

South Devon Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

**South Devon AONB Estuaries
Steering Group Meeting**

to be held at

10am on Wednesday 8th May 2019
at
Follaton House, Repton Room

Agenda & Papers



AONB Estuaries Steering Group Membership

Dart Harbour Authority

Mark Cooper

James Dodd – apols recvd

Devon County Council

Kirstie Pritchard

Cllr Jonathan Hawkins – apols recvd

Duchy of Cornwall

Tom Stratton

Environment Agency (Catchment Based Approach)

Rob Price – apols recvd

Natural England

Ruth Crundwell - TBC

National Trust

Richard Snow

Salcombe Harbour Authority

Cameron Sims-Stirling

Hugh Marriage – apols recvd

South Hams District Council

Rob Sekula

Elected rep TBD

AONB Unit staff attending

AONB Estuaries Officer

Nigel Mortimer

AONB Manager

Roger English

AONB Office Manager

Vanessa Gray

Agenda

- | | | |
|--------|---|------------|
| Item 1 | Introductions & apologies for absence | |
| Item 2 | Notes of the last meeting 6 th November 2018 and any matters arising | Page 4 |
| Item 3 | Estuaries Officer's current activity report, and priorities for the next period – presentation & verbal report | Page 10 |
| Item 4 | Estuaries and Catchment priorities for the next 12months and longer term? | Discussion |
| Item 5 | Financial report | Page 12 |
| Item 6 | “Round the table” session - any topical issues to be raised by members of the Steering Group - National & Regional Coastal & Estuary Catchment Issues | |
| Item 7 | Date and venue for Spring 2020 meeting | |

Agenda item 2

MINUTES OF THE SOUTH DEVON AONB ESTUARIES STEERING GROUP MEETING

Held at Follaton House, on Tuesday 6th November 2018

1. INTRODUCTIONS AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Those present were:

Mark Cooper	MC	Dart Harbour Authority
James Dodd	JD	Dart Harbour Board
Kirstie Pritchard	KP	Devon County Council
Tom Stratton	TS	Duchy of Cornwall
Rob Price	RP	Environment Agency
Christine Singfield	CS	Natural England
Phil Goodhead	PG	Salcombe Harbour Board
Nigel Mortimer	NM	AONB Estuaries Officer
Roger English	RE	AONB Manager
Vanessa Gray		AONB Office Manager

Apologies for absence were received from:

Cllr. Jonathan Hawkins	Devon County Council
Richard Snow	National Trust
Cameron Sims-Stirling	Salcombe Harbour Authority
Rob Sekula	South Hams District Council
Cllr. Elizabeth Huntley	South Hams District Council

2. NOTES OF THE LAST MEETING (23rd May 2018) AND ANY MATTERS ARISING

- 2.1 Action 1 (NM) – The AONB Estuaries Officer informed Members that SHDC has not yet signed the concordat but discussions with MMO are ongoing.
- 2.2 Action 4 (MC) – Results of Sharpham's Bioblitz on the Dart are not yet available.
- 2.3 Action 6 (CS) – The Duchy of Cornwall had not been consulted on NE Coastal Access Plans however this is now in hand. Consultation with all parties is taking place until spring, with a view to implementation commencing summer 2019.
- 2.4 Action 8 (NM) – Advanced moorings (nee 'Eco Moorings') on the Dart may be challenging for a number of reasons with currently available designs. The DHNA Harbour Master is looking to work with Plymouth University on this.

