

RIVER DEBEN ASSOCIATION

Minutes of committee meeting held at 1 Lime Kiln Quay, Woodbridge on Wednesday 15th May, 2019 at 6pm.

1. **Present:** Sarah Zins (Chair), Jane Alexander, Jim Goldsworthy, Michael Holland, Richard Verrill and Robin Whittle
Apologies: Peter Clay, Alan Comber, Jane Haviland, Kate Laydon, Sam Jennings and Robert Simper
2. **Declarations of Interest**
SZ asked for any declarations to be made when relevant.
3. **Minutes of the meeting of 13th March 2019**
The minutes were agreed and approved.
4. **Matters arising**
Chairman and Committee appointment: SZ has had no response to her appeal for a new Chairman or anyone interested in joining the Committee. Potential new Committee members were discussed, and after agreeing that potential conflicts of interest could be dealt with in the usual ways, it was agreed that SZ should approach the new manager of the Woodbridge Boatyard. Otherwise, all current Committee members should be consulted before any approaches are made.
[Action: SZ to ask Matt Lis if he would be prepared to join the committee]

Leaflet distribution: JA and MH offered to distribute copies of the River User's Guide.
Editor of The Deben: RV proposed a formal vote of thanks to RW for taking over the production of the Spring 2019 edition of The Deben at very short notice. Those present were unanimous in their thanks and praise for RW's efforts. Thanks were also given to JG and JH for their work in the mailing of the magazine. In due course, RW will request the return of the as yet unpublished articles submitted to the editor for potential future use. **[Action: RW to contact Mrs Bucknell]**
Outline of proposed new outline of the Woodbridge Conservation area: RW circulated a plan showing the proposed new boundary of the Woodbridge Conservation area.
Website: AC has reported to SZ that the RDA website is attracting a respectable number of hits.
5. **Accounts and memberships to date**
JG said that after the costs of producing and mailing each edition of the Deben, there is, at the current subscription levels, approximately a £50 surplus and this will increase next year with new subscription rates. He circulated a list of some members for whom he has no contact details, and confirmed that the current membership is over 900. SZ asked JG to investigate whether £1000 could be invested in a savings account to produce a better rate of interest.
[Action: JG to investigate interest rates of savings accounts for RDA funds]
6. **Feedback from RDA AGM on 1st May**
All present agreed the talk given by David Kemp of the Environment Agency was informative and entertaining. Similar feedback has been received from several members.
7. **Autumn Meeting**
It was agreed that the Woodbridge Community Centre is the best venue in Woodbridge. RV suggested asking whether PGL would host the meeting at Bawdsey Manor in November.
[Action: SZ to contact PGL about holding the Autumn meeting at Bawdsey Manor and the possibility of having a speaker from the Radar Museum]
8. **Change of personnel – new Councillors, Karen Thomas etc.**

SZ noted that Karen Thomas is leaving the IDB and taking up the role of Head of Coastal Partnership East from Bill Parker, who is retiring. Her responsibilities will include liaising with all the local Councillors on sea defences.

Christine Block and Susan Harvey did not stand in the recent local elections and there are a number of new district councillors. SZ updated the Committee on the two new wards adjoining the Deben and the Councillors representing them.

[Action: SZ to talk to the new Deben and Orwell and Villages Councillors]

9. Report from DEP meeting held on 29 March 2019

SZ reported that the DEP is proposing to rewrite the Deben Estuary Plan. The RDA are listed as co-authors of the 2015 edition and the current re-writing was discussed, including whether an update was premature. Questions were raised about progress against the action points of the plan, and SZ agreed to raise this at the next DEP meeting. It was concluded that the RDA would offer editing assistance, with a particular interest in planning matters, mooring and channel maintenance and liaison with the Fairways Committees, but would discuss any areas of difference (including saltmarsh preservation and footpaths) with the RDA committee.

[Action: SZ to request progress reports against the DEP plan action plan]

10. Report from Healthy Estuaries Meeting on 22 March 2019

RW explained the concept of 'Regime Theory' presented by David Brew at the DEP meeting held in Aldeburgh Yacht Club on 22nd March. Its purpose is to provide a general method for assessing whether an estuary is in equilibrium or trying to expand or retract. It is based on the tidal prism (the volume of water between mean High Water and Mean Low Water within the tidal range of the estuary). It uses data giving the cross-section profile at many position up the estuary. It applies a simple formula to relate the width and depth at any section. From this it is possible to calculate the equilibrium width for any depth for that prism. From this, the model can predict where the river is trying to expand or retract. The trouble is that the formula only applies to a single size of silt particle. In the River Deben (and probably many other rivers) the particle size is not the same in the reaches near the mouth of the estuary as that up near the top end of the estuary. David Brew agreed that before using the model as a management tool to consider 'managed retreat' more information was required to check if the model was correct for any particular estuary. This is why the RDA Saltmarsh Group have set out some sticks at the edge of the saltmarsh on each side of the estuary in the lowest reach (Sea Reach). It is hoped that checks taken after six months or a year will show whether this reach is in equilibrium or not. RW added that a little erosion is expected due to wash from boats.

The Committee agreed that the outcome of the meeting on 22 March was a positive result for the future of the river.

