

MINUTES

Colne Estuary Advisory Group Meeting

Wivenhoe Sailing Club, 9th April 2009, 7.30pm

Present

Graham Underwood (GU) – University of Essex/Chairman of CAG
John Partridge (JP) – Brightlingsea Harbour Commissioners/Chairman of CMG
Caroline Shotton (CS) – CEP
Steve McMellor (SM) – University of Essex/CEP
Gordon Eve (GE) – Anglian Water/CMG
Tricia Martin (TM) – Tendring District Council/CMG
Beverley McClean (BM) – Colchester Borough Council
Will Hawkesworth (WH) – Colchester Borough Council
Martin Dents (MD) – CPRE Colchester
Leon Woodrow (LW) – Tendring District Council
Graham Chasney (GC) – Colne Yacht Club
John Ravenhall (JR) – ACBOA
Ian Bliss (IB) – Environment Agency

Apologies

Chris Edwards (CE) – Eastern Region RYA
Fabian Bush (FB) – RMA / Boat Builder
Rupert Marks (RM) – Pioneer Sailing Trust
Andrew Davenall (AD) – Sea Cadets
Marion Beckwith (MB) – Brightlingsea Town Council
Bernie Hetherington (BH) – Brightlingsea Harbour Commissioners
Nick Baker (NB) – Rowhedge Heritage Trust
Brian Percival (BP) – BWCC

Chairman: Graham Underwood

Subject

Action

- 1.0 **Welcome and Apologies**
GU welcomed everyone in attendance and everybody introduced themselves.
Apologies were given.
- 2.0 **Minutes of the last meeting**
The minutes were agreed although it was noted that the meeting had been a very long time ago and that few of the people present had been at that meeting.
- 3.0 **Recent History of the Colne Estuary Partnership**
JP gave an update on the recent history of the CEP, most notably that Colchester Borough Council had withdrawn their annual funding for the CEP and also for the River Patrol service provided by BHC.

Tendring District Council will be continuing their contribution and in addition will be providing funding for a revised River Patrol service. Anglian Water has also agreed to provide funding towards the Partnership.
- 4.0 **New arrangements for the Colne Estuary Partnership**
GU gave an update on the University's involvement with the CEP and explained that the CWEP would now come under the umbrella of the University from March 2009.

The Department of Biological Sciences will host the new CEP website and act as a contact hub. Dr Steve McMellor has been appointed to develop the GIS database explained in more details below and also to provide additional support to the CEP.

The University will contribute to the organisation of the management and advisory

group meetings. It is essential to maintain these links and provide a credible route to disseminate information both to and from statutory organisation and local interest groups and users of the estuary.

The University is building a GIS database of the existing data sets on the Colne. This will include existing data on physical properties of the estuary, chemical data (nutrients, salinity, trace gases), pollutants (faecal contamination, sterol biomarkers, Biological Oxygen demand) and biological rates (denitrification. Primary production, nutrient exchanges) and standing stocks (phytoplankton and benthic algal biomass, invertebrate densities, subtidal and intertidal shellfish density, larval fish densities in saltmarshes).

These core data will be placed within a framework to allow accessory data to be added and overlain (e.g. Environment Agency harmonised monitoring programme data, regional planning data (population, housing, leisure use etc.)

This will be a resource for new studies and a basis for data mining looking at long term trends, patterns etc. The goal is a integrated system that allows existing patterns in the data to be confirmed, for gaps in the data to be identified and degrees of uncertainty concerning future scenarios in the estuary to be determined.

The existence of such a resource, in association with the present CEP. framework of the estuary management group and Estuary advisory group, will provide a powerful tool to address issues that will arise due to the various statutory duties that particular organisations are responsible for. With future developments in coastal zone planning (the UK Marine Bill) and EU legislation (e.g. the existing Water Framework Directive and the draft Marine Framework Directive).

Supporting funding for this is under negotiation with various organisations (Tendring DC, Anglian Water, CoastNet, Natural England). This will link to work with the Environment Agency.

The aim is to make the CEP / University of Essex a hub for coastal zone related matters, and to use the Colne database as a tool for understanding estuarine and coastal zone processes, and for forecasting future scenarios. This will lead to further funded projects and raised profile in the region.

5.0 **Presentation by Dr Steven McMellor, University of Essex**

SM presented work on his background in relation to the Colne estuary and presented some initial work generated by the Colne estuary GIS database being established at the University in the Department of Biological Sciences. This included the graphical representation of data collected at the University over the last 30 years. The graphs showed nutrients such as nitrate, ammonium and phosphate in the waters of the Colne and how these change downstream. The data also suggested that almost half of the Nitrogen load in the Colne estuary comes down the river, rather than from the Sewage treatment Works at the Hythe. The database contains scientific data as well as protected area designations, habitat types, coastline, towns, road and rail, rivers and inland water bodies. [Full presentation available on CEP website]

MD said it was important that farming data is included on the database.

BM asked if metadata would also be available and was advised that it would be, possibly via the Coastnet database.

6.0 **Overview of developing Essex Shoreline Management Plan by Ian Bliss (EA)**

IB explained the progress of the stakeholder consultation process to date, with news of the various stakeholder meetings to discuss the Agencies assessment of coastal defences in the Essex region. The next steps in the process were also explained with a date given for publication of a preliminary draft of the new Shoreline Management Plan of November 2009. [Full presentation available on CEP website]

GU advised that Iris Johnson and Cllr Shearing were involved with the SMP process at TDC and Robert Davidson and Nick Cope from CBC. He also asked how many of the 85 policy development zones were in the Colne area. IB advised 15-20 and that the zones were split up by urban frontages which automatically made them 'hold the line' areas.

MD enquired about funding and IB replied that the plan will inform future strategies/plans which will require funding.

GU asked why no-one from the EA had been to talk to St Osyth Parish Council about the SMP and whether this was because it was presumed that TDC have consulted all the relevant Parish Councils. BM advised that the theme groups for the SMP included representation from Parish Council's. GU expressed concern that some Parish Councils haven't been involved and may not know about this.

JP asked how the issues relating to more specific areas would fit into the SMP and was advised by IB that the plan was a strategic overview and not focussed on very specific areas or issues.

JP then asked how the plan had changed from the time when Nigel Pask was involved as this was the last time the SMP had been discussed by the CAG. IB reported that the plan will cover the entire coast and that national influences coming in may affect the plan that the previous SMP work did not cover.

JP asked how the work at Wallasea and Abbots Hall would fit into the SMP and was advised that these were prior to the SMP but would be taken into account, but to what extent is something that still has to be agreed.

IB then reported that a draft document showing client steering group recommendations would be available in the summer for consultation. This will include website information, events and public consultations. He offered to come to a CAG meeting arranged to discuss this again at a later date. There are however stakeholder events arranged for 9th and 14th July which CAG members would be welcome to attend.

7.0 Matters Raised by Members

There were no matters raised by members.

8.0 Date & venue for next meeting

It was agreed that the date of the next meeting be held to coincide with the draft policies for the SMP. Date to be advised.