



# TAW TORRIDGE ESTUARY FORUM

**Minutes of Quarterly Meeting held on Mon.17th April 2023 held at Fremington Parish Council Offices, Beechfield Centre at 7.00pm**

## **Present:**

Jeff Needham	Tawstock P C
Jim Bell	Yelland Action Group & Fremington P C
David Dixon	Barnstaple Gig Club
Paul Brown & Kelly	Bideford Harbour
Chris Northrop	Appledore Instow Ferry
Mark Haworth-Booth	West Country Rivers Trust
Sue Prosper	Love Braunton
Peter Hames	Northam T C
Ricky Knight	Barnstaple T C
Dominie Dunbrook	North Devon Council
Colin Frajbis	Westleigh P C
Ian Harrison	Rolle Canal Society
Russell Walters	RMB Chivenor
Sandra Knight	Coastwise ND
Jenny Carey-Wood	North Devon Coast AONB
Andy Bell	ND Biosphere
Tim Jones	BTO WeBS
Alan Kavanagh	Natural England
Chris Salisbury	Taw & Torridge Wildfowling Club
Tony Pratt	ND Yacht Club & Chair
Ian Crawford	Secretary

**Apologies:** Chris Dee, Chris Hassall, Andy Cox, Graham Bell, Chris Fuller, Corine Dyke

**Minutes of Meeting held January 16th:** Circulated and adopted as an accurate record.

**Matters Arising:** The annual accounts presented in January are being audited by Chris Northop. TP apologised for not including the floating crane at the Appledore Shipyard on the agenda - **this item to be included on the July agenda**. Three monthly meetings of the Planning & Consultation Committee have been held - minutes are available on request and will be published on the website when up and running. **(Action in bold above)**

## **Reports:**

### **a) Consultation & Planning Committee:**

- River Pollution TP had written to SW Water - Alan Burrows, SWW Director of Environmental Liaison had replied advising that SWW has various projects including 'Waterfit', a programme of improvement to reduce the use of storm overflows. It was agreed that **we invite SWW to join us at our July meeting**. TP had also written to Geoffrey Cox MP who had taken the matter up and agreed to rely on information that we forward to him. MH-B had attended Selaine Saxby MP's event which he described as surreal. Fremington Parish Council had also raised the issue of sewage spills. **(Action in bold above)**
- HELAA There should be community representation on this body set up to ensure sufficient local land allocation. Evasive replies have been received by TP & JB on behalf of the Forum. SP reported that Braunton had raised issues about vested interests inappropriate influence on this body. The meeting gave full support to **TP to write to district councils** insisting in community involvement. **(Action)**
- Website Chris Dee is working on a more accessible and representative website for the the Forum. Thanks are recorded for his voluntary and skilled contribution.

Planning We have objected to some 100 houses at Chilpark, Fremington. Trees at Yelland Old Power Stn. are subject to planning application 76924 described as 'Discharge of Conditions' and residents are encouraged to object to the removal of trees which are habitat to ravens and other rare birds. 76924 is linked to application no. 60823 which gave developers 'outline planning' only after their successful appeal. St. Andrews Rd, Fremington development refused by NDC and goes to appeal. Barton Cross, Instow - an appeal has allowed 5 houses.

- Flooding Bideford TC's Decarbonisation & Environment Committee had considered the implications for future flooding due to climate change in October 2020. The most useful projection on flooding is, Leading Consensus (IPCC 2021) - link here: <https://coastal.climatecentral.org/map/13/-4>.
- Bird Protection TJ raised the issue of Public Spaces Protection Orders (PSPO) reporting that no one knew where they are to apply. Bird disturbance by dogs at high time roosts can be best prevented by encouraging public awareness rather than simple prohibition notices. Signage which raises awareness would help. AB reported that Braunton Burrows have provided more informative notices and maps are recognised as a method to advise bird and animal habitat. JC-W reminded the meeting that District Councils are responsible for issuing PSPOs.

Discussion followed on who should provide such signage and it was proposed that the Biosphere could set up a working group or maybe a campaign about recreational disturbance in natural habitat. Coordination by the Biosphere with Environment Agency using EA's 3Cs (Championing Coastal Co-ordination) funding designed to enhance and progress coordination for coastal sustainability and resilience. **AB agreed to report back on this proposal** to the Forum. **(Action)**

### **Break for Refreshments:**

### **b) Estuary Reports:**

- Bideford Port Since the outbreak of Covid 19 there has been no market for Devon ball clay which previously went through the port. PB reported that as a consequence the future of the port is not looking secure and that the harbour users group is still work in progress. AB mentioned that a Harbour Revision Order is being considered as there is no harbour authority. No unifying authority exists to set up a harbour authority, so it was considered that both the district councils could raise the finance to secure a Harbour Revision Order. AB informed us that Chichester harbour had set up an organisation without a harbour authority which covers the surrounding area (Chichester Harbour Conservancy) PB as harbour master said he would keep us apprised of any developments and welcomed our interest and support.
- Appledore Ferry Both boats were on the water on 23rd March. Now back to one boat as debris interfered with shore access. PB encouraged reporting of obstacles in the estuary which interfere with piloting to be reported to Bideford Harbour office for removal.

**c) North Devon Biosphere:** AB reported developments on funding, carbon sequestration projects, Instow dunes, development centres and Anchorwood Conservation land above the river bank for carbon sequestration.

