

South Devon Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

South Devon AONB Estuaries Steering Group Meeting

to be held at

10am on Tuesday 5th November 2019
at
Follaton House, Repton Room

Agenda & Papers



AONB Estuaries Steering Group Membership

Dart Harbour Authority	Mark Cooper James Dodd
Devon County Council	Kirstie Pritchard Cllr Jonathan Hawkins
Duchy of Cornwall	Tom Stratton – Apologies given
Environment Agency (Catchment Based Approach)	Rob Price
Natural England	TBA
National Trust	Richard Snow
Salcombe Harbour Authority	Cameron Sims-Stirling Hugh Marriage
South Hams District Council	Rob Sekula Elected rep TBA
<u>AONB Unit staff attending</u>	
AONB Estuaries Officer	Nigel Mortimer
AONB Manager	Roger English
AONB Office Manager	Vanessa Gray

Agenda

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| Item 1 | Introductions & apologies for absence | |
| Item 2 | Notes of the last meeting 8 th May 2019 and any matters arising | Page 4 |
| Item 3 | Estuaries Officer's current activity report, and priorities for the next period – presentation & verbal report | Page 9 |
| 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 WEDNESDAY 8th MAY 2019

1. INTRODUCTIONS AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Those present were:

Capt. Mark Cooper	MC	Dart Harbour Authority
Kirstie Pritchard	KP	Devon County Council
Ruth Crundwell	RC	Natural England
Nigel Mortimer	NM	AONB Estuaries Officer
Roger English	RE	AONB Manager
Vanessa Gray		AONB Office Manager

Apologies for absence were received from:

James Dodd	Dart Harbour Board
Cllr. Jonathan Hawkins	Devon County Council
Tom Stratton	Duchy of Cornwall
Rob Price	Environment Agency
Richard Snow	National Trust
Cameron Sims-Stirling	Salcombe Harbour Authority
Hugh Marriage	Salcombe Harbour Authority
Rob Sekula	South Hams District Council

The following changes were noted

Christine Singfield is now on a one year career break. Natural England will be represented in future meetings by Ruth Porter.

The AONB Manager added that due to recent elections there would be no elected member representing South Hams District Council.

2. NOTES OF THE LAST MEETING (6th NOVEMBER 2018) AND ANY MATTERS ARISING

2.01 Action 1 (RE) – The AONB Manager attended a meeting on 18th December 2018 with development planners from South Hams District Council. Part of the meeting discussed improvements that could be made in planning cases with MMO interaction. It is thought the first response containing revised wording will be for a development on the Dart estuary where a pontoon application is anticipated.

Action 1 (RC): Ruth Crundwell offered to add wording to NE responses on terrestrial and marine planning where it goes into the intertidal area.

2.02 Action 2 (NM) – To arrange a workshop with NE and the EA to determine an approach to encourage consistency when responding to marine planning applications. The Estuaries Officer informed members that there had been no success in making arrangements to date, however this will be useful so continued efforts will be made.

2.03 Action 3 (NM) – Exeter University presented at the spring SKEF meeting. It is anticipated they will also present at the autumn meeting with a focus on how red tides on Salcombe Kingsbridge estuary could be managed going forward.

2.04 Action 4 (CS) – There was some concern that there is no formal method of feedback to Defra allowing points to be addressed for the next round MCZ consultations. It was felt that concerns raised from the 2012 consultation had not been addressed and therefore were still present in the current round. RC informed members the challenge is the MCZ consultation process is run by Defra with NE advising on the designation.

Action 2 (RC): Find out whether any progress made by Christine Singfield.

2.05 Action 5 (all): The AONB Manger informed members that DCC and South Devon AONB each submitted responses to the Protected Landscapes Review call for evidence. A panel member, Lord Cameron of Dillington visited a number of AONBs' including South Devon. Particular interest was shown in the Estuaries Management Plan and the Heritage Coast. Lord Cameron praised the Estuary Steering Group for its accountability and sharing. Report conclusion is expected in September.

- i. The Dart Harbour Master informed members that DHNA are refreshing their strategic plan. A high percentage of returned stakeholder survey forms were concerned with the environment. MC would like the current level of alignment with the South Devon AONB Estuaries Management Plan continue. The AONB Manager informed members the project to update the South Devon AONB Management Plan included a consultation across a wide community and would hope that there would be correlation with the DHNA stakeholder responses.

2.06 Action 6 (MC) – To request LiDAR data if required.

- i. The AONB Manager informed members that LiDAR data is available online.

