



# TAW TORRIDGE ESTUARY FORUM

Minutes of Quarterly Meeting held on Mon.16th October 2023 at Fremington Parish Council Offices, Beechfield Centre at 7.00pm

## Present:

Mark Haworth-Booth	West Country Rivers Trust
Ricky Knight	North Devon Council
Andy Bell	ND Biosphere
Russell Walters	RMB Chivenor
Debbie Frazer	Devon Wildlife Trust
Sandra Knight	Coastwise ND
Sue Prosper	Love Braunton
Andy Cox	Bideford Amateur Rowing Club
Chris Salisbury	Taw & Torridge Wildfowling Club
Chris Northrop	Appledore Instow Ferry
Tristan Otten	Torridge District Council
Colin Frajbis	Westleigh P C
Ian Harrison	Rolle Canal Society
Chris Dee	BTO WeBS
Tom Humphreys	Skern Lodge
Jim Bell	Fremington P C
Matt Edworthy	Gaia Trust
Jeff Needham	Tawstock P C & Vice Chair
Tony Pratt	ND Yacht Club & Chair
Ian Crawford	Secretary

**1. Welcome & Introductions:** Tristan Otten from TDC was welcomed by the Chair

### **Apologies for absence:**

Jenny Carey-Wood, Chris Hassall, Peter Hames, Paul Brown, Michael Day, Zuzanna Dusza, Mark Cann, Mike Tucker

## **2. Adoption of Minutes from Previous Meeting on Monday, 17th July 2023:**

Two amendments had been received, the first is on page 3 and refers to HELAA and came from Ian Rowland - Torridge District Council and was noted.

The second amendment on page 4 (at page top) which refers to 'wind farm cable coming ashore' came from Sue Prosper - Love Braunton was proposed for further amendment as follows:

*In response to a question raised by SP, AB responded to confirm that the amount of wind farm cable coming ashore should be minimised on land, and with minimal disturbance during peak season which raised Forum members speculation over whether 'season' applied to nature's cycles or tourists - AB confirmed that it referred to tourists.*

With these amendments accepted the minutes were proposed and seconded for adoption.

## **3. Matters Arising:** There were no matters arising

As the White Cross Wind Farm was now the subject of a planning application no. 77576 it was agreed to take this agenda item after Estuary Reports

### **Reports:**

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

The following report from TP had been circulated by email;

The Committee consists of Tony Pratt (Chair), Ian Crawford (Secretary), Chris Hassall, Jim Bell, Jeff Needham & Mark Haworth-Booth.

The Committee has met twice since the main quarterly meeting on 17th July, 2023. Discussion and action have been undertaken on the following topics;

1. Further attempts have been made to enlist the National Trust and Devon Wildlife Trust to the Forum. This has been progressed with some success. Contact has also been made with the Devon Maritime Forum with the hope of rejoining.

2. Further investigation is ongoing into Catchment Sensitive Farming.

3. The question of who owns the banks of the estuaries has been further followed up but local district councils have been unable to help. It is thought that further progress on this is beyond the capability of the P & C C. and the finances of the Forum.

4. Various planning applications and future applications affecting the Estuaries have been considered.. These include Yelland Quay South to which an objection has been submitted and the White Cross Wind Farm cabling now active which is an ongoing agenda item with TTEF

5. It has been agreed that TP will complete the “Shoreline Management Survey” on behalf of the Forum.

6. The Forum will continue to check that appropriate signage about bird protection continues to appear at new developments around the estuaries.

7. Preparation for the October Main Meeting

Thanks is due to the members of the sub-committee for their hard work during and between P & P C meetings.

The report was noted and no questions arose. TP extended an invitation for Forum members to attend Policy & Planning Committee meetings as follows:

Future P&CC meeting: 2.30pm Fri.10th Nov. & Fri.15th Dec. at Beechfield Centre

**b) North Devon Biosphere Reserve:**

The following report was given by AB.

- The Critter Project progresses with engagement of landowners to support the scheme (to improve water quality, reduce flood risk, improve soil quality and create salt marsh)
- CABA Catchment Based Approach <https://catchmentbasedapproach.org/get-involved/north-devon/> . The Catchment Partnership led by Devon Wildlife Trust (DWT), includes Westcountry Rivers Trust (WRT), the Environment Agency, the North Devon UNESCO Biosphere and the North Devon Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).
- Coasts in Mind empowers members of the public to act on climate change. Harnessing their knowledge, it will work with local people to co-create a ‘Community Archive’ of coastal change over the last 100 years. <https://www.citizen.org.uk/blog/2023/Jul/17/introducing-coasts-mind-new-mola-project-exploring-community-centered-approaches-coastal-change/>

**c) North Devon AONB Partnership:** No report received.

**d) Port of Bideford:**

The following report was sent from PB by email on 9/10/23

***Bideford Harbour Report***

*Shipping; there have been no ship movements to Bideford, Appledore, Harland and Wolff or Yelland in this quarter.*

*The lack of vessels is of some concern but the downturn in the volume of traffic is equally reflected and reported by all ports throughout the southwest – and beyond. Causes for this are variously cited as being the Ukraine war, the European building recession and the inevitable economies of scale represented by the inexorable increasing size of cargo vessels.*

The EU building recession affects our clay exports disproportionately as all our fine North Devon clay is destined for NE Spain / Finland for making into up market flooring tiles.