3. ESTUARY OFFICER'S CURRENT ACTIVITY REPORT AND PRIORITIES FOR THE NEXT PERIOD

- 3.1 The AONB Estuaries Officer gave a report on activity that has taken place since the spring meeting. A full list was provided within the meeting papers. In discussion:
- i. The inaugural Dart Estuary Forum was held on Monday 18th June. The next meeting, scheduled to take place on Tuesday 13th November, will focus on water quality matters. An invitation to attend has been extended to South West Water.
 - ii. In response to elected members request, a leaflet on plastic pollution was produced and distributed. The DHNA Harbour Master offered to fund a second print run.
Post meeting note: a second print run has been funded from the DCC locality fund.
 - iii. On planning matters, the AONB Manager informed Members that as well as the AONB Estuary Officer's professional view on the potential effect on the aquatic, shoreline and seabed environment, the AONB response also incorporates the wider AONB perspective including wider landscape and special qualities. Landscape Visual Impact Assessments (LVIA), Ecological Impact Assessments and Heritage Impact Assessments are some of the tools used in formulating the AONB response. The Local Authority determine whether a development is major however this is governed by the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), which was revised in July 2018.
 - iv. AONB consultation has improved, with more cases coming direct from planning officers, with respect to estuaries and generally. The DHNA Harbour Master reported that DHNA are not always consulted despite being a statutory consultee on navigation matters. Tom Stratton proposed a meeting between the Duchy of Cornwall, Dart Harbour Navigation Authority and South Hams District Council to discuss planning consultation.
Post meeting note: a meeting has been arranged for 18th December at Follaton House.
 - v. **Action 1 (RE)** – The AONB Manager will provide example planning cases, with SHDC and MMO interaction, that highlight a need for closer working relationships.
 - vi. Although concordat has been paused for a while, SHDC wish to move this forward. The MMO do not have local marine licensing people so our contact in Plymouth is Lisa Southwood.
 - vii. **Action 2 (NM)** – arrange a workshop with Natural England and the Environment Agency to determine an approach to encourage consistency across the board.
 - viii. The AONB Manager provided an update to Members on the emerging Neighbourhood Plans. The AONB Planning Guidance document has been used by many Neighbourhood Plan groups when forming their NP. Newton & Noss already have a well-developed NP with some useful policies in relation to the Yealm. The Salcombe NP group are robustly looking at the water environment as part of their plan. The Dart is felt to be a more complex matter.
 - ix. The Estuaries Officer updated Members on a biosecurity project, funding secured by Natural England, to survey and trial the management of Pacific oysters. The Yealm Estuary is particularly affected, with strong footwear now required to simply cross the beach. There are some challenges, for example surveying vertical walls, and may invite assistance from a kayak group.
 - x. The Estuaries Officer provided an update on the 'holiday footprints' project. Resolving all issues arising from waste from holiday properties in Salcombe and Dartmouth would be a large task given the current arrangements and also the method of collecting from commercial properties which does not currently allow for separation of food and recyclable waste. Holiday-makers are instead encouraged to consider food, fats, oils and grease, disposing correctly and not down the sink. Essentially people are being encouraged to bring their current principals on holiday with them.
 - xi. AONB Management Plan review
 - o The AONB Management Plan review has been an opportunity to incorporate aspects of the existing Estuaries Management Plan into the same document. The AONB Estuaries Management Plan and Planning Guidance documents will be annexes to the main Plan. The Planning Guidance document will be updated with important water quality related information and following the revised NPPF and any significant cases that clarify the new paragraphs.

- The AONB Management Plan is typically in two parts, strategy and delivery plan. A key driver from each objective in the Management Plan will be used to form for the delivery plan for that year. Partners will be given opportunities to incorporate projects and initiatives into the delivery plan and the AONB Project Officer will be in touch shortly.
- xii. Rob Price informed Members that there is online guidance to determine if a license is required for a septic tank: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/discharges-to-surface-water-and-groundwater-environmental-permits#check-the-guidance-for-your-activity>. There is also guidance on whether a property is required to have a connection to the public sewer, based on distance and number of properties in the development: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/general-binding-rules-small-sewage-discharge-to-the-ground#additional-rules-for-new-discharges-from-treatment-systems-installed-and-in-use-on-or-after-1-january-2015>.
- xiii. Exeter University had funding to study red tides on Salcombe Kingsbridge estuary in 2018. It was an unusual year with no bloom reported however the data is still expected to be useful. The University will be invited to the next Forum meeting to report on their results and findings.
Action 3 (NM) – Invite Exeter University to the Spring meeting of the SKECF.
- xiv. There have been some concerns with ‘free swimming’ on the Avon Estuary. The DHNA Harbour Master mentioned the RNL provide some guidance on swimmer visibility, which the DHNA will look to incorporate onto their website in due course.
- xv. Marine Conservation Zones
 - A decision on the proposed new MCZs is expected soon.
 - Defra have one year to determine these after date of consultation.
- xvi. National Marine Park
 - Initially proposed by Luke Pollard MP and backed by Plymouth City Council
 - Currently centred on Plymouth
 - Stakeholder meetings are advocating for an area much larger than Plymouth Sound and surrounding area.
Action 4 (CS) – Check if there is a way to feedback views on the MCZ consultation process to Defra.
 - Defra’s consultation on designated landscapes is principally focussed on National Parks and AONBs’. However, this also includes possible extensions of designated areas, so it is likely they will be interested in the National Marine Park proposal.
Action 5 (All) – Submit a response to the Protected Landscapes Review call for evidence which closes on 18th December 2018 <https://consult.defra.gov.uk/land-use/landscapes-review-call-for-evidence/>.
- xvii. The AONB Manager went through the priorities for the next six months as outlined in the agenda papers. In discussion
 - The AONB host the Avon Valley Countryside Facilitation Group whose objectives include improving water quality, reducing soil loss and improving habitats and species.
 - East Portlemouth has very fragmented sea grass meadows which may be caused by pressure from boat movements, anchoring and landings. It is proposed to look at designating areas to manage activities as part of a proposed seagrass improvement project.
 - Christine Singfield informed Members that the MMO have a project to look at anchoring behaviour in the South and South West. They are looking for stakeholder involvement in Plymouth and Salcombe with an estimated completion by the end of this financial year.
 - Pacific Oysters will be an ongoing project. Evidence is being gathered as part of this project for NE and Defra. Currently there is no change to the approach taken with proposed new shell fisheries farming Pacific Oysters.


