

# ALDE AND ORE COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP

FINAL MINUTES

MINUTES OF THE SEVENTEENTH MEETING OF THE ALDE AND ORE COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP HELD ON THURSDAY 24 OCTOBER 2024 AT 6.30PM ON ZOOM

PRESENT:

Nominated representatives

Tim Beach (TB) Chairman	Cllr. Snape Parish Council
Julia Ewart (JE)	Cllr. East Suffolk Council
Jocelyn Bond (JB)	Cllr. Aldeburgh Town Council
Gary Wingrove (GW)	Cllr. Orford and Gedgrave PC and NOTT
Oliver Morgan (OM)	Cllr Tunstall PC
Peter McGinity (PM)	Chillesford Parish Meeting
Harry Young (HY)	Business Repr;
Edward Greenwell (EG)	ESWMB alternate
Alison Andrews (AA)	Alde and Ore Association

Frances Barnwell (FB)	Vice Chairman AOCP
Chris Gill (CG)	Treasurer AOCP

ADVISERS/ATTENDEES:

Giles Bloomfield (GB)	East Suffolk Water Management Board (ESWMB)
David Kemp (DK)	Environment Agency
Elizabeth Stanton (ES)	The Alde & Ore Estuary Trust (AOET)

MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC: 3 including Charles Croydon

## AGENDA

**1. Apologies:** Andrew Reid Cllr. Suffolk County Council; Tim Wilson Cllr. East Suffolk Council (Rendlesham and Orford Ward); Ben Coulter (repr.) Butley, Capel St Andrew and Wantisden PC; Roger Dawson Hollesley PC; Boyton PC rep; Alan Hutson Iken PC; Bill Parker Sudbourne PC; Jane Maxim AOET; Jane Skepper ESWMB Alternate; Ed Boyle Natural England.

**2. Declarations of interest:** No new declarations by members.

### 3. Minutes of the meeting on 27 June 2024

These were approved. Proposer EG, seconder CG

### 4. Matters arising from the meeting on 27 June 2024 not otherwise on the agenda

Under AOB last time: AA thanked those connected with the AOCP for helping secure over 700 surveys returned, compared with 550 ten years ago, and said that several local associations and clubs and encouragement in carparks had also contributed. It was hoped that the first draft would be available shortly.

### 5. UPDATE –ROLL OUT OF UPPER ESTUARY EMBANKMENT IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME and LOWER ESTUARY BUSINESS CASE

5.1 Giles Bloomfield reported on progress with the Upper Estuary Plan. The detailed design, being managed by Pete Roberts, for Snape Maltings was now complete and out with local specialist contractor for pricing up, with results expected by early November. The remaining detailed designs for Aldeburgh, Iken and Snape Village were nearing completion and he was looking to replicate repricing on all the phase 1 work. The detailed costings were prepared in June 2022 for the Phase I business case submission; this is done using the Partnership Funding Calculator (PFC). This resulted in the government grant award for phase 1 since when there have been some cost increases, including the impact of the uncertain economic environment. It should be noted inflation was included in the PFC. Furthermore, the PFC also recognises benefit changes which may result in more government grant eligibility. Therefore, a reassessment of whole estuary qualifying benefits is also underway; this being done by Risk & Policy Analysts (RPA) consultants. It was hoped to have the results of the revised calculations by Christmas or soon after so the picture on updated government funding would be available. In January 2023 a grant award of £11.1 million was made. This included £3 million from the RFCC local levy funding. In anticipation of potential cost increases we will ask the RFCC to help with additional funding: the ESWMB officers have already made representation at the RFCC Local Choices meeting for additional monies. The RFCC is considering all requests at their January Board meeting. GB reported that there was some upward pressure on

costs because of demand for plant and required drivers because of an unusually inflated market due to Sizewell C construction activities.

