ALDE AND ORE COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP FINAL

MINUTES OF THE TENTH MEETING OF THE ALDE AND ORE COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP HELD ON THURSDAY 24 March 2022 AT 6.30PM BY ZOOM

PRESENT:

Nominated representatives

Tim Beach (TB) Chairman	Cllr. Snape Parish Council
Frances Barnwell	Vice Chairman
Ben Coulter (BC)	repr. Butley, Capel St Andrew and Wantisden Parish Council
Peter Palmer (PP)	Cllr. Aldeburgh TC,
Bill Parker (BP)	Sudbourne Parish Council
Niels Peterson	Cllr. Tunstall Parish Council
Alison Andrews (AA)	Alde and Ore Association
Harry Young	Business Representative
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)
Elizabeth Stanton (ES)	AOET

MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC: 5

AGENDA

Apologies:

1. Andrew Reid Suffolk County Council, Russ Rainger East Suffolk Council, Andrew Cassy/Andrew Greenwell Boyton PC, Ray Herring Cllr. East Suffolk Council, Peter McGinity Chillesford Parish Meeting, Jeremy Hinvre Iken PC, Gary Wingrove Orford and Gedgrave Parish Council, Edward Greenwell IDB alternate, Jane Skepper IDB Alternate, Emma Dixon IDB, Ed Boyle Natural England

2. **Declarations of interest**

Most Declarations of Interest forms had been completed. The Hon Sec would send out a few reminders.

3. Minutes of the meeting on 27 January 2022

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

4. Matters arising from the meeting on 27 January 2022 not otherwise on the agenda

None, all were to be covered under the agenda.

5. IDB Update on the Outline Business Case submission.

GB reported on the progress towards producing the revised Business Plan and hoped it could be submitted to the Environment Agency in 3-4 weeks.

Since the last meeting he has had clarification on fuel and revisited those costs given the nationwide issue of high white diesel prices: he shared that he was working on £1.75 per litre plus VAT: that was a reasonable estimate looking ahead but he would have to manage any larger price rise in the risk contingency. He had agreed with the Environment Agency the principles of the approach to be adopted in the Economic Appraisal. He had previously mentioned the pumping stations renewals and while those used to be a stand-alone project they needed now to go in the Economic Appraisal for the estuary. Another task required for the Application was an assessment of the carbon impact of the investment, involving modelling and a carbon calculation and this work was progressing too: part of the process of modelling was to look for ways to minimise the carbon footprint whether in materials used or construction processes, for example, using virgin clay, as was proposed, was very helpful in getting a good score and identifying the preferred option. The fact that this option was already laid out in the Estuary Plan, which was

already approved as being of material importance in planning terms, meant that that work could be done more quickly. He mentioned that funding from the Other Government Department Fund was forthcoming for the Lower Estuary and the pumping stations, but this year's annualised update might also yield some funding for the Upper Estuary in October.

The questions in letter the EA had sent last summer relating to the clay at Iken which might lead to delinking the project from the EA Investigation, had now been fully answered and a response was awaited. So, overall, he hoped that the IDB were within 3-4 weeks of getting the Business Case back to the EA. TB commented that was hopefully good news with the progress towards splitting off the Business Case from the clay investigation.

In response to a question, GB explained that there were 8 pumping stations of which 2 were private but might be taken under public control and talks on those were in hand with Aldeburgh Town Council. He added that the pumps were used to manage water levels and contributed to making the marshes functional habitats so were very important for the freshwater environment. As other pumping stations projects elsewhere in East Anglia were already in progress, he would be getting useful figures for costing the project.

Responding to a question about whether the sewage farms in the area might factor into considerations for grant, GB said that for infrastructure in the flood plain, like sewage and others such as roads, were put for consideration under the Other Government Department Fund (OGD) grants. The algorithm process that scheme used yielded more grant: he commented that the project had done well out of that process and did not merit fresh applications.

