



Lower Otter Restoration Project

Minutes of the Stakeholder Group Meeting

Rolle Estate Office

2pm Tuesday 24 September 2019

1 - Attendees

Cllr Tom Wright (Chair)	(East Devon District Council & Budleigh Salterton Town Council)
Cllr Geoff Jung	(East Devon District Council, Woodbury & Lypstone - Environment Portfolio holder – previously Colaton Raleigh)
Cllr Alan Dent	(East Devon District Council – Budleigh and Raleigh)
Cllr Jim Carter	(East Budleigh and Bickton Parish Council)
Richard Spurway	(Devon County Council)
Mike Williams	(Environment Agency)
Megan Rimmer	(Environment Agency)
Mark Rice	(Environment Agency)
Geoff Porter	(Otter Valley Association)
Haylor Lass	(Otter Valley Association)
Sam Bridgewater	(EDPHCT / Clinton Devon Estates)
Carla Whitaker	(Clinton Devon Estates)
Iain Ure	(Otterton Parish Council)
Andrew Howard	(KOR Communications)
Jim Pyne	(Pulhayes Farm)
Chris Jenner	(FAB Link)
Ian Wycherley	(Representing South Farm residents and businesses)
Pauline Dyer	(Representing Granary Lane Residents)

2 - Apologies

Alison Slade	(Natural England)
Bridget Beer	(Environment Agency)
Chris Woodruff	(East Devon AONB)
David Butler	(Representing Granary Lane residents) P. Dyer attended in his place
Marcus Adams	(South West Water)
James Chubb	(East Devon District Council)
Peter Chamberlain	(Devon County Council)
Sam Scriven	(Jurassic Coast Trust)
Tom Pyne	(South Farm) Jim attended in his place.
David Turner	(East Devon District Council)
Nicky Daniels	(Otter Valley Association)
Cllr Christine Channon	(Devon County Council)
Sean Mills	Budleigh Salterton Cricket Club

3 - Introduction

Actions all completed. Minutes Agreed.

4 – For Discussion - Updates and forthcoming work

Megan Rimmer and Sam Bridgewater provided an update on the project as follows:

- Jacobs are progressing the detailed design and Environmental Statement (ES) working towards submission of the planning application in late 2019. This requires a significant amount of supporting material.
- Although modelling not completed, preliminary data and analysis suggests that there is a low risk of saline water contamination of drinking water from SWW borehole.
- The Technical Steering group met recently to continue advising on detailed design work.
- The Outline Business Case for LORP has been approved within the EA.
- A range of wildlife, habitat and allied surveys have been completed to support the Environmental Statement
- With regards to guiding visitor management design, a special interest group was convened including members of EDDC, OVA, RSPB and DWT. The group agreed a preference to maintain low key infrastructure. Doug Rudge and Frazer Rush who helped design Seaton wetlands were contracted to develop plans, which are outlined in a report (available on the website) as a result of this engagement.

Parking:

- It was noted that the attractive nature of the facility will attract more visitors to the site which could cause increased parking difficulties in Otterton.
- It was noted at the Technical Steering Group that a parking facility would be beneficial at the North end of the site, as well as consideration of the landscape at the East side of White Bridge. However, these parking opportunities lie outside the direct project area.
- The meeting confirmed there is provision of parking on the site to offset the loss of roadside parking and protect the SSSI, with existing informal parking “designed out” in the detailed project plans. Clinton Devon Estates has begun discussions with EDDC about whether any new parking facility could be adopted with profits directed towards supporting future site management. Should parking charges be implemented the group recognised the need for proactive positive PR with regards to the loss of free spaces on the road
- It was agreed that the potential availability of land for parking would be discussed further with Clare James (Estates Surveyor, Clinton Devon Estates), Otterton Parish Council and Devon County Council Highways. These discussions will be separate to and outside the scope of LORP.
- It was also noted that a number of visitors make use of the old railway line and associated roads for parking and that this would likely continue, particularly by Cricket Club visitors when big matches are played due to the proximity of the proposed new club site.

