

Zonation and Code of Conduct Review Exe Power Boat & Ski Meeting



Minutes

3pm Friday 24th March 2017

**Location: Exe Power Boat & Ski Club, 5 Shelly Court, Pierhead,
Exmouth, Devon, EX8 1ER**

Attendees

Paul Scott (EPBSC Commodore as Chair) - PS

Iain Grant (Secretary EPBSC) – IG

Mark Sansom (Powerboat Secretary EPBSC) - MS

Pete Hardy (Classic Ski Secretary EPBSC)

Dave Curno (RYA)

Stephanie Clark, Exe Estuary Management Partnership (EEMP)

Neil Harris, South East Devon Habitat Regulations Partnership (SEDHRP)

Nathan Robinson, East Devon District Council

Rowena Garne, Devon County Council

Introductions

SC introduced NH and NR and explained that they were both invited in response to the group requesting to meet with those involved with the SEDHRP.

NR and NH introduced roles to group and how they are involved with management of the Exe Estuary. NH is currently involved with the implementation of a mitigation strategy on the Exe.

Update from SC

- Extension of consultation to the 28th April (instead of end of March)
- Public Event will be moved to the 20th April at 6pm. Date will be advertised via email, with additional information available on EEMP website.
- Tidal restriction (suggested at potentially 2 hours either side of HT) – concerns raised about this at last EPBSC meeting. Not likely to be tidal, as this area deemed to be important for birds at various states of tide during winter, not just low tide.

NR – Brent Geese, Widgeon feed on eelgrass when submerged – primary importance on duck pond area as birds feed at all states of the tide. This is important for all nature conservation and has the highest level of protection stretching from Local Nature Reserve to RAMSAR site which is the highest level.

DC – The Local Nature Reserve (LNR) has been encouraging access. There is a contradiction as you (SEDHRP) are proposing a Voluntary Exclusion Zone (VEZ) but still encouraging visitors to area via LNR.

NR – The zone will extend to all users – including dog walkers. LNR is the lowest designation and is superseded by all other designations. There is therefore no requirement to promote or encourage access to LNRs.

NH – The partnership has full support from Natural England.

SC – Not looking to prevent access just looking to redirect access to better area.

SC – The previous request from this group for VEZ to be moved up above the power boat zone is not ideal as this has been highlighted as one of the most important areas for birds. However, there has been suggestion that the line might be moved eastwards on an angle (not agreed yet).

NR – Shouldn't be any real change in how it affects you (power boaters) – will likely prevent a clash of users.

MS – Could cause conflict with kite surfers. All trying to use the same area for certain period, if kite surfers access when water is knee deep and then the power boaters come out, the kite surfers will be pushed to left.

NR – Still a very important feeding area in bottom corner and they are legally bound to protect the bird life there.

MS – Looked at everyday eelgrass has expanded not decreased.

NR – Still important feeding ground – large flocks of Brent Geese use that area.

PS – There is direct conflict with kite surfers, as they are only loosely adopting the scheme that was put in place originally.

NR – New proposals mean use is unchanged for powerboats. The powerboat zone is not changing and has an exemption from the VEZ. If a powerboat area could be found elsewhere that would be the ideal but there isn't one.

PS – The power boaters have been using the area since the 70's and haven't seen any evidence that there has been a decline due to their activity.

DC – No decline over 30 year period.

NR – Larger than 30 years need to look at – more like 100 years. The decline is species specific with more specialist species that feed on eelgrass decreasing. Any activity could cause disturbance.

DC – At sea, all sea birds will only take flight within couple metres of a boat and are far more cautious to overhead predators, less of a threat in a boat and birdlife can adapt.

NR – Very difficult to pick apart specific disturbance causes, in my (NR) opinion dog walkers are the most disruptive activity to bird life, however all activities play a part in the disturbance of bird life to different extents. Dogs play biggest role and that is why we are attempting to extend the zone to all users. There is no proposal of change to powerboats.

MS – People prior to the powerboats are the ones that cause disturbance.

NR – Locals do go on mud and is having a negative affect – just need to advertise zones

NH – Most important thing to keep in mind is that the birds don't have a choice in where their optimal habitat happens to be but people do have a choice in where to

conduct their activities. The area is internationally important with two sites suggested as a refuge – trying to work with all users in order to prevent statutory zone put in place.

DC – Would like to come up with zone - 60 people policing it for you if you get them on board – it will be easier for everyone.

NH – We are legally required to protect the bird life on the estuary.

NR – A very small percentage of the estuary is being suggested. Powerboats have an exemption from all states of the tide exclusion.

