

Lower Otter Restoration Project

Liaison Group meeting

Wednesday, 3 November 2021 – 2.30pm to 4.00pm

Meeting notes and actions

Attendees: Tom Wright (chair) Mark Rice, Mike Williams, Dan Boswell, Bridget Beer, Sam Bridgewater, Kate Ponting, Clare James, Kendal Archer, Tony Bracey, Katrina Holgate, Lorna Sherriff, Richard Bell, Haylor Lass, Geoff Porter, Derek Wensley, Geoff Jung, Chris Woodruff, John Hiles, Roger Sherriff and Jim Pyne.

Apologies: Peter Burgess, Helen Booker, Alison Slade, Megan Rimmer, Nick Pyne, James Chubb, Christine Channon, Sam Scriven, Jessica Bailey, Bill Roper and Sam Jeffcoat.

Welcome

Tom started the meeting stating how he felt about the flooding on 21 October and how it had damaged the reputation of the project. He is a strong supporter of the scheme but has been robustly questioned by the public and has found these comments very difficult to deal with. A lot of questions have been raised over competence and he completely fails to understand how a contractor can allow vehicles of such value and with pollution risk to be left on a flood plain when there was a forecast of flooding.

He would like an explanation of what will be done moving forward and how this now will affect the programme.

Progress update (flood)

[Presentation by Dan](#) (Environment Agency Senior Project Manager for LORP) to explaining timeline of flooding. More rain fell than forecasted. The incident is currently being investigated. Improvement measures have been put in place already with the flood warning system. This has now been automated and does not rely on a phone call being made to alert of advanced warning. Covered misconceptions and positives – presentation attached. Follow up questions and comments:

Tom – Finds it difficult to understand why this happened with flood and weather warnings, notifications of high tides and rainfall. Tom Pyne has never lost a beast or equipment to flooding. It makes him feel anxious about the project moving forward.

Geoff J – he was made aware at 11pm that night. Press reports have been poor and he thinks this needs to be challenged. Existing cricket ground – looking poor, will it be playable next season?

Response by Kate – As a member of the cricket club this is something they deal with most years and come through. Added some of the club has visited the new ground and were excited by the new site being provided as part of LORP.

John Hiles – Concerns re pollution of estuary. Were all sub-contractor vehicles using bio oil?

Dan/Tony – Yes, the investigation has looked at all tickets of vehicles to confirm this.

Haylor – Felt comms about the flood should be looked at. Information/updates needs to be shared with Budleigh Journal. Had notification on 28 Oct South Farm Road open again and was not.

Geoff P - Road closed signs at the top of Granary Lane, but nothing at Park Lane side. Tried to cycle through but no notifications. Barrier was blocking his exit out of flood water. Signage needs to be raised with DCC.

John H – Discussed the cycle ways, including Park Lane being part of National Cycle Way 2, and how notifications were placed to let public know were closed.

Dan – Responded by asking what normally happens when flooding occurs?

ACTION: Dan to raise with DCC.

Geoff P and others - It is you own risk if you decided to use roads/paths and 'chance it'.

Progress of LORP works

[Included in the attached presentation](#). Follow up questions and comments:

Tom – Please give a timetable of works – especially the construction of the road and tie in with bridge. **ACTION: Dan** – currently reviewing the programme, will come back to the group on this

Chris - What will change on site? Has the site set up been altered?

Dan – No changes to the compound but lots will change due to what has happened. We need to see what comes from the investigation.

Derek – Do the creeks naturally erode and change over time?

Dan/Mike – They have been created as suggested routes for water to exit the site, but they will branch, meander and develop smaller creeks into a complex pattern over time.

Trees

Presentation given by Mike attached. Follow up questions and comments:

Tom – Has been challenged by public over the vegetation clearance. Can we communicate the messages in this presentation?

Mike/Kate/Sam – this was on the planning application and the information boards. We have updated the LORP website to reflect questioning and misconceptions. Hoping the message is filtering down, important to keep repeating message, taking groups out to explain etc. What other misconceptions do we need to address?

ACTION: LORP Project Team to keep on explaining and sharing.

Tom – As well as the wetlands we should be promoting the wider natural environmental gains.

Roger – Should be piggybacking on COP26.

Geoff J – Thank you for the plants donated to Seaton Wetlands

John H – Otterton Parish Council AGM every May, would be happy for a presentation as part of that. **ACTION:** Bridget to correspond with dates.

