



River Deben Association

MINUTES OF

RDA FORUM

HELD AT WOODBRIDGE CRUISING CLUB

ON 14TH JANUARY, 2017 AT 9.30AM

Present: Peter Jones, Bob Whitehouse, Colin Lister, Victoria Lister (taking notes), David Watson, Robert Simper, Pearl Simper, Catherine Lerner, Steve James, John Smith, Steve Copsey, Steve Larkman, Alan Fuller, Geoff Sinton, Mark Barton, Jonathan Simper, Tony Lyons, Nigel Barratt, Jon Wilkins, Andrew FitzGerald, Simon Read, Paul Webster, Anne Moore, Robin Whittle (Chair), Sarah Zins and Graham Henderson.

Apologies: John White, Simon Skeet, Mike Ellis, Tam Grundy, Linda Wilkins, Christine Block, Sam Jennings and Mike Ingram

1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION.

Robin Whittle (Chair), thanked Peter Jones representing Woodbridge Cruising Club for Hosting the meeting, Victoria Lister for taking notes, Gillie and Pearl Simper for providing Tea and Coffee. Robin then introduced the New RDA Chairman elect Sarah Zins who had agreed to be the time keeper. Each participant was asked to keep input to around 5 mins.

INTRODUCTION. A brief introduction included: DEP, River Walls, River users' code, Saltmarsh Research, Bawdsey Manor, Web Site, Natural England Coastal Path, and East Anglia One.

Deben Estuary Plan: A great deal of effort went into this. It took 4 years to prepare. It is a live report which means that it will be updated from time to time. Includes flood defence, access, wildlife, businesses, clubs, and users. Available to view on line or can be printed out. [It is now being quoted in Council documentation as a 'material consideration' in planning terms. This means it can be very useful when responding to planning applications within the estuary area.]

River Walls: For the current specification only two flood cells require further remedial work. FC4 Shottisham Creek (2km) and FC1 Bawdsey to Ramsholt (5km). FC4 was anticipated to start last December but has not yet and FC1 which is planned but still has to be estimated and scoped.

River Users' Code: Please spread the word that it relies on people having a responsible attitude. Now on its second print. Extra copies are available today and on request.

Saltmarsh Research: Survey of Loders Cut Island, started in 2014 is giving interesting results. The level of the saltmarsh has been rising steadily at the same rate as the relative sea level rise (total of 11mm since the start of measurements – 3.5mm per year). Simon Read noted that there had been some mud deposits on the island. This was carried out by Tam Grundy in the summer of 2015 sometime after the survey had been running. The mud had been deposited at the north corner of the Island. The readings at the twelve posts (including Nos. 5 and 6 closest to the deposit) had not shown any marked change that could be related to this deposit.

The Pilot Study on the saltmarsh just upstream of Waldringfield has been running for seven months. This included investigation of the tunnelling effects of shore crabs on the erosion of mature saltmarshes in Suffolk (and Essex).

Bawdsey Manor: Concern that the purchaser of the quay area takes a responsible approach to the conservation of the area. The RDA has written two letters to Suffolk Coastal District Council to this effect.

RDA Website: now under new management. Alan Comber has started to look after the web site and is making improvements. Please send in any comments/suggestions on the sheet which was circulated at the meeting.

Natural England Coastal Path: A decision concerning the route around the River Deben is likely to be made this year. RDA is interested in views on this. It is hoped that an alternative would be the acceptance that the Ferry forms part of the path. The Ferry currently only operates in the summer, however, it is understood that discussions around this topic are being held with Andrew Moore who holds the licence. It was also noted that, although the RDA has expressed support for a path along the river wall, Anne Moore, a member of the RDA Committee, was not in favour of this. It was also noted that both above and below Waldringfield where the path was breached a reinstatement was not welcome.

East Anglia One: It was confirmed by Graham Henderson that work starts this year.

2. HARBOUR MASTERS AND FAIRWAYS:

KYSON: Steve Copsey reported that this was the first year that the Kyson Committee had taken over the management of the moorings and fairway of the now extinct Knoll Committee. They are now licensed for both areas. It was noted that navigation marks have improved right up to the Tide Mill. The Committee is in the process of issuing user licences. Work is ongoing to improve its web site. Steve was asked if his committee had any concerns about silting. He confirmed that he had no concerns about silting or dredging. It is his feeling that silting needs to be accepted and that dredging is not beneficial.