4. ESTUARIES AND CATCHMENT PRIORITIES FOR THE NEXT 12 MONTHS AND LONGER TERM

- 4.1 The DHNA Harbour Master reported that the 'Hole-in-the-wall' on the Dart, originally built by 'Napoleonic PoWs' has long had a breach. Although this is not believed to be widening, there is a perception that water is 'getting further' into the marsh. They will now investigate water flow in the area of the breach to establish if this is an issue. The AONB Manager mentioned there is LiDAR data, from around 12 years ago, that could be used as a baseline to measure further studies against.
Action 6 (MC) – If required, request a copy of LiDAR data from the AONB Manager.
- 4.2 The AONB Manager informed Members that Jamie Davies, Senior Project Manager with Plymouth Marine Laboratory, is joining Partnership Committee as the Community Representative for Coast and Marine. He develops work programmes and packages and has an area of expertise in remote sensing (drones etc.).
- 4.3 Rob Price informed Members that a Catchment Partnership action plan is being formed and that the Environment Agency will submit a spending review submission. In 9-12 months the estuary forums will be invited and given the opportunity to identify projects and seek funding to carry forward CaBA projects.

5. FINANCIAL REPORT AND BUDGET

- 5.1 The AONB Manager went through the financial figures and reported the budget to be on track.
- 5.2 The Pacific Oyster project is revenue funded only, with a management fee to support the Estuary Officer's time. This, along with inclusion of other additional income streams, has eased the pressure to incorporate a retail price index (RPI) trigger on contributions.
- i. For future note, DHNA have just completed their budget for their next financial year, so the latest date to provide figures is by October.
 - ii. Salcombe Harbour Authority set their budgets in August so would ideally like figures in Spring.
- Action 7 (RE)** – The AONB Manager will draw up a Memorandum of Agreement, incorporating a season's notice to invoke the RPI trigger, for the next financial year.

6. "ROUND THE TABLE" UPDATES

- 6.1 The DHNA Harbour Master reported the following:
- i. A Kingswear Parish Council pontoon split, allowing beads to spill out.
 - ii. The blue plastic sheath on the Higher Ferry cable was degrading and going into the river. A manufacturer redesign means this now uses an environmentally friendly grease instead and the cable has now been replaced.
 - iii. DHNA are supporting a sea bass project to catch and tag fish. Hydrophones will be used to collect data on the fish positions. Direct contact with the hydrophones is required to transfer the data which should ideally be collected in one hit.
Action 8 (MC) – To contact NM if he wishes to take up Nigel's offer to assist with the data capture by driving the boat.
- 6.2 Kirstie Pritchard updated Members with the following:
- i. Devon Maritime Forum
 - a. DMF has been through a period of dormancy due to staff illness, but now has resource in place to cover coordination of the forum – Acting Coordinator, Lou Hoskin

 - b. Regular newsletters will now be circulated (DMF October newsletter) and the annual conference is planned for 5 or 6 February at Saunton Sands Hotel – the theme will be 'the importance of the marine environment for wider benefit.'
Action 9 (All) – Let KP know if you wish to be added to DMF circulation.

- c. DMF currently working on a project for the MMO to identify hard to reach stakeholders, not currently engaging with the Marine Planning process. Aim is to identify who they are, what the barriers to engagement are, and how to overcome these barriers.

