

STEART FORUM
MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 12 DECEMBER 2018
AT HILL HOUSE CHRISTIAN CENTRE

PRESENT:

Barry Leathwood (Chairman), Anne Hayes, Dick Best, Phil Brewin, John Chaplin, Simon Clarke, Andy Darch, Vanessa Dare, Phil Edwards, Richard Foyle, Alys Lambert, Alys Laver, Colin Leppard, Steve Mewes, Colin Passmore, Mark Ward and Aly Prowse (Admin).
Bob Birkenhead (Comwich resident, observing).

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:

Apologies were received from Andrew Guilding, Susan Jones, Sarah Littler and Julie Pay.

2. APPROVE MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING 12.9.18:

The minutes of the meeting held on 12.9.18 were approved.

3. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE LAST MEETING:

a) Minute 4a - Great Crested Newts (GCN)

- i A.Lambert reported that a site meeting had been held during October attended by A.Lambert, S.Clark, C.Leppard, P.Brewin, A.Laver, K.House and J.Strimpton. This resulted with recommendations to improve the physical habitat of the ponds. Initially the works will be undertaken on ponds 33 and 34 as a pilot scheme. If positive results are observed, then similar improvements could be considered at remaining pond sites. A.Lambert circulated a more detailed note of the 'Grazing Meadow Improvement' pilot. S.Clark has submitted an interim funding bid of £13k over two years as match funding to feed into the project and the wider area.

b) Minute 4b - WWT Steart Marshes Strategic Policy

A.Laver has almost finished the draft marketing and commercial plan. The plan addresses the concerns of the local communities and will include a theme each year such as higher education. Alys will complete an executive summary for circulation.

Action: A.Laver

c) Minute 4c - Country Wall Flood Defence

- i Following the letter from the Forum to J.Chaplin expressing the concerns regarding Country Wall, John read out his response which identified a number of actions that together with the EA, he gave a commitment to undertake. These included working with key stakeholders to put in place procedures that will enable any breach to be repaired rapidly and review historic monitoring data to better understand the movement and deterioration of the shingle ridge. A copy of the letter will be circulated to members.
- ii C.Passmore said he believes it could take one major storm for the ridge to go as it is under extreme pressure currently. A.Darch said it is 'fortunate' that recent high tides have not been accompanied by bad weather. J.Chaplin said he will further engage with Colin and Andy and report back at the next meeting. **Action: J.Chaplin**

d) Minute 4e – Biffens Corner

A.Prowse made initial contact with the landowner at Biffens Corner whose boundary wall and shrubbery at times causes visibility problems exiting the junction on to the C182. Hopefully the dialogue can continue to try and instigate some improvement at this junction. Highways will be approached again as its involvement in the dialogue could be key. **Action: A.Prowse**

e) Minute 4f – "Slow Somerset" book. The Steart Residents' Group (SRG) meeting to discuss this issue has been arranged for 12.12.18 at 7pm.

4. SOMERSET'S BRILLIANT COAST PROJECT – Mark Ward:

Mark outlined the key elements of this project:

- 3-year project that commenced August 2018, mainly funded by the Hinkley C Community Fund
- Its aim is to develop and deliver community engagement, education and volunteering initiatives across the Somerset Coast, its wildlife and landscapes.
- To connect local people with the coastal environment, to help look after and value it. The project encompasses some 50 miles between Minehead and Brean.
- Three strands: - Curious Coast (knowledge of coast and its involvement in its conservation); Wild Beach (forest school led, involving 4 or 5 schools per year) and Parish Shores (parish council led engaging with their communities targeting projects near Hinkley Point).
- Liaising with the Severn Partnership and also working with WWT Steart Marshes.
- Feedback from some of the parishes includes concerns that the project could attract more traffic in the area.

