

**RIVER DEBEN ASSOCIATION  
MINUTES**

**Minutes of Committee meeting on 6<sup>th</sup> May, 2020 via Zoom**

**1. Present and Apologies**

**Present:** Joeske van Walsum (Acting Chair), Jane Alexander, Peter Clay, Jim Goldsworthy, Jane Haviland, Michael Holland, Matt Lis, Moray McPhail, Richard Verrill, Robin Whittle, Sarah Zins

**Observing:** Julia Jones

Apologies were received from Sam Jennings and Robert Simper

**2. Declarations of Interest**

It was agreed these would be declared as and when necessary throughout the meeting

**3. Minutes of the meeting of 13<sup>th</sup> January 2020**

The minutes were approved by RV, seconded by JH and will be published on the RDA website.

**[Action SZ to send minutes to Alan Comber to publish]**

**4. Matters arising**

It was agreed that any matters arising from the minutes will be discussed as they arise.

**5. Introduction from the Acting Chair and thoughts on future strategic direction**

JVW said that, having considered them in detail, he proposed no change to the strategic aims of the RDA to maintain the peace and tranquillity of the river, whilst encouraging reasonable access for the public. JVW stated his ambition to increase RDA membership to 2,500 and that the wider distribution of The Deben magazine would be the main driver in achieving this aim.

Regarding the aim to increase appeal and distribution of The Deben, JJ outlined the limitations of the bi-annual publication and her wish to make it more accessible and to engage more with the wider public. She suggested that the website be more widely used for people to upload their own stories or articles, thus creating an historical archive of river-related articles. There could also be a library/archive function for more detailed and scholarly articles on topics such as the saltmarshes. JG's comment that a membership of 2,500 would greatly increase the work of the Membership Secretary was noted. It was agreed to discuss this topic at a later date.

**[Action: JVW to add magazine contents and website to a future meeting agenda]**

**6. Impact on the river of the Coronavirus lockdown**

It was agreed to keep a watching brief on government guidelines regarding any easing of current restrictions.

**7. Accounts and Membership to Date**

JG had previously circulated the current statement which shows income to 5 May 2020 was £3,210.75, expenditure was £1,665.16 (mostly related to the publication and distribution of the Spring 2020 edition of The Deben), with a surplus of £1,545.59. Current membership stands at 839.

**8. Rescheduling of the 2020 AGM**

JVW's suggestion of holding the AGM via Zoom was discussed. It was agreed that a large number of the membership may feel excluded by the need to use technology and that the AGM should either be postponed until later in the year or a postal vote be used.

MH questioned whether the current Constitution, which dates from 2010, should be reviewed to consider aspects such as postal voting. JVW said the stated aims do not need to be changed but it was agreed that for reasons of due diligence, a review would be timely.

**[Action: JVW – sub-committee to be formed to undertake review of Constitution and make recommendations to a future meeting]**

**[Action: JH to check whether postal voting is permissible]**

## **9. Report from the DEP Meeting – 2 March 2020 (pre Covid-19 lockdown)**

SZ reported that it was announced at the meeting that the Felixstowe hydro cycle for irrigation was to start after harvest.

Storm Ciara, which hit in February, had resulted in the third highest tide at Harwich since 1953. The EA will repair damage to the recurve wall at Felixstowe Ferry and at Flood Cell 5b at Methersgate. The road flooding in Woodbridge was due to a blocked drain, which is the responsibility of Anglian Water to maintain.

Landowners have approved the design by Andrew Hawes for Flood Cell 1 (FC1). The proposed enabling development poses structural concerns and SZ tabled a paper at the DEP meeting outlining some of these. It was agreed that Strutt & Parker will share their tax advice. SZ has subsequently raised some of these concerns with John Cole, a DEP Trustee, including that if public money is involved, the DEP should be included in the decision-making on the specification for the FC1 wall.

The DEP had been proposing an imminent review of the plan, but Charles Loyd suggested at the meeting that unknown changes to agriculture resulting from leaving the EU mean a review should be delayed. However, the minutes note that the review will continue as initially planned.

## **10. Flood Defences**

RW talked through the study he had conducted for the specification for FC1. It was agreed that this was a very technical matter and that a sub-committee would convene to discuss RW's views consisting of JVW, RW, JH, RS and SZ. He added that the communities of Felixstowe Ferry and Bawdsey should have input in the decision to decide what defences are built as their property is at risk.

## **11. Fireworks**

JVW has circulated to the Committee his correspondence with the leader of the Woodbridge Sea Scouts group who had approached the RDA with an appeal for support for a riverside firework display in November. JVW was initially in favour of the proposal but following responses from JH about the environmental damage and disturbance to wildlife, his opinion has changed. ML said he had also been approached and was against the idea due to the potential for damage to his customers' boats caused by falling debris. He seconded JH's objections on grounds of the unsuitability of fireworks in an AONB and SSI. Other Committee members, previously unaware of the environmental harm caused by fireworks, agreed that the RDA should not support the proposed display but urged that a positive alternative be suggested, i.e., a Son et Lumiere display.

