

# ALDE AND ORE COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP

DRAFT MINUTES

MINUTES OF THE NINTH MEETING OF THE ALDE AND ORE COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP HELD ON THURSDAY 27 JANUARY 2022 AT 6.30PM BY ZOOM

## PRESENT:

Nominated representatives

Tim Beach (TB) Chairman	Cllr. Snape Parish Council
Frances Barnwell	Vice Chairman
Andrew Reid (AR)	Cllr. Suffolk County Council,
Russ Rainger (RR)	Cllr East Suffolk Council
Ben Coulter (BC)	repr. Butley, Capel St Andrew and Wantisden Parish Council
Jeremy Hinvre (JH)	Cllr. Iken PC
Peter Palmer (PP)	Cllr. Aldeburgh TC,
Bill Parker (BP)	Sudbourne Parish Council
Gary Wingrove (GW)	Cllr. Orford and Gedgrave Parish Council
Alison Andrews (AA)	Alde and Ore Association
Chris Gill (CG)	Treasurer
Andrew McDonald (AMcD)	Comms Group

## ADVISERS/ATTENDEES:

Giles Bloomfield (GB)	East Suffolk Internal Drainage Board
(ESIDB)	
David Kemp (DK)	Environment Agency (EA)
Jane Maxim (JM)	AOET
Ed Boyle (EB)	Natural England

MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC: 5 and 1 apology

## AGENDA

1. **Apologies:** Andrew Cassy/Andrew Greenwell Boyton PC, Ray Herring Cllr. East Suffolk Council, Peter McGinity Chillesford Parish Meeting, Niels Peterson Cllr. Tunstall Parish Council, Edward Greenwell IDB alternate, Jane Skepper IDB Alternate, Harry Young Business Representative, Emma Dixon IDB

### 2. **Declarations of interest**

Representatives were to send in their completed Declarations of Interest form which was required annually. Three had already come in.

### 3. **Minutes of the meeting on 16 September 2021**

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

### 4. **Matters arising from the meeting on 16 September 2021 not otherwise on the agenda**

None, all were to be covered under the agenda.

### 5. **IDB Update on the Outline Business Case submission.**

**GB** said that a lot of work had been going on in relation to the embankment Business Cases over the last few months. The Upper and Lower Estuary cases had had to be revisited to comply with latest government funding requirements and, in addition, to avoid double accounting of the eligible qualifying benefits, the pending costs of replacing the 7 pumping stations (which provide water level management obligations to freshwater environs) have also now to be considered in the round. RPA had been appointed and all the benefits, costs had now been updated from Partnership Funding Calculator (PFC)2014 levels to new PFC2020, which was to the benefit of the estuary. In parallel to that work, further applications to other top-up grants were being sought e.g., the Other Departmental Government

Fund (ODG), Environmental Support Fund (ESF) and Local Levy. Also given the government new Net Zero targets and the removal of red diesel exemption from April 2022, the additional cost of having to use white diesel for construction activities had had to be recalculated. Overall, while costs were higher, eligibility for grants had gone up and he estimated that he could not see that the present funding gap of £12 million that the Trust had been working to would be any greater, but he would come back on that.

Other work necessary for the Business Case included revisiting Environmental Impact Assessments, which Jacobs were doing, to produce revised in combination impacts. In parallel IDB were moving forward on work on the Lower Estuary Business Case. This included the making safe of the collapsed old gravity discharge sluice and current pump discharge route of Gedgrave Pumping station. Many will have seen the temporary up-and-over pipework that had had to be installed last year which affected priorities on how to seek approvals allocate funding.

But overall, GB said that things were moving apace. Next week IDB were meeting with the EA Large Project Review Group to discuss how to make sure meeting the new format and template requirements could most efficiently be met. Hopefully the Upper Estuary Outline Business Case would be submitted late February-mid March. DK added he was aware of the phenomenal amount of work IDB were doing and the aim of EA and IDB was to get to all done as quickly as the requirements allowed. Other IDB action which would help with progressing the Plan was IDB had been working on securing a bespoke Waste licence. The first step is to submit a waste recovery plan to the Environment Agency. The application was submitted End December 2021. Subject to approval Full licence application can be made.

