

RIVER DEBEN ASSOCIATION

Notes from the Forum held on Saturday 8th February 2019 at the Woodbridge Cruising Club

Sarah Zins, the Chairman of the RDA welcomed all present to the 2019 Forum. Invitations to attend had been issued to all local businesses, clubs, committees etc., whose activities have a strong river element. SZ invited all present to introduce themselves and state their main current river-related concern.

Attendees

Rex Kellett – Groundwork

Invited to speak on business resilience and practical advice delivered to East Coast businesses.

Robert and Pearl Simper – RDA President, Simpers of Ramsholt, live very close to the tide line at Ramsholt.

Main concern: Craft breaking the river speed limit

Richard Steward – RDA member, Blyth Estuary Partnership, RDA Saltmarsh Group

Alan Fuller – Robertson's Boatyard.

Main concern: the falling number of boats on the river

John White – Harbour Master, Felixstowe Ferry

Main concern: The Deben Bar and erosion at the mouth of the river

Colin and Victoria Lister – Felixstowe Ferry Sailing Club

Main concern: Speeding, particularly in the river entrance

Sam Jennings – RDA Committee member, Woodbridge Quay Company, Sea Scouts

Main concern: removal of dilapidated boats, car parking, dinghies on the beach, flood defences

Peter Clay – RDA Committee member, Woodbridge Riverside Trust

Steve James – East Suffolk Wakeboard & Water Ski Club

Main concern: the de-restricted area between Ramsholt and Felixstowe

Peter Greateorex – Waldringfield Fairway Committee

Main concern: Speeding, control of dogs on the beach, over-flowing rubbish bins, replacement of the Horse Sands buoy

Tony Lyon – Waldringfield Harbour Master

Jon Wilkins – Waldringfield resident, Chairman of the Waldringfield Flood Defence Group, Felixstowe Ferry Foreshore Trust

Main concern: stabilising the saltmarshes

Veronica Falconer – RDA Committee member, Woodbridge Town Councillor

Michael Dale – Woodbridge Town Councillor, Woodbridge Town Harbour Master

Main concern: abandoned boats, Whisstocks Quay, dredging

Mike Ellis – Harbour Master, Tide Mill Yacht Harbour

Ben Grundy: Melton Boatyard, HMS Vale

Bob Spillett - Tide Mill Trust,
Main concern: dredging near the Tide Mill

Steve Copsey – Chairman of the Deben and Kyson Fairway Committee
Main concern: saltmarsh erosion, public access at Whisstocks Town Quay

Robin Whittle – RDA Committee member (past Chairman)
Main concern: maintenance of the river wall and saltmarshes

ITEMS TO BE DISCUSSED

- Flood defences
- MMO licences
- River speed restrictions
- Raw sewage discharge
- Deben Bar
- Falling numbers of boats on the river
- Replacement of the Horse Sands buoy
- Dilapidated boats

Business Resilience to flooding

Rex Kennett spoke about the free advice Groundwork offers to businesses affected by flooding to help with preventative and mitigation issues. The warnings issued by the Environmental Agency are very helpful but he highlighted the importance of staff training and contingency measures.

The floodgates on the Deben at Woodbridge and Waldringfield were discussed. The failure to make the Whisstocks gate fully mechanised can be problematic as it is operated by Norse, who are only available Monday to Friday. On occasions, this has resulted in the gate being closed all weekend despite the lifting of a warning. Robertsons have 3 gates and have a first and second response system in place. Eversons operate their own gate and the EA operate the 10 gates at Waldringfield, again, only on weekdays. The Woodbridge Quay Company buildings form part of the flood defence and are not water-tight. A floodgate has been installed and is working well.

The flooding around the model boat pond is thought to be due to the drainage from Kingston Field not being reinstated following earthworks 10 years ago. The planting of additional willow trees might ease, but not solve the problem.

Marine Management Organisation (MMO) licences

The general feeling was that these should be easier to obtain with the option of applying for generic use (ie saltmarsh maintenance) rather than the present system of individual exercises needing to be licensed. The licences are expensive (typically from about £2500) and are given for a specific period, after which they lapse. Robert Simper said direct correspondence regarding the cleaning of the slipway at the Bawdsey Sailing Club resulted in permission being granted for the work without the need for a licence as it was minor and was to be carried out by members.