5. WATER MANAGEMENT AT STEART PENINSULA:

a) Steart borehole

- i. The grant application to the Somerset Catchment Grant Scheme was successful. An award of £6800 was made against the original application for £8000.
- ii. Unfortunately, the application to the Greater Quantock Land Development Fund was not granted as the panel felt the project did not give an adequate return on capital investment, plus it felt the EA and NE should bear a large proportion of the cost.
- iii. A further meeting will be held with the EA and NE to determine what is needed for the restoration of the newt ponds.
- iv. P.Brewin has submitted a project for the Drainage Board to enlarge the pipe under the road by Dowells Farm which is hoped will help manage water distribution and flood defence.
- v. P.Brewin is drawing together a simple scoping document for the project. He has received one quotation and will approach another drilling contractor for a further quote.
- vi. C.Passmore said there may be a problem finding a fresh water source. P.Brewin agreed that the scheme would not be a goer if unable to find water. The scheme will proceed with caution. Technical specifications will be looked at in January and prices sought.
- vii. A potential site on land belonging to A.Darch has been identified. The pump could be powered by either electricity or possibly solar.

b) General

P.Brewin thanked the EA who had been very active with helping to manage the silt removal at both Steart village and Northbrook. Recently, the flaps had become very silted, the water on the tidal side was higher than the fresh water side so urgent maintenance work had to be undertaken. There is a small amount of water flowing now. The situation will be managed as part of a routine maintenance programme.

6. STAKEHOLDER UPDATES:

- Steve Mewes (Somerset Wildlife Trust)
 - A shoreline management plan meeting will be held in January 2019.
- Colin Leppard (NE)
 - Various surveys have been undertaken along the Severn Estuary regarding high tide roosts including Clevedon where there is a lack of saltmarsh at high tide and from Aust to Brean Down where there are 50 high tide roosts with 60% still on saltmarsh. A survey will be undertaken at Bridgwater Bay.
- S.Clarke (NE)
 - Talks are ongoing with EDF specifically regarding mitigation measures for disturbance to Shelduck and other birds that use the Parrett Estuary caused by the increase in boating traffic. EDF will examine opportunities to reduce disturbance on the shore. This

will include bolstering the fence on Wall Common to the shoreline, roosting and nests, infrastructure upgraded on the NNR at the end of the peninsula and the possibility of a new raised hide and a second hide at Wall Common perhaps halfway along the footpath from Dowells set back into the reed beds. Simon, C.Leppard and D.Best will discuss further as an overall project proposal and will also seek feedback from residents. A.Darch suggested the second hide would attract more people through the village, but he is not against renewing the older hides. C.Leppard said it would be linked with the coastal footpath and seasonal usage.

- A.Darch advised the boardwalk on the coastal path is dangerous as when it is wet it is very slippery. S.Clarke will investigate and repair as necessary.
- A.Prowse mentioned that over the last 2 or 3 months, cattle from the fields leading to Nettlebury (field with the Tower hide) have been on the coastal path at least 6 times. The fencing around the fields is very poor. There is a very large Longhorn bull in the field that could be pretty frightening were he to escape! S.Clarke will speak to the landowner and/or the tenant farmer.
- A.Laver (WWT)
 - An architect has been approached to design the replacement offices. Alys will consult with the local community.
 - One of the double gates at Steart Gate car park has been damaged. Alys asked if it needs to be replaced as WWT do not close them. C.Passmore said they are used when driving stock up and down the road, so they are required.
 - Photographers photographing the short-eared owls are becoming a nuisance as at times they park inconsiderately along the verges often leaving car doors open, thus impeding residents and other road users. Alys has erected signs requesting consideration to others and has tried to speak to people asking them to use the car parks.
- R.Foyle (Stockland Bristol)
 - J.Sivyer is currently trying to obtain funding for the proposed cycle path from Stockland to connect into the WWT Reserve to avoid using the Stockland/Otterhampton junction.
- V.Dare (EA)
 - The Stolford flood defence scheme is almost complete.
 - The Bridgwater Tidal Barrier Scheme consultation is open for comments until 1.2.19. Vanessa will email the copies of display boards and feedback to Aly for circulation.

7. ANY OTHER BUSINESS:

- a) P.Edwards asked when the highways sign will be erected in the village. A.Prowse has chased several times and has been advised that it will be done but it is not a current priority. Aly will continue to pursue.
- b) B.Birkenhead said he would like to repair the English Heritage sign (dated 1897) that is near Steart beach. He was advised to speak with A.Guilding as Chair of the Commoners.

8. DATE AND TIME OF THE NEXT MEETING:

The date and time of the next meeting will be on Wednesday 20 March 2019, 2.30pm at Hill House Christian Centre.

Post meeting - the meeting was deferred until 8.5.19

The meeting ended at 4.10pm.