

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE ENVIRONMENT POLICY DEVELOPMENT
GROUP HELD AT FOLLATON HOUSE, TOTNES ON WEDNESDAY, 26
JANUARY 2005**

MEMBERS

* Cllr R W Hallett - Chairman

* Cllr A R Vale - Vice-Chairman

Ø Cllr J Brazil

* Cllr M Stone

Ø Cllr R J Carter

* Cllr A Ward

* Cllr S L Rankin

* Cllr J A Westacott

* Denotes attendance

Ø Denotes apology for absence

EPDG.12/04 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Environmental Policy Development Group held on 23 December 2004 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman subject to an amendment in the Declarations of Interest (min. EPDG.9/04 refers) whereby a Member's interest in R31 be strengthened to mention her involvement as the Council's representative on the Village in Action Group.

EPDG.13/04 BUSINESS BROUGHT FORWARD BY THE CHAIRMAN

The Chairman advised the Group that he had one item of urgent business regarding renewable energy. This item was considered urgent due to the Group's previous request for a seminar to inform Members on the use of wind turbines, especially in light of recent wind turbine planning applications being received by the Council. The Group reiterated its request for a seminar to be arranged in the near future with a number of speakers being invited to attend and present a balanced view.

EPDG.14/04 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members were invited to declare any interests in the items of business to be considered during the course of the meeting. These were recorded as follows:-

Cllr Hallett declared a personal interest in Item 5(b) Estuary Management Plan: Yealm Estuary (see EPDG.15/04 below) by virtue of his representation on the Yealm Estuary Management Plan Joint Steering Group. He remained in the meeting during consideration of the item and took part in the discussion and vote thereon.

EPDG.15/04 ESTUARY MANAGEMENT PLANS

A report was considered which sought to provide Members with a review of both the Dart and Yealm Estuary Management Plans (EMPs). Each Plan, was being considered alongside the existing statutory South Devon AONB Plan with its broad aims and objectives. This enabled views to be obtained on the delivery of AONB objectives, for the drafting of an updated 5 year local action programme for both estuaries. Members were reminded that the EMPs were primarily a co-operative action to protect the natural wealth and beauty of the area and ensure its sustainable use. Each EMP made reference to how they supported the Council's Priorities corporate priorities.

A. DART ESTUARY

The Dart Estuary Officer presented the Group with background information and a summary of the key issues affecting the Dart Estuary. It was noted that the Dart Estuary Environmental Management (DEEM) was atypical, being a broad-based partnership with many contributing partners and in addition to the Local Authority.

The key objectives of DEEM were identified as follows:-

- To co-ordinate the sustainable use of the River Dart and surrounding land, ensuring environmental, recreational and commercial activities were effectively managed;
- To integrate the management of activities on the water with those of the surrounding land;
- To reconcile the potential conflicts between the protection of the natural environment and the demands of tourism and commercial/recreational use of the estuary; and
- To sustain constructive partnerships which involve user groups, community associations, statutory and local authorities working in collaboration towards the strategic objectives of the Dart EMP.

In discussion, reference was made to:-

- (a) a Member's query regarding a breach in the wall at Sharpham and the knock-on effect this would have on the water depth. In response, it was confirmed that an extensive survey had been conducted by DEEM, which had alleviated any major fears. It was noted that a report was available for any interested party;
- (b) the Cycleau project and their involvement. Following a query, it was noted that Cycleau were currently running a three-year programme which was due to end in 2006. It was confirmed that match funding had been contributed by various partners. This provided the opportunity to look at the River Dart catchment area as a whole, working alongside the Devon Wildlife Trust.

In addition, the Group was reminded that a number of partners contributed financially. Similarly, it was noted that certain partners donated funding in kind, such as Devon County Council which provided office space for the Dart Estuary Management;

- (c) Members recognised the difficulties surrounding the Noss-on-Dart position and of particular importance to Council's prosperity objectives;
- (d) Water Quality and Pollution. Concern was expressed regarding agricultural pollution. In response, it was noted that this was becoming an area for concern but it was being addressed through the Cycleau project. Schemes were being investigated to encourage farmers to place 'buffers' between their fields and the river;

Provisions to deal with major oil spillages were addressed and it was confirmed that Booms (floating barriers placed around the oil or around whatever was leaking the oil which then contain the leak so skimmers can collect it) were kept in a state of readiness. The nearest Boom was noted as being located in Exeter.

The use of pump-out facilities on boats caused concern amongst Members of the Group. In response it was noted that an investigation into the use of a sludge boat was being considered. The Group was further informed that South West Water had implemented a quality improvement plan in the region of £16 million and a vast improvement had been noted;

- (e) The difficulty of access to the river, from land, for pleasure / recreational crafts was noted;
- (f) The importance of tourism to the economy of the Dart was noted. It was suggested that provisions should be made for cruise-liners to have access to moorings against the river bank. However, following discussion it was noted that this would not be practical, not only due to gaining the access to the bank also due to security issues for the cruise-liners and feedback showed that customers valued the experience of coming ashore;
- (g) Members recognised the importance of maintaining Dartmouth's fishing industry. It was noted that there were only 13 existing salmon licenses, all of which were traditional family licences. However, it was confirmed that the season for use of these licences had been shortened;
- (h) The Group picked up on the report's reference to the development and implementation of a scientifically based, sustainable dredging policy. It was noted that the Harbour Authority did not presently have a policy and that licences were required; one to extract the

mud and one to deposit. However, the Group was informed that DEEM had produced a report regarding the use of dredging;

- (i) A Member of the Group felt that the Council's Community Safety and Emergency Planning Officer would be a useful resource in the prevention of marine related crime.

RECOMMENDED

That the Executive be **RECOMMENDED** that the EPDG has considered and noted the report and the core objectives in the drafting of an up-dated 5 year local action programme for the River Dart.

B. YEALM ESTUARY

The Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Project Officer informed the Group that the Yealm Estuary Management Plan was first produced in 1998 with an intention to be reviewed after five years. He noted the following to be taken into account whilst discussing the report:-

- issues affecting the Yealm estuary which the Council should be involved in;
- areas Members wished to discuss;
- issues which were not perceived to be adequately addressed;
- any views on the consultation process, consultees, venues, timing and formats.

During discussion, particular reference was made to:-

- a) stone gabions. Members were informed that discussions in relation to the greening of gabions as a policy, especially in line with their construction were being implemented. The Group felt that this was an issue that the Council could implement.
- b) the Groups understanding on the importance of educating the public on the significance of eel grass beds at the mouth of the Yealm.
- c) the limited access to the river via footpaths was noted. Furthermore, the interest Sustrans (a cycle path construction company) had shown in the use of the old, disused rail track as a cycle route was noted. The Group was informed that prior to any action being taken English Nature required an environmental impact assessment to be undertaken.
- d) the implementation of a neighbourhood watch approach towards the prevention of boat crime;

- e) the potential impact of the proposed Sherford development. It was noted that these concerns were to be addressed as part of the development of Sherford;
- f) the annual spring clean up was noted to be very successful.

RECOMMENDED

That the Executive be **RECOMMENDED** that the EPDG has considered and noted the report and the core objectives in the drafting of an up-dated 5 year local action programme for the Yealm.

(Meeting commenced at 10.00 am and concluded at 12.10 pm).

Chairman