Action 3 (RE): Distribute link -

<https://environment.data.gov.uk/searchresults;query=lidar;page=1;pagesize=20;orderby=Relevancy?searchText=lidar>

- ii. Simon Roper, AMBIOS, may have historical data that could be made available to DHNA.
- iii. South Devon College may have funding to strengthen relationships between Devon/Cornwall and France.
- iv. Paul Singer, who now sends students to France to further their knowledge in the yacht industry, has knowledge of how to find possible funding for activities.
- v. Interreg funding opportunities are now past so the potential for other opportunities needs to be investigated.

Action 4 (MC): Contact Simon Roper to explore what historical data is held and pass contact details for Paul Singer to RE.

2.07 Action 7 (RE) – Draw up a Memorandum of Agreement that incorporates a clause on required notice to invoke an RPI increase in funding. The AONB Manager informed members that the RPI increase will not be triggered for the current years funding, detail in agenda item 5.

2.08 Action 8 (MC) – To contact the AONB Estuaries Officer is assistance needed when supporting University sea bass project. The Dart Harbour Master informed members that DHNA had not been involved however he understands the tagging exercise was successful.

2.09 Action 9 & 10 (KP) – Devon Maritime Forum

MC attended the DMF conference held in February.

2.10 Action 11 (NM) – Voluntary agreement regarding the Dart estuary Mew Stone and seal disturbance.

Voluntary agreement not traced however a Dart Estuary Environmental Management (DEEM) leaflet, compiled with assistance from Stephen Westcott, has been found.

Action 5 (NM): Distribute a copy of DEEM's seal watching leaflet.

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 autumn meeting. A full list was provided within the meeting papers. In discussion:

- i. South Devon AONB Estuaries funding partners are
 - o Dart Harbour Navigation Authority

- Salcombe Harbour Authority
- Devon County Council
- South Hams District Council
- National Trust
- Defra
- Duchy of Cornwall
- Westcountry Rivers Trust for catchment management projects (hosting)
- ii. Although not leading on marine plastic and litter, the South Devon AONB will be involved, however marine waste issues are much wider plastic pollution alone.
- iii. Estuaries Officer involvement with Parish Councils
 - Encourage Parish Councils to monitor their areas, reporting changes or concerns.
 - Communicate to all Parish Councils around the estuaries to look at facilities linked to developments; encourage sustainable drainage schemes and report any run-off during the construction process.
- iv. Harbour Guides
 - There are two articles in the Yealm harbour guide including one on seagrass. These pages in the are now published free of charge.
 - The information provided for this years Salcombe Harbour guide includes information on jellyfish.
- v. The Estuaries Management Plan is now a formal annex to the revised South Devon AONB Management Plan, launch event taking place on 24th May.
- vi. Seaweed farm application
 - The AONB has been formally consulted on this application and the Estuaries Officer has responded.
 - Although not formally in the DHNA area, the Dart Harbour Authority responded to this application with suggestions on how the area could be lit.
 - The AONB Manager informed members that the LVIA for this application was lacking in some detail. The MMO will look at what was required on this so they can apply the knowledge elsewhere.
- vii. Pacific oyster project
 - There is interest in Pacific oyster removal, in particular on the Yealm which has the greater issue. The focus is on the foreshore in front of the harbour office.
 - Encouraging Pacific oyster surveys around the coast, generating a heat map of dots to easily see where the greater populations are found.
 - Looking into whether removed oysters can be grown on, also to see if the shell can be used as a fertiliser additive.
 - There are a high number of volunteers on the Salcombe Kingsbridge estuary where new seagrass areas have been found during survey work.
 - MC reported there are Pacific oysters by the double steps in Dartmouth that can be easily viewed and photographed from the pontoon at low tide.
 - **Action 6 (??):** Take regular photographs to monitor spread.
 - A question was raised how schools could be actively engaged to look out for invasive species such as the Chinese mitten crab. The AONB has a 'crabbing with kindness' poster. As well as educating on how to do this responsibly, this also shows how to sex a crab as well as encouraging people to report anything unusual.
 - **Action 7 (NM):** Send 'crabbing with kindness' notices to MC.
 - A workshop was held for the Pacific oyster project volunteers enabling them to identify some of the other invasive non-native species. Volunteers are encouraged to get to know their area and report change.

