

RIVER DEBEN ASSOCIATION

Minutes of committee meeting held at 1 Lime Kiln Quay, Woodbridge on Wednesday 13th March, 2018 at 6pm.

1. **Present:** Sarah Zins (Chair), Jane Alexander, Veronica Falconer, Jim Goldsworthy, Jane Haviland
Kate Laydon, Richard Verrill, Robin Whittle and Robert Simper
Apologies: David Bucknell, Peter Clay, Alan Comber, Michael Holland, and Sam Jennings
2. **Declarations of Interest**
SZ asked for any declarations to be made when relevant.
3. **Minutes of the meeting of 9th January 2019**
The minutes were agreed and approved.
4. **Matters arising**
Committee changes: RW made some suggestions of people who might be interested in taking on the role of Chair in 2020, when SZ will stand down, having served for 3 years. It was agreed that candidates would need to have time available to attend day time meetings, have a love of the river, an interest in flood defences, a strategic mind and gravitas in the community. An appeal will be made at the AGM. **[Action: SZ to add Chairman recruitment to the AGM agenda]**

Removal of dinghies from Methersgate Quay: SZ reported that boat owners are waiting to hear when they can meet with the owner of Methersgate Quay.
5. **Accounts and membership to date**
JG confirmed that the 2018 accounts have been scrutinised and signed off by Peter Thubron, who will now stand down as Examiner. It is hoped that a contact of MH will be willing to take on the role. SZ said a formal resolution to increase the subscriptions to £10 for couples and £6 for individuals from 2020 will be made at the AGM. The RDA now has 899 members.
[Action: JG to send SZ the name of MH's contact and SZ to make a formal approach]
6. **Feedback from the RDA Forum held on 9th February 2019**
SZ said the meeting was well attended and appeared to be well received. Minutes of the Forum will be circulated to those present. As discussed at the Forum, Alan Fuller of Robertsons is setting up a boat sewage service and it is hoped this will increase the pressure for houseboat owners, in particular, to install holding tanks and use the service rather than discharging directly into the river. The RDA leaflet raising awareness about the need to keep within the speed limits on the river will be distributed to riverside pubs and printed in the next edition of The Deben.
[Action: RW to distribute leaflets to The Anchor, The Maybush, The Ramsholt Arms and The Ferry Boat. KL to distribute leaflets at the Deben Rowing Club. SZ to include the leaflet in The Deben]
7. **AGM – 1 May 2019**
It was agreed that the AGM should start at 6.30pm. Following the RDA business, David Kemp of the Environment Agency will give a talk entitled '24 Hours in the Incident Room'.
SZ said that sadly DB was in hospital and it was likely this would mean the Spring 2019 edition of The Deben will be delayed and will not be ready to be posted at the time that the AGM notice has to be sent out. JH said Barker Gotelee have offered the use of their franking machine to reduce the cost of postage and JG agreed to prepare the labels and envelopes. If DB feels unable to produce the Spring edition of the Deben, we will consider making alternative arrangements.

[Action: SZ to draw up the AGM notice with an additional note explaining why The Deben will be sent out at a later date. JG to prepare the envelopes and take them to Barker Gotelee for franking]

8. Report from SCF meeting held on 07/02/19

SZ has circulated the minutes of the meeting which did not include any action related to the Deben.

9. Report from the DEP meeting on 21/01/2019

SZ attended the meeting which included a talk by PGL outlining their plans for coastal defences at Bawdsey and the installation of a WiFi mast. The Chair reported that £120,000 of Community Infrastructure Levy has been awarded to the DEP for the preparation work necessary to undertake improvement works to the river walls at Bawdsey Marshes, (known as Flood Cell 1). Some surprise was expressed by RDA members that the grant might cover the costs incurred (on behalf of the Adeane estate) for tax advice on enabling development and it was agreed that it would be preferable for all resources to be put directly into the flood defence work.

10. Woodbridge Regatta & Riverside Fair, Sunday 23 June 2019

JG was thanked for arranging for the RDA to have a stall and for JG and MH volunteering to man it on the day. The date makes it difficult for other Committee members to assist.

11. Flood defences

SZ gave details of a meeting called by the DEP to be held at Aldeburgh Yacht Club on 22 March when David Brew from Royal Haskoning will make a presentation on the paper prepared for Natural England entitled "Healthy Estuaries" and dealing with the Alde and Ore, River Deben and Hamford Water. The report says that the estuary mouth of the Deben between Bawdsey/Felixstowe Ferry is undersized. RW said the assumptions should be tested and has inserted bamboo sticks into the saltmarsh edges along Sea Reach. Initial results should be available by around mid-summer.

SZ said the EA have agreed to pay for repairs to the sea wall in FC4 (Shottisham). RS said a short section, close to Plum Tree Hall will be heightened.

[Action: SZ, RW and JH to attend the meeting on 22 March]

12. Saltmarshes

SZ and RW attended the Suffolk Saltmarsh Group (SSG) meeting on 22 February and explained this is the umbrella group for the officers and groups interested in saltmarsh on all Suffolk rivers. SZ was delighted to report that the decision has been taken by the EA to collect data on all saltmarsh interventions on the Deben and other East Coast rivers with the help of colleagues working on Marine Pioneer.