11. Woodbridge Regatta and Riverside Fair, Sunday 23 June

SZ once again thanked JG and MH for volunteering to run the stand and hoped they would be successful in recruiting new members to the RDA. Feedback from the Maritime Woodbridge event last year highlighted the benefit of having child-friendly activities on the stand.

[Action: JG and MH to think about river related games/activities for the stand]

12. Flood defences

There was nothing to add to earlier discussions.

13. Saltmarshes

RW reported on the Marine Pioneer 'Values and Priorities' he attended on 27th March. This DEFRA funded project is led by Peter Cosgrove. The first meeting was an information gathering exercise and a 2nd workshop will define the action to be taken. RW informed the workshop of the RDA's input to the database and its views on saltmarshes. A research group is in discussions with Cambridge University and RW hopes they will be able to visit the Waldringfield site. SZ thanked RW for a

highly informative visit to the Waldringfield saltmarshes and RW extended the invitation to the whole of the Committee.

RW has written to Dr Helen Burningham of UCL who advocated at the recent DEP meeting, the use of drones for measuring saltmarsh accretion and erosion. RW thinks drones can be helpful in certain circumstances, but he considers the element of tolerance is too great at 30-40cm (his method has a tolerance of 1-2 mm). No reply has yet been received from Dr Burningham.

14. Planning Applications and new construction

Whisstocks Restaurant: SZ had written to the Council's planning department to withdraw the RDA's initial objection to the residential use of the top floor after visiting the site and seeing that the ground floor provides a river view. The withdrawal of the objection was subject to various conditions, including that the financial contribution of £30,000 plus VAT offered by the developer in their design and access statement was put back into making Whisstocks Place a vibrant open space for the town. However, the application did not go to full committee and permission was given for a holiday-let flat with disappointingly no contribution being required. It is thought the developer is in discussion with a restaurateur from Felixstowe.

SZ reported that a potential purchaser of the site, Peter Akram, has requested a judicial review of how the planning permission for this building has been handled. He wanted to use the entire building for community use and intends to raise his objections at the Woodbridge Society Planning meeting. SZ has agreed to meet with Peter Akram but feels it is not appropriate for the RDA to get involved with a judicial review.

Other: MH reported two successful interventions regarding discharge of conditions: concerning the external fabric of Methersgate Barn and another concerning development at Creek Cottage, Broomheath which has been blocked as being out of proportion with the surroundings.

An appeal against the development on Melton Hill has been lodged, but not yet validated.

MH has investigated whether there was any benefit in informing the Forestry Commission about the felling of trees at Kyson. As it is permissible to fell 5 cubic metres of trees per quarter he sees no benefit of informing them, but he will monitor any further felling.

[Action: SZ to recommend to the DEP that the new Deben Estuary Plan should contain measures for protecting trees]

SZ declared her interest in the following topic.

SZ said an enforcement notice has been issued against the summerhouse that has been erected on the bank opposite Lime Kiln Quay. Planning permission for the summerhouse was applied for retrospectively but not granted and it should have been taken down by the end of March. ESDC have been informed that this has not happened. The same property owner has built a jetty into the river with a mooring. It is thought that this will have required permission from the Crown Estate as well as obtaining an MMO licence.

[Action: MH to check that the correct permissions have been granted]

15. Wildlife

RV raised the question of the RDA producing a bird spotting guide. MH said he will discuss the matter with his contact at the RSPB and will try to source some photographs for the guide.

[Action: MH to contact the RSPB and source photographs for the bird-spotting guide]

16. Footpaths

MH offered to investigate whether the footpath route from the river to the mound at Sutton Hoo has been changed.

SZ reported that the new owner of Methersgate wants to divert the footpath around the back of the cottage near the quay. It was agreed the RDA had no issue with this diversion as long as access to the quay and the small beach continued to be available. It was noted that Mr Clarke is trying to stop Methersgate residents from using the quay which is regrettable.

[Action: MH to find out the route of the Sutton Hoo footpath]

17. Website, including news updates

SZ said that KL has reported receipt of very few news updates. The committee were asked to help spread the word that the RDA website can be used to promote any river-related activities or events.

[Action: KL to post news RDA's presence at the Woodbridge Regatta and Riverside Fair]

18. New editor for The Deben

It was agreed that editing The Deben was a big commitment. SZ said Mark Howard, who prints the magazine has offered to do the layout and RW offered to act as temporary editor until a replacement can be found. He said he has enough articles for the next edition. It was agreed that one option might be for the RDA to pay a professional editor to produce the magazine and if this was the case, the editor would not have to join the Committee.

[Action: SZ to contact UoS to see if a media student might be interested in editing The Deben, and to place an advert on the RDA website]

19. Any other business

RW said the new Chairman of the Kyson Fairway Committee would like to commission a depth survey of the Deben from Woodbridge to Methersgate. The RDA have been invited to contribute £200 towards the total cost of £450. It was noted that this information is readily available on Admiralty charts and apps such as Navionics and the value of surveying only a short stretch of the river was raised. RV said the Fairway Committee is responsible for mooring fees and as such should be able to finance such a project themselves.

[Action: RW to find out the specification of the proposed survey and email to Committee members for information]

RW attended the AGM of the Felixstowe Ferry Foreshore Trust and was pleased to hear that as a result of the RDA Forum earlier in the year, they are imposing greater control over the discharge of sewerage from houseboats.

There was no other business and the meeting was closed.

The date of the next meeting is 17th July at 6pm.