

ALDE AND ORE COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP

FINAL MINUTES

MINUTES OF THE FIFTEENTH MEETING OF THE ALDE AND ORE COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP HELD ON THURSDAY 21st MARCH 2024 AT 6.30PM IN TRASK ARTISTS CAFÉ, SNAPE MALTINGS

PRESENT:

Nominated representatives

Tim Beach (TB) Chairman	Cllr. Snape Parish Council
Andrew Reid (AR)	Cllr. Suffolk County Council
Julia Ewart (JE)	Cllr. East Suffolk Council
Jocelyn Bond (JB)	Cllr. Aldeburgh TC
Ben Coulter (BC)	repr. Butley, Capel St Andrew and Wantisden PC
Edward Greenwell (EG)	ESWMB alternate
Harry Young (HY)	Business Representative
Alison Andrews (AA)	Alde and Ore Association
Frances Barnwell (FB)	Vice Chairman AOCF
Chris Gill (CG)	Treasurer AOCF

ADVISERS/ATTENDEES:

Giles Bloomfield (GB)	East Suffolk Water Management Board (ESWMB)
David Kemp (DK)	Environment Agency (EA)
Jane Maxim (JM)	Alde and Ore Estuary Trust (AOET)

MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC: one apology

AGENDA

1. **Apologies:** Katie Graham Cllr ESC; Roger Dawson Hollesley PC; Oliver Morgan Tunstall PC

Boyton PC rep ; Peter McGinity Chillesford Parish Meeting; Gary Wingrove Orford and Gedgrave PC; Alan Hutson Iken PC; Bill Parker Sudbourne PC; Jane Skepper ESWMB, Alternate; Ed Boyle Natural England.

2. Declarations of interest

The annual declaration of interest forms has been circulated to all representatives and several returned already. No new declarations of interest.

2. Minutes of the meeting on 29 June 2023

These were agreed .

4. Matters arising from the meeting on 29 June 2023 not otherwise on the agenda

Re Para 7: TB reported that the Suffolk Coast RAMS (Recreation Disturbance Avoidance and Mitigation Strategy) funding programme, addressing greater footfall in rural areas including by having wardens, was still in hand by East Suffolk Council and a report would be made to the next Suffolk Coast Forum.

5. UPDATE –ROLL OUT OF UPPER ESTUARY EMBANKMENT IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME

- 5.1. GB gave a detailed update on the progress completing essential preparatory surveys and obtaining various permits to enable the Upper Estuary embankment improvement project to begin on the ground in the autumn. Over the summer boreholes had been made throughout all the upper estuary embankments, core samples had been sent to the laboratories for analysis, which allowed for analysis of how the ground would behave with the new wall design. All the modelling had now been done. Currently, construction phase drawings for every flood cell were being prepared and sent as they were done to EA (DK)) for FRAP (Flood Risk Activities Environmental Permit) approval to minimise any delay there. Around the Maltings the designs for partially demountable (removable bolt down steel posts with slots to accommodate

aluminium dam boards) defences, transitioning into a clay embankment sculpturing the areas near the building and adjoining ditch to find solutions to make the areas usable and deal with flooding were now near completion.

- 5.2. The Upper Estuary programme was looking at getting into the Snape Maltings complex, FC6 including Tunstall and Snape Maltings, in the autumn; moving to the Snape sluice and the upstream side on both sides of the river and then into the village in spring 2025, so doing FC7 Snape Village and Snape Warren over 2025-26; Aldeburgh 'phase3' (near Brickdock) and part of FC5 Iken in 2026; Aldeburgh 'phase 2' (near Slaughden) and the other part of Iken in 2027. Further, the aim was also by Spring 2027 to get into the upper part of Flood Cell 4 in the Lower Estuary, subject to a fully signed off business case for the lower estuary.
- 5.3. ESWMB were also dealing with the changed funding for the government's required projects on pumping stations, but GB had separated off and done the Outline Business Case (OBC) for fully funding the one at Iken which, subject to EA Approval, would ensure construction would be scheduled in with the Iken works.
- 5.4. HY expressed his appreciation for the way ESWMB were pressing on hard with getting a lot of detailed design work done to get the project underway on the ground and that they were working very well with the Landscape Architect that Britten Pears were employing. It was very exciting.
- 5.5. It was agreed that there should be a presentation to Snape Parish Council, possibly at their Annual Parish meeting, explaining the progress of the project and that Snape Village would be the next in line, that the order of work in each of the flood cells was designed that at no point would any other flood cell be more likely to flooding while another was in progress of being done.