**[Action: JVW to explain to the Woodbridge Sea Scouts why the RDA can not support the plan and to suggest a more eco-friendly alternative is found]**

## **Meeting resumed on 13 May 2020 at 6pm, via Zoom**

**Present:** Joeske van Walsum (Acting Chair), Jane Alexander, Peter Clay, Jane Haviland, Michael Holland, Matt Lis, Moray McPhail, Richard Verrill, Robin Whittle, Sarah Zins

**Observing:** Julia Jones

Apologies were received from Jim Goldsworthy, Sam Jennings and Robert Simper

## **12. Report from SCG meeting on 09/03/20**

SZ reported that the winter weather had caused serious damage in a number of places along the coast and repairs were being addressed. An SMP policy review was being undertaken for Slaughden and Bawdsey, and next steps at Thorpeness were discussed.

## **13. Report from Suffolk Saltmarsh Group on 09/03/20**

This was chaired by Karen Thomas, who has agreed to continue to act as Chair, despite her new role. It was the first meeting for a year, and it was agreed that the Group's mission remained to access expertise and to

facilitate estuary groups. A table of objectives, how they could be achieved and by whom was circulated and agreed, and fully supported by the RDA.

#### **14. Report from Marine Pioneer Workshop on 13/02/20**

This was attended by SZ and RW, and concerns that the Marine Pioneer would be championing managed realignment on the estuary were allayed. Several useful contacts were forged.

#### **15. Saltmarshes**

RW reported that there has been a delay on the six month survey work at Loder's Cut Island and at Waldringfield, due to the Covid 19 virus. This work will take place as soon as possible.

Some concern has been raised at Waldringfield that bundles of faggots are coming free and floating into the river, where they could do damage to moored yachts. These were part of the Waldringfield Flood Defence Group's project to provide protection to the north of Waldringfield. For further information (<http://www.riverdeben.org/about-the-river/conserving-the-salt-marsh/>).

RW has written to the MMO to discuss the possibility of a generic licence for dredging on the Deben which can be used for saltmarsh restoration, and is waiting for a response

#### **16. Planning Applications and new construction**

- a. **Whisstocks Restaurant.** There was nothing to report
- b. **Melton Hill** –MH said the latest appeal had been turned down by the Council. A judicial review of the case is continuing.
- c. **Renovation of Sea Scouts' Building.** The RDA Committee supported the application to renovate and extend the building and permission has been granted.
- d. **Boathouse Café, Bawdsey.** A further 3 year rolling permission to operate the Café has been granted to PGL with provision to install three more tables.
- e. **Kings Knoll, Broom Heath.** The owners of this listed building have applied for permission to renovate and extend using large areas of glazing. Concern has been raised about the risk of light shed over Martlesham Creek. MH said there are no regulations covering light spillage from inside buildings.

#### **17. Wildlife**

Due to lockdown restrictions, RV had nothing to report.

#### **18. Footpaths and Access**

SZ has heard from Giles Merritt that the route of the Coastal Path along the Deben has now been agreed with the relevant landowners. Natural England are now waiting for sign-off of the route from an SSSI point of view as the marsh harrier and Brent geese populations could be affected. The route through FC1 will be on the land side of the borrowed dyke which will act as an effective barrier to the river wall so walkers will not be visible from the water and there should be minimal use of the river wall.

**[Action: The RDA will continue to monitor progress of the Coastal Path]**

#### **19. Website including news updates**

JJ encouraged Committee members to visit the RDA facebook page. ML agreed that social media will be a helpful tool for improving outreach.

It was agreed to post a picture of the Classic Boat Award winner, 'Ariel' on the website.

## **20. Autumn edition of the Deben**

JJ called for suggestions of local artists, ideally with forthcoming exhibitions, to provide artwork for the cover of the next edition. Articles of around 200 words with relevance to the river are invited from those aged under 21.

[Action: JVW to ask SJ for contributions from the Sea Scouts]

## **21. Cancelled events**

The Woodbridge Regatta and Maritime Woodbridge have both been cancelled. If lockdown restrictions are relaxed sufficiently, MM said Maritime Woodbridge are considering holding a 'Deben Day' in the Autumn.

## **22. AOB**

- a. **Young Ambassadors.** There was nothing specific to report but it was noted that when allowed, events should be planned to include activities to attract younger people.
  
- b. **Sewage Forum.** SZ reported on a paper written by Kirk Weir of the Woodbridge Society about testing the water to ascertain the safety of swimming off Ferry Quay. Anglian Water have advised that the number of river birds in the area mean the water is polluted by guano and therefore it is not a suitable site for swimming.  
It is hoped the mobile sewage pump-out service to be offered by Robertson's Boatyard will encourage take-up from houseboats on the river, but the cost of installing holding and emptying tanks was recognised as a deterrent.
  
- c. **Fireworks.** Following the discussion at the meeting on 6 May, JVW has drafted a reply to the Leader of Woodbridge Scouts.

[Action: JVW to circulate draft letter to the Committee for comment]

- d. **Constitution review.**

JH said the Working Party to be formed to review the Constitution would consider ways to update the rules to include aspects of modern life such as allowing email voting by the membership. JJ asked for confirmation in good time if a postal vote was to be included in the Autumn edition of The River.

[Action: JVW to set up a Working Group to review the Constitution of the RDA]

There was no other business and the meeting was closed.

## **Dates of future meetings:**

**Thursday 16 July**

**Wednesday 16 September**

**Wednesday 11 November**

**Wednesday 20 January 2021**