

DRAFT MINUTES

Pagham Harbour SLA Contract Management Committee

Tuesday 28 June 2016

Present:

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

1. Minutes and actions from last meeting

- Minutes agreed and signed off
- Natural England's (NE) plans for the England Coastal Path and its implications for Pagham Harbour: WSCC and RSPB are waiting to see what NE's preferred route is for the path (it is likely to mainly follow existing Public Rights of Way (PRoW), and questions remain around maintenance, lengths of path that currently are intertidal and the implications of 'spreading room'. WSCC and RSPB keen that infrastructure is only installed when absolutely necessary as the costs for its maintenance will fall to the local authority. What is certain is that the creation of the route won't downgrade any existing PRoW.

Action: TC to send to SO and CW our current summary of our understanding (such as it is so far) of what NE is intending to create.

- SO: Does the proposed route go out to consultation section by section?
- CW: We understand NE is following a 5-stage process which is being followed by, seeking to create the route by 2018. NE is currently in the early stages of speaking to landowners.

Action: RSPB to seek if NE are willing to speak to the Community Forum in November to update.

2. Annual report for Apr 2015- Mar 16

TC led the meeting through the draft Annual Report that the RSPB submits to WSCC as part of the Service Level Agreement (SLA). The key questions and point raised were as follows:

- SO: Are farmers concerned about the numbers of Brent Geese, eg puddling crops?
- RSPB: Farmers have means available to them to counter the effect, but importantly the creation of Medmerry and the management of the habitats there to attract the Brent Geese means that there is likely to be a lessening of the impact on local farmers of these small geese.
- SO: Is there any issue regarding dogs and electric fences?
- RSPB: The fences are either in areas of the reserve where the public don't have access, or are well marked. Dogs are usually much better able to sense electric fences than humans.
- SO: Have all groundworks been cleared with WSCC?
- CW: WSCC approves a 5-year Management Plan, which means the RSPB does not have to repeatedly come back for permission for activities on WSCC-owned land. Larger scale works that require planning permission are approved by WSCC separately
- SO: Is the level of management by RSPB over and above that expected by WSCC in the SLA?
- CW: Yes.
- SO: Is the development of the visitor engagement in line with WSCC expectations?
- CW: Yes. WSCC wanted to see an improvement in face to face engagement, which is happening, and WSCC also wanted to see a retention of school visits, which is really encouraging.
- TC: Note our changes to the way we are reporting regarding volunteering: we are now reporting the number of *roles* (some volunteers fulfil more than one role) and the number of *active* volunteers rather than the number of volunteers on our Volunteer Management System (VMS), which might include those who are currently not active.

- SO: In the reporting of volunteering, is that for Pagham Harbour alone rather than Medmerry?
- TC: Yes, VMS allows us to do this accurately.
- CW: What WSCC has seen since transfer is that the RSPB really does look after and value volunteers, and the numbers have increased.
- SO: Is Medmerry outside of any WSCC involvement through the SLA?
- CW: Yes.
- The 'blow-out' of the bank between Ferry Pool and Broad Rife has caused Ferry Pool water levels to drop substantially

Action: RSPB to summarise the current situation at Ferry Pool.

3. Uplift Project

- There have been considerable steps forward in the preparations for the delivery of the Uplift Project to improve the toilets and disabled access to the existing Visitor Centre, and improvements to the Discovery Area nearby to benefit schools, family visitors and all users.
- The RSPB submitted a Project Overview to WSCC in May 2016 detailing progress and plans. The RSPB has drafted in the help of a specialist infrastructure project manager and engineering consultants.
- The complexity of the project has been huge: carrying out work on third-party land (Environment Agency), on an uncapped landfill where intrusive work must be kept to a minimum, and working within new Construction, Design and Management rules. It means that works for 2015/16 have been carried over to 2016/17, but this means that all works will be properly planned and risks more effectively managed.
- SO: Is RSPB confident that it will be able to maintain the renewed infrastructure?
- TC: Yes
- CW: WSCC has informally approved the submission of the planning application for the works, as is required in the SLA (to be confirmed formally in due course); the Environment Agency has also given initial approval. The first phase of works will be in the Discovery Area; the replacement toilets will come as a second request. WSCC is really pleased to see the RSPB's plan, which provides the confidence the Council was seeking. It shows what the WSCC monies will be spent on, and also that the RSPB is seeking extra funding to help deliver the plans.

Action: Simple Powerpoint to be created for Community Forum about the Uplift Project.

4. Byelaws

- WSCC has had a conversation with NE about the form the revised Local Nature Reserve (LNR) byelaws should take.
- NE has a new template for LNR byelaws; WSCC will follow that template and needs to fully understand any implications the new template may have on activities in the reserve.
- WSCC has committed to drafting the new byelaws in 2016 but has yet to make progress on this yet.

5. Finance

- All financial mechanisms within the SLA are working.

6. Agenda for Community Forum

- Update regarding reserve management and wildlife, including Ferry Pool
- Update regarding Uplift Project
- Byelaws
- Acknowledge situation regarding Pagham Beach but remind the group of the appropriate forums to raise any matters on this

7. AOB

- SO: As in Chichester Hbr, is RSPB aware that CDC and ADC have jointly established an s106 developer contribution scheme for Pagham Harbour to mitigate the recreational disturbance effects of new populations arising from development in its vicinity?

Action: CW to look into those.