

RIVER DEBEN ASSOCIATION

**Minutes of a meeting held via Zoom
on Wednesday, 11 November 2020**

1. **Present:** Joeske Van Walsum (Chair), Jane Alexander, Pauline Bloomfield, Peter Clay, Gary Doggett, Liz Hattan, Jane Haviland, Oliver Houchell, Mat Lis, Moray MacPhail, Sarah Zins

Apologies: Michael Holland, Robert Simper, Richard Verrill

In attendance: Alan Comber, Kathryn Cooper, Julia Jones, Caroline Matthews

2. **Minutes of meeting held on 16 September 2020**

No changes were requested. JH proposed that the minutes be accepted, seconded by LH.

[Action: JVW to post Minutes on RDA website]

3. **Matters arising**

All issues to be addressed during the meeting.

4. **Strategy**

JVW referred to the strategy document previously circulated to the Committee along with a list of sub-committees that cover the various strands of RDA business. He thanked the Committee members for their willingness to take on particular responsibilities via the sub-committees and then report back to the whole Committee.

5. **Committee Members – functions and gaps**

JVW welcomed Caroline Matthews (CM), who has volunteered to take over the role of Secretary from JA from the 2020 AGM. CM gave a brief outline of her interest in the Deben and joining the RDA Committee. CM is highly qualified and known by JH and SZ.

JVW thanked GD for taking on the role of Treasurer but proposed that he focusses instead on Marketing now that a qualified bookkeeper, Kathryn Cooper (KC) has offered to take on the role of Treasurer. KC is recommended for the role by PB. She has sailed on the Deben all her life and is keen to be involved in local groups.

JVW welcomed AC, RDA Website Administrator to the meeting. JVW thanked AC for the time and effort he gives to keeping the website up to date.

6. **Deben Estuary Partnership**

JVW summarised the recent DEP meeting he and JH attended on 12 October. Little action has occurred since lockdown in March and no clear plan of action was evident at the meeting re FC1. JH said that contrary to expectations, the latest draft of the DEP Plan is not a material planning document. JH has requested a list of achievements which will shape the nature of the next draft and the DEP aim to table this at their next meeting.. JVW would like to avoid duplication by the DEP and RDA but noted that some members of the DEP Committee do not share this ambition.

[Action: JVW and JH to consider options for developing a more effective working relationship with the DEP.]

7. **Accounts Update**

GD now has the bank card to facilitate online banking and will arrange for payments due for printing and postage to be made. He has looked into a Go Cardless system for membership subscriptions and hopes to take this further with KC, when in post.

[Action: GD to liaise with MM regarding membership subscriptions and with the new Treasurer, once in post]

8. Membership Update

MM reported that membership is building but noted that a quarter of new members do not appear to have paid a subscription. MM's current focus is on obtaining contact details for all members and payment in full of subscriptions. MM welcomed the advent of online banking and hopes it could be linked to a web-based payment system.

[Action: MM to liaise with the Treasurer regarding missing or partial membership subscriptions]

9. Report from the Conservation: Nature and Water Quality Sub-committee

JH confirmed the formation of a new sub-committee. JH will lead on Nature with LH leading on water quality. Aims include:

- establishing links with the Suffolk Wildlife Trust with a need to be mindful of their limited resources, e.g., the potential for RDA to be of assistance to the SWT.
- Building on existing links with The Essex and Suffolk Rivers Trust and English Nature; with potential for RDA volunteers to assist with fish surveys.
- Looking to be a champion for the health of the river and developing a strategy for this with nature and water quality as our focus.
- Aiming to incorporate the length of the river catchment with the associated aim of widening RDA membership and interest.

10. Water Quality

LH said that there is a lot the RDA can do on water quality. Ideas are being discussed with the Conservation Subcommittee. The Environment Agency has recently published a Water Quality Report for England as part of the Water Framework Directive. The River Deben scored "moderate" on ecological status and "failed" on chemical status. Every river failed on the latter, and the Deben was average overall. Agriculture and waste water were major contributors. Further information is available on the EA website under Rivers. JW said the RDA's ambition should be to improve the quality of the water in the Deben to meet the highest standards.