The current licence held by Tam Grundy to deposit mud on Loder's Island has only 2 years left to run. This project has worked well with the dredged mud quickly forming part of the saltmarsh.

Concern was raised at the amount of mud around the Tide Mill which will soon prevent the wheel from turning. The Tide Mill pond is also filling up. When dredging is done in Ferry Quay, the mud has to be tested and a sample is sent to the laboratory.

[ACTION: Sarah Zins to ask Carol Reid how much the lab tests of mud from dredgings cost

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River Speed Restrictions

The Waldringfield Harbour Master only has jurisdiction over the moorings at Waldringfield and confronts anyone caught speeding to explain the damage caused and the danger of speeding, including calling them on VHF. It was noted that the wash created, not always as a result of speeding, is as problematic as speeding, to smaller craft and to those on moorings. Whether 'No Wash', special mark buoys, similar to those used at Waldringfield, could be used elsewhere was discussed and it was noted that the Suffolk Coastal Council are not supportive of this plan. The general consensus was that it is ignorance of the rules and the dangers caused by speeding that needs to be addressed and a friendly reminder is the only option in the absence of any Maritime Police on the river. Reports of motorboats speeding after dark through the moorings at Methersgate and further down river were discussed but visiting speedboats had not been seen or heard coming into the river at the mouth at night. Jet skis were how causing less problems than in the past. It was noted that many yachts were trying to come into or leave the river and were speeding to make their destination before the tide made navigation difficult, so there would always be a problem in this regard. It would need an act of parliament to change the speed limits on the river.

[ACTION: RDA leaflets advising boat users on the speed limits in the river to be distributed to the Ferry Boat Inn, the Ramsholt Arms, the Maybush and the Anchor.

Boat users should be reminded of the speed limits and encouraged to show consideration to other river users]

Raw Sewage Discharge

This is a concern to many due to the growing number of houseboats on the river. Robertsons have made significant improvements in recent years by installing a treatment plant to service the yard and offices and intend to issue licences to nearby houseboats so that only treated water can be discharged into the river. They are proposing to have a mobile pump-out system which can either be wheeled along the quay or used from their landing craft along the whole length of the Deben. In marinas and at Ferry Quay the issue is largely self-policing as it is considered anti-social by the majority to discharge foul waste into the river. However, the fact that many boats on the river do not have holding tanks is a hurdle to keeping the water clean. It was noted that the UK is far behind Holland on the subject of raw sewage discharge. Despite this, Simperts Shellfish noted that the river water has only once failed a test for acceptable levels of pollution and that it was cleared after 3 days.

[Action: RDA to investigate the possibility of a by-law to make discharging of waste into the river illegal.]

Deben Bar

The shifting channel was acknowledged as a natural phenomenon and no action to be taken.

Falling numbers of boats on the river

It was noted that the waiting lists for moorings at Waldringfield and Ramsholt are not as long as in previous years.

[ACTION: To be discussed at Forum in 2021]

Horse Sands Buoy

The Waldringfield Fairways Committee would like the buoy reinstated on the Horse Sands. The Felixstowe Ferry Harbour Master said there was greater need for the buoy at the mouth of the river as erosion has removed the possibility of having 'meet up' posts on the shoreline. He said there has been no increase in the number of boats going aground on the Horse Sands since the buoy was moved as most people know of their existence and the route of the deep-water channel. He said that even if Trinity House were prepared to buy a new buoy, maintenance of it would fall to Felixstowe Ferry Sailing Club and for that reason he was opposed to it being reinstated. There is also the cost of an MMO licence to install a buoy, which is around £1200 per buoy, and the maintenance and insurance costs of about £1000 per annum.

Dilapidated boats

Rotting fibreglass boats were acknowledged as an environmental problem as well as often being an eyesore, but the legal procedures and costs involved in removing them are prohibitive.

[ACTION: RDA to publish photographs of abandoned boats on the website with an appeal for information on who may own them]

Sarah Zins thanked everyone for attending, and particularly Rex Kellett for his talk on business resilience. Thanks also to the Woodbridge Cruising Club for hosting the event. The minutes of the meeting, taken by the RDA Secretary, Jane Alexander, will be distributed to all speakers for approval before being posted on the RDA website.