Cricket Club:

- Malcolm Baker is no longer involved with the Cricket Club and the Chairman is now Sean Mills who replaces Greg Evans.
- The planning application for the Cricket Club relocation was submitted in August, a response is anticipated in November. To date there have been no negative public comments on the planning portal.
- The risk to pedestrians and vehicles at the proposed entrance to the Cricket club was noted. Consideration of clear signage was requested due to significant risk of traffic speed.
- Use of Kersbrook for parking and construction traffic was noted as being undesirable as causes issues with access to properties. Alternative location to be sought if possible.
- If planning for the Cricket Club is approved, but LORP is not there is the potential to proceed but agreement would be required from the Estate and external funding would be required.

Interreg Funding Application:

- The funding application will be resubmitted in October, with a decision expected at the end of January. The French Partners (who are akin to the National Trust) are still committed to the project and contact with delegations has been positive.
- The partner project within the Sâane Valley is startlingly similar to LORP, but equally complicated. If Interreg funding is successful and both projects proceed to implementation phase they will pave the way for proactive adaptation to climate change at other estuarine sites. Since the initiation of LORP there has been a sea change in climate change thinking, understanding and support for active management particularly at large agency level including UK Coastal groups and the French Biodiversity Agency.
- If the Interreg funding application is unsuccessful the project does not become unviable, but it will impact the delivery timescale and alternative sources of funding will be required.

FAB Link:

- On 11th July the French Regulator statement asserted that the 'conditions were not met' for their approval and that they would wait for more clarity on Brexit, essentially leaving the door open for approval. No decision will be made until after Brexit.
- It is now more likely that the LORP delivery will be prior to FAB, with FAB works unlikely to begin until late 2022. There is a 10 year Options Agreement in place with Clinton Devon Estates with a parallel Compulsory Purchase Order.
- Potential construction and timing conflicts between FAB and LORP appear to be surmountable.
- The field opposite South Farm Cottages has been identified as a proposed compound for FAB Link (to be used over a period of 2 years) which would reduce construction traffic through the town and limit the impact on the local town and residents. The current LORP alignment of the carpark and new South Farm Road would mean the loss of use of this compound. A solution is in discussion regarding potential realignment of the road. Consideration would be made for visitor access and bird migration in the summer during FAB delivery phasing.
- FAB want to work together with LORP with regards to the Western footpath.

Western Footpath – FAB Link

- With regards to the Western Footpath, LORP could progress first and raise and widen the footpath to accommodate later works. This would require a redesign to allow for works access via a dry route that is not tidal. FAB and LORP engineers would work together to ensure the integrity of the structures are sufficient, maintained and reinstated.
- The raising of the footpath (approx. 2ft) would have the benefit of maintaining the continuity and future-proofing of the coastal path against sea level rises. It will have limited species impact and will also include the undergrounding of cables (already due to be implemented by the AONB in conjunction with the FAB project) improving flight paths for birds. There is no intention to re-designate the footpath as a cycle path, and the actual path would remain the same width as the existing one. Only the bank would be wider.
- It was acknowledged that some people may head north of South Farm Road via the western footpath. Detailed design is ensuring risks of tidal entrapment are minimised. Considerations with regards to public safety are being considered very carefully and this location will be checked.
- It was noted that the removal of spoil at Big Bank and during other works would be used to raise the old tip site, but that an area is required for temporary soil storage. Maintaining cattle access related to Pulhayes Farm has been designed into the project.

SWW Overflow Pipe

- The proposed 'hard engineering' protection of the existing SWW overflow pipe behind the shingle bar (part of the Jurassic Coast World Heritage Site) is not supported by Natural England or the Jurassic Coast Trust as it doesn't support the development of natural processes. LORP is trying to avoid a hard engineering solution and through discussions with SWW potential solutions are being investigated. This includes directional drilling under the estuary to lay a new underground pipe, and the potential removal of the existing pipe. Whilst there would be a financial outlay to include this in the project, it would ultimately reduce the ongoing financial impact of protecting the existing pipe and increase the potential use and function of the pipe.

