



Lower Otter Restoration Project

Minutes of the Stakeholder Group Meeting

Clinton Devon Estates Office, Bicton Arena

10.00 am Wednesday 2 August 2017

1 - Attendees

Cllr Tom Wright (Chair)	East Devon District Council & Budleigh Salterton Town Council
Chris Woodruff	East Devon AONB
James Chubb	East Devon District Council
Ian Wycherley	Representing South Farm residents and businesses
Mike Williams	Environment Agency
Megan Rimmer	Environment Agency
Andrew Howard	KOR Communication
David Butler	Representing Granary Lane residents
Marcus Adams	South West Water
Richard Spurway	Devon County Council
Haylor Lass	OVA
Christy Tolliday	Natural England
Cllr Christine Channon	Devon County Council

2 - Apologies

Malcolm Baker	Budleigh Salterton Cricket Club
Cllr Geoff Jung	East Devon District Council - Colaton Raleigh
Sam Bridgewater	EDPHCT / Clinton Devon Estates
Jayne Savage	Clinton Devon Estates
David Turner	East Devon District Council

Introduction

The chairman felt the public exhibition into the four shortlisted options for the project (held at the Temple Methodist Hall at Budleigh Salterton on Wednesday, July 5, 2017) had been very informative. He said it had been well publicised, and while it was no criticism of the organisers he noted that around 2.5 per cent of the population of Budleigh Salterton had attended. He would encourage more people to attend the next exhibition about the preferred option.

David Butler had also attended the exhibition and said people would find it hard to say they had not been consulted, and that discontent around the process had disappeared.

Ian Wycherley was disappointed the stakeholder group had not been able to view and comment on the feedback forms prior to the exhibition, and asked that the forms to be used at the next exhibition could be circulated beforehand.

Feedback from July 5 public exhibition

Mike Williams said the EA had been pleased with the attendance which was broadly similar to that at exhibitions into flood defence schemes in the area.

Megan Rimmer presented the feedback from the exhibition (previously circulated). The chairman said it was clear that Option 3 was the preference of those who had taken part. DB said he felt Option 3 was viable, valuable and valid.

MW said that at this stage all the options were still broad proposals and finer details would vary depending on factors such as cost and social acceptability.

MR added that ground investigations were about to commence and these would help inform the final option to be selected to be taken forward for further consultation. The outcome of these investigations could not be presumed.

DB asked if it was possible to break down the feedback so it could be better understood what each of the various stakeholder groups such as Granary Lane residents, the cricket club, and South Farm businesses wanted. IW felt that this would have been more easily achieved if stakeholder group members had been able to comment on the feedback forms.

Haylor Lass said the stakeholder group was wide-reaching and the exhibition helped the project understand the views of the general public. People were most interested in what affected them directly, and that feedback was for guidance and did not mean any option was set in stone.

MW said there was no data on what the members of the cricket club felt, although the chairman added that he felt that while members had a sentimental attachment to their current ground it was widely accepted that it was not viable to remain there.

DB added that Granary Lane residents had attended the exhibition in good numbers and they had welcomed the opportunity. IW said there were some new people in the South Farm area who were wondering how to react, but generally people were accepting of the project, providing there were assurances over the road access.

HL said the area was hugely popular with walkers and others and the OVA was keen that the chosen option recognised that maintaining public access was vital.

The chairman said the project was likely to lead to more visitors to the area, as had been seen at Seaton Wetlands. IW noted that holiday traffic had been identified as by far the biggest issue by the Otterton neighbourhood planning team and hoped traffic would be a major consideration for LORP.

Funding

Mike Williams said the project had found a likely French partner in the Conservatoire du Littoral, and had been encouraged to proceed with a bid for INTERREG VA funding, to be submitted in September. La Vallee de la Saane in Normandy was facing similar issues to the Lower Otter.

The Heritage Lottery Fund had urged the project to submit a revised bid in December and there was a reasonable chance it would be successful if the issues identified had been addressed.

Issues log

Mike Williams said any new issues identified through the public consultation would be added to the issues log.

AOB

Andrew Howard gave an update on the project website and said there had been significant increases in visitor numbers after the public exhibition.

Next meetings

October 18, 2017 (subject to there being sufficient new information from ground investigations)

January 24, 2018.

Statement of meeting

The stakeholder group noted that following the public exhibition held on July 5, 2017, in Budleigh Salterton the preferred option of those who attended and gave feedback at the time, or who gave feedback online, was Option 3.

This option, also referred to as Big and Little Marsh Floodplain Restoration, had both the greatest level of support and the least level of objections.

On the basis of the event and information from technical investigations there will be another event. The group hopes more people will attend when there are firmer proposals.

The chairman noted that the number of people who attended the July exhibition equated to 2.5 per cent of the population of Budleigh Salterton. He would encourage the public to attend the exhibition on the final proposals in greater numbers.

Ground work investigations are on-going. The project is awaiting the results of these surveys and various funding applications.

The meeting closed at 11.05am