5.2 In parallel with the current reassessment of the PFC inputs, GB is also looking at different EA legal cases around unsustainable abstraction of ground water and their impact. These are requiring the ESWMB to establish a new assessment approach to valuing the loss of the existing 60 abstraction points in the flood plain in a Do Nothing scenario. The current valuation method caps the financial loss to the capital cost of seeking a new groundwater source alternative outside the tidal floodplain. From the legal cases outlined above, the ESWMB know EA can no longer licence this approach. Furthermore, existing ground water licences on the high ground of the Alde and Ore catchment are likely to be capped, reduced and/or removed completely on sustainability grounds. Whilst assessments by the EA as regulator are ongoing, changes in licencing could occur as soon as 2028. In the meantime, landowners who are likely to be impacted have been identified through heat mapping and are being encouraged to seek alternative supplies from remaining unlicensed high flow surface water. The maximum potential fresh water yield materialises directly behind the tidal defence prior to the IDB pumps discharging it into the estuary. The increased importance of defending the water supply needs to be robustly evaluated. A draft assessment approach has been sent to irrigation sector specialists in Norfolk and Suffolk and an EA national economist for their input. The study may be supported by a grant from The Alde & Ore Estuary Trust.

5.3 In addition the EA have confirmed the need to update the flood model for the estuary to take into account the most recent sea level rise forecasts required by the EA. The EA considered the previous model too old though the changes are minimal. These new datasets will be used for an updated flood model to be undertaken by HR Wallingford. A preliminary fee estimate has been given of £50,000. This is subject to change depending on the actual runs needed to provide the required assurance. This additional model may be funded by a grant from The Alde & Ore Estuary Trust.

5.4 A further grant from The Alde & Ore Estuary Trust will be requested by the ESWMB for an environmental baseline assessment for phase 2, the Lower Estuary. Once again, the ESWMB has had quotes from Jacobs to do the Habitat Regulations Assessment, Water Framework Directive assessment. As mentioned, another grant application to the Trust will be made. There is a lot of work going on and ultimately funded by the Trust. This demonstrates the importance of their role in taking this project forward with the ESWMB.

5.5 Finally, once all the studies detailed in 5.2-5.4 above have been concluded, RPA would be asked to evaluate changes in whole estuary eligibility and potential government grants (FCERM-GiA). Again, this would have to be funded by the Trust.

GB was thanked for his excellent update and ongoing support for this whole estuary project.

5.6 Meanwhile, DK said EA were pushing forward to secure the Flood Risk Activity Permits so they would be ready on time and when needed. A new national permitting unit had been put in place and he was seeking to ensure the right data was included in applications to ensure as smooth a passage as possible. DK's help on this and on many other matters outlined above was appreciated.

#### Discussion

5.7 EG asked whether the soil sampling surveys covered the Lower Estuary to check on suitability of local materials. GB said they only cover Upper Estuary as core sampling was costly and would be done at a later stage but it was a reasonable working assumption that local soil from the marshes would be suitable for the renewed walls as has been the case in previous wall improvement works.

5.8 JE asked whether savings were to be had by buying in plant and renting it out- GB said they did this previously and would wherever possible but some of the construction machinery was too big for maintenance work potentially impacting full utilisation throughout the year, thus making it financially ineffective. JE asked whether the SZC funding going to Benacre might be another source of funds? GB replied that it was unlikely as the funding received related to maintaining the A12 as a viable major road. GB said ESWMB kept a list of possible other funding sources such as grants for biodiversity and habitats, at a regional or landscape scale. ES said the Trust was also looking at relevant funding sources.

5.9 ES commented that the government had, last week, focused on working effectively with charities: she hoped that the EA and other bodies would ensure this is followed through in practice. This new Charity Covenant which has been welcomed by charities is an important development if followed through. EG had contacted our local MP and secured a commitment to meet with some of the estuary team- this was welcomed as ensuring that she had a good understanding of what was needed and could assist when time arose for her strong support.

5.10 GB said the update to the economic assessment was necessary as when the updated costings come in the ESWMB and the Alde and Ore Estuary Trust need to know what the funding requirements may be. The other

studies for the lower estuary will occur simultaneously. This would ultimately enable an update of whole estuary benefits assessment and availability of government funding.

5.11 HY asked if the work was likely to start at Snape Maltings in September 2025. GB said it was not possible to say definitively what the timing would be. There are so many uncertainties including approvals from third parties. Once all information is available the ESWMB would discuss the detail with The Alde & Ore Estuary Trust as grant providers to the ESWMB and having responsibility for funding the work where government funding is unavailable.

5.12 JE mentioned that ESC had now separated out NSIP planning from other planning matters and there were two monthly meetings so there was a better and timely focus on what was needed. The next step would be to get a similar arrangement for coastal engagement. She added with local elections there would need to be more briefing on what was needed TB said AOCF was happy to take up her offer for help.