TB, GB, HY

-LOWER ESTUARY BUSINESS CASE.

5.5 GB said having done most of the Upper Estuary works, and submitted the Iken pumping station business case, the ESWMB, in particular GB was refocusing his efforts on the Lower Estuary Outline Business Case. One of the first stages would involve updating prices and benefits as so much had changed given inflation caused by the Ukraine War and other economic events, but he didn't see the cost of the construction works changing too much because of existing risk allowances and adjusted specification away from planned use of more expensive HVO a new non fossil/biofuel which was now being questioned as to its sustainability of production and supply, reverting to conventional white diesel being used. As before he was working with RPA (Research Policy Analysts) to get the best outcomes possible.

He and DK were discussing, using latest information, the possible implications of coastal squeeze and saltmarsh and that work would require information being fed into Natural England through Environmental consultants providing technical environmental assessments on behalf of ESWMB for the lower estuary.

5.6 On funding the whole Estuary Project, there was a multi-pronged approach.: The current estimate is that there could be about £10 million coming from the Government as Grant in Aid, the Alde and Ore Estuary Trust were preparing a bid to get up to £10 million from the Heritage Lottery Fund, other trusts and foundations, the remaining amount currently estimated at £10million would be a mix of philanthropists and other funders. With the help of professional fundraising consultants, the Trust is working on all three areas including the Heritage Lottery Fund. Naturally the aim was to get as much as possible. The HLF like grant requests to start with smaller projects and there are a number of ideas for example, perhaps working with RSPB on a historic site, the winching dock at Boyton for viewing the landscape and estuary: this would show the added value of amenity and access combined with flood defence arrangements.

5.7 GB explained that there were two steps to secure government sign off of the Outline Business Case. The first was to get technical approval and subsequently financial approval. 1) Technical sign off would confirm that the project had a sound design and business case in that the economic benefit exceeded the cost of doing the work as well as other factors. 2) To gain financial approval the Outline business case has to demonstrate that there is 3rd party partnership funding in place, a condition to release government funds. This is normal business practice. However, this project was unusual being a partnership project involving significant funding from the community and donors, who might not fully commit to payment until the business case gained financial approval: so, it did not fit obviously in either of the two categories. This is an understandable issue, as folks want to be sure the upgrade will be successfully completed. JM said that AOET continues to search for positive solutions for the lower estuary and had talked to the EA about potentially phasing the release of government funds. However, the

mechanics of it need to be determined, the key aim at the moment is to get technical sign off and at the same time continue to work with the ESWMB and EA to agree a practical way forward. GB said that there was no other project, with its partnership approach, on this scale like this in the country that had advanced so far and persistently and it was being taken very seriously, so there was a lot going for it.

TB emphasised that with the project being taken so seriously, it just showed that we just had to plough on and see it through.

6. IKEN CLAY DEPOSIT CASE- UPDATE ON LEGAL PROCEEDINGS

TB reported that he had written to the new Area Director of East Anglia, EA, to ask for an update on the Iken case on clay deposited at Iken but had received no reply. However, the case must be no longer subjudice as it had been reported in newspapers that the six defendants had pleaded guilty to breaches of the licence and that the hearing and judgment were provisionally due to be held at the Crown Court in Ipswich in July, when terms of the sentences/fines would be reached. TB said he would write again as he felt that the AOCP was owed a response and as much information as was possible in the circumstances given the guilty pleas.