South Farm Road

- Traffic lights are not a requirement on the new road as there are sufficient passing places and visibility designed in.

Kersbrook

- It was noted that no interaction or impact on East Budleigh is expected as a result of LORP. However, the Kersbrook culvert (Western side) could have significant impact. This area is separate to LORP and whilst consideration has been made, it is out of scope.
- It was recommended to flag to the responsible body for investigation (EA and EDDC).

5 – For Discussion – Issues Log – updates, comments and issues to close

Mosquito Survey

- Public Health England have been supplying data to Jacobs as part of the nationwide research initiative looking at estuaries and wetlands. Mosquitos are not believed to be a significant issue and potential problems such as creation of stagnant standing water can be designed out.

Boating – Right of Tidal Navigation

- The Right of Tidal Navigation presents a potential issue for the future use of the estuary. At high tide the shallow flooded intertidal area behind the shingle bar could be a potential draw to kite surfers/paddleboarders etc. It would be worth thinking ahead as retrofitting a solution (through by-laws/voluntary Wildlife Refuges) would likely be more difficult to implement. Thinking ahead it would be useful to investigate by-laws to prevent use before usage is established. It may be possible to restrict use by design in the land around the site, or there is the option of establishing a Voluntary Wildlife Area, however this is difficult to police.
- Commercial watersports are a risk, however there is the chance that locally this could be desirable which would present a conflict with the project deliverables. Natural England will expect delivery of the range of species and habitats identified in Exe Flood Defence Strategy.
- This needs inclusion in the ES.

Invasive species

- CDE have treated the Japanese knotweed on the site of the old tip. The matter of invasive species is to be added to the issues log.

6 – For Discussion – Public Engagement

Lessons Learned

- The importance of not engaging too early when not enough detail is available was noted.

Planning application strategy

- A small strategy meeting is to be held prior to the planning application. To avoid mis-informed sensational reporting in the press it was agreed to pre-empt local press engagement prior to the planning application submission.
- It was noted that objections at this stage must go through the planning portal.

Points of note

- The public footpath is anticipated to be of particular importance and interest to the public and residents and therefore should be considered of particular note in future public engagement.
- A combined “Information” session with Otterton, East Budleigh and Budleigh Salterton was agreed to be held, ideally in the East Budleigh Village Hall, to include “the Consultation Journey” of the project. This engagement will form part of the planning application and therefore needs to be held prior to submission.

- A specified Councillor session at the opening of the engagement event was recommended prior to opening the hall to the wider public.
- Consideration to be given to new residents who may not be aware of previous public engagement.
- It was agreed to advertise on local radio and BBC Spotlight if possible. KOR to pursue this avenue.
- If required, on-site dynamic engagement events could be effective, although thought that this would likely only target a limited audience.

7 – For Discussion – Future communication with the stakeholder group

The next meeting is anticipated to include details of the funding decision and outcome of the planning application.

8 - AOB

None

9 - Statement

Andrew Howard was requested to write a statement to represent the outcome of the meeting.

10 – Actions

- 1** Potential availability of land for parking would be discussed further with Clare James (Estates Surveyor, Clinton Devon Estates), Otterton Parish Council and Devon County Council Highways.
Iain Ure/Sam Bridgewater
- 2** It was acknowledged that some people may head north of South Farm Road via the western footpath which may pose a risk with regards to being trapped during high tides. Considerations with regards to public safety are being considered very carefully and this location will be checked.
Megan Rimmer
- 3** It was recommended to flag Kersbrook to the responsible body for investigation (EA and EDDC).
Cllr Jim Carter
- 4** Right of Navigation: Investigate by-laws to prevent use before usage is established
Sam Bridgewater
- 5** Inclusion of Right of Navigation in the ES.
Megan Rimmer

6 Invasive Species to be included in issue log.

Megan Rimmer

7 Small engagement strategy meeting to be held prior to the submission of planning.

Megan Rimmer

8 Public information session to be held prior to planning application submission

Megan Rimmer