11. Talks

JH has identified several potential speakers on subjects including beach-combing, water quality and the Suffolk Wildlife Trust. JW said hosting regular talks, either online or in person (when permitted) will be an attractive aspect of membership of the RDA.

12. Walks

PB outlined her thoughts about arranging a variety of walks for members starting in April 2021 if permitted, and thereafter once a month. They could be led by different Committee members, include lunch or tea, and with links to the talks (as above). JJ suggested books featured in the latest edition of The Deben as helpful resources for local river-based walks.

13. Attracting new members

JW and GD have approached local publicans and restaurateurs with a view to securing a discount on food and drink at several establishments close to the Deben for RDA members. This is going well and agreements will be finalised for when Covid restrictions are lifted. It was noted that the offers could dovetail with RDA walks, talks and RDA events. MM raised the question of whether this would require a membership card or a phone app. It was noted that not all members will have smart phones and that a membership card may be the preferred option. GD has a mock-up of a card which he will circulate to the Committee for comment.

[Action: GD to circulate draft membership card to the Committee and JW and GD to continue negotiations with local establishments]

14. Social Events

PB had nothing to add until it is known when social events may be arranged, at which time she will be delighted to organise all kinds of events.

15. Maritime Woodbridge / Deben Festival

MM confirmed that the Maritime Woodbridge Committee has agreed that the next Festival will be in 2022. Current restrictions make future planning problematic and if anything is possible in 2021, it will be small-scale and arranged at short notice.

16. Update re Woodbridge Ferry

ML said a suitable clinker-built launch, capable of carrying 6 passengers has been found but the need to find somewhere suitable to land at Sutton remains.

17. AGM 2020

JVW requested that all Committee members attend the meeting which will be via Zoom at 6.30pm on Wednesday 18 November. It will be an opportunity to thank SZ for her Chairmanship and retiring Committee members. The aim is to make the event as different, fun and interesting as possible in the circumstances. A short film of JVW interviewing 'in conversation' the RDA President, Robert Simper, following the formalities. **[Action: SZ to circulate a Zoom link. JVW to circulate the agenda]**

18. Planning Applications

JVW reported that with regret, MH has decided that due to other commitments, he will step down from the Committee at the AGM.

[Action: JVW to seek a replacement for MH to oversee planning issues]

19. Website

JVW expressed his thanks to AC for his excellent work on maintaining the RDA website and gave him an open invitation to attend RDA meetings as an observer. AC said he was happy to continue posting reports etc., but that he does not have the time to maintain a site capable of processing online payments. He added that it may be necessary for the RDA to employ someone with more expertise in the future. JJ thanked AC for supporting the RDA Journal initiative which is now live with new articles available every fortnight from a link on the website.

20. Heritage Harbour Status

There was no news.

21. Constitution

JH reported that the re-drafting of the Constitution is currently on hold while options for potential incorporation are being considered.

[Action: JH to outline proposals for updating the Constitution in a few months' time]

22. Alde & Ore Estuary Trust

JVW has met with Alison Andrews, Chair of the AOET to discuss any potential for co-operation with the RDA. This was met with enthusiasm

[Action: JVW to continue conversations with the A&O]

23. Rivers for Mental Health

JVW briefly outlined recent conversations held on the subject and the matter will be discussed fully at a later date.

[Action: JVW to form a sub-committee to discuss potential development of the project]

[KC and CM left the meeting]

24. Any other business

JVW asked whether there were any objections to KC being appointed Treasurer and CM as Secretary at the AGM on 18 November. There were no objections, and their appointments were welcomed.

JJ was congratulated on the outstanding latest edition of The Deben magazine.

JVW thanked everyone for their time, showed appreciation for the hard work that everyone seemed prepared and willing to undertake and appreciation of the sub-committees taking more and more action. He looked forward to welcoming everyone to the 2020 AGM on 18 November at 18.30.

Next Meetings:

Wednesday 18 November AGM 6.30 pm

Wednesday 20 January 2021 6.30 pm

Wednesday 17 March at 6.30 pm