Action 10 (All) – If you have ideas, please send to KP

ii. Landscape

- a. The updated landscape character types for South Hams and West Devon (including estuaries) are now reflected on the county map:
<http://map.devon.gov.uk/dccviewer/?bm=OSGreyscale&layers=Landscapes;10&activeTab=Landscapes&extent=232900;7987;323785;84055>. Plymouth will be added shortly.
- b. The Seascape Assessments for the North East, North West, South East and South West marine plan areas were published by the MMO in late October:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/seascape-assessments-for-north-east-north-west-south-east-south-west-marine-plan-areas-mmo1134>.

iii. Historic Environment

- a. The National Mapping Programme (NMP - mapping archaeological sites from aerial photos and LiDAR) has previously completed mapping for the South Devon coast (a precursor to the South Devon Coast RCZA) and an earlier project looked at the Tamar Valley. NMP is a national project funded by Historic England. The NMP team in Devon are from AC Archaeology and are embedded with the DCC Historic Environment Team. The team are currently undertaking 'Moor to Shore Phase 1', which covers the area seaward of Dartmoor from the Exe Estuary to the middle Dart and is due to be completed in March 2019. We are currently putting together a bid for 'Moor to Shore Phase 2' which will look at the area seaward of the Moor from the Plymouth boundary to the Salcombe/Kingsbridge estuary. The Dart to Kingsbridge would be a potential Phase 3. NMP results go straight onto the HER.
- b. The Lottery funded CITiZAN project (Coastal and Intertidal Zone Archaeological Network <https://citizan.org.uk/>), which is run by the Museum of London Archaeology unit (MOLA), is looking to bid for a Second phase of the project. The basic idea is to involve local communities/groups in recording heritage that is at risk from coastal erosion. The DCC HE Team is awaiting reports/results from Phase 1 and is encouraging CITiZAN 2 (should it take place) to make greater use of the expertise and local knowledge available through partnerships such as we have in Devon.

6.3 Rob Price provided Members with these updates

- i. The Environment Agency are looking at how to achieve Defra's 25 year environment plan. As part of this process the EA have defined their Devon and Cornwall Vision, identified 4 key categories or noble causes and the environmental outcomes they aspire to achieve in these categories by 2025/26. This has enabled the EA to identify and estimate investment required which has been submitted to Defra as part of the spending review. Further work on this will progressed via the River Basin Management Planning Cycle.
- ii. The Government have confirmed the Water Framework Directive will be supported until 2026/27 and possibly beyond. The EA have set up a project with Natural England and West Country Rivers Trust to look at how interventions can be delivered to improve the WFD status on the Gara. This is a pilot to off-set a mapping error that impacts availability of Countryside Stewardship grants.
- iii. EA have set up a workstream that co-ordinates the regulatory effort of the environment management team with the advice and support available from Natural England and Catchment Partner Farm advisors. Frogmore will be targeted as the "epicentre" that aims to encourage best practise roadmaps to compliance which will contribute to improving WFD status of the water environment.
- iv. Shell fisheries are listed as protected areas in the Water Framework Directive. The EA are working with Bangor University and the Food Standards Agency to look at the feasibility of developing a modelling and forecasting tool to help predict when e-bacti may be mobilised and impact the shell fishery. This can enable appropriate action to be taken by stakeholders contributing to the e-bacti loading.

- v. The EA are currently appraising a design of a technical fish pass that, subject to landowner agreement, would open up over 10km of water on the Yealm catchment.

6.4 Christine Singfield informed Members that

- i. NE are liaising with landowners and other stakeholders asking for their views on the coastal access scheme new coast path.
- ii. RPA became responsible for community development schemes
- iii. Salcombe seagrass survey took place in September to look at the extent of the beds and change over time. EA report is expected by the end of the financial year and will help determine whether active management is required.
- iv. There will be a meeting arranged to discuss eco moorings and their issues.
- v. There have been reports of seal disturbance at the Mewstone. There has been a voluntary agreement in place for some time.

Action 11 (NM) – If found, provide an example of the voluntary agreement to CS.

7. DATES AND VENUES FOR 2019 MEETINGS

Wednesday 8 May 2019, Follaton House

Tuesday 5 November 2019, Follaton House

Agenda item 3

South Devon AONB Estuaries Partnership Period Report November 2018 to April 2019

The purpose of this brief report is to give an indication of the work carried out by the Estuaries Officer over this period – further details are available on request.

