

RIVER DEBEN ASSOCIATION
Committee Meeting Minutes

Date/Time: Wednesday 20th May 2026, 19:00 – 20:30

Venue: Amanda's house, Woodbridge

Chair: CN

Item no.	Subject	Action
1	Present: Colin Nicholson (CN), Amanda de Margary (AdM), Liz Hattan (LH), Phil Skinner (PS), Tony Carter (TC) Apologies: Sue Orme, Caroline Peeke, Matt Lis, Anna-Marie Sellon, Ben Grundy, Robert Brinkley, Julia Jones	1. CN to update website and replace Caroline with Phil as Secretary
2	➤ New Declarations of interest None	2. PS to produce a draft register of interests to be uploaded onto RDA google drive.
3	➤ Approve Minutes of the meeting of 8th April and Actions The Committee noted special thanks to Caronline for final set of minutes produced as Secretary. Minutes were approved. Actions for agenda items 5, 6, 9, 10 to be carried forward. ➤ Approve Draft Minutes of 29th April 2026 AGM for posting on website The minutes were approved.	3. PS to email minutes to Alan Comber to upload onto website. 4. PS to create action tracker at bottom of minutes.
4	➤ Members and Finance numbers Accounts for 30th April via email to committee members. April is bumper month for memberships. Amanda still calculating current membership numbers. Amanda has received a request for 20 colouring books. Will ask around as to who has spare copies. Also, looking for additional copies for Woodbridge Regatta.	5. AdM to track down available copies of colouring books. 6. AdM to draft funds policy.

	How surplus funds are used was discussed and Amanda proposed drafting a funds policy for discussion.	
5	➤ Review AGM+Talk - 29th April / Steam Bending: The Committee noted that the event was a great success with good attendance. Thanks to Matt and Daniel were expressed. The engagement of the school children present was celebrated. For next time, it was noted that a projector for the presentation would have been helpful. Julia noted via email that a write up of the event had been prepared and would be published in the RDA Journal. ➤ Deben Forum Planning: Thoughts on dates, participants, location, issues It was discussed whether the Deben Forum should also include representation from the Upper Deben which had not historically been represented. Tony suggested that the issues of the Upper Deben were quite different and the committee agreed. Colin suggested re-titling the forum to the 'Deben Estuary Forum'. In regards to dates, it was agreed that Matt and Ben were key and Colin would pick up with them. Location was likely to be Woodbridge Quay Church as previously. ➤ Volunteers for rota for Woodbridge Regatta & Riverside Fair, Sunday (19th July) stand booked: Availability of colouring books, old magazines, stand etc. The stall is manned 10am-4pm. Colin suggested an appeal to members beyond committee members who would be willing to volunteer some time. Availability of internet connectivity for receipt of payment for new members was discussed as being quite important.	7. CN to follow up with Matt and Ben to agree an initial proposal on dates for Deben Forum. 8. AdM offered to investigate internet connectivity at Eversons wharf for Woodbridge Regatta new members payment processing.
6	➤ Magazine / Journal Updates / Bits & Bobs – Julia	9. PS to abstract a list of previous talks from the website for committee to

	Julia requested organisational details for the Aumtumn talk to be early so as not to delay magazine production. Liz suggested the Ships Company from the Longshed and it was felt this would be good for next year's AGM given timing fo the ships launch. Lord Deben was discussed as an option. Amanda suggested reviewing previous talks to reflect on balance of previous talks between different interests reflected by the RDA membership. Having a talk that could bring in the interests an participation from the Upper Deben members was noted as something that should be on the agenda for the next 18 months. Via email, Julia suggested The Woolverstone Project and the National Coastwatch Institution who have a lookout point at Felixstowe. Otter monitoring was discussed as something that would go down well and could be combined with an update on what has been happening up at Ufford. It was agreed that this was the first choice to go for. Amanda suggested the Art Haven as a potential venue. Date likely 4th Novemeber but would confirm with speakers first.	reflect on historical balance of RDA interests represented in talks. 10. CN to contact Penny Hemphill re: Otters.
7	Jet Ski Update/Survey update CN updated the committee via email: “30 April 2026 Meeting with ESC Coastal Management Cabinet Member and ESC legal manager. a) Route established (sign-off by (ESC Head of Legal and Democratic Services and the Monitoring Officer) to give ESC endorsement (probably annually) to Deben (sailing mostly) clubs for their programmes of racing etc. to ensure that they are not in breach of the 1979 Byelaws: b) 2x Legal interns have held meeting to map out ways to update the byelaws to year-round. RAMS manager, on board c) Date for next Police Patrol, facilitated by Deben Yacht Club fixed: 29th July”	
8	Report from Nature and Conservation Subcommittee (CN LH) No update.	