The situation may change because:

It is widely anticipated that the EU building market will revive in Q1 2024.

The H&W shipyard is expecting to see more regular shipping movements.

In Q4 2023, HM will re-approach all the shipping agents to remind them that Bideford is still open for business.

The prospects for the Appledore Maritime Innovation Centre should start to register in 2024, bringing additional activity – as per Chris Fullers email.

The first landing of harvested seaweed at Bideford from the trial offshore farm is planned to be in Q2 2024.

The “Waverly,” and the “Fresh Spring” are all potential tourist passenger carriers into and out of Bideford in summer 2024.

**Harbour Users Group:** I reported to the TTEF in 2022 that it was the intention to form a Bideford Harbour Users Group (HUG). A HUG or a stakeholder’s group comprised of a cross section of harbour users is a vitally important component to the healthy functioning of any harbour and is firmly recommended in the Port Marine Safety Code. I was perhaps overly optimistic in my timings! The proper functioning of a HUG requires engaged participants using information that is not legally privileged and the Port of Bideford is not yet in a position to achieve this. It remains my intention to attempt to form a HUG in Q2 of 2024 and I will be asking the TTEF to be represented.

I would be happy to respond to any written questions and will endeavour to be present at the Spring meeting – hopefully with some slightly more upbeat messages.

Paul Brown, Bideford Harbour Master [paul.Brown@Torridge.gov.uk](mailto:paul.Brown@Torridge.gov.uk)

#### **e) Appledore Instow Ferry:**

The following report was given by CN.

We have carried almost 250000 passengers since the start in 2011. We lost an unprecedented number of days this year, due to weather, mainly in July and August, as well as the usual number of lost days due to tide/time restraints. Fares remain at £2 for an adult crossing, £1 for kids and dogs (still) go free. Bicycles are charged at £2. Our season runs from 1 April to 31 October each year.

**f) Natural England:** No report received.

**g) Westcountry Rivers Trust:**

The following report was given by MH-B.

The Westcountry Rivers Trust was founded in 1994 by the then poet laureate Ted Hughes and others concerned by pollution in the Taw-Torridge Estuary. It is an environmental charity with a focus on restoring and protecting the freshwater environment. It was the first of many river trusts. Volunteers test water quality on Westcountry rivers - there were 329 active citizen scientists in November 2022 and they had completed 9,452 surveys. These check for turbidity, phosphates and total dissolved solids. North Devon Council has appointed Cllr Peter Jones as lead on water quality and he has arranged a drop-in session for anyone who would like to find out about volunteering to test water for the WRT - it is at the Countryside Centre, Braunton, 10-1 on Saturday 11 November. No scientific knowledge required. It is something Duke of Edinburgh Award candidates can do. New testing kit capable of detecting bacteria is apparently to be rolled out in the not too distant future.

**h) Other Reports:**

**Website:** CD reported that contact had been made with D. Butterworth, the previous website constructor so progress could now be made. CD raised the question of hosting costs and it was agreed that our funds would pay for these. CD was keen to see the website explaining Forum membership organisations and it was agreed that an email be sent to each organisation asking for the following detail: official name, logo and or pic showing organisation's activity, and a brief description of interests with an official email address. IC agreed to circulate the email asking Forum members to reply to CD.

**Devon Wildlife Trust:** The following report was given by DF. A brief summary of some contacts/updates in the North Devon Rivers and Estuaries areas ;  
General : [www.devonwildlifetrust.org](http://www.devonwildlifetrust.org) 01392 279244 New CEO: Nick Bruce-White  
Main contact for TTEF : Pete Burgess [pburgess@devonwildlifetrust.org](mailto:pburgess@devonwildlifetrust.org)

White Cross Wind Farm on shore application is currently being assessed including possible impacts on the inner bank area of Horsey .

Horsey Island : " we are monitoring Horsey outer bank, bordering the Taw, very closely and will be carrying out detailed drone survey of saltmarsh vegetation in the near future."

North Devon Natural Solutions

The Northern Devon Natural Solutions team works with farmers and landowners to:

- allow rivers to return to their natural state to reduce flood risk
- restore wildflower-rich grasslands to benefit threatened butterflies and other wildlife
- create new areas of woodland
- encourage natural processes, 'wilding' areas of land to help tackle the climate and nature emergencies

The project focuses on land next to 36 watercourses within the Torridge and Taw catchments, Further information : <https://www.devonwildlifetrust.org/northern-devon-natural-solutions>: Devon Wildlife Trust Contact : Ewan Wallis, NDNS Project Manager, on [ewallis@devonwildlifetrust.org](mailto:ewallis@devonwildlifetrust.org)

### Working Wetlands

#### Working with South West Water

Since 2008 Working Wetlands advisers have been working with farmers and landowners to address potential sources of pollution on farms, with the aim of using natural solutions to protect water quality and quantity, and restore wildlife habitats. . “Our team of farm advisors cover eight strategically chosen river catchments: Barnstaple Yeo, Dart, Fernworthy Reservoir, Lower Exe, Otter, Roadford Reservoir, Tamar, and Wistlandpound Reservoir. We work upstream of the places where drinking water is taken from the rivers and reservoirs, enabling us to have the biggest impact on raw water quality.” Also Upstream water project with South West Water and West Country Rivers trust and others.