- viii. Sharpham salt marsh retaining wall
The first of two free drone flights, offered by Plymouth Marine Laboratory, took place a couple of months prior to the meeting. A second flight will survey for changes, looking specifically at accretion and erosion within the creeks.
- ix. Plymouth Sound National Marine Park
 - o Stage 1 is close to Plymouth Sound. Stage 2 would cover a much larger area.
 - o Glover review said this could be a model.
 - o The overlap with other designations complicates things. There is a need for existing management bodies to be part of the structure, including catchments.
 - o A further consultation is expected soon.
- x. BioBlitz 2019 will take place at Wembury on 27-28 September.
Action 8 (NM): Find out if a Sharpham BioBlitz is planned for this year.
- xi. Marine Conservation Zone outcomes are due to be announced in June
- xii. The AONB Manager went through the priorities for the next six months as outlined in the agenda papers.
In discussion
 - o Look at ways of conserving seagrass off East Portlemouth. Potential for swimming/snorkelling areas that also serve to protect seagrass from boats.
 - o Map recently discovered areas of seagrass.
 - o Continue to reach out for Pacific Oyster project volunteers for the Dart.
 - o Construct an environment management plan document that includes guidance on acceptable mitigation measures.

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

- 4.1 The AONB has funding to trial ideas for habitat enhancement on steel piled walls. The proposed structure at Noss on Dart has changed and can no longer be used for this project. Other ideas include rock armour mitigation. MC suggested that DHNA may also be able to provide funding for the right project
- 4.2 The Dart Harbour Master indicated where a breach in the Sharpham salt marsh retaining wall could result in the river cutting through for a more direct flow. The
Action 9 (NM): Look into possible prevention/mitigation in advance of the second drone flight.
Action 10 (MC): Arrange a meeting between the AONB Estuaries Officer and those that recall bow creek

5. FINANCIAL REPORT AND BUDGET

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

6. "ROUND THE TABLE" UPDATES

- 6.1 The DHNA Harbour Master reported the following:
 - i. Coastal Communities Fund bid to upgrade the standard fishing pontoons failed as DHNA were unable to demonstrate increase in employment. The bid was to support the fishing industry:
 - a. install replacement pontoons having a higher freeboard able to accommodate ships up to 120 tonnes.
 - b. improve safety by installing lighting and CCTV
- 6.2 Kirstie Pritchard updated Members with the following:
 - i. Historic Environment
 - a. CITiZAN (Coastal & inter-tidal archaeology project, Museum of London Archaeology) – First Local Network meeting on Thursday 30th May in Exeter.
 - b. TIDE (European Atlantic regions coastal heritage & tourism project – Armada, Napoleonic, U-Boat warfare, trans-Atlantic migrations) – Start up meeting 14th May in Exeter.

- c. AI&MP Moor to Shore Phase 1 (mapping of archaeology from aerial photos) – Haldon Ridge to Dart valley completed. Draft report with Historic England for comment. Summary of project findings is on the DCC Historic Environment Team web pages.
- ii. Climate change predictions.
 - a. The 2018 climate projections for the UK were published in December. This is a 10-year update on previous predictions. A comparison of the new projections with the old for the South West show the only real difference to cause some concern is that sea level rise projections for the second half of the 21st century are between 1.5 and 2 times bigger than previously projected.

Action 12 (KP): Circulate climate projection report.

6.3 Ruth Crundwell informed members

- i. Christine Singfield is on a career break, due to return March 2020. All are requested to use the Devon, Cornwall and Isles of Scilly email address.
Action 13 (RC): Circulate link to Devon, Cornwall and Isles of Scilly email address
- ii. Ruth Porter is covering some of Christine’s work areas, including representation on the Estuary Steering Group.
- iii. Seagrass survey is complete, draft report is being finalised.
- iv. Defra are expected to announce the designation of the third tranche of Marine Conservation Zones (MCZs) in June.
- v. Coastal access documents for the Yealm, Erme and Avon are being released. The premise is to use existing paths and ferries and the South West Coast Path when ferries are not available. The AONB Manager added that the ferries on the Yealm and Avon have very limited hours of operation, something that was being looked into by Natural England (Jane).
Action 14 (RC): Circulate coastal access documents and liaise with Jane regarding ferry operations on the Yealm and Avon.
- vi. Kingswear to Lyme Regis report is with Defra and the Secretary of State.

7. DATES AND VENUES FOR 2019 MEETINGS

Next meeting:

- Tuesday 5 November 2019 at 10am, Follaton House

2020 Meeting dates:

- Wednesday 13 May 2020 at 10am, Follaton House
- November meeting dates to be confirmed

Agenda item 3

South Devon AONB Estuaries Partnership Period Report May to October 2019

The purpose of this brief report is to give an indication of the work carried out by the Estuaries Officer over this period in support of priorities identified in the South Devon Estuaries Management Plan – further details are available on request.

Headliners:

- ✳ At least two new seagrass meadows thought to have been found – one confirmed within Salcombe and one still to be confirmed within the mouth of the Erme estuary.
- ✳ Good progress on surveying the shores of the Salcombe-Kingsbridge and Erme estuaries for Pacific oyster populations.

