

**STEART FORUM**  
**MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 21 FEBRUARY 2018**  
**AT STOCKLAND SPORTS AND SOCIAL CLUB**

**1. PRESENT:**

Barry Leathwood (Chairman), Dick Best, Phil Brewin, John Chaplin, Andy Darch, Vanessa Dare, Phil Edwards, Andrew Guilding, Anne Hayes, Susan Jones, Alys Lambert, Alys Laver, Steve Mewes, John Sivyver, and Aly Prowse (Admin).  
Kevin House: Environment Agency; Matt Phillips: Team Van Oord (Kier Services)

**2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:**

Apologies were received from Colin Leppard, Julie Pay and Sarah Littler.

**3. APPROVE MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING 8.11.17:**

The minutes of the meeting held on 8.11.17 were approved.

**4. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE LAST MEETING:**

**4.1 EA Steart Coastal Management Report (Kevin House)**

Great Crested Newts (GCN)

4.1.1 Concern had been expressed at the decline of the GCN population from those large numbers (circa 3,000) that were captured for relocating prior to the commencement of the scheme to the very few in number recorded in 2015 and in subsequent monitoring surveys. K.House explained that problems with planned transfers could not take place to ponds 29-34 because of disease testing restrictions and to ponds 1-10 (Area B) because they were not licensed to do so. There were other issues with ponds 6 & 7 in Stockland. The continuing failure to maintain suitable habitat e.g. existing ditches and ponds drying out and poaching around the edges of others, has not allowed the population to recover.

4.1.2 The Report makes a number of recommendations. However, no action has been taken as yet as consideration is being given to determine the best course of action. The preferred option currently is to see what can be done with the original ponds to improve their suitability; look at what is feasible and to explore options with the landowners, and then perhaps focus on the ponds with long term sustainability.

4.1.3 P.Edwards expressed concern that experiences from this scheme have not been disseminated to ensure lessons can be learned, in the hope to prevent recurrences with any future developments. He also asked what is going to be done to safeguard the future population. K.House said there will be a learning outcome from Steart; how for example NE will restructure licence applications, so other agencies will benefit.

**4.2 Water Supply to Steart Village**

4.2.1 The impact of blocking off the water supply to the village has had in the opinion of some, a negative impact on the bio-diversity of the area which could therefore affect the SSSI status, in addition to the loss of water in the ditches as a means of "wet fencing". Members of the Steart Resident's Group had highlighted this aspect during the consultations. P.Brewin advised that the EA consulted with the IDB and other consultees including Natural England, who agreed to the known implication of the Scheme. P.Brewin added that it was always a challenge to get a water supply to the peninsula, but there is no space to do so now. P.Edwards said his pond has much lower levels now and at Cox's for example, a pond that never dried out, is now dry early summer every year as are the majority of ditches.

4.2.2 D.Best said this is perceived as a problem, but we would need monitoring to prove or disprove it and would need more accurate gauging of levels which could determine any

action. P.Brewin said he could assist with water level monitoring as funding has been received from the EA and also could provide water level data. A.Guilding asked which of the ditches would want to be re-instated?; P.Edwards thought that C.Leppard would need to be spoken to regarding the SSSI condition.

K.House said with regard to GCN management, no monitoring has been undertaken in the ditches although he believes Natural England has done some condition assessment of the ditches. It was agreed to take up water and ditch management issues with C.Leppard. **Action: A.Lambert**

4.2.3 P.Edwards suggested that a bore hole to bring water to the peninsula would work and wondered who we would need to raise this with if this is something we might want to pursue. P.Brewin said it would be viewed as a private scheme and agreed that a bore hole could provide a solution. This will be subject to further discussion and it was suggested that a small focus group would look at this. **Action: Group to be determined.**

4.2.4 A.Darch said there is a potential problem at Dowells as the rhyes don't appear to work so the water has nowhere to go. P.Brewin said drainage is a problem which he is dealing with, but this is a different issue to the water supply on the peninsula. He also added that ditch management can be resolved.

