



EXE ESTUARY MANAGEMENT PARTNERSHIP

MANAGEMENT GROUP MINUTES

Sargent Room, Coaver Club, County Hall, Exeter

2pm Friday 28 March 2014

Present:

Cllr Bernard Hughes, DCC (BH) (Chair)
Cllr Pat Graham, ETC (PG);
Cllr Margaret Baldwin, ECC (MB);
Aidan Winder, DCC (AW);
Lynn Trout, Forum Vice Chair (LT);
Midge Kelly, Exe Estuary Officer (MK)

Cllr Ted Hockin, TDC (TH) (Vice Chair)
Cllr Andrew Cadbury, SPC (AC)
Paula Salge, EEMP (PS);
Pete Ball, EA (PB).
Cllr Michael Howe, EDDC (MH);

1. Welcome and Apologies for absence:

Apologies were noted from: Tom Manning, NE (TM); Jane Lavick, LiCCo/EA; Graeme Smith, TDC (GS); Neil Downes, Forum Chair.

2. Budget Update

AW introduced the budget monitoring statement showing the financial position at the end of February 2014. He pointed out that the LiCCo project and its associated funding has been of major benefit for the Partnership, but that the project is currently scheduled to end on 30th September. AW is actively pursuing an extension of the project until the end of March 2015, along with the National Trust and at least one French partner. Although this will not bring any more funding, it will give us more time to deliver existing and additional outputs.

BH asked Partners if they were aware of any particular budgetary obstacles to making their usual contribution to the Partnership. EDDC and TDC both indicated that finances are tight, and that it may not be possible to maintain support at the current level for far into the future.

MK reported that Natural England have confirmed that their contribution for 2014/15 will be £4500 to 31st December 2014, but they are unable to guarantee any further contribution beyond that date. This compares with their 2013/14 contribution of £7658.

3. Exe Estuary Officer report – MK

MK elaborated briefly on the list of activities and achievements circulated in advance of the meeting. There were no queries.

4. Forum Feedback

MK tabled the Forum Feedback report from the Exe Estuary Forum that took place on 26th February 2014. She also presented some trends in the forum feedback responses following a comparison between Winter Forum events in 2011, 2012, 2013 and 2014. In particular, the comparison indicated that:

- The Council Chamber seems marginally more popular than the Coaver Club conference room
- People seem to feel more engaged if offered smaller group discussions
- We need to remind people what the EEMP does (...for them)
- We need to ensure that we choose relevant themes – or rather, involve the estuary community in choosing those themes

MK pointed out that Ed Hughes in his soapbox session had suggested asking people to list their 3 main concerns / worries about the estuary and plan the forum agenda around the most-mentioned concerns. Speakers could be invited from relevant bodies to present to the Forum how the concerns could be addressed. In her review of the Partnership's database, which will involve contacting all stakeholders, Paula will take the opportunity to asking people about their interests and concerns.

BH said that he thought the February Forum had gone very well and that the feel of the event had been rather less confrontational than had been known. He agreed that we need to make sure that the themes are relevant. He also highlighted the need to keep people informed of issues such as the Disturbance Study through updates – these could be provided by the Forum (or potentially through Exe Press).

5. LiCCo update – MK presented briefing note from JL

- (a) Education – Response has been phenomenal, with huge interest shown in piloting and using the resources. Over 100 teachers are registered to attend the training days in the Exe Estuary alone, both primary and secondary, with only very limited spaces left. The schools resources packs are being designed and will be available at the end of May (primary) and end of June (secondary) as printed packs, on DVDs and online. Contact me for further info or see <http://www.licco.eu/uncategorized/update-on-licco-schools-resources/>
- (b) Dawlish Warren & Exmouth Beach Management scheme – the latest position is as in Exe Press 35. Emergency works are being progressed as a result of the damage suffered to the Warren by winter storms. The plan is for further local stakeholder events and public exhibitions in Dawlish and Exmouth w/c 23rd June.
- (c) Heritage and past coastal change exhibitions – these will take place alongside the beach management events at Dawlish and Exmouth. A separate LiCCo talk and free public exhibition is also being held at Lympstone Village Hall on 21st May, working with the Lympstone History society. A further LiCCo exhibition is also being held at Starcross Church from 24th to 26th May as part of the Starcross Past and present event, which will focus on the archive materials found and the 19th Century paintings of the Exe Estuary discovered by Exmouth Historical Society.
- (d) Starcross Householder Guide – we are working with the Parish Council to produce and distribute a guide to every household, covering flood risk, the village emergency response plan, how to prepare for flooding and how to become more resilient. High Viz jackets have already been provided to the community volunteer flood wardens in starcross and we are also providing additional equipment for this new group, including gloves and torches.

