

# ALDE AND ORE COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP

FINAL MINUTES

MINUTES OF THE EIGHTH MEETING OF THE ALDE AND ORE COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP HELD ON THURSDAY 16 SEPTEMBER 2021 AT 6.30PM BY ZOOM

## PRESENT:

Nominated representatives

Tim Beach (TB) Chairman

Russ Rainger (RR)

Peter McGinity

Peter Palmer

Annabel Chamberlain

Alison Andrews (AA)

Jane Skepper (JS)

Cllr. Snape Parish Council

Cllr East Suffolk Council

Chair Chillesford Parish Meeting,

Cllr. Aldeburgh TC,

Cllr. Iken PC

Alde and Ore Association

IDB Board Member

Chris Gill (CG)

Andrew McDonald

Treasurer

Comms Group

## ADVISERS/ATTENDEES:

Giles Bloomfield

David Kemp (DK)

Elizabeth Stanton

Ed Boyle

East Suffolk Internal Drainage Board (ESIDB)

Environment Agency (EA)

AOET

Natural England

MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC 4 and 4 apologies

## AGENDA

- 1. Apologies:** Andrew Reid Cllr. Suffolk County Council, Ray Herring Cllr. East Suffolk Council, Andrew Greenwell Boyton PC, Ben Coulter repr. Butley, Capel St Andrew and Wantisden Parish Council, Jeremy Hinves Cllr Iken PC, Frances Barnwell Vice Chairman and Cllr. Orford and Gedgrave Parish Council, Niels Peterson Cllr. Tunstall Parish Council, Bill Parker Sudbourne Parish Council, Harry Young Business Representative, Jane Maxim AOET, Edward Greenwell IDB alternate, Karen Thomas CPE.

### 2. Declarations of interest

RR explained that he was also a Councillor on Snape PC as well as the newly nominated ESC Councillor to be a representative on AOC.

### 3. Minutes of the meeting on 8 July 2021

These were agreed without amendment. (proposer CG, seconder JS)

### 4. Matters arising from the meeting on 1 April 2021 not otherwise on the agenda

None, all were to be covered under the agenda.

### 5. IDB update on the Outline Business Case submission.

i. The Chairman introduced by recapping that the Outline Business Case submitted to the Environment Agency was still outstanding as it had been linked to the EA Investigation into clay stored at Iken. AOC and others had put considerable pressure on EA thought various routes to get the investigation completed as rapidly as possible or the Plan detached from it to enable the flood defences project to be started as soon as possible. He cautioned that given the Iken Clay investigation, care had to be taken as the matter was still subject to an outstanding criminal investigation.

ii. GB reported progress in that the IDB had recently received a formal letter inviting the IDB to revise the Business Case, which had been technically passed, to specifically exclude the stored clay and then to resubmit it. GB explained the original Case had not relied on the Iken clay but in any revision that matter would be made even clearer. As EA had, since the plan was submitted in 2018, made revisions to the flood grant

applications criteria and as costs had risen, weeks' worth of work was needed to revise the case. He could say however that the net effect, given changes to the scheme providing benefits to the plan on the one hand and rising costs on the other, would be that the estuary would not need to find any more funds.

iii. ES explained that the IDB required more funds to prepare the revised business case and the Trust had discussed this with the IDB, GB estimating the cost at possibly about £50,000. This put the AOET as a charity in a very difficult position because spending such money, while necessary to get the plan resubmitted, meant spending money when there was no guarantee that the scheme would be approved. Nevertheless, the Trust had asked the IDB for an application for a grant from the Trust to do the work which it could consider she hoped this could be completed before the Trust had to finalise its annual accounts to be completed during October.

iv. ES said the AOET was very frustrated by the lack of understanding of the issues facing the charity and the estuary defence needs and by the lack of support from the EA. At no point, despite requests, had EA explained why the Project had to held up.

v. JS said there was an increasing level of frustration within the Internal Drainage Board about how long the investigation was taking. She suggested time may have come to write more letters and make more personal approaches to have the Estuary project released from this blockage. She would be seeing the local MP shortly.