MS – Kite surfers aren't adopting the current zone.

NH – This time there will be Habitat Mitigation Officers out patrolling the area and keep an eye on users in the zones.

DC – If the RYA is on board then they can get information out to all users on an international scale via their website, etc.

NR – Availability to provide education – if this is not affective they may have to enforce statutory measures which is not what we want.

MS – Powerboats can educate as a group whereas kite surfers are individuals.

NR – There will be improved signage on the site.

NH – Phasing approach – other projects to get information out such as interpretation boards and website, etc.

SC – Amended dates 1st September is still a flexible date. Mid-September is a potential compromise. 31st December is likely to be the end date.

NH – Consultation is ongoing at the end there will be a meeting on final proposal taking into account anything else.

NH – Misleading to link dates to eelgrass should really be linked to bird activity.

DC - RYA currently represents sailing, windsurfing, powerboating, PWC. Does not represent SUP, canoeing (covered by BCU), kite surfers however may take them on in future due to increasing need for representation.

NR – Kite surfers prefer a sheltered area for beginners and therefore probably won't be coming out in the depths of winter anyway, more experienced kite surfers will be less likely to want to use zone during winter.

MS – Out past the slipway they can get caught in tides and be pushed into moorings and therefore tend to use sheltered area.

NR – Kite surfers that are more advanced don't operate in bottom corner.

MS – They will run a course from the slipway across.

PC – Water sports are becoming less seasonal.

PS – Disagree with basic approach of proposals.

NH – Unclear on issue from group.

NR – The scheme would push other users into the area.

SC – Nobody else has an overlying right to use that area over the power boaters.

NR – Kite surfers don't adhere to zone. Less a problem with zones and more an issue with lack of awareness of zonation.

PS – Birds will still feed without disturbance even if zone is moved further north.

DC – Two colour zone? – red zone and blue zone.

NH – Decline in certain species such as Oystercatcher. There has been a decline in bird activity due to disturbance at the southern end of the estuary.

NR – More about the fact that this will extend to all users. Want kite surfers to move to the west during that time of year.

PS – Will not support zone as it stands.

DC – Much better compliance and support if zone is changed.

SC – Most users agree with some compromise.

PS – Disagree with evidence.

DC – Evidence of feeding – declines in certain species.

NR – Brent Geese, Widgeon – context of site – extent of eelgrass. Protecting that habitat is the best approach.

DC – Would like more evidence.

PS – Status quo works as it stands. Don't take any notice of kite surfers.

NR – Kite surfers originally adopted their exclusion zone from within.

SC – If there is a decline – statutory measures will be put in place, which is more of a reason to put in VEZs to prevent statutory measures.

NR – The main impact is other user groups such as dog walkers.

DC – Kite surfers, wind surfers could be included in exemption or could be made tidal as previously suggested?

NR – Not asking for changes to the powerboats statutory zone.

MS – Kite surfers get caught by the tide if they move west.

NR – The kite surfers have agreed to move west.

PS – Not objecting to 95% of the proposals. Power boaters and kite surfers could have a meeting and talk it through.

Amendment to Water Ski Zone:

SC – Beyond buoy 21 – ECC looking into emending water ski area to come out of navigation channel and VEZ, but concerned about cost and time.

PH – Will be a good compromise.

SC – Might be good to have meeting – will look into it.

- Colin Acton is currently looking at it will pass it onto Steve Carnell (Higher up).
- Colin suggested law amendment rather than harbour direction.

SC – Do PWCs use the power boat area?

MS – PWCs do occasionally use area 2-3 times a year during summer.

DC – Some individuals cause issues. They do have a number on them in order to identify them, but may be small. Talk to Cattewater Harbour Master (Plymouth).

SC – End of month – details of consultation will be sent round via email and on EEMP website:

- 20th April public meeting
- Press release next week
- Deadline for consultation
- Report for decision produced
- SEDHRP Executive Committee
- Meetings with dogwalkers and wildfowlers organised

ACTION: Send invite to Emma (RYA) as well.

NH – If health and safety is concerned then obviously this takes precedence to zones.

Summary of Proposed Suggestions from Meeting

- Do not want VEZ in powerboat area in Exmouth. The group have concerns that there could potentially be an increase in number of other users using the powerboat area. However, SC NH and NR clarified that it is unlikely to be a tidal restriction, so there should be a decrease in users within the area, due to the voluntary exclusion. However, the western boundary may be moved further east, following public consultation. There will be no change in powerboat activity.