Tom - Should KOR communications be here?

Bridget confirmed that we are working closely with the KOR Comms team.

Geoff J– No challenges or posts on social media. Should we be trying to answer through that medium?

Kate – use as gauge of public opinion but will take challenges or questions into a private conversation rather than general response to comments as this can prove unproductive and time-consuming. Would be pleased for feedback on what needs to be communicated.

Haylor – Have you secured the trees that you want yet, as aware of shortages?

Dan – Currently placing orders, are aware of issues with supply.

Geoff P – What about the Lombardy poplars? Will they be replaced?

Mike – No the Lombardy poplars are non-native species so will not be replaced; however we are taking cuttings from the Black poplars to grow on and replant.

Public access

Dan/Sam

Dan explained that through the life of the scheme we will give as much public access as possible, but certain footpaths will be limited. We will give as much warning as possible before closure. There will be improvements to the south part of the Western footpath, this is subject to a new planning application in due course. Previously was to be completed by FABLink as would have been ahead of the LORP works, but now part of LORP. The design will be comparable to the previous proposal.

Tom – It is important that it provides an improvement for those with mobility issues.

Chris – What is the timing of the application?

Dan/Mike – We need to have further conversations with EDDC planning officer.

Sam explained that CDE is looking at legal position of small craft in tidal waters. There is a legal right of navigation in tidal waters but at no detrimental impact to the SSSI. There is currently no public access to this area and it is not intended to create a new boating lake (no access in design). CDE taking advice and consulting with EA/Natural England and EDDC. Do we put out a voluntary message request or take a legal stance using regulation and/or byelaws? Hard to police but will have ranger presence.

Car parking along South Farm Road Seems to be less of an issue currently.

Tom – Spaces in the new official car park seem to have increased to 55.

Dan - The area has not increased, but DCC changed the layout to make more spaces.

John Hiles – A local resident went to cycle on South Farm Road was told in a forceful way by a Kier worker that they were not able to. **ACTION:** Tony and Kat to share note with Kier site team via a Toolbox Talk, public access is at own risk and a reminder to be polite and respectful at all times.

Geoff J – How do people feel about paying for parking as SFR was free?

Mike/Sam – No decision has been made regarding charging for parking.

John Hiles – Met Claire Wright and DCC on site to discuss and asked for layout to be considered for more vehicles.

Monitoring Steering Group

Mike

Mike explained the purpose of the Monitoring Steering Group is to feedback results and shape activity although setting up the group has been challenging. Currently working with what can be delivered with the funding available using volunteers and Citizen Science. Existing monitoring in place in the estuary by British Trust for Ornithology to include the new LORP areas and linking in with Plymouth Coastal Observatory and its coastal monitoring programme.

For monitoring flood risk there is a new logger on White Bridge to help measure water levels.

Jim – Is there any public access to that data? Concerns regarding fluvial flooding. Up the valley Frogmore Road became fully flooded in 40 mins. Has concerns and has not been satisfied with the explanations in the past.

Mike – Modelling has shown that this is has been accounted for.

Richard – After flood on 21 Oct what measurements and what data are you collating? Monitoring of all incidents is useful. Would like to compare measurements on current recent flood event and after scheme completed. Is important to know if the scheme is working or not?

Dan/Mike – Information will be shared when reports are completed, this takes some time to produce, but is available to the public. **ACTION:** Dan to share information with the Liaison Group when it is available.

Maintenance of scheme

Richard – Raised concerns of responsibility for maintenance once scheme is complete, so it operates in the optimum way. Asked for a breakdown of this.

Dan – This detail is in the planning conditions. The road and footpaths are DCC responsibly, but the majority of the scheme is sustainable, and maintenance is very low.

John Hiles – COP26 states that sea rises will be 28cms by 2050, has this been taken into consideration when designing the scheme?

Dan/Mike – Think those figures may be incorrect, but yes, this is the whole reason for the scheme.

Geoff P – Asked if there was the provision for lots of high banks for birds within the scheme.

Dan – We have some bird islands as part of the scheme. We do not have planning to put more in.

Summary and close

Tom

The purpose of this LORP Liaison Group is to get to know the information and to agree how to disseminate it. Meeting very important for sharing information, more effective by getting to know each other, and coming together. Thank you all.

Next meeting to be confirmed for February 2022.