



EXE ESTUARY MANAGEMENT PARTNERSHIP

MANAGEMENT GROUP MINUTES

Sargent Room, Coaver Club, County Hall, Exeter

10am Tuesday 22nd January 2013

Present:

Cllr Bernard Hughes, DCC (BH) (Chair)	Gavin Bloomfield, RSPB (GB)
Andrew Burns, NE (AB)	Cllr Andrew Cadbury, SPC (AC)
Cllr Pat Graham, ETC (PG)	Cllr Michael Howe, EDDC (MH)
Jane Lavick, LiCCo/EA (JL)	Mary Rush, TDC (MR)
Richard Tugwell, EA (RT)	Aidan Winder, DCC (AW)
John Goss-Custard (JG-C) (left after item 2)	Midge Kelly, Exe Estuary Officer (MK)

1. Welcome and Apologies for absence:

Apologies were noted from: Neil Downes (Forum Chair); Lynn Trout (Forum Vice Chair); Cllr Ted Hockin, (TDC)

2. Disturbance of Exe Estuary overwintering birds by recreational activities – presentation by John Goss-Custard

Prior to this item, GB registered his disapproval that a private consultant had been invited to present a critique of a scientific report - commissioned by the Partnership - in the absence of the authors of that report.

The Chairman said that J G-C was invited to present his views as an information item, not for the Management Group to make decisions or propose actions based on those views. It was agreed that Footprint Ecology be invited to the next meeting to comment on issues raised in J G-C's critique.

ACTION: MK to invite Footprint Ecology, subject to agreement on costs.

J G-C presented Powerpoint slides to the meeting, which were based on the critique circulated in advance of the meeting. Whilst the presentation is too large to circulate by email, MK can provide paper copies to any Management Group partner on request.

MR pointed out that local authorities are required, legally, to adopt the precautionary principle in relation to matters affecting the wildlife that underpins the designation of the estuary as a European Special Protection Area (SPA). If there is a reasonable chance that if, in this case, additional housing development, will result in disturbance that will adversely affect the size or longer term viability of the bird populations, local authorities can **only** grant planning permission if the disturbance can be offset – in this case through measures funded through the 350 [pounds] per dwelling developer contribution.

AB pointed out that the developer contributions (CIL) scheme has the advantage for developers that development can proceed without the need for every developer to prove that their proposed development will not cause disturbance – a difficult, lengthy and costly exercise.

MH reported that Natural England are reviewing the process by which disturbance is assessed on a range of sites (incl. estuaries), in order to derive a recommended approach for future use. The

questions raised by J G-C in relation to Footprint Ecology's methodology will form part of this ongoing review. Similarly, the development management process within each local authority will also allow challenge through questions raised by developers and others at appeals and input from planning inspectors.

3. Budget update 2012/13

The budget monitoring statements for the EEMP and LiCCo project were presented by AW and noted by Partners.

4. Exe Estuary Officer update report - MK

There were no questions on this item, but the Chairman pointed out that he had also attended the stakeholder meeting for Lower Halsdon Farm (Exmouth) mentioned in the report and had misgivings about one of the items included in the Management Plan for the farm. This being the proposed cycle / footpath along the northern boundary of the farm, connecting the A376 with the existing Exe Estuary Trail. He expressed his concern that this would add to the traffic on the A376.

5. LiCCo Update – JL

JL presented, and tabled a summary of activity underway. This will be circulated with these minutes for the benefit of absent Partners. Good progress was noted by the Group.

ACTION: MK to circulate LiCCo briefing with these minutes.

JL explained that the formal consultation period on the Flooding and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Strategy for the Exe Estuary was launched on 21st January and will run until 4th March. A wide variety of means are available for people to express their views, including a programme of drop in sessions at venues around the estuary, and meetings to which the Environment Agency / LiCCo officers have been invited (incl. the EEMP Forum). Any organisation that would like to receive a visit to discuss the Strategy should just get in touch with JL.