In answer to a question on when work might start on the Estuary Project, GB said that the chance of starting any work other than enabling work to get machinery in place this year was unlikely as the seasonal window for environmental mitigation (moving wildlife) was near its end. In relation to the Lower Estuary, IDB were also revisiting the alternative plans for dealing at Boyton: these could also address coastal squeeze and by generating intertidal habitat would generate considerable funds.

TB commented that everyone in the AOCP area would be disappointed that work would not start this year but, given the necessary actions explained to AOCP, there was no choice and once all was in place the project could fly.

JM, commenting for the Trust, explained that the Trust had fund raising plans in place but until there was something in writing from EA about the grant position, the Trust could not start to put them into action. The Trust were ready to go as soon as they could.

## **6. Update on EA investigation on clay deposited at Iken**

The Chairman introduced by recapping that because the original Outline Business Case had been linked to the EA criminal Investigation into clay stored at Iken, it had then been delayed. AOCP and others at all levels had put considerable pressure on EA, before and since the last AOCP meeting, through various routes to get the investigation completed as rapidly as possible with little result. But he noted that the work now in hand revising and updating the Business Plan should meet EA request made in a letter in relation to points to be covered last summer to enable the Plan and the clay issue to be seen to be as entirely separate issues and so allow the Plan to proceed.

The Chairman asked whether anyone had views on challenging the pace. AR said we needed to be as pragmatic as possible and there seemed no mileage in putting on additional pressure given where we had reached. SB (member of the public) asked how upset the whole community was with all this delay and how could the EA ignore their reputation being lost with such lack of action and communication on the investigation. In reply the Chairman said he could not agree more and the community's real fears and concerns had been powerfully communicated including that every winter that went by was a dangerous time. But, even so, that had had little traction with the criminal investigation. Hence the way forward was with Plan B to go around the clay issue and that was the work in hand.

The need to tell everyone about progress was discussed here and under Item 8. Communications. See 8.ii for full report and conclusion.

## **7. FC 9 Hazlewood Marshes**

The Chair recapped explaining that the walls of Hazlewood Marshes were breached in the 2013 surge. Last autumn being concerned about erosion on the back of the remaining old wall, the landowners, the

Wheeler, asked for advice and as DK had indicated this fell to AOCF. As agreed in September, the Chair had sought expert advice on whether there might be any wider impacts and approached Mark Dixon, recommended by GB, who has a good reputation in East Anglia. Mark Dixon had provided a brief report based on google maps and his knowledge of the area. The AOCF had shared this report with the landowners (the Wheelers and Suffolk Wildlife Trust (SWT)), the Trust, IDB, EA and N. to check whether anything did not ring true, with a view to then having a meeting with the landowners to discuss what if anything needed to be done. Most had replied. Briefly the report suggested that the existing walls would continue to be eroded, that mud was accumulating and saltmarsh was likely to develop, but the flow into the estuary might not change much from what had already occurred. AR added the boatman, the Cables, like others had found that the river flow had increased since the breach in 2013. AA confirmed others had found this and said that an increase in flow of 6-9% or so had been forecast by Professor Pye in 2014.

Johnny Wheeler said it had been good to have the three site visits because of the concerns about the future of the wall his father had built, with only a small contributing grant, to protect his land and the river golf course. Their concern was that with the greater area of water daily now inside the Marshes at high tide, the wind velocity from the north was eroding the unprotected back of the remaining wall in a way not foreseen. While noting the Dixon report in relation to possible increased saltmarsh, he remained concerned that the erosion was faster than had been expected. This was leading to more frequent overtopping of the new wall, raising concerns about the sustainability and integrity of the 'Wheeler' wall. If nothing was done and nature took its course the new wall would not survive, and this would affect their land and the golf course. The Aldeburgh Golf Club were now also taking a keen interest and had sought the advice of Andrew Hawes (flood engineer).