Detail:

[Main Estuaries Management Plan Policy/Action - 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 [Est63];

- i. Salcombe-Kingsbridge Estuary Conservation Forum* - autumn meeting
 - ii. Avon Estuary Forum* - autumn meeting
 - Photographic competition sub-group meetings
 - iii. Dart Estuary Forum*
 - iv. Yealm Estuary Management Group* - spring & autumn meetings
 - v. Dart Harbour Communities Group
- (*full secretariat role – venue bookings, meeting papers, key-persons liaisons, etc.)

2. Catchment Based Approach activities [Est16];

- i. Stoke Gabriel exploratory community SuDS project meeting
- ii. South Devon Catchments Partnership hosting, host working group meetings and wider membership meetings
- iii. Continued raising of wider water quality issues within all associated AONB works [Est58]

3. Beach clean events supported and organised local Great British Beach Clean events [Aware/P6]

4. Awareness raising articles prepared [Aware/P1];

- i. On-the-Dart 'Estuaries Management' article

5. Formal education events [Aware/P4];

- i. Grove Primary School – whole school sustainable waste event
- ii. Kingsbridge Community College - Marine Champions group meeting
- iii. University of Plymouth – lecture on Estuaries Conservation Management to Applied Conservation Biology course students

6. Community events [Est54];

- i. Wembury BioBlitz 2019 event
- ii. AONB Bat evening event
- iii. AONB Management Plan 2019-2025 launch
- iv. AONB Thurlestone Beach event

7. Pacific oyster Community Science project [Est27];

- i. Salcombe-Kingsbridge Pacific Oyster Group – several extensive surveys* and culls – concerning discovery of Pacific oysters displacing dwarf seagrass & requiring careful removal
 - ii. Erme estuary – survey* and cull of the western shoreline
 - iii. Dart estuary – survey with MBA staff and establishing a new group
- (* surveys have led to important discoveries of new and potentially significant seagrass meadows – initial investigative surveys have been carried out but require follow up on suitable tides & weather)

8. Talks and presentations [Aware/P1];

- i. Ashburton ProBus group – Dart estuary environment
- ii. South Hams Society – Salcombe-Kingsbridge estuary water quality discussions
- iii. DCC Environment Team – Estuaries Conservation in South Devon
- iv. Water resilience Summit – Estuaries Conservation Management
- v. AONB Walk & Talk wellbeing guided walk Kingsbridge

9. Research projects assisted [Est68];

- i. Various universities & institutes – CarbonQuest carbon storage in intertidal habitats research project – assisting with local saltmarsh sediment sampling
- ii. Exeter University – Harmful Algal Blooms workshop
- iii. Plymouth University – exploratory meeting to discuss a potential rock armour coastal defences ‘bioscaping’ guidance project

10. Planning & MMO license consultations [Plan/P1];

- i. Salcombe-Kingsbridge – East Portlemouth boathouse, W.Charleton Erosion defences, Underdeck steps, Winslade Farm slurry lagoon, Gerston Point householder;
- ii. Dart – Dolphin shipyard, Dartmouth public slipway (advisory);
- iii. Avon – Cockleridge householder;

11. Conferences, workshops and key meetings;

- i. AONB team meetings and AONB Annual Community Forum
- ii. Salcombe seagrass project planning
- iii. Salcombe Harbour - Annual site meeting
- iv. Devon meeting of Estuary/Coastal officers
- v. Advanced moorings – TECF
- vi. Batson tidal reedbed site management meeting

12. Other;

- i. Some progress on production of an AONB Construction Environmental Management Plan guide
- ii. Minor progress on an East Portlemouth seagrass conservation project - new East Portlemouth seagrass meadow interpretation panel in production
- iii. Invitation to produce a Salcombe TIC Guide page
- iv. South Devon AONB Estuaries Management Plan given a glossy front cover

Priorities for next 6 months

13. EA's Water Challenges and Choices Consultation & MMO's draft South West Marine Plans – work to engage our local communities within these important consultations
14. Marine Biosecurity – continued coordination of estuary ‘citizen community groups - surveying and monitoring INNS populations, and trial Pacific oyster control management
15. Development of Salcombe seagrass conservation project
16. Technical responses to planning and development applications and enquiries as required
17. Technical response to South West Marine Plans and South West River Basin ‘Challenges and Choices’ consultations
18. Continued work within AONB to explore alternative income generation

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Estuaries Steering Group:

- i. Notes the current activity and progress report.
- ii. Gives its views on Estuaries Management Plan priorities to be actively pursued over the next month period.

Agenda Item 5

Financial Report

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