WALDRINGFIELD: John Smith reported that he used to be Harbour Master, Tony Lyon has now taken over this role and John has become secretary for the fairways committee. It has just renewed the lease with the Crown Estates for 45 years. This prompted a rent review which came in at 27% rise. After reviewing Crown figures an agreement of 14% rise was reached. They have 221 moorings although 4 squib moorings have been relinquished but they are in shallow water and are not popular.

There is a waiting list of about 2 years for small shallow boats and 8 – 9 years for 35 foot boats. It is not possible to change all moorings to 36 foot. Once an optimum berth has been secured (deep, long and near the club house) it is rarely given up.

RAMSHOLT: Jonathan Simper reported that the waiting list was closed. Once they had 20-30 boats on the waiting list it was unrealistic to add more. It has to be admitted however, that on the rare occasion that a berth comes up some of the names on the list no longer require a berth as they have put their names down in several locations and another one has come up which they have taken.

FELIXSTOWE FERRY: John White sent his apologies. RW mentioned that the bar was shallow. He had had reports that before Christmas the more northerly channel entrance was deeper than the marked channel. However the position of the channel kept changing. If the entrance did change to the more northerly channel it could make a difference to the shingle build up along the Felixstowe Ferry shore where it had become depleted. An enquiry was made if the Horse Sands buoy was going to be replaced. GH reported that there was no intention to replace it. Care in placing racing marks was requested.

RW offered the RDA's thanks to Harbour Masters and Fairway committees.

3. **BOATYARDS AND OTHER BUSINESSES. Larkmans:** Steve reported no change. All boatyards and businesses had a problem in common – the cost and time it takes to obtain licenses from the Marine Management Organisation (MMO). GH declined to speak on the topic. Working with the MMO appears to be a bit tricky for the whole River Deben and where letters have been written to the MMO and MP Coffey the replies only state an understanding of the position. At **Robertsons Alan Fuller** reported that their slipway needs to be kept clear but the boatyard is not allowed to clear it except through the MMO. Were they unable to take advantage of the Tom Grundy Licence? No there is currently no appropriate licence.

Geoff Sinton of Woodbridge reported that the MMO rules seemed to have been drafted for the likes of Milford Haven or Southampton not for rivers such as the Deben. The Crown Estate had demanded a 20% increase in rent for moorings. This was contested and the calculations requested. Upon review the sums worked out at lower than current.

Mark Barton at Waldringfield reported that analysis of the soil (mud) samples required by the MMO cost a great deal. RW asked if the flood defence around the yard was a problem. No it gave a better definition to the premises and less people tended to just wander in. RW asked who's responsibility it was to close the flood gates. The residents fill the gaps but the EA come and sit by them. Last night did not happen it was a metre below. **Shell Fish and Deben Fisheries, Jonathan Simper** wished that the MMO left the River Deben alone which had worked very well run by local people and was an extra layer that was not required. He went on to explain that if the fresh water irrigation lagoons became affected by flood water from the River it would make 10,000 acres of land uneconomic to farm. They have a crown lease to farm oysters in the river and are currently farming and selling rock oysters. However, it is a personal wish to re-establish native oysters. They may well be able to do this because the Deben is a very clean river. Jonathan attends quarterly meetings of the Rivers Colne and Blackwater where they have

endemic problems – Colchester and Chelmsford water treatment plants (low quality treatment kills sea food industries). The Water Authorities say that it is society that causes problems with hospitals causing most concerns. The River Deben does not have these problems. Whilst the additional planned housing is an obvious concern; we do not have the industry or hospitals. In response to a question surrounding the erosion of saltmarsh it was thought that the cause was unlikely to be discharge. GH asked if the WA had made any mention NPKs in water and the response was that there have been references to algae blooms (the river Fowey on the south coast was given as an example where mussels were farmed and toxins entered the water which was detrimental to the business). JS also reported that other family members were now pair trawling and this seems quite successful. Other plans include Charter work.