The DEP Saltmarsh Group meeting on 8 March heard that the EA's Sudbourne project using faggots to restore the saltmarsh has been stopped due to difficulties in obtaining an MMO licence. JH said a Freedom of Information request should be made asking why no response has been received after 40 weeks, when all licence applications should be answered within 10 weeks.

Dr Helene Burningham of UCL is making a proposal for a PhD student to use drones over the coast around the Deben Estuary and the saltmarsh within the estuary to determine physical changes. RW suggested that the use of drones is helpful for monitoring vegetation changes but questioned whether they are able to provide the detailed measurements needed to assess saltmarsh erosion. RW suggested that the RDA could offer to work with Dr Helene Burningham to compare their results and this was agreed.

[Action: RW to draft a note and circulate it to the Committee for approval before sending to Dr Burningham]

RW was pleased to report that the benefit of monitoring the saltmarshes was gaining momentum and he has joined a sub group of the SSG to carry out work which will provide valuable base information.

RW reported on the latest measurements from his Pilot Study which continues to show an alarming rate of erosion of the saltmarsh inland from the river channel of 24mm per year. For each length of 10km the area lost is 240 sq. meters, and with at many tens of kilometres of saltmarsh edges up and down the creeks, this is of great concern. An extension to the Pilot Study includes crab exclusion netting to measure the effects of the crabs and the use of new measuring equipment to measure the level of mud (accuracy of +/- 2mm).

[Action: RW to circulate a summary of his report and update the RDA website with links to other articles]

13. Planning

SZ has visited the Whisstocks building and confirmed that there is a river view when seated at table height on the ground floor. A letter has been sent to SCDC to withdraw the RDA's earlier opposition to the change of use for the first floor to residential with the condition that the developer invests in the design and access to Whisstocks Place to ensure its appeal as a vibrant, open space for the town and that the profits gained from an additional residential space will be used to make the ground floor unit commercially viable for a restaurateur. SZ noted that the Woodbridge Riverside Trust (WRT) oppose this move as they would prefer the first floor unit to become a community space.

VF said two applications for the discharge of conditions on planning permission to properties close to the river have been received, at Methersgate and Sutton. Regarding the Sutton case, VF said the elevation from the river should be requested, as if the work to be undertaken is not visible from the river the RDA would have no grounds to object. MH has drafted a letter objecting to the discharge of conditions relating to the Methersgate property and a copy will be circulated to the RDA Committee for comment.

[Action: MH to submit the approved letters to SCDC]

RV offered to take MH on his boat to increase his knowledge of the river.

[Action: RV and MH to arrange a date for a river trip]

RW updated the Committee that the Woodbridge Society wish to enlarge the conservation area and fill in any gaps not covered between Ipswich Road and the river. VF suggested the RDA obtain a copy of the book about the Woodbridge Conservation area.

[Action: RW to show the new outline of the conservation area to the Committee]

14. Wildlife

RV explained the difficulties he was having in photographing any deer to illustrate his article for The Deben, but he has spoken with landowners on the north side of the river who confirm the numbers are higher than ever and are causing a great deal of crop and young tree damage. He said four out of the six species of deer found in the UK are found around the Deben estuary.

There was a discussion about broadening the appeal of The Deben and the website, and it was agreed that information on birds and their habitats would be sought from the RSPB and local experts.

[Action: RV and RW to source information on identifying birds for the website and The Deben]

15. Footpaths and Access

There was no news from Natural England about their recommendations for the route of the England Coastal Path.

16. Website and news updates

KL said she had not had much response to her appeal for river-related news from other organisations. The RDA's competition with a number of other locally based organisations with similar interests was noted and the number of visits to the website would be helpful information. Committee members reported that they have been contacted by people, some not living locally, who have found the RDA website interesting and informative.

[Action: SZ to ask AC for the number of hits received by the RDA website.]

17. Any Other Business

SZ said the AGM notice will include the re-appointment of Committee members and asked those present whether they were willing to stand for re-election. VF said she will not be standing for re-election but will remain a member of the RDA. SZ said the RDA will thank VF properly for her stalwart contributions to the RDA, particularly on planning matters at a later date and thanked her for her offer to continue to help at events. All other members of the Committee agreed to stand for re-election. **[Action: SZ to prepare the AGM notice for circulation by 1 April 2019]**

The request from the WRT that the RDA partner them or contribute financially to their proposed exhibition based on tidal flow and the shape of the Deben estuary to Wilford Bridge and the impact of flood walls, saltmarshes was discussed. The subject was an interesting one, but the RDA unanimously considered that it was not a grant-making body and had already supported the Riverside Trust in the past. It was also noted that the RDA's own funds are only accreting minimally year on year and are being conserved for a major contingency.

[Action: SZ to reply to Andrea Leech with the Committee's decision.]

There was no other business and the meeting was closed.