Headliners:

- * Presentation on 'Coastal Planning' given to SHDC Planning Officers
- * Two local Pacific oyster groups established and assisting with local population surveys

Detail:

[Significant crossover of work and activities is inherent to the Estuaries Officer's work and the activity headings are not categorical]

1. Coastal forum meetings (*full secretariat role)
 - i. Salcombe-Kingsbridge Estuary Conservation Forum* spring meeting
 - ii. Avon Estuary Forum* spring meeting
 - iii. Dart Estuary Forum* autumn & spring meetings
 - iv. Yealm Estuary Management Group* autumn & spring meeting
 - v. Dart Harbour Communities Group
 - vi. Wembury Marine Conservation Area Advisory Group AGM – update presentation
2. Catchment Based Approach activities;
 - i. South Devon Catchments Partnership hosting, host working group meetings and wider membership meetings
 - ii. Raising of wider water quality issues within all associated AONB works
3. Beach clean events supported
4. Awareness raising articles prepared;
 - i. Salcombe & Yealm Harbour Guide 2019 pages updated and produced
 - ii. Holiday Footprints 'Water Quality Matters' pages within Salcombe & Kingsbridge [visitor information] Guides 2019
 - iii. Local newspaper 'Nature Notes' articles through the month of March – including illustrated articles generated on Pacific oysters surveys and issues
 - iv. Assistance with Gara Rock circular walk leaflet
 - v. Fisheries byelaws information updated on main slipway signs
5. Formal education events;
 - i. Salcombe Primary School – school's environment group beach clean
 - ii. University of Plymouth – local estuaries conservation management workshop to 2nd year students
6. Community events;
 - i. Wembury BioBlitz 2019 - preparatory meetings
 - ii. AONB Bat evening event
 - iii. Rockpooling egg hunt
7. Pacific oyster Community Science project;
 - i. Yealm Pacific Oyster Group – surveys, oyster collecting and cull
 - ii. Marine non-native species identification course – Yealm estuary
 - iii. Wembury Pacific Oyster Group – training event and survey
 - iv. Project progress meeting
 - v. Salcombe-Kingsbridge Pacific Oyster Group – training event, survey and cull
 - vi. Natural England SW marine officers field visit – Yealm estuary
8. Talks and presentations;
 - i. SHDC Planners – Coastal development management – CEMPs, SuDS & tidal heights
 - ii. BBC local news – marine plastics interview – not-broadcast
 - iii. Salcombe Harbour Board – Water Quality joint presentation with EA
9. Research projects assisted;
 - i. Plymouth Marine Laboratory – Harmful Algal Blooms consultation
 - ii. Plymouth Marine Laboratory – Drone survey (baseline) of Sharpham saltmarshes, Dart estuary

10. Planning & MMO license consultations;
 - i. Salcombe-Kingsbridge – East Portlemouth boathouse (pre-app & app), W.Charleton Erosion defences, Underdeck steps, Winslade Farm slurry lagoon;
 - ii. Dart – Dolphin shipyard, Dartmouth public slipway (advisory), Fish Hoek & Waterside, Dartside Quay, Noss Marina;
 - iii. Start Bay seaweed farm;
 - iv. Mount Batten coastal defences;
11. Marine Planning;
 - i. MMO Marine Plans wksp – SHDC staff
 - ii. SHDC coastal development management meeting
 - iii. SW Marine Plans policies wksp and consultation
 - iv. Plymouth Sound National Marine Park meetings, consultation & white paper launch
 - v. MMO non-licensable activities wksp
12. Conferences & workshops attended;
 - i. National Marine Protected Areas Management Officers webinars
 - ii. Devon Maritime Forum conference
 - iii. South West Marine Ecosystems conference
13. Internal meetings;
 - i. AONB team meetings
 - ii. Salcombe seagrass project planning
 - iii. Dart Harbour modified waters mitigation discussion meetings
 - iv. EA local waterbodies liaison meeting
 - v. South Devon AONB management plan review
14. External meetings
 - i. Dart Harbour - Annual Meeting
 - ii. Holiday footprints – Kingsbridge Information Centre
 - iii. Sea Dream Education meeting

Priorities for next 6 months

15. Marine Biosecurity - coordination of new estuary 'citizen community groups - surveying and monitoring INNS populations, and trial Pacific oyster control management
16. Production of a South Devon AONB 'Construction Environmental Management Plan Guide' with enhanced information for coastal developments
17. Development of Salcombe seagrass conservation project
18. Technical responses to planning and development applications and enquiries as required
19. Technical responses to South West Marine Plan consultations
20. Continued work within AONB to explore alternative income generation
21. AONB Estuaries Management Plan – publishing of final document

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Estuaries Steering Group notes the current activity and progress report.

Agenda Item 5

Financial Report

Agenda item 5 has been redacted in full as this item deals with staffing and finance matters.