To a question about the carbon analysis, GB explained that it looked at the operation of building, at the actual materials used and their movement and included assessing how an investment was built using less carbon where possible. But that said, the calculators don't work really well on savings such as the services being provided behind the river walls where there are thousands of hectares of wet marsh where carbon sequestration is significant.

TB commented that it was frustrating that there has never been a better opportunity to get significant funding but the whole investment was being held back by the clay investigation. The important thing was to keep pressing ahead to get the Outline Business Case submitted. He thanked GB and DK for continuing to work together on progressing the Business Case.

6. Update on EA investigation on clay deposited at Iken

The Chairman introduced by saying as he had written again in February to EA, this time repeating his letter of the same time last year, pointing out that nothing had changed in that time and his letter prompted the belated Fifth Community Update. He read into the Update that there was some progress being made but there was not much else in there. He was open to suggestions for further prompting. He was cautious doing anything in relation to the investigation given where the investigation was reaching as the update implied there was likely to be some form of resolution by the next update: the situation was frustrating.

FB said she found the lack of action wholly unsatisfactory and asked what required the length of time to do the investigation and its cost. The Community was being put at risk while waiting and further, whilst recognising the IDB were working hard to progress the work, delay was causing the need for more reworking, thus increasing the delay and creating a vicious circle of delays. She did not feel the community was being served properly. TB agreed and said he had made those points.

TB said that personally he felt that no matter how many times frustration and dissatisfaction had been expressed, including in the press, it seemed not possible to get any traction.

The possibility of using the Statute of Limitations to challenge the delay was suggested but it was thought unlikely to help, but anyone was welcome to do research on that.

TB said he had also raised the question of public interest in relation to the delay and had not had an answer.

7. **FC 9 Hazlewood Marshes**

The Chair recapped the issue which began when erosion affecting the walls in and around Hazlewood Marshes was brought to the attention of AOCP. The AOCP decided to seek advice on whether there were implications for the estuary plan and what part the AOCP might play. The advice received was that if old walls collapsed it would largely be a positive thing. He and AA had spoken with the Aldeburgh Golf Club and learned about their plans, and that they were talking with the Wheelers: the plans in mind were to address the erosion on the internal walls but this would not involve action affecting the estuary. AA had

also spoken with Johnny Wheeler and while he would have appreciated help with the costs, he was realistic about what might be done. So, concluding TB said that AOCP have investigated but there is nothing in the view of AOCP nor the Trust to be done in relation to the estuary.

8. Communications

i. **Posters:** AMcD said the Comms Group had been working with the three organisations, AOCP, AOET and ESIDB. He shared a draft initial poster and suggested that all the posters might be headed in the same way, '' One more storm…' with the aim of trying to get into all the boards that the estuary was a threatening situation and we needed to act together. The Group were putting together about 20 draft slides/posters, which could be used at exhibitions, conferences or community meetings and were considering setting up a virtual room too. He would circulate the drafts to key stakeholders for comments shortly and would hope by June have the final set. The definitive funding needed for their production had yet to be addressed.

BP said in relation to the draft poster, his concern that the posters should not imply that the project was a once and for all solution, there needed to be expectation management. The Chair assured him that the boards overall focussed on buying time and resilience.

BC commented on the messaging, advising that the strap line needs discussion – was it technically correct, and realistic in the context of delays. It was punchy but could it be substantiated? AMcD took on board that warning and was happy to have help moderating that message. TB added the thought along the lines of 'a stitch in time'. Concluding, the Chair said that the draft board material would be circulated to stakeholders including AOCP representatives for comment and advice. **Action: AMcD and Comms Group**

ii. **Bringing the community up to date with the estuary plan progress.** From last meeting the Comms Group were going to produce an update for the community. The Comms Group had considered a draft and the possibility of a separate IDB and AOCP notices the latter being issued earlier on where we are and the IDB one when the way forward and technical details could be clearer. The Chair agreed with IDB that it was not the time to do so given the sensitivities around the investigation.