9	➤ Updates on RDA representations on other Organisations/Project teams • Deben Climate Centre Emphasis now moving onto what projects are deliverable and don't overlap with existing 'Recover the Deben' plans and those of other agencies DCC continues monthly monitoring water quality (nearly 70 locations) Link to April report in Facebook. • Recovering the Deben East Suffolk Catchment Partnership/Essex & Suffolk Rivers Trust/ Recovering the Deben (RtD) continue to build Natural Flood Management 'bunds' in the upper reaches around Debenham. Value for money and the real effect on flooding of some of the smaller projects remains a question. RtD website (link) now covering local events. Some progress on SUDS at Sutton Hoo is being made. They have a report on fish passage structures on the Deben. RtD project on Natural England SSSI Recovery is being written up, summary of what it concluded: • there is currently insufficient evidence to conclude water quality is the primary driver of habitat decline in the SSSI • However, if unmanaged, ongoing nutrient and pathogen inputs could drive future ecological impacts - particularly under climate change Phase 2 investigations recommended: • Better understand riparian flows and estuarine processes • Targeted sediment and ecological surveys in areas of identified nutrient and bacteriological pressure • Long-term standardised monitoring to enable early change detection • Priority actions should focus upstream on reducing sewage and agricultural nutrient and bacterial inputs	11. CN to circulate Recovering the Deben presentation to RDA committee.

	• DEP DEP Plan will go out for public consultation shortly. There may be an opportunity for funding from ESC. DEP Acting Chair, Rob Bellfield, is now having to move abroad and sadly relinquish his post. Suitable replacement is being sought.	
10	➤ Planning / Footpaths / Access SCC Footpaths Officer, walked from Wilford Bridge to Woodbridge and placed some signage at relevant points (recommendations from CP, thank you) along this section. FP officer spoke to quite a lot of members of public who were very grateful for the signs and spoke of their own experiences of cyclists on this section. They were all very positive about the signs and were local people that said that if they notice that these had been taken down, they would report to SCC. It is intended to continue with the Woodbridge to Kyson point section. SO updated via email: Attention has been drawn to a potential planning breach at 12 Willowbank adjacent to Fayrefield. We await the findings of the planning authority. SO noted that it is now free for three hours to park at Ramsholt Arms, as well as the top field car park.	
12	➤ Breach at Ufford Pools The large breach at the Ufford weir is having a major impact locally; river levels have dropped by almost one metre. This has left the mill stream channel to dry out with a loss of fish and aquatic species, e.g. caddis and mayfly larvae as well as roach, dace and small trout. The Environment Agency reluctant to take on responsibility (on a national basis, the EA has realised that in previous decades, it has been maintaining assets with taxpayers' money, that turned out to be private and this has now been deemed wrong – and the EA now has no budget for it).	12. CN to ask footpaths officer why Ufford Pools footpath repair isn't their responsibility given AdM's findings.

	The Lower Deben Riparian Owners Group (LDOG) and Ufford Parish Council are working with Landowners and other agencies to identify the best way forward. Network Rail could become involved as the extra flow alongside the East Suffolk Line could undermine the piling. As an aside, a similar Upper Deben Riparian Owners group (UDOG) has been formed, with Lord Deben as President. The footpath is currently scheduled to be closed until September, but this should not be taken as an indication of when everything would be sorted AdM looked at Highways Agency website and felt they had legal obligation to maintain the public footpath was responsibility of the local highways agency.	
13	➤ AOB - Thanks received for RDA grants of £500 each towards anti-erosion works from: Andrew Willis, Bawdsey Haven Yacht Club; Roger Challis, Waldringfield Sailing Club Treasurer, and John Ogden, WSC Vice-Commodore. - Update on SCC signage actions for cycling along paths. Via e-mail JJ put forward that the RDA needs to be sensitive about being associated with banning activities as everyone should be enjoying the river. However, it is important to support the existing rules of the footpaths - Debenham fair, Sat 6th June TC has offered to man a stall on behalf of the RDA. CN offered to share RDA posters that TC can display on a stand. Committee members thanked TC for volunteering to represent the RDA at this event.	13. AdM to also check what has been shared with her previously by Moray that Tony can use for RDA stand at Debenham fair.
14	Date of next meeting 8th July, 6:30pm	14. PS to propose schedule of meetings for remainder of 2026.

	It was agreed that it would be worth planning dates further in advance.	
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