TAW TORRIDGE ESTUARY FORUM

Minutes of the meeting held on Mon. 28th April 2025 in the Beechfield Centre at 7.00pm

Present:

Chris Fuller	Torridge District Council & Speaker
Susan Smith	Bideford Town Council
Mike Teare	Bideford River Torridge Heritage Trust
Tony Nichols	Rolle Canal Society
Chris Dee	BTO WeBS
Helen Sheard	Bideford Sustainability Group
Brian Hopkins	Bideford Sustainability Group
Martyn Bennett	Bideford Harbour
Sandra Knight	Coastwise ND
Anne Marie Eveleigh	Earth Action North Devon
Simon Cartwright	Bideford Amateur Rowing Club
Chris Salisbury	Taw & Torridge Wildfowling Club
David Brain	Environment Agency
Helen Cooper	Save Our Sands
Tony Bown	supporter
Aaron Lowe	Skern Lodge
Tom Humphreys	ND Biosphere
Tristan Otten	Torridge District Council
Tara Jenkins	North Devon Council
Elizabeth Dee	North Devon Council
Jeff Needham	Tawstock P.C. & Vice-Chair / Treasurer
Ian Crawford	Secretary
Tony Pratt	North Devon Yacht Club & Chair

1. Welcome & Introductions: The chair welcomed everyone. Members old and new introduced themselves

Apologies for Absence: Sally Ramsden, Justin Gillett, Jenny Carey-Wood, Chris Northrop, Paul Brown, Donna Sibley, Sue Prosper, John Puddy, Debbie Frazer, Rick Knight, Mark Cann, Peter Hames, Tim Jones, Andy Cox, Chris Hassall, Mark Haworth-Booth, David Dixon & Devon Marine Forum

2. Adoption of Minutes of Previous TTEF Meeting: Mon. 20th January 2025

3. Guest Speaker: Chris Fuller, Economic Development Manager, TDC
Chris was welcomed by the chair and opened his address confirming that the Estuary Strategy goes live from Tuesday 29th April and the consultation will run for until Wed. 28th May. His presentation, Torridge Estuary Strategy 2025 - 2030, had been circulated to Forum Members previously and he apologised for the lack of a projector and handed out copies of the slides as a substitute. Chris stated that the time had come to put all the pieces of the jigsaw together including previous strategies. Bringing vessels into the estuary has been a main focus supported by the new owners of the shipyard and linking to future needs connected to Floating Offshore Wind in the Celtic Sea. The Appledore Clean Maritime Innovation Centre has exciting potential and could play a significant role in creating a brighter maritime future for the area.

Bideford quay is generally considered to be quite under-utilised. TDC have involved a wide range of interested parties in the development of this strategy. The strategy has been limited to the waters under the influence of TDC and consideration has been given to local government reorganisation which means that TDC might not exist in 3 years time. The work has tried to take into consideration a range of factors, including future economic growth as well as environmental aspects and resident / visitor interests such as clean water and river uses.

Questions to the Speaker included reference to the need for affordable social housing to assist economic development, with less housing development on the edge of the estuary. Development of a strategy could be restricted if bylaws were not changed as the harbour regulations currently limit the scope of activity. Concern about access for electric cables was raised as was the impact of seaweed farming on the fishing industry.

4. Refreshment Break

5. Reports:

a)TTEF / P & C Committee. Report had been circulated. Tony Pratt drew attention to the Richmond Dock planning application which the committee had been prepared to support subject to heritage stipulations made by TDC.
However other concerns are now raised including, the continued use of the dry dock where it would be used to store vessels under a fixed roof which would prevent access for larger craft, the preservation of the docks heritage and public access to the site. The Forum position is now to object to this application until a list of issues drawn up by the Chair and sent to TDC, are addressed.

b)Finance Report: Jeff Needham reported that funds stand at £3278.

c) Estuary Reports:

Bideford Harbour: Martyn Bennet reported that safety standards were being introduced on all quays supported by a Code of Conduct which will be published on TTEF website. H M Paul Brown's report to be circulated
Appledore Instow Ferry: Chris Northrop's report has been circulated

d) N D Biosphere Tom Humphries reported that sand dunes had been cleared and a brief report would be sent to the Secretary

e) N D Coast Landscape: The Chair reported Jenny Carey-Wood's imminent retirement and that he would send a thank-you to her in recognition of her support of the Forum

f) Devon Wildlife Trust: Debbie Frazer's report has been circulated

g) Harbour Users Group: Mike Teare's report has been circulated

h) Bideford Heritage Harbour: Mike Teare's report has been circulated

i)Love Braunton: Sue Prosper's report to be circulated

j) Natural England: No report

k) Any Other Reports:

WeBS Report: Chris Dee's report has been circulated

Website Usage Report: Chris Dee's report has been circulated

Westcountry River Trust: The Chair reported that WRT are working with maize growers in the Taw catchment to reduce runoff due to bare earth left after harvesting of maize crops. Mark Haworth-Booth's report will be circulated with other late reports.

Tony Bown reported that a survey was being done of wrecks in the estuary. Chris Fuller offered to send a link to the survey.

6. Matters Arising from Minutes of 21st October 2024 - None

7. Matters brought forward by the Chair. We are looking for a replacement of the Secretary from January Forum 2026 - job description under Current Issues, TTEF Website

8. Agenda Items for Next Meeting. Suggestions for Speakers for future Forums should be sent to Secretary or Chair

9. AOB.

- **The Secretary on behalf of Sally Ramsden (WI)** raised the existence of PFAS, commonly known as "forever chemicals," at several UK military sites, including RM Chivenor in Devon. This initiative follows the development of a new PFAS risk screening tool by the Environment Agency, aimed at identifying and prioritising pollution threats.(*RM Chivenor is of particular concern due to its proximity to protected environmental areas, such as shellfish waters, PFAS are synthetic chemicals used in firefighting foams and various consumer products. They are persistent in the environment and have been linked to serious health issues, including cancer and reproductive disorders*) The Secretary offered to contact RM Chivenor for a response about any action being taken by them

- **Helen Sheard** mentioned a walk being led by Mary Breeds at Ford Woods, Bideford EX39 5XU 7.00pm Tues. May 20th - for further information - https://www.devonwildlifetrust.org/events/2025-05-20-walk-explore-ancient-woodland-ford-woods-bideford

- **Anne Marie Eveleigh** mentioned 'World Clean Up Day Tarka Trail & Estuary Clean Up Event on Friday 26th September

- **Tom Humphries r**eported that ND Biosphere team are running a Festival of Nature in Appledore on Saturday 17th May, which would be great for Estuary Forum members to attend and promote. We have Matt from Westcountry Rivers Trust (WRT) sharing some opportunities for Freshwater Citizen Science in the early afternoon. Details of the event programme are in the link below:

https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0/#search/Tom.Humphreys%40devon.gov.uk/jrjtXRGPMLzzTphThbCKvkxpcgzrnHwqldkmpwmDBkTbfrmdJHbsXGRtCNJDpZSnPpnQLhpm?projector=1&messagePartId=0.1

- **Tristan Otten** reported North Devon and Torridge Councils have published their Local Development Scheme, which is a timetable setting out when they intend to start and finish the plan-making process. Details of our Local Development Scheme can be found here: https://www.northdevon.gov.uk/council/strategies-plans-and-policies/environment-and-planning-policies/local-plan/local-development-scheme-lds

10. Future Meeting Dates: 21st July, 20th October and January 19th 2026