4. **CLUBS. Peter Jones of Woodbridge Cruising** reported that he was still waiting for report on input mud. **Deben Rowing Club - Catherine Larner.** Catherine reported that she had been a member of the rowing club for 8 years and that during that time there had been many changes. In 2010 they received a grant for the clubhouse. As a result there had been a huge increase in membership which now stands between 100 and 120. Between 20 and 30 of which are the junior squad. The club is totally run by volunteers. They are limited on space and are very grateful for the areas which are lent to them. At high tide you will see the members queuing on the ramp to gain access to the water. We have an agreement with the Deben Yacht Club to use their ramp when we do not have access to the Woodbridge boatyard ramp for whatever reason. The main activity at the club is single and double sculls. We do also have quads, and coxed fours, but it is not feasible to row eights. The club is competitive and has done well with 50 pots (prizes) in the last year. A number of taster sessions are run each year. They have had a few issues, fuel thefts, access, and wake from boats. They love the river and appreciate what they have. Boat wash affects all aspects of river users. An effort needs to be made to keep wash to a minimum. **Deben Yacht Club - David Watson** noted that the main activities are racing dinghies and leisure sailing. Usually have 70+ youngsters who enjoy an introduction to the river if you see us please bear with us.

Waldringfield Sailing Club - Bob Whitehouse reported that they had around 650 members mostly dingy sailors. They are doing well at national and international level. In the recent Cadet Worlds 5 out of 10 and the overall winner were all from Waldringfield. They are developing their accessibility of adult learners with a Saturday pathway to racing. He would like to see improved co-operation between clubs. He wondered if there was any role in the RDA for this. Should there be any interest in recreating Deben Week please see Bob later.

Felixstowe Ferry Sailing Club - Colin Lister provided the following notes. *As with all sailing Clubs in these fast changing times, there is no basis for complacency and we, like many others, are endeavouring to offer relevant and exciting opportunities to both dinghy and keel boat sailors.*

Club news

- We had 513 paid up members last year and aim to increase this in 2017
- We offer:
 - A recently modernised Club House
 - Excellent catering and bar services
 - Dinghy parking
 - Inflatable and outboard storage facilities
 - Hire of Club owned dinghies from £5.00 per half day
 - Competitive Wednesday night and weekend dinghy racing
 - A Youth Sailing programme

New for 2017

- RYA accredited training courses for power and sail, headed by Alan Rutterford and run by Sam Rowell
- Participation in the RYA's Push the Boat Out initiative to introduce members of the public to dinghy and cruiser sailing in an enjoyable and structured manner
- Scheduled Saturday afternoon Dart 16 training sessions throughout an extended season
- An enhanced programme of organised cruises and talks for both Yacht and Dinghy sailors

Also

- We are hosting the 2017 **Firefly Nationals** between 12th & 18th August
- We are hosting a **Barts Bash** race on Sunday 17th September for both dinghies and keel boats

Concerns

- Security is an ongoing issue. We have now constructed cages for safe storage of our rib engines but
- We have had a break in at our dinghy storage shed so have now further improved the structure to reduce risk
- We are vigilant but have an open site with immediate road and water access

Summary

- FFSC are genuinely excited by the new world where the Club needs to be operated as a structured business providing:
 - Training
 - Affordable access to sailing
 - Competitive dinghy and catamaran racing
 - A well supported and social Cruising programme
 - A land based social and educational programme

Bawdsey Haven Yacht club - Robert Simper reported that for now there was no change. They have a lease on the boat park and on the slipway but not on the cafe. At some time it will change but business as usual for its 76-120 members. Its aims and ambitions have not changed – just to enable members to potter about in small boats.

Water Ski Club - Steve James reported that there was little communication with other water users – and those were always complaints and mainly about wash. Many river users belong to no club at all. The huge gin palaces also affect the water skiers as they need smooth water to operate. Most water-skiers are club members but 1 in 5 will be independent on average. Non club members are allowed to use the club pontoon up to 5

times – then they have to join to continue usage. Having no gate, door or other physical means of deterring non-members from using the equipment, there are a lot of issues with non-members, and allowing the use of the pontoons for 5 times before becoming a member is of concern! Another concern was raised about the increased number of and the likelihood of hitting a wild swimmer whilst skiing. Steve noted that with all helmets being a minimum of level 2 a wild swimmer would not be hit by a ski boat. It was noted that wild swimmers are often wearing dark clothing which does not aide visibility. Steve noted that he was always available to talk and discuss any issues regarding powered craft on the river. He has no authority over many users, but will help wherever he can. Jonathan Simper noted that it was important to keep to within the speed limits.