7. ALDE AND ORE ESTUARY PLAN - UPDATE REPORT FROM REVIEW TEAM

TB introduced the Situation Report paper prepared for the meeting by the review team, assembled after the last meeting, as it was acknowledged that certain aspects of the Estuary Plan needed updating. The group had decided that what was needed was a narrative to bring anyone interested in the plan up to date with changes since the Plan was endorsed in 2016. The paper was therefore a synopsis of the current position, and while the plan's implementation needed to remain flexible, the concept of resilience in the plan remains unchanged. The draft Situation Report, while pointing out that the essence of the plan for a resilience approach remained at its core, recorded changes in finances, statutory requirements, new allocation of responsibilities of tasks as the plan was rolling out and reflected the position in relation to funding at this time. It had the agreement of the AOET, EA and ESWMB.

No comments were made on the report. TB asked the AOCP to take note of the plan, and agree that it should be adopted as an AOCP document and be added to the website. This was agreed.

8. COMMUNICATIONS UPDATE

AA explained that anyone wishing to see the latest on the progress of the Estuary project or to look at why the project was necessary, what it would save and how it was being taken forward and funded, could visit the Virtual Visitor Centre launched at the open day on 7 October 2023: this would be updated as and when appropriate. The easiest way to access it currently was via the icon on the AOCP website www.aocp.co.uk.

JM added she had spoken to CPE about making the work on the estuary more prominent in their web site and making the virtual visitor more accessible directly <https://aldeore.exhibition.app/>

FEEDBACK INVITED

AA reminded the meeting that communications was a key role of the AOCP and therefore invited anyone to provide feedback on what was provided, what changes might be helpful, what kinds of updates they would like to see and views generally on how people could hear about and communicate about the estuary embankment improvement project. JM suggested that AOCP website could benefit from a revision or modernisation. AA mentioned that only updating information currently went on the website as all but one of the members of the AOCP Comms team had left their positions, and TB added that the volunteer to help reshape the site had faded away. JM wondered whether a consultant might be taken on to do the work and give a fresh eye to it. TB took this on as an action point.

TB, AA plus All invited to give feedback

9. WATER MONITORING IN THE ALDE AND ORE

9.1 AA reported on the project monitoring the quality of water in the Alde, Ore and Butley rivers being undertaken by a team of volunteers under the wing of and partially financed by the Alde and Ore Association. The team had been collecting samples every week since October 2022 and a good evidence data base was being built up on presence of e-coli and nitrates. A high e-coli content was not safe for people and nitrate content at higher levels can affect the environment, plants, habitats and therefore fauna. The project had received funding in the first year from Suffolk County Council thanks to Councillors Reid and Howarth-Culf, and the remaining gap was met by the Association, and for the first six month of 2023/24 70% of funding was kindly provided by the

National Landscapes Suffolk and Essex Coast and Heaths (previously called AONB) Amenity and Accessibility Fund. Funders for the next six months and beyond were being sought.

9.2 The results so far were more encouraging than those found in the Deben where there was greater vulnerability to pollution because of the large water sewage treatment plants there. So far, except on a very few occasions the e-coli measures in the Alde, Ore and Butley were within the category of 'excellent quality' and in the tidal waters the nitrate content was, again with a few outliers, within the government target of 50 ppm. Non tidal river waters were registering higher nitrate content at times. The peaks of readings appeared to relate to times of very heavy rain and so run off with more content or to high spring or surge tides when bird and animal droppings were also washed off the saltings. The advice was therefore that while the waters were generally in a good state, it would always be sensible for anyone who had contact with anything in by or on the river to wash their hands.

