

DRAFT MINUTES

Pagham Harbour SLA Contract Management Committee

Monday 23 November 2015

Present:

- WSCC: Cllr Tony Sutcliffe; Charlotte Weller (Countryside Services Manager)
- RSPB: Tim Callaway (Pagham Harbour Site Manager); Adrian Thomas

1. Minutes of last meeting and actions.

- Minutes agreed.
- Action completed: the Environment Agency's erroneous sign re navigation at the entrance to the Harbour was too large a job for them to remove so they painted over it instead.

2. Headline update from RSPB, focusing on any key issues

TC presented an update on recent RSPB activity at Pagham Harbour. The headlines were:

- In 2015, Pagham Harbour had the most successful breeding Little Tern colony (the reserve's most important breeding species) on the South East coast.
- Important populations of breeding waders of shoreline and wet grassland all increased on 2014, but productivity (number of chicks produced per pair) was mixed
- Visitor numbers to the visitor centre are up 20% on 2014 (probably due to a range of long-staying rare wildlife, the team working well, and the Battle of Britain flypast!) Visitor satisfaction scores continue to increase.
- TS asked if there was a risk of there being too many visitors. TC explained that the key focus for RSPB was giving existing visitors a good experience, and getting existing car park visitors to actually come into the centre rather than increase overall numbers. However, an increase in the proportion of families coming to the Visitor Centre this year has been very encouraging - engaging the next generation with nature is vital.
- School visits and the number of people engaged during Outreach are up 37% and 6% respectively on the total for 2014/15. CW explained that if schools were concerned about transport costs to the Visitor Centre, WSCC had a fleet of minibuses available for hire just for the cost of the driver.
- Number of volunteer roles up to 152.
- The extension of the People Engagement Officer role allowed increased engagement with local community youth groups.
- Woodland grant fencing, tree planting and Higher Level Stewardship work all started
- The Environment Agency has finished their sheet piling at the 'causeway' between Pagham Lagoon and the Harbour. It is good that the causeway has been secured and is not anticipated there will be any negative impacts.
- There is an issue of high nutrient levels in Pagham Lagoon - TC is liaising with Pagham Beach Holdings Ltd to seek to restart the group of stakeholders to look into this issue.

3. Uplift project - progress

- The RSPB has appointed building-specialist Consultants to oversee the project to 'uplift' the facilities around the Visitor Centre. Note: This is not a project to replace the Visitor Centre; it is to replace the disabled toilets, toilets, add a decking walkway to aid access around the Centre, improve the Discovery Area, repair the Visitor Centre car park, replace dilapidated signage, and replace the Ferry hide. Much of the detailed design has yet to be done.
- CDC Planning Officers have been to visit as several aspects will require planning permission.

- The draft programme aims to complete improvements to the visitor centre car park, the disabled toilet and the decked walkways by April 2016.
- Environment Agency landlords consent will be needed, plus insurance for working on an old landfill site.
- RSPB has some quotes for the work but these will need to be ground-truthed by the consultants. Once RSPB has these, it will be able to give WSCC clear costings and timeline.

Action: RSPB to share costings and timeline with WSCC ASAP, but no later than next Contract Management Meeting.

4. Byelaw revision

- CW and AT met in September to discuss possible revisions to the byelaw text, given that a number are defunct and to make the remaining wording more user-friendly.
- CW has contacted Natural England (NE) to get their views on this approach; currently awaiting a reply.
- Pagham Harbour LNR is one of the most complex LNRs in terms of land ownership, so CW has also raised a question with WSCC Legal Services to check eg whether byelaws need to be revised each time land ownership changes within the Harbour.

Action: CW to update re NE position and legal position once facts become clear

- Once we have a signal from NE, WSCC and RSPB can redraft the byelaws and jointly begin to arrange public drop-ins in early 2016
- There will be separate engagement with the landowners

5. Select Committee meeting

- On 14 Dec, WSCC and RSPB will give an update on the first three years of the Service Level Agreement (SLA) to the Environment and Community Services Select Committee. CW has drafted a report based on the key areas in the SLA.

6. Finance

- Confirmation that WSCC has paid the latest instalments within the SLA, which have been received by RSPB.

7. Agenda for Community Forum

1. Welcome. (AT). Hand to Chair (Cllr Sutcliffe).
2. Minutes and actions from last meeting.
3. RSPB update, including Uplift Project. (TC)
4. Redecoration confirmation, and update to byelaws (CW)
5. Pagham Beach update (TS)
6. Confirmation of future Chair (CW)
7. AOB

8. AOB

- English Coastal Path: There is a government initiative to create a path around the entire English coast, the process led by Natural England. It intends to 'create' the East Head to Shoreham stretch next year. NE has visited both WSCC and RSPB separately for meetings.

Action: CW to check implications re byelaws

- AT thanked the RSPB Pagham Harbour team for their efforts to ensure the Communities Forum is advertised widely.