K.House left the meeting at 3.30pm and said he will attend the next meeting.

#### **5. WWT STEART MARSHES VISITOR ASSESSMENT (Alys Laver):**

The quotation to repeat the visitor assessment was £15k. This was considered too high, so A.Laver advised that monitoring would be only done near Hill House, and the car parks at Steart Drove and Steart Gate. She has contacted SCC to enquire if Highways can supply the equipment and is awaiting a response.

#### **6. STOLFORD FLOOD DEFENCE SCHEME (Matt Phillips):**

M.Phillips outlined the plans for the Scheme which has a spill over impact to both WWT Steart Marshes and The Bristol Port Schemes. Maintenance of the shingle ridge and Catsford Common frontage is a very expensive and an ever-diminishing operation; it is a struggle to obtain enough shingle to maintain the ridge. Options were explored to cease maintenance whilst defending the properties at Stolford. The area will encompass circa 160 metres from the rock armour to the large outfall. The landscape will be different as the scheme will take 0.4 hectare from the saltmarsh.

- P.Brewin asked if modifications to the flap system would be required if the line of defence changed. M.Phillips said the defence line will not change. He had considered whether modifications to the flap would make it more reliable but had deemed this unlikely due to siltation.
- J.Sivyer asked if there would be any impact to the coastal path on the green bank; M.Phillips said only temporarily during construction.
- M.Phillips said the construction impact will be more readily felt by dog walkers. There will be a huge amount of material to be brought in via minor lanes in Wick although heavy plant will be accessed through Wall Common, Steart.
- Subject to Planning approval (expected at the end of March) construction will commence at the beginning of May until October.
- J.Chaplin said he would be happy to attend future meetings regarding this scheme.

#### **7. IMPACT OF HINKLEY C ON LOCAL PARISHES:**

A.Prowse ran through the presentation made to the Transport Forum by local parishes in January outlining in particular, problems as a result of the traffic generated by Hinkley C including the damage to verges and laybys along the C182, and volumes of HGVs and buses causing

innumerable delays and inconvenience. Rat running through villages and lanes is also an issue. Whilst not necessarily attributed to Hinkley C there has nonetheless been an unprecedented number of accidents between the C182 Combwich and Otterhampton junctions; 8 in the last 12 months. There will be a 50mph speed limit introduced in the Spring from the Rodway roundabout at Cannington through to Clayland Corner, Stogursey. P.Brewin is also aware that SCC is exercised with road drainage problems.

## **8. STAKEHOLDER UPDATES**

### 8.1 P.Edwards (SRG)

- P. Edwards asked for an update regarding the WWT Steart Marshes Strategic Policy. A.Laver is in the process of writing it and estimates it will be completed within the next 6 months.

### 8.2 J.Chaplin (TBPC)

- The planning permission will expire in 2020. Brexit may have an impact with regards to the development of the Port at Avonmouth.

### 8.3 S.Mewes (Somerset Wildlife Trust)

- As part of the Coastal Survey work, 2000 hectares has been surveyed to date.
- The outcome of the grant fund application under the Somerset Brilliant Coast Scheme should be known by the end of March.

### 8.4 A.Laver (WWT)

- Amendments to the proposed building design are being finalised; consultation will then follow.
- The new dog walking signs are nearly finished and is hoped the old ones will be removed and replaced in the next few weeks. S.Mewes noticed there were no signs on the outside of the hides to advise that dogs were not allowed inside.

### 8.5 P.Brewin (SDB)

- The outfalls are being monitored; these were heavily silted last year. The fish passes have been plugged as they were getting clogged up, which was letting silt back in. A.Laver added that there will be small de-siltation works undertaken before the end of March.

## **9. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

There was no other business.

## **10 DATE AND TIME OF THE NEXT MEETING:**

The date and time of the next meeting will be on Wednesday 13 June 2018, 2.30 - 4.30pm (venue to be confirmed).

The meeting ended at 4.15pm