5.13 **TB summing up** said the aim was to secure clarity around re-costings before Christmas to enable a specific discussion on where we are in the new year. ES said given the Trust's role they would want to take stock then. TB agreed and said the next step after that would be a meeting as soon as is possible with a wider range of key players involving the Community Partnership and including councillors to take stock of what needed to be done, what action could various people take to ensure the issue of meeting costs was fully addressed. This meeting would focus on local government funding rather than the funds The Alde & Ore Estuary Trust is seeking.

## 6. Iken Clay

GB reported the sentencing hearing has been deferred until March 17-21, 2025. However, the EA had now agreed that the deposited clay was of the correct quality (including being non-toxic) and could be used, subject to securing the necessary licensing which could take up to two or more years. However, as the Iken flood cell was to be done over three years, ESWMB could start at one end of the flood cell and work back towards the clay so hopefully avoiding any delay. The AOCF noted that it was very disappointing that 7 years had passed since this case began and that even though the clay had now been found to be useable licensing would cause further delay. TB said he had been in touch with EA that day and in the weeks before the meeting and was pressing for a definitive date by which clear decisions would be given on the usability and timing of it.

## 7. Wildlife Wise (RAMS- Recreation Disturbance Avoidance and Mitigation Strategy)

TB reported that he and AA had met with the new Strategy Delivery Manager of RAMS, now called Wildlife Wise, which was focusing on reducing the impact of visitors, whether tourists or visitors stemming from increases in housing developments to reduce the impact of visitor on European protection sites. The scheme was funded by CIL money involving Ipswich Borough, Waveney, Babergh District, and East Suffolk and Mid Suffolk Councils. Sam Kench was appointing a number of wardens to engage with visitors and was developing signage schemes and other engagements. AOCF gave him views on the estuary area and where the pinch points for action were, principally Iken, Slaughden and Snape Maltings. It was a promising meeting for further mutual discussion as the plans develop. TB also mentioned he and Aaron Howe had had earlier discussions and Sam would be approaching him too.

JE provided a link to ESC website should anyone want to learn more details of the scheme .

[Wildlife Wise | Cherishing, respecting and protecting the wildlife and habitats of the Suffolk Coast](#)

## 8. Communications

Noted that the regular updates on the estuary project, led by ESWMB, were likely to be issued every 4-6 months. The last one had been in July and another was due before Christmas. AOCF would of course be circulating it to all on its contacts list, representatives, clerks and members of the public.

Noted that the AOET's Annual Report and Financial Statements had been filed with the Charity Commission.

*Post meeting: these are now available on the Charity Commission website.*

## 9. Finance

Noted £14,692 in the building society and that another £2500 was due from EA.

## 10. Any Other Business

*4 Rivers programme- request from Charles Croydon*

*Background: the Deben Climate Centre Ltd AGM last December reported ' discussions with East Suffolk Council to create a multi-faceted Community Energy Engagement Programme- the 4 Rivers Recovery programme to be launched in the autumn and expanding to reach the entire East Suffolk District (mentioning Deben, Alde Ore and Blyth in question*

*time). It would run climate adaptation workshops for local communities, expand the Citizen science programme and create several river interventions aimed at recovering biodiversity and mitigating the effects of flooding.*

*The Centre issued an update on 16 October 2024 re the Deben Climate Focus area, "the project has grown in scope and we expect to announce a larger-scale partnership with ESC in the next month or so."*

CC wanted the AOCP to be aware of this wider initiative and that most recently the Waveney valley had been included. AA confirmed that the Alde and Ore Association were now entering their third year of monitoring E. coli and nitrate weekly testing in the Alde and Ore. CC said the Deben were also looking into antibiotic resistance in the Deben and added the Deben Climate Change Ltd were seeking funding for a PhD study from ESC. GB said that these wider surveys can be really helpful in gathering material to demonstrate the value of an amenity to an area when building up the economic appraisal in the business case for grants, just as the Alde and Ore economic survey had proven and there were high hopes from the one currently in preparation.

**11. Date of Next Meeting:** the next quarterly meeting of the AOCP would be on 30 January 2025 but there may be a smaller meeting earlier that month to discuss further help that could be received from local authorities. This is all subject to receipt of the latest costings.

30.11.2024