There followed a discussion among all present raising on the one hand the fact that there was a real feeling around in the area that nothing was happening on the estuary plan, even noting since AOCP had come into being it appeared there had been no action, but on the other the need to avoid sensitivities around the investigation and the existing uncertainty when the project might be approved and be able to go ahead. Timing was debated included releasing a note or press notice before Easter or waiting until it was clear that nothing would emerge even before the June AOCP meeting. EA needed to come up with a really good reason soon as to why nothing was being done over such a very long time period when each year that passed risked substantial damage to the area.

AMcD suggested that a straightforward note issued before Easter would not prejudice the scrutiny role of the Partnership. The basis for such a draft already existed in the draft which the Comms Group had discussed. There was a positive story to be told and, contrary to some perceived outward appearances that nothing had been done, a great deal in terms of essential planning had been taking place. ES said that the benefits flowing form the project were of considerable public interest element and it was important for the Partnership to make that clear. EA progress has been glacial. The Trust has its own concerns too and these were expressed in the Trust's annual report. She added that the Trust had also sent the Annual Report and Accounts to some people at the EA and encouraged them to read the Trustees Report and again had had no response.

TB agreed that the matter could not be parked indefinitely and advised that it was important not to cut across the criminal investigation and noted that there was a good neutral and positive basis for a release. A small group including the Trust, AOCP and IDB would come up with note being both neutral, informative and positive, and include showing how much had been done in changing and challenging context. ES stressed that reference to the public interest point was important. TB said he would also think about warning the EA of the note avoid cutting across the investigation. **Hon Sec to fix meeting to discuss possible statement before the Easter**

9. AOCP Admin Finance: Accounts at 31 December 2021

AA reported that so far this year bills of £250 had been paid. With the £2500 kindly granted by the Environment Agency last year and the money carried over from the original Partnership there should be enough to deal with the poster work discussed under Communications and it was hoped that Coastal Partnership East might also be able to help too.

10. **Any other business**

i. FB pointed out that it was 12 years since the Alde and Ore Futures consultation resulted in the recognition of the need for an Estuary Plan and 10 years since its genesis, and still there was no sign of any implementation of the Plan for the Lower Estuary: people were extremely concerned. This delay was against the public interest. GB said that the picture was a bit more rosy as work to develop the Lower Estuary Plan was already underway. Apart from the pumping stations project which was nearing completion, assessments had been made on economic terms for a whole estuary basis, in relation to habitat, carbon and economic assessments, which meant that the detailed data base sets were ready to be built into the lower estuary plan. He hoped that while that plan might not be submitted within this year, it won't be far behind. Work was also in hand by Jacobs to engaged with Natural England on coastal squeeze including how healthy was the saltmarsh in the estuary, and possible related plans for Boyton on which feelers were also out to RSPB, the landowners. All such work added up to numbers in the business case. Consciously aware Lower Estuary had not had the same level of engagement in public meetings and would seek to change that when possible.

AA commented that as the Estuary Plan showed two options for Boyton and as well as local concerns about paths at Boyton, the proposed details on what to be done for that area might need further discussion in AOCP. Also work on coastal squeeze was part of AOCP's remit and there might be some read-across in sharing data between the Monitoring Review on coastal squeeze and plans for the Lower Estuary.

ii. Hon Sec drew attention to the Trust going ahead with the great fundraising Flotilla from Aldeburgh to Orford on Sunday 4 September 2022, postponed from last year because the Flotilla Committee didn't feel it could run a Covid safe event for participants and volunteers. Participants or volunteers to help with all the organisation were advised to check out the details on the AOET website …www.AOETrust.org or write to info@aoetrust.org. The Chair commented that it was good news to see positive action being able to go ahead.

11. Date of Next meeting

The next meeting would be on **Thursday 23 or 30 June 2022 at 6.30pm, to be decided whether by zoom or in Orford Town Hall nearer the time**

AA 28 March 2022