



TAW TORRIDGE ESTUARY FORUM

Minutes of the meeting held on Mon. 21st July 2025 in the Beechfield Centre, Fremington at 7.00pm

Present:

Zoe Smith	Roy Dennis Wildlife Foundation & Speaker
Mike Teare	Bideford River Torridge Heritage Trust
Helen Cooper	Save Our Sands
Helen Sheard	Bideford Sustainability Group
Brian Hopkins	Bideford Sustainability Group
Sandra Knight	Coastwise ND
Debbie Frazer	Devon Wildlife Trust
Chris Salisbury	Taw & Torridge Wildfowling Club
Tristan Otten	Torridge District Council
Anne Marie Eveleigh	Earth Action North Devon
Mark Cann	Braunton Parish Council
Peter Hames	Torridge District Council
Jeremy Bell	Northam Town Council
Sue Prosper	Love Braunton
David Brain	Environment Agency
Andy Cox	Bideford Rowing Club
Emily Clark	Devon W I
Sally Ramsden	Devon W I
Ray Turner	Devon Birds
Joe Newberry	ND Coast National Landscape
Tony Bown	supporter
Tim Jones	ND Biosphere Coast Group
Chris Dee	WeBS

Elizabeth Dee	North Devon Council
David Dixon	Barnstaple Pilot Gig Club / Fremington P C
Mary Breeds	Braunton Countryside Centre
Tom Humphreys	ND Biosphere
Katie Lee	ND Biosphere
Jeff Needham	Tawstock P.C. & Vice-Chair / Treasurer
Ian Crawford	Secretary
Tony Pratt	North Devon Yacht Club & Chair
Mark Haworth- Booth	Westcountry Rivers Trust

Welcome & Introductions: The chair welcomed everyone and introduced the speaker Zoe Smith . Members old and new introduced themselves.

Apologies for Absence: John Puddy, Ricky Knight, Susan Smith, Sam Heaton

2. Minutes of Previous Meeting Mon. 28th April 2025: Accepted & adopted.

3. Guest Speaker: Zoe Smith from the Roy Dennis Wildlife Foundation with the aid of an overhead projector, presented the history of the Foundation starting with the ospreys, then red kites in Spain and the white tailed eagle across Britain. they are the 4th largest of the eagles with a wingspan of 2.5m and take 5 years to develop their full colours and became extinct in Scotland during the 1800's. Roy Dennis started his project in Scotland in 1968.

White tailed eagles nest in trees near cliff faces and have a breeding radius in England centred on the Isle of Wight, always returning to their birthplace for breeding. There are currently 37 eagles released and only 27 remain in Britain and with tagging are traced going as far as Wales and Ireland and the very North of Scotland as well as parts of England. Whilst some get killed by wind turbines, their diet comprises small mammals, stealing from other animals such as otters, and eating fish. They will attack buzzards and fly at over 1000m on flights to Europe. It was interesting to see that an eagle can camouflage itself as the upward limb of certain trees. Their introduction to Exmoor entails around 20 leads to a couple of breeding pairs. Questions were raised about the safe location of wind turbines in view of the casualties reported and the prospect of them feeding in the estuaries to which Zoe replied that there was no evidence of feeding in the estuaries. Zoe was thanked for excellent and detailed presentation.

4. Refreshment Break

5. Reports:

a) TTEF / P & C Committee. Report had been circulated. Tony Pratt drew attention to the planning application for Wooda Road housing near the Shipyard, which would be the source of industrial noise complaints - refused by TDC and going to appeal. Planning Application 80131 at NDC is a new one for a filling station at Lake R'bout, junction of A361 & A39. Jeff Needham added that previous shipping of cattle feed arriving at Appledore is now arriving in Plymouth due to better tidal services. However cattle feed also continues to arrive at Appledore

b) Finance Report: The Treasurer reported that funds stand at £3151-46 .

c) Estuary Reports:

- **Bideford Harbour Master** - no report
- **Apledore - Instow Ferry** - no report

d) N D Biosphere Tom Humphries reported a programme of events:

Recent activities:

Ongoing support from the Westcountry Rivers Trust in delivering code signed citizen science training for community groups, and event workshops