6. Paula's Projects – Update

Paula told Partners that this was her 104th day with the Partnership. She went on to provide an update on each of the 4 pieces of work that she is engaged on:

Completion of the State of the Exe report: She estimated that this is 70% completed. Most of the factual information has been collated, and most of the remaining work relates to updating maps and graphs, which is time-consuming. She then needs to liaise with designers and printers to get the document produced.

Review of Recreation Management: This too is around 70% completed. The work is based around each recreational activity and where it happens on the estuary. It is looking at current controls and potential measures for further mitigating disturbance of wildlife and reducing conflict with other estuary users – especially in the light of the increased population around the estuary anticipated for the coming years.

Mooring review: Still waiting for data from LEMA re the number of moorings available and number in use. Currently mapping the location of moorings for each moorings association.

Review / update of EEMP stakeholder database: 800 emails will be sent out on Monday. As well as asking people to confirm their contact details, people will also be asked to list their interests and 3 main concerns about the estuary.

MB reported that Topsham Moorings Owners' Association (Sally Penn) have been in touch with her, unhappy that they haven't received a response to an emailed response for clarification about the questionnaire, which was sent to both MK and PS. Neither PS nor MK remember receiving the email, but PS will make contact with Sally to discuss her concerns.

ACTION: PS to contact Sally Penn of Topsham Mooring Owners' Association re the association's concerns about the questionnaire.

LT pointed out that when the future funding of enforcement measures on the estuary are discussed, it is often assumed that a levy on boat owners and users is the solution. However, she pointed out that boat users are only a small proportion of the people who enjoy recreation on the estuary, and that such a levy would be inequitable. She suggested that a fairer approach might be to fund the estuary in the way similar to the way that public parks are supported – through a proportion of the Council Tax.

7. Partnership Staffing Issues - AW

AW reported that Working Group are keen that PS's time with the Partnership be extended slightly to enable her to finish properly the very valuable work that she is doing and to tie up loose ends. Partners supported this, and AW agreed to pursue an appropriate extension after discussion with PS and other officers within DCC. He acknowledged that there are currently pressures on recruitment and that rules and regulations are in place, but was optimistic that a pragmatic solution could be agreed.

ACTION: AW to seek an extension to PS's contract with Temp Solutions to enable her to complete the work

AW reported that MK has handed in her notice because of health issues – particularly associated with anxiety - related to the role. Her last day will be Friday 13th June.

In the next few weeks, AW will be speaking with DCC managers and EEMP Partners to see what budget is available, but hopes to recruit a new Exe Estuary Officer to fill the role. It may be necessary to appoint on a fixed term rather than open ended contract in view of current recruitment rules.

ACTION: AW to explore and act on options for recruit a replacement Exe Estuary Officer

8. Bird Fund Projects – MK

MK reminded Partners that Stuart Line Cruises have been collecting donations from customers of their winter bird watching cruises for a bird-related project and have recently passed approx. £2700 to the EEMP (which is shown in the budget monitoring statements as a separate budget line). The original plan was for the EEMP to put the funds towards the cost of a bird hide at Mudbank Lane, which was being worked up by Exmouth Tenants and Residents' Association

(ETRA), but after lengthy negotiations with the site owner, Network Rail, the project was reluctantly dropped.

MK included an article in the December issue of Exe Press inviting project suggestions, and 5 suggestions were received – 4 from the RSPB and 1 from the ETRA. She met with the two proponents of all the projects and drew up short summaries of each, which she tabled at the meeting.

These summaries have been discussed at the Working Group meeting on 13th March and emailed to Stuart Line to ask them for their preferences. Both the Working Group and Stuart Line indicated a preference for the bird viewing screen near Mudbank Lane, Exmouth. It should be noted that the suggested site is on land owned by East Devon District Council rather than Network Rail, and EDDC have indicated their support in principle for the project.

Partners noted the prior discussions and confirmed their support for the bird viewing screen. It was agreed that MK should arrange a site visit involving all interested parties to discuss siting (is this the best spot for the birds as well as for people?) and other considerations.

