

STEART FORUM
MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 13 JUNE 2018
AT HILL HOUSE CHRISTIAN CENTRE

1. PRESENT:

Barry Leathwood (Chairman), Dick Best, Phil Brewin, Andrew Guilding, Susan Jones, Alys Lambert, Alys Laver, Steve Mewes, Julie Pay, John Sivyver, Chris Westcott and Aly Prowse (Admin).

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:

Apologies were received from Colin Leppard, Simon Clarke, John Chaplin, Anne Hayes, Andy Darch, Vanessa Dare, Sarah Littler and Phil Edwards.

3. APPROVE MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING 21.2.18:

The minutes of the meeting held on 21.2.18 were approved.

4. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE LAST MEETING:

4.1 EA Steart Coastal Management Report

Great Crested Newts (GCN)

Alys Lambert said she had met with Kevin House, Colin Leppard, Alys Laver and Phil Brewin to discuss the GCN and water supply issues and reported the following:

4.1.1 The WWT and NE results for the GCN surveys during April/May are awaited. Once received, it was agreed initially to establish the current GCN population and following this, to review the recommendations of the 2016 GCN report.

4.1.2 It was agreed that WWT would arrange additional eDNA monitoring in ditches to the north of the site to establish whether there is any GCN presence. This will be carried out at the same time as the pond monitoring.

4.1.3 If feasible, following the GCN surveys identify where we might need to act on recommendations – shade, fencing etc.

Water Supply Issues. See Minute 7 below.

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

The current numbers of visitations using the two car parks is circa 47000-48000 per annum. To compare like for like data originally provided by Planning Solutions, monitoring will need to be carried out in the same periods and places i.e. Easter Holidays, May and August Bank Holidays (2019) at Biffen's Corner, the main car park, Marsh Farm and Steart Gate car park.

6. WWT STEART MARSHES STRATEGIC POLICY (Alys Laver):

This Policy is in progress, using the WWT marketing strategy template. Alys is currently inputting data from the most recent visitor surveys, plus input from the forums. The Policy will be circulated before being signed off. D.Best advised the Parish Community Plan is currently under revision; it may be appropriate to include some elements/reference to the Policy.

7. WATER LEVEL MONITORING STATION AT STEART VILLAGE (Phil Brewin):

7.1 Phil said the water level monitoring station had been installed in May on the tilting weir structure at the outfall from the ditch system. The equipment will enable the monitoring, in real time, changes in water level throughout the year and transmit the data to an IDB maintained website. The data will be used to inform the operation of water control structures, especially in response to heavy rainfall that could cause potential flooding issues to land, roads or properties on the peninsula. Additional monitoring stations will be added in the near future which will

provide information to the North and South brook ditch systems. The telemetry station is managed and maintained by the IDB. It was funded by the EA.

- 7.2 Phil provided data for the first month's operation which showed the level dropped from 5.2m to 5.1m, dropping 1cm per day (the norm would be 0.5cm per day). The optimum retention level is 5.3m. This data validates the claims of insufficient levels required to maintain wet fencing and the ditch system to support plant and animal life.
- 7.3 Phil suggested one option to introduce more water to the peninsula, which currently relies on rainfall, would be via a borehole. It would not be the intention to fill up the ditches, just to maintain a certain level. Phil supplied data from the exploratory work undertaken at Pawlett which had the same issues e.g. too dry in spring. There would be a number of steps to explore such as an abstraction licence, water quality, SSSI considerations and finance. Phil said the IDB does not have a budget for this but he would be willing to assist in the development of such a project. It was agreed to form a focus group to try and take this forward. Suggested membership included the EA, NE, WWT, IDB, residents and land owners and to target August for a first meeting with the desired outcome to try and form a proposal.
- 7.4 A.Guilding asked that if the ditches are filled up, could the water escape. Phil said this would form part of routine maintenance; higher water levels would make all the difference as it would help water flow through the flap thus help to alleviate heavy siltation in the summer; the two issues are interrelated.

8. SOMERSET BRILLIANT COAST PROJECT (Steve Mewes):

The grant application to the CIM fund was approved. The project encompasses community engagement and education. Dr Mark Ward will manage the project from August along with another member of staff, Tilda.

9. COUNTRY WALL (Andrew Guilding):

Andrew met with the Bristol Port Company agent as he is concerned about the vulnerability of the sea defences. The agent advised he had discussed this issue at Board level with the EA. A.Lambert said it is part of the EA's asset inspection programme looked at periodically, but it is not maintaining it. **Alys agreed to try and get some further detail.** D.Best said there is a shingle ridge forming behind Country Wall which may stop over topping but would not stop a surge – the only solution would be managed realignment.

10. STEAR COASTAL MANAGEMENT PROJECT – ANNUAL MONITORING REPORT 2016/17:

A.Lambert briefly advised that the site has developed as expected; a lot of monitoring will continue; some of the geomorphological and lidar data will be extended and groundwater monitoring will also continue. Alys will keep the Forum updated on any further development.

11. HIGHWAYS – ROADS FROM C182 OTTERHAMPTON JUNCTION TO STEART:

D.Best said prior to the start of the Scheme the EA made provision for passing places to be created and others to be improved, because of the single-track lane. Since the implementation of the Scheme and the resultant increased traffic, the roads and verges have deteriorated very badly.

A.Prowse sent photographs of the worst places to Highways along with a request for repairs to be carried out. She was advised there was no budget to repair defects in the passing places but Highways would be prepared to supply a gang for one day and a lorry load of planings to do some repairs or alternatively, supply a pile of planings for us to use as and when. A.Laver said WWT could store the planings at the compound. Highways would be advised. In addition, **Aly will forward the photos to the EA to illustrate the issue. A.Guilding will speak to the Bristol Port Agent & Colin Passmore re the large potholes at Marsh Farm, which are off the highway.**
Nb post meeting Highways were allocated some additional funding for road repairs so extensive patching was carried out, followed by surface dressing.

12. INCLUSION OF WWT STEART MARSHES IN “SLOW SOMERSET”;

A.Laver has been asked by a local author if he could include a half page of information about WWT Steart Marshes in the “Slow Somerset” Bradt guide. Alys wanted to check what local residents felt about this. Dick suggested we should ask the community. Otterhampton residents should also be included as they are the residents who experience the greatest volume of traffic. A meeting will be arranged before September. A.Laver will also be invited to attend. **Action: A.Prowse/D.Best**

13. STAKEHOLDER UPDATES:

13.1 Chris Westcott

- The fencing from Steart Gate to the foreshore was repaired last month. Dick has erected additional signage.
- NE are trying to keep on top of path maintenance.
- An apprentice has been appointed – Laura Robertson.
- Simon Clarke will be returning from his secondment.

13.2 Steve Mewes

- Steve announced that there is to be a first “Festival of Nature, led by the National Trust in May. This will be an annual event which will build over time. He also handed out “A Wilder Britain” publication.

13.3 John Sivyer

- John announced that Richard Foyle will now represent Stockland at future Forums although John will attend on occasion.

13.4 Dick Best

- Dick advised that Steart has got its own defibrillator which is located on the wall of the old chapel (opposite Steart Backrap). This was funded by the parish Hinkley C Community Fund.

14. ANY OTHER BUSINESS:

There was no other business

15. DATE AND TIME OF THE NEXT MEETING:

The date and time of the next meeting will be on Wednesday 12 September 2018, 2.30 - 4.30pm (venue to be confirmed).

The meeting ended at 4.10pm