vi. CG said he had discussed ways of putting pressure for movement with FB (VC of AOCP) and Nick Robinson, including the possibility to put on more pressure using NR's possible contacts. The idea was being considered.

vii. During further discussion it was very clear that all the Partnership were very frustrated by the current position and very concerned that as time went by the chances of greater flooding increased. It was decided that a further newsletter to inform the local community would not add to the detailed minutes of AOCP or the AOET newsletters. The publicity AOCP had secured earlier in the year had informed people locally but not made any appreciable difference to getting EA to move.

viii. JS suggested that EA staff might be asked to a private meeting to explain the position to the AOCP. The problem was who to invite as the blockage lay with the Legal and Finance side of EA not with the local regional contacts who would normally be the people best approached. To be considered further.

ix. It was agreed that TB would renew pressure on EA by writing further letters and making further personal approaches also seeking reassurance about the process for renewing the application and all its attendant costs. ES said the AOET would make its own comments too in its accounts.

x. DK explained the process for reviewing the revised project in EA, first locally and then in a national scrutiny group, but could not guarantee the outcome. But there was £5.2 billion in the Government's flood budget and shovel ready projects would have a very good chance of funding if approved.

x. GB commented that the EA updates on the investigation presented problems as they were issued with no warning even of timing yet alone content and this made it difficult for IDB to respond effectively.

## **6. Environment Agency update in river repairs** (not related to the Business Case)

DK reported that the EA had secured money for two repair projects in the estuary. The first would deal with maintenance of the sluice at Snape: a full inspection on what needed to be done would begin in the week of 27 September and how to get access to it, with the actual work taking place at the end of October or in early November.

The second target was repairing broken concrete blocks on the front of the Aldeburgh, FC10s, river wall, which was similar to work done in FC4 in 2016/17. This was likely to be done in November when the maintenance team would have finished similar repairs on the Blythe.

## **7. Hazlewood Marshes**

The meeting considered the paper submitted on the recently identified possible impacts of the deterioration of the remaining defences around Flood Cell 9 (Hazlewood Marshes). While most of FC9 was now developing new intertidal habitat, the increased water area at full tide at the eastern end, in northerly winds, was eroding the back of the spur of the original walls which provided some shelter for the wall built there to protect some private land and the river golf course. The issue was separate from the plans for the Upper Estuary. The exact impact on river flows on the FC or the river itself was not clear as on the one hand it might increase river flows and affect the estuary further down but on the other might not make a great difference. After discussion it was agreed that the Chair would investigate possible sources of expert advice to assess and advise on possible impacts and then return to the Partnership with the results or plans for finding funds to secure professional assessment. ES said that the AOET's current priority for funding was the main estuary restoration.

## **8. Communications- Report back from AOCB Comms Group. Update:**

AA said that plans to refresh the web site pages on the Estuary Plan had been held over during the summer. AMcD who had volunteered to help with Comms agreed with the Chair that a small group would be called together and addressed before the next AOCB meeting.

## **9. AOCB Admin Finance**

- i. The Chair gave the good news that the Environment Agency had now found the way to give the Partnership £2,500 for administrative work for the current year. Similar amounts would be paid to the other Suffolk Estuary Partnerships. Thanks to DK.
- ii. The Chair reported that at last the funds from the former AOEP held in HSBC had reached the building society account of the AOCB and he expressed thanks as well to Edward Greenwell and Mandy Bettinson. Reimbursements would now be paid to the two people who had personally paid AOCB bills while the account was not in funds.

## **10. Any other business**

- i. TB reported on an opportunity that had come up to seek further funding for the work of the AOCB. EA had issued a call for application relating to Championing Coastal Coordination. The officers would look at the opportunities to seek resources to help tasks of the AOCB including possible saltmarsh work and comms. An application would be put in by 30 September.
- ii. CG asked whether there was any more progress on identifying ways to undertake work earlier to do preliminary work on the Orford town river defences at an earlier date. GB explained that the upper estuary needed to be done substantially first to avoid flood risk transference and that for the lower estuary needed to follow on.

## **10. Dates of Next meetings**

The next meeting would be on **Thursday 9 December 2021 at 6.30pm**, by Zoom.

AA 17 September 2021