting designs for FC10 (Aldeburgh wall) to incorporate a more gradual landward slope and effective footpath that forms part of the flood defence that is not washed away when overtopped.

The footpath trial on FC10 at Slaughden where the present footpath is impassable may cost approximately £10,000 and would trial a number of potential surfaces. This would be a useful trial as footpaths are issues nationally. It was important to recognise that the flood defence and rights of way are integral but AH felt that it was important to have the wall height at 3.1 metres and the footpath surface on top, so increase very marginally the height of the wall. Jane Burch agreed that the SCC would contribute to the cost of the trial.

It was agreed that the Orford trial should be assessed and AH and Rights of way should discuss and agree the criteria for materials to trial. **Action AH/AR-ROW/JB-SCC/EA/and a user group representative**

JB

AH was discussing FC1 (Boyton) with the RSPB and landowners and would be in a position to present designs at the end of the month. It might be possible to incorporate a design model with a sill to allow 2hour overtopping if this was required depending on the outcome of the whole estuary study (as above minute 5).

AH

7. ENABLING DEVELOPMENT

The Chairman updated the Partnership on progress with his discussions with landowners and was encouraged that around 30 small scattered plots had so far been offered, with four more landowners to meet. There has been an offer of one cash donation rather than land. Other points were:

- It was agreed that plots should be discussed with SCDC in the first instance to eliminate those that would not fit the criteria before they were then discussed with the parish councils for their involvement.
- It is hoped that the councils may be able to suggest other potential sites that landowners may not have considered.
- The preferred route for donations will be for the donor to acquire planning permission and then donate the land to the Trust.
- Discussions are being held with a local Estate Agent to agree terms on which they will sell the land on behalf of the Trust.

8. ESTUARY TRUST

It was noted that the Estuary Trust was registered with the Charity Commission at the end of December. Procedures for a bank account were being arranged. No Chairman had yet been agreed.

9. THE SALTINGS GROUP

The Brick Dock site is still to be completed and AH was asked to ensure Stevensons were set to complete shortly. To prepare for the next round of saltings projects, bundles of hazel faggots were to be coppiced and bundled from Butley Woods on 23rd February.

AH

This would save considerable funds on transporting from further afield. Parishes were asked to advertise this project as it was hoped to build up a number of local volunteers who were interested in helping to support the Partnership's work.

10. COMMUNICATIONS GROUP

Copy for the next Newsletter would be gathered shortly, the main items would be the Surge, Hazelwood Marsh, Footpaths trial and registration of Estuary Trust.

It was agreed that the annual meeting in May, **agreed for 8th May at 5pm** in Thorpeness Country Club, would take the form of a workshop to involve local businesses, parishes, landowners, and householders etc., to discuss the Estuary Plan by flood cell. This is necessary to show community involvement when the plan is submitted for the Sustainability Appraisal. Although the meeting would continue to be open to the whole community, in addition one partnership member will be responsible for inviting representatives to cover all interests in their allocated flood cell.

It was agreed to postpone the autumn conference in Snape Maltings until spring 2015 when the enabling development plans, sustainability appraisal and the Trust were further forward.

11. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Tuesday 25th March at 2pm in Orford Town Hall, Tuesday 22nd May and Thursday 10th July at 2pm in Orford Town Hall.

AJB/2.2.14