MH requested that every effort be made to make the site of the viewing screen accessible by wheelchair users. BH offered to contribute his 2014/15 localism fund towards improving the path from the lorry park to make it fully accessible. He also suggested involving the restorative justice group in carrying out the path upgrade.

ACTION: MK to contact Stuart Line, Geoff Morris of ETRA and Steve Henry of RSPB to inform them of the outcome of the bird project discussions.

ACTION: MK to arrange site visit involving EDDC's Countryside Team and a representative of the ETRA to discuss site options, access issues, designs and costings and report back to next Management Group meeting.

ACTION: PG offered to walk the site and review its accessibility for wheelchair users.

10. Action log from January's Working and Management Group meetings - MK

This was not discussed in detail as it had been circulated in advance of the meeting. MK did update Partners on the outcome of a speeding prosecution that was brought against the joint owners of a powerboat that was observed to be exceeding the 10 knot speed limit by the Harbour Patrol. A case was brought but the plaintiff 'copped a plea' and was let off with a caution. Exeter City Council intend to publicise the case to deter others and ensure that the powers of the Patrol Boat are taken seriously. MK informed Partners that Exeter City Council have recently confirmed that the patrol will be back out on the estuary this season, although its engine is acknowledged to be in need of replacement (or major repair?).

11. Any other business

(a) Rubbish on Exton foreshore. A large amount of water-borne rubbish (plastic, timber, old boats, dead sheep etc.) have been washed ashore during the winter storms and deposited on the shoreline at Exton. Residents living on the shore at Exton have been in contact with both BH and MK about getting the rubbish removed. MK has been in discussion with one of the residents, Andy Harris of EDDC, and the land agents for Crown Estate (Knight Frank). The land below mean high water is owned by Crown Estate but leased to Devon Wildfowling and Conservation Association (DWCA). As tenants, the DWCA are responsible for maintaining and managing the land, and they are planning a working party to 'get stuck in'. It is understood that the largest of the derelict boats is being removed by its owner. EDDC have kindly offered to provide a couple of skips to help the process, even though they have no legal obligation in relation to the situation. (Land ownership of land above mean high water is not known, though Network Rail is a possible candidate.)

ACTION: MK to write a letter on behalf of the EEMP thanking EDDC for their assistance with the Exton clean up (either before or after the event).

(b) Abandoned boats (discussion followed from Exton discussion)

MH said that any boats abandoned on EDDC's stretch of foreshore are removed and taken to Camperdown Depot.

PS – The different mooring associations on the estuary don't seem to know in detail about each other's activities or policies. One of the recommendations from the mooring review is likely to be that they set up a coordinating body to address common issues – such as, perhaps, the issue of abandoned boats.

Partners expressed different opinions on whether moorings associations would be prepared to work together and adopt common policies on some issues, though there was general agreement that this would be desirable. AW said that it would be useful to explore options following PS's review and throw into the mix practices in other estuaries.

(c) Exmouth Town Council – Departure of Colin Poole, Town Clerk - PG informed Partners that Colin is leaving as Town Clerk at the end of May to return home to Suffolk. He will be missed.

ACTION: MK to write letter on behalf of the EEMP thanking Colin for all his hard work and helpful contributions to the work of the Partnership.

(d) Clyst Local Drainage Board

At a recent meeting to discuss dredging of the Lower Clyst between Owen Patterson MP, Hugo Swire MP, Environment Agency officers, local councillors and local landowners – at which BH and MH were present - it was agreed that a partnership approach to dredging be adopted, perhaps involving the formation of Local Drainage Board (LDB). BH mentioned that it was his understanding that although the EA may be involved in the future dredging of the main channel of the Clyst, it would be local landowners via the LDB who would clean out the smaller channels.

MH asked where the LDB might fit with the EEMP.

Partners agreed that close liaison between the EEMP and LDB would be beneficial to both parties.

ACTION: AW to participate in liaison with LDB when opportunities present.

BH said it would be useful to know what is happening in connection with the Harbour Revision Order proposal, which would provide clarity on who will fund what.

LT asked how far the jurisdiction of the Harbour Authority extends up the Clyst.

MK – information supplied by PS after the meeting: The Harbour Authority's jurisdiction extends up the Clyst as far as the weir at Fishers Bridge.

12. Date of next meetings:

Next Management Group meeting – 2pm on Friday 30th May 2014 in the Sargent Room of Coaver Club.

Next Working Group meeting – 2pm on Friday 23rd May 2014 in the Sargent Room, Coaver Club