<https://www.southwestwater.co.uk/environment/projects/nature-based-solutions>

<https://forms.microsoft.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=IGj0fdE29E-x7S4rN-W2GJu7syPuPDj5PsqZ9eSD0Uy1UQldZSTRMV1EwTkNIWUpPVUhLQTU2Mk-MVC4u>

### Working Wetlands & Upstream Thinking | Devon Wildlife Trust

If you are a landowner and would like more information on the project, please [email workingwetlands@devonwildlifetrust.org](mailto:workingwetlands@devonwildlifetrust.org)

### Marine

DWT Marine Recovery Officer : Carli Cocciardi [ccocciardi@devonwildlifetrust.org](mailto:ccocciardi@devonwildlifetrust.org) or Marine link at Wembury, Coral Smith [csmith@devonwildlifetrust.org](mailto:csmith@devonwildlifetrust.org) [wemburymarine-centre.org](http://wemburymarine-centre.org). The marine officer who lives in Plymouth sent apologies on the basis that there was no public transport from Plymouth to Fremington

### Other

Schools liaison **[wilderlearning@devonwildlifetrust.org](mailto:wilderlearning@devonwildlifetrust.org)**

Beaver Enquiries **[beavers@devonwildlifetrust.org](mailto:beavers@devonwildlifetrust.org)**

Planning issues [planning@devonwildlifetrust.org](mailto:planning@devonwildlifetrust.org) ( have responded/are responding to planning applications linked to the White Cross windfarm and building developments along the estuaries )

Local Group: Barnstaple and District Local Group : Arranges walks , talks and some conservation activities in the North Devon Area ( Swanpool Marsh and Uppacott wood). Contact [Deborah.frazer@btinternet.com](mailto:Deborah.frazer@btinternet.com)

**Devon Maritime Forum:** TP reported that the membership of this forum comprised the broad and diverse range of organisations and individuals who have a stake or interest in marine and coastal issues in Devon and the wider South West peninsula.

Contact had been established through Zuzanna Dusza with DMF, an organisation which TP considered might help establish official status for Port of Bideford in one of the biggest estuaries in Britain without a harbour authority.

**Home Farm Marsh:** ME reported that mechanical diggers, which had been present recently, had created ditches to aid water retention and a marsh environment for the bird life. ME wished to give credit to Tim Mitton (Environment Agency) for supporting the work.

## **Refreshments Break**

### **Any Other Matters Arising:**

**White Cross Wind Farm** - TP opened the discussion with an outline of the planning application no. 77576 as follows;

- Consultation by North Devon Council ends on 3rd November 2023
- Cable comes ashore by Saunton Sands Hotel and goes underground on the Braunton Burrows to cross the Taw by the white cottage and arrive at East Yelland Substation

17 sheets of location plans with 20 environment statements and an environment assessment

Other contributions to discussion were as follows;

- Trenches may not go all the way but will be 30M to 100M wide. - Restoration after cable laying and the prospect of contractors leaving the site in better condition than found in.
- Power coming in will be DC (direct current) which will need conversion to AC by turbines. Hence a turbine hall 100M x 50M x 10M high or East Yelland sub station.
- Ecology recovery time and use of biodiversity credits to offset damage done. Natural England will monitor this process.
- Impact on the Biosphere is seen as minimal in a from a maritime perspective. Hydrology could be affected. Impact on Burrows wildlife will be extensive.
- Suggested that TTEF invite White Cross to make a public presentation. This had been done at Braunton. Another suggestion was to explore an extension to the consultation period

After discussion on whether the Forum wished to object to the planning application a consensus position was to object on specific grounds. It was left to the Chair and the P&CC to meet and take matters forward.

**Action P&CC**

### **4 Urgent Matters Brought Forward by the Chair:**

TP reported the Forum's involvement as a stakeholder in the government's Shoreline Management Plan, SMP 18 Hartland Point to Anchor Head (North Devon & Somerset) The Lead Authority is North Devon Council.

## **5 Agenda items proposed for the next meeting:**

MH-B had been in touch with Adrian Dowding as a prospective speaker from the Westcountry Rivers Trust. It was proposed AD be invited to the AGM. **Action MH-B**

## **6 AOB:**

Regenerative Farming - MH-B reported a meeting to be held at Barnstaple Library on 8th November with Andy Gray from River Taw Fisheries & Conservation Association.

Access to Skern by windsurfers has raised concern locally.

## **7 Dates of forthcoming Meetings: TTEF, AGM 7.00pm Monday 15th January**