26th April: Spring into Sustainability, Bideford

17th May: Festival of Nature, Appledore

5th June: CSI training, South Molton

17th June: CSI training, Ashreigney

- 'Ecoventure' in partnership with SMART ACTION CIC (South Molton Pool) with disadvantaged young people who enjoyed a day of kick-sampling ecology in local stream (11th June)

- Melting Ice & Rising Tides art symposium at Burton Gallery, Bideford, brining awareness of sea level rise and local impacts (27th June)

- Rocky shore 'touch tank' at Appledore & Instow Regatta for children to enjoy and develop environmental stewardship (20th July)

The ND Biosphere now has use of a Bouncy Castle, courtesy of DRIP, simulating a river catchment. Available for local community events this summer, get in touch if you would like to borrow.

The ND Biosphere has teamed up with the Exeter Science Centre in time for Climate Week 2025, to run a photo competition with the theme 'My Biosphere' running between 7th July – 24th August. Winners will have their photos displayed at a public gallery in Barnstaple. Please share far and wide! Full information available here:

<https://exetersciencecentre.org/projects/mybiosphere-photo-competition/>

Future activities:

9th August: Pond Dipping at Hallsannary, in partnership with Littleham and Land-cross Biodiversity Group.

e) N D Coast National Landscape: Joe Newberry, now appointed National Landscape Manager reported a vacancy for his old post. currently working with both district councils on the National Framework. On the Nature Recovery programme work is with other environmental groups (see separate full report - to be circulated)

f) Devon Wildlife Trust: Debbie Frazer's report has been circulated. She put emphasis on resisting development that impinges on ecology and reminded us that the Government's Planning Framework consultation is still open

g) Harbour Users Group: Mike Teare's report has been circulated. He drew attention to the importance of the TDC Estuary Strategy and the need to address leisure activities such as the unregulated use of jet skis. Tony Pratt reminded us of the need for a Harbour Authority and suggested that the Harbour Master's code of practice for quayside safety would help regulate any abuse of use.

h) Bideford Heritage Harbour: Mike Teare's report has been circulated. As part of a national initiative a trail history of WW2 activities locally is being contemplated. More info on the website and a building to house the history is being sought.

i) Natural England: No report

j) Webs: Chris Dee's report has been circulated

k) Any Other Reports:

- **Westcountry Rivers Trust** Mark Haworth-Booth reported on an environmental DNA project looking at the presence of fish species, the Shad, in the Taw. WRT are also working on a project to arrest soil erosion arising from the planting of maize on the river Taw. His report is to be circulated
- **Earth Action ND** Anne Marie Eveleigh reminded us of the EAND event which is part of World Clean-Up Day on Saturday 27th September.
- **Tony Bown** reported that the Met. Office have confirmed that sea levels are rising quicker than projected.
- **Jeremy Bell** reported concern about a high wall around Yelland Old Power Stn. site where known hazardous substances exist. Environment Agency are to be contacted regarding inspection visits to be requested. **Action Tony Pratt**

6. Any other matters arising from April minutes - None

7. Urgent Matters brought forward by the Chair:

In view of the Secretary resigning prior to the January 2026 AGM, the chair emphasised the importance of the secretarial support to the chair and the running of the Forum's business. The job description is published on our website and Forum members are urged to support the finding of a replacement secretary.

8. Agenda Items proposed for next Meeting:

Future speakers were discussed and included South West Water. Alternatively Surfers Against Sewage was mentioned and in that case, Ian Crawford suggested asking Claire Moody as a speaker. Speakers to be followed up by the P&CC at the next meeting. **Action Planning & Consultation&C Committee**

9. AOB.

- **Helen Sheard** mentioned the Bideford Fair would include an environmental stand. To become involved please contact Helen <hwsheard@yahoo.co.uk>
- **Brian Hopkins** referred the meeting to the Water Commission Report of 464 pages published today
- **Peter Hames** referred to Knapp House in Northam which together with fields going down to the river has been sold to a holiday park developer after being in administration for some time. He also mentioned that sheep grazing on Northam Burrows are being wormed, a practice that has a negative impact on invertebrate biodiversity evidenced by the absence of the dung beetle.
- **Tony Pratt** The Forum can expect a report from the youth section of the North Devon Yacht Club

10. Future Meeting Dates: 20th October and January 19th 2026