9.3 The Association was planning an information page on its website for anyone to see. Meanwhile, it was building up a good evidence base line and would be continuing the monitoring to check that nothing untoward was spotted early so action could be taken. She expressed her thanks to BC who led the lower estuary group of samplers.

9.4 AR and JE very kindly offered possible funding but councillors would need to be approached after the forthcoming local elections were complete.

9.5 JM said this monitoring work was very helpful and would be appreciated by all the participants in the forthcoming AOET fund raising Flotilla event from Aldeburgh to Orford, with the outgoing tide, on Sunday 28 July, 2024 (or details see www.aoetrust.org).

9.6 DK reported that the EA monitored the mean daily flow of rivers: and in the huge storms last autumn, the mean daily flow rose from the average of 100% to 1000% for twenty-four hours in the upper Alde near Framlingham. In fact, the proportion of land flooded in Suffolk recently was higher than at any other time in the last century.

10. AOCF ADMIN:FINANCE Annual Report for the Year ending 31 December 2023

10.1 CG reported that with a grant from the EA, which was much appreciated, interest on the building society account, and expenditure only on the website, the AOCF account held at 31 December 2023 £15,876, of this £8,232 were unrestricted funds. Officers were now writing to the three original donors to two of the restricted funds to see if the money could be transferred into the general account and were going to leave the third account relation to saltings for use with estuary embankment improvement plan. The accounts were noted.

10.2 It was noted that as work on the estuary would be starting on the ground this year, the need for more communication by meetings, posters, leaflets and similar would be able to make good use of the funds.

10.3 For today's meeting the AOCF were very grateful to the Britten-Pears Trust for providing the place to meet at no cost; their support for the river was appreciated.

11. OFFICERS

11.1 TB said that as this was the first meeting in 2024, it was time to elect officers for this year. No one had come forward and the current officers were willing to stand for one more year. Chair- Tim Beach, Vice-Chair -Frances Barnwell, Hon Sec -Alison Andrews, Treasurer -Chris Gill. Those at the meeting expressed their thanks to the officers who were re-elected unanimously.

11.2 TB pointed out that this was the fifth year in office for all four, after successive annual elections and the constitution indicated officers could change. He asked people to consider whether, given the roll-out of the estuary plan the time was coming to have a chair from the Lower Estuary.

12. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

12.1. With a view to engaging community interest, AA asked if it would help now that the Plan was being rolled out, to have an event, such as a lively talk on the history of the river and its environs in the autumn. AR suggested that a site visit, if possible, when works were underway could also be very interesting. JE asked how much a metre of wall would cost- the answer was £1million per kilometre- and a discussion followed about how to attract donations, for example say £50 per water vole hotel. JM asked whether once work was underway would there be information boards on the river wall as there have been when the Snape Village wall and Aldeburgh Marsh were redone after the 2013 surge. GB said that it was possible but boards were frequently vandalised unless a site was very active. It was agreed to think further about information boards that could be sited in more walked places, such as high streets, to enable people to be aware of what

was going on.

12.2 DK declared a near miss of a massive flooding by a large surge on 21/22 December. The surge was driven by a storm from Norway: it was very fortunate that at the last minute the wind died and changed direction – only the Norfolk Broads was badly affected, but the flooding there was far worse than in 2013 or 2019.

12.3 TB mentioned that a few here had looked at Sudbourne beach and its changing face with Professor Pye that morning, and it was clear that huge unpredictable storms could change things overnight but for us the only way forward was to carry on with the plan to seek resilience.

12.4 TB reported that following the 7 October conference, then the East Coast Conference a week later, plans were beginning to develop to go into schools and provide information and learning materials into the curriculum on flood defence and water related matters combined with a local area interest so as to increase awareness of the importance in the Suffolk area and also encourage thinking of going into careers related to water and the environment. The Outreach team of the RFCC were leading but involving AOCP, AOET and ESWMB.

Date of next regular AOCP meeting. Thursday 27th June at 6.30pm.

AA 22 March 2024

17 April 2024