TB thanked JW and said the next step was a meeting with the landowners including AGC to discuss the consequences of what was happening and the question of any possible action or funding.

**Action: TB, AA**

## **8. Communications**

i. AMcD had led the development of the Communications Plan in 2020, and now returned to help with comms developments. He spoke in relation to action on the decisions at the last meeting to have a small group to prepare matters to be ready for action when the complex and hopefully good news about taking the Estuary Plan forward arrived. Happily, with coinciding interests of the AOCF, AOET and IDB, a small working group had been formed to update, refocus or replace all the information boards used at past meetings and exhibitions to be able to explain what needed to be done, why and how and how it would be funded. This also involved issues set out in the Comms Plan to ensure that all the interests of residents, visitors, businesses, parish/ district/county councils and groups with a stake in the estuary area needed to be in terms of content and the right sorts of communication. The third meeting would be next week and a fourth was likely after design work and technical updating to enable the material to be used flexibly and updated quickly as matters progressed. He saw IDB would be the first responder being the Business Case Applicant, with the Trust in relation to approaching funding and funders and the AOCF seeking to bring in all the parishes and their constituents and other groups in the estuary, covered, to spread the good news and help create a good ground for asking for support. It was a good piece of partnership working. The group would be reporting back to the AOCF.

TB thanked AMcD for the work so far.

**Action: AMcD, AA**

ii. At several points in the meeting there were discussions about how to communicate to the estuary community about what was happening in this holding period while the Business Case was being progressed. It was recognised that the AOCF policy had been not communicate when there was nothing positive to say but, the uncertainty had now been going on a long time. People were saying they had no idea what was going on and feeling left in the dark. So, the question was asked, what might be communicated more widely about the progress of the Estuary Plan? On the one hand it was not yet possible to say that Plan B would clear the way as EA could not confirm that until it saw the revised plans and met the response required to EA's letter of last summer on how the Plan and Investigation might be separated but, on the other hand there was a need to get something out.

It was agreed that might be done if there was an early response in March to the submission of the revised Business Plan. But if that outcome took longer to arrive, a more general note, based, say, on minutes of meeting could be prepared AMcD volunteered that the Comms Group could draft a piece to show action was in hand even if a final answer not yet in place and that could go in local newsletters and on the web

site: it would need to be cleared with all parties within AOCIP including advisers.

**Action: Comms note to all**

#### **9. AOCIP Admin Finance: Accounts at 31 December 2021**

TB explained that during the year securing a new bank account and transferring the money that has been in the former AOEP bank account had been achieved and that together with the welcome grant of £2,500 from the Environment Agency, total funds stood at £14,343.

CG added that, as there had been no AGM last year, the expenditure noted covered the last 23 months: expenditure only related to regular updating of the AOCIP web site and the work commissioned by AOCIP to refresh the site. He also noted that thanks be given to Edward Greenwell and Tim Beach for covering the bills while the new account was set up and the money due finally transferred into it. The accounts were approved.

#### **10. Election of Officers**

Further to the note prior to the meeting that the current officers were all prepared to stand again for another year, TB explained that while FB had left Orford and Gedgrave Council she was prepared to stand again as a co-opted member. He called for nominations. These were made as follows and all unanimously agreed.

	Proposer	Seconder
Chairman: Tim Beach	BC/AMcD	AR
Vice Chairman: Frances Barnwell	TB	BC/CG
Hon Secretary: Alison Andrews	TB	AR
Treasurer: Chris Gill	AA	FB

#### **11. Any other business**

As postscripts:

TB said that while the long wait for an outcome on the Business Plan was very disappointing, he was hopeful that good results would arrive, and he would be writing another letter.

AA thanked TB for his good leadership through these difficult times and all endorsed that.

#### **12. Date of Next meeting**

The next meeting would be on **Thursday 24 March 2022 at 6.30pm,**  
**to be decided whether by zoom or in Orford Town Hall nearer the time**