**d) North Devon Coast AONB:** J C-W circulated the following report to the meeting:

- **Sustainable Development Fund** <http://www.northdevon-aonb.org.uk/our-work/grants>  
The AONB's small grant scheme is now open and welcomes projects that conserve and enhance our landscape, nature and the historic environment or provide a connection with nature for local people and visitors through improved access, citizen science activities or to benefit their health and wellbeing. Grants range from £200 to £4,000. We welcome grant enquiries for projects being completed by the end of January 2024. See our website for information and forms, as well as a list of last year's projects.
- **Historic Environment** <https://www.northdevon-aonb.org.uk/coastalheritage>  
The team continue to support projects to manage and interpret the WW2 heritage on the coast, supported the setting up of a conservation volunteer group at Hillsborough Nature Reserve and surveying hill forts to increase understanding. Resources and surveys from the Coastal Heritage Project
- **Farming in Protected Landscapes** [https://www.northdevon-aonb.org.uk/farming-protected-landscapes\\_](https://www.northdevon-aonb.org.uk/farming-protected-landscapes_)  
This is a national, four-year, DEFRA funded grant scheme for projects benefiting nature, climate, people and place on farmed or managed land in the AONB. Twenty-three projects have been approved in the first two years, with grants of around £180k.
- **North Devon Biosphere Nature Recovery Plan 2021-2030** - the AONB team continue to work with local partners to monitor and deliver actions to meet the ambitions of the plan to improve biodiversity by participating in the working groups on the Coast, Woodlands and Settlements. Actions are being supported by AONB grant schemes (SDF and FiPL) and partnership working. See <https://www.northdevon-aonb.org.uk/our-work/nature-recovery>
- **Finding Nature's Footprints** is a 3-year project led by the AONB and funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund and local partners. The team of Joe Newberry, Laura Carolan and Lowenna Arnold are working with communities in and around the AONB to learn more about our wildlife through surveys, monitoring, mapping and recovery actions. The focus is on villages, gardens, fields and shores reflecting the interest of volunteers and participants - whether plants, mammals, insects, birds or inter-tidal species. The project is using the iNaturalist App to record sightings and is working in Hartland and Ilfracombe in the first year. An AONB Environment Group has been developed engaging with people aged 16 - 30 to provide training and practical activities. Coastal work is being carried out primarily with Coastwise North Devon. See <https://www.northdevon-aonb.org.uk/findingnaturesfootprints> for more details and to sign up for the project newsletter.
- **Publicity, Branding and Communications**  
**Re-Branding** - Following the Glover Review recommendations, DEFRA has proposed a rebranding of AONB teams and Partnerships to be called 'National Landscapes' whilst the geographical designation will remain an AONB. Consultation work on designs is in progress with no set date yet for implementation.

Natural England are doing work at Braunton Burrows and Woolacombe. RK mentioned the new path to Crow Point.

**e) Natural England:** Alan Kavanagh introduced himself as Senior Advisor for Offshore Wind in the Celtic Sea region for NE with a main interest in developers at Whitecross wind farm which aims to generate 50 gigawatts by 2030 and coming ashore at East Yelland. SP was concerned about the transparency of the project despite presentations already made. PH raised a question about the Moroccan power line coming ashore at Abbotsham through a separate company.

- **Airboats:** The issue of bird disturbance from these fan-driven boats is on our radar. The approach to them is one of education and awareness raising . We understand that locally Andy Bell will try to put something together on this . Our marine Lead Adviser Sophie has contacted the harbour master as well
- **Houseboats:** This needs a joined-up approach. We do unfortunately not have the capacity to lead on this work at present. Education about responsibilities etc should be part of the plan.
- **Braunton Marsh:** No update from NE, the Devon Wildlife Trust is working on this.
- **Wading birds disturbance:** No significant update but, here also, the approach should be one of education and awareness raising with communities and visitors.
- **Coastal Change Management Areas (CCMAs):** We have worked with NDDC and Torridge DC on this and a CCMA for the estuary is set to be designated in the revised Local Plan. The next step will be to develop a coastal transition plan to take the opportunity we now have to plan ahead for changes to the coast that will inevitably happen through climate change and sea level rise. The plan needs to set out for instance where vulnerable infrastructure should be relocated to, how to deal with changing coastal habitats and where to employ natural solutions to managing coastal change .

**Pollution from Agriculture:** We have 2 Catchment Sensitive Farming Advisers working in the Taw and Torridge catchments.

**f) Other Reports:** RK reported the removal of old bicycles and debris on Seven Brethern under a court order issued on behalf of NDC in anticipation of a tidal barrier from Barnstaple old bridge upriver towards the old railway bridge now re-opened as a footpath.

DD representing NDC reported that there are jurisdiction problems with issues arising on the river and hopes to generate an inclusive conversation on the subject.

There were no ‘Urgent items b/f by the Chair’ or ‘Agenda items for next meeting’

**AOB:** JB raised the issue of increased use of heavy goods vehicles delivering raw materials to the development site at old Yelland Power Station, suggesting that this could be done by boat to the jetty, avoiding environmental damage from excessive road transport journeys site.

**Dates of Future Meetings:** Monday 17th July, Mon. 16th October, Mon. 15th Jan.’24