JL also reported that she has met with David Weatherly, a former educational adviser on environmental sustainability with DCC, and is looking likely that through LiCCo we will be able to work with him to develop some Exe Estuary-specific school packs on coastal change, estuaries and climate change – aimed at Key Stages 2 and 3.

JL informed Partners that the LiCCo-supported film about the Exe Estuary is available from this week. She will circulate further details to MK and the film will be shown at the EEMP Winter Forum event on 12th February.

The new LiCCo website (www.licco.eu) is now live and contains lots of information about the LiCCo project and coastal change, covering all the French and UK sites that are involved in the project.

6. Potential ingredients for Action Plan 2013/14

AW introduced this item, explaining that it would be useful to have a general discussion at this stage for Partners to contribute their thoughts and ideas for action points of action areas for inclusion in the Exe Estuary Officer's action plan for next year. If Partners agreed, ideas expressed at the meeting, along with those transmitted to MK soon after, will be noted and included in a draft action plan. That draft will be circulated to Partners for comment, and a revised version brought to the next Management Group meeting on 27th March. Partners agreed this approach.

ACTION: All Partners to send ideas for action plan to MK before 15th February

ACTION: MK to send draft action plan (V1) to Partners before 25th February

ACTION: All Partners to comment on draft action plan before 5th March

ACTION: MK to circulate revised draft (V2) to Partners along with other papers for Management Group Meeting on 27 March.

MK presented a few Powerpoint slides to set out the context for actions, referring to the contribution of the action plan to the Scheme of Management for the SPA. MK listed the core activities of the EEMP (newsletter, clean ups, Winter Forum, Summer event etc) with the approximate number of officer days taken for their delivery, and indicated the approximate number of days available for other activities. MK also listed actions that have already been included in the 'indicative' (but not exhaustive) action plan for 2013/14 that is included in the Interim Management Plan. These include (slightly paraphrased):

- Estuary wide agreement on management of abandoned boats & hulks
- Resubmission of Heritage Trail bid to HLF
- Environmental Health audit
- Review of zonation scheme for Exe activities
- [Begin consultation on community priorities to inform Management Plan Review]
- Work with cruise providers to develop cruise commentary (around LiCCo messages etc)
- Develop Exe-specific web based info
- Investigate options for new technology to add value to Exe visits (e.g. I phone app)
- Contribute to LiCCo promotional strategy where appropriate

In the discussion that followed, the following ideas were suggested:

(a) Summer event:

MK suggested to Partners that the summer festival of 2012 didn't contribute much to awareness of the Exe Estuary or the EEMP, and that there are other similar festivals that provide entertainment with stalls. Both ND and LT, the Forum Chair and Vice Chair respectively have indicated their agreement with the sentiment, and ND has indicated (at the Working Group meeting on 16 January 2013) his preference for a 6-monthly Forum event.

Suggestions from Partners:

Possible venues – Dawlish Lawn, Topsham Quay or somewhere in vicinity of the canal. Involving Exeter City Council could encourage greater integration into the EEMP.

Event could involve partner organisations more in providing guided walks, boat trips, talks, family fun.

ACTION: MK to discuss with ND and LT.

(b) Inclusion in the Action Plan of activities that relate to statutory functions connected with the SPA could help with future financial footing of the EEMP.

(c) Location signs at regular intervals along Estuary Trail providing grid reference to help emergency services to locate and access casualties and incidents on the trail. BH suggested Roger North at Parsons Brinckerhoff may be able to advise on funding for this.

(d) Zonation scheme revision good

(e) Other measures associated with mitigating disturbance – esp. *current* levels

7. Arrangements for Winter Forum on 12th February

MK ran through the programme.

8. Date of next meeting:

10am on Wednesday 27th March – Large Meeting Room, 9th Floor, Renslade House (c/o Natural England), Exeter. Please note there is no parking at this venue, other than for the disabled.

ACTION: MK to circulate location plan for Renslade House with papers for next meeting.