5. **WOODBIDGE SPECIFIC: Tide Mill - Nigel Barratt** reported that there used to be more than 3000 Tide mills now there are only 3. Two in the UK and one on the continent. It is a national asset but not considered to be a historic museum. They need to maintain the tourists coming to that part of Woodbridge and would encourage the RDA to assist. Once gain the MMO and silt was their big problem. In 2011 the milling pond was dredged and a million plus cubic meters was removed. However, they were only allowed to pump this into the river to settle elsewhere. Over the past 10 years the silt has risen by 18 inches. As it reaches the outlet pipe they will have to dredge. The mill which is a business and is under threat. Milling flour brings in 50% of their revenue. Silting could stop the milling. With the changing face of Woodbridge the museum should be involved in heritage aspects. **Bass Dock - Sam Jennings** reported that they are a collection of mainly house boats all around the dock. The intention was to attract Thames barges to visit the area. **Riverside Trust - Andrew Fitzgerald** reported that they had a 30 year lease on 100 foot long boat shed to build a ship. The project is being opened on 29 – 30th May [this has been delayed to early July]. The opening has gone from low key to now very serious high profile project. Arts Council funding has changed the face of this project. Sae Wylfing the 1/4 replica of the Sutton Hoo ship which is loaned to the WRT by the Giford family and which often visits schools will be at the event as will Brian the warrior with 2 x 800 kilo sacks. The project for the shed with its Heritage Lottery funding is to be a 92 foot ship. We are lucky to have some high profile supporters like Dan Snow as we have to generate real money (£30k) a year to keep going. Currently looking for younger people to join the Trust. There is lots of work to do. Including the use of the public space also water front including the slip. The hoardings are about to disappear then a new path two weeks later. Then the slip which is now in planning (failure would leave a 92 foot boat land locked). And then from Bass Dock to the Tide Mill requires major input on the need to make the moored boats “of interest”. Moorings in this area for boats could make it a destination. Dredging needed to restore the slip. A discussion then took place on who would own the slip and the mud. The Council could take a lease or the trust could take a lease directly. In general the trust did not want plastic boats in this area. The question of moorings was open they did not want to take away from other businesses they had just been thinking of a few Dutch men. It was pointed out that in theory permission already exists for yachts to park at the town quay for up to 3 days and they could have electric and water. Negotiations continue at some strength.

6. **FELIXSTOWE FERRY FORESHORE TRUST - Jon Wilkins** reported that they were established in 1991 by 30 people who bought shares. They own the slipway which the ski club lease and which the Sailing Club use. There have been various run ins with water dwellers as the FFFT want to keep the setting the same. Members are now dying off and younger members are required. Anyone interested in purchasing a share is advised that they are £500 and a limited number are currently available. Contact the board, Tony Storer, Robert Brinkley or Jon Wilkins.

7. **Wild life – unfortunately no report was available on this important aspect.** Health of the wildlife depends on community and MMO. Fish stocks survey looks promising. The saltmarsh is the fish nursery and one reason why we got permission across the river here. Salt Marsh functions are not always appreciated.

- 7A. **SCAR - Graham Henderson.** RW apologised for the oversight in not making this an item on the Agenda. Graham was asked to comment if Sizewell would happen. No doubt it will happen. Currently the effect on the coastline an 800 metre jetty would have is to be considered.

8. **DEBEN ESTUARY PARTNERSHIP.** Natural England requires that the coastal path should be on both sides of the Deben unless a ferry is acceptable. Currently the Ferry only operates in summer. The DEP is against opening the path from Bawdsey to Ramsholt. Not only because the landowner does not want to but because of wild life. There would be a big disturbance and dogs. There would be an expansion of people and problems with parking. The DEP finds the RDA stance a problem. It would also mean any managed retreat being stopped and breaching being filled to re create river walk. Making for example flood cell one public accessible would cost a lot more. [The RDA has recorded the view (*The Deben* No. 50. Spring 2015) that the river walls to both flood Cell 1 and 7 are important in order to preserve the Estuary as it is, and should be given priority in terms of maintenance].

9. **DISSUSION.** East Anglia One. Sam Jennings (by email) and Graham Henderson reported that a trench 45 meters (75 metres for construction) had been agreed and that work would start this year .Woodbridge Museum move to Whisstocks: Bob Merritt was asked to send in written notes which will be added to the report by RW [Bob decided not to send anything]. The reed bed adjacent to the Martlesham Creek boatyard has turned grey. Has this been caused by pollution from the nearby sewage farm? Paul Webster, Chair of Maritime Woodbridge gave the 2017 date as September 9th/10th. Going to be a very exciting time. More information in due course.

Robin Whittle thanked everyone for their interesting input and questions, advising we will do it all again in 2 years time. Feedback, forms found on the chairs, would be welcome and don't forget the river users' guides.