

## **RSPB Pagham Harbour Community Forum: Minutes**

20 July 2015

North Mundham Village Hall

On the panel:

- Chair: Cllr Tony Sutcliffe (TS)
- Charlotte Weller (Countryside Services Manager, WSCC) (CW)
- Tim Callaway (RSPB Pagham Harbour & Medmerry Site Manager) (TC)
- Adrian Thomas (RSPB Project Manager) (AT)

Also in attendance representing WSCC

- Cllr Margaret Evans
- Cllr Simon Oakley

Also in attendance representing the RSPB

- Jan Atkinson, Pagham Harbour People Engagement Officer
- Ivan Lang, Pagham Harbour & Medmerry Warden
- Roy Newnham, Visitor Experience Officer

### **1. Welcome and reminder of how the forum works**

### **2. Annual Report.**

AT led the Forum through the 2014/15 RSPB Annual Report (see separate PDF), as signed off at the Contract Management Meeting by WSCC.

- Cllr Adrian Harland (Sidlesham PC) asked about the lack of Lapwings in fields along Rookery Lane (outside the nature reserve) compared to former times. TC explained about the changes in cropping practice nationally that has led to their calamitous decline.
- Cllr David Meagher (Bersted PC) asked about possible link-ups with the work he is hoping to do in Bersted Parish for wildlife, especially Water Voles and Lapwings. Action: RSPB land managers to get in contact with Cllr Meagher.
- TC clarified the situation re mink control on the Peninsula: there haven't been mink sightings for several years, so the current policy is to monitor for signs. If any signs of mink are found, then this can be escalated up to control.
- Cllr Oakley asked if there were any reasons for the increase in visitors to the visitor centre from 2013/14 to 2014/15. The RSPB felt it was due to a combination of the breeding Black-winged Stilts plus good weather at key times of year.
- The question of the continued long-term closure of the car park at Pagham Spit was raised. CW confirmed that the owners of the land where the car park used to be (Pagham Beach Holdings Ltd) has made it very clear to WSCC that there was no further debate to be had regarding the car park; PBHL wish it to remain permanently closed.
- An attendee asked for WSCC to consider re-exploring if there are any options for possible blue badge parking on the Pagham side of the Harbour.
- An attendee asked for paper copies of project paperwork to be made available to those who wish to receive it in that form, even if it requires the person to pay an annual administration fee for it. The RSPB will do this.
- The question of whether or not Pagham Harbour is accreting (more silt deposited than eroded), a study is underway by Brighton University which appears to show very minor levels of accretion currently.
- WSCC were asked whether they were confident the capital funding made available to the RSPB as part of the Service Level Agreement would be spent on delivering an uplift in standards at Pagham Harbour. CW explained that WSCC understands the constraints the

RSPB faces with regard to the site conditions (e.g. an old landfill site) but explained she had asked for a projection of how the RSPB plan to spend the funding in the coming years. WSCC will then be able to monitor progress against this plan. The question was posed as to whether WSCC would renegotiate the deal with RSPB should monies not be spent. CW confirmed that the point where they would need to do that is a long way off and so hasn't yet been considered.

- Cllr Ray Radmall gave a useful update on the situation regarding the erosion at Pagham Beach and the planned works there. This work is outside the jurisdiction of the RSPB, although it is providing extensive ecological information to help those parties formulating the plans for the beach.

### **3. Current and future work**

TC gave a brief summary of the work the RSPB has done since April 2015 and is due to do in forthcoming months. This includes:

- Tidying and painting of the Visitor Centre and toilets has been done
- The Church Norton car park has been resurfaced, with thanks to the Friends of Pagham Harbour for helping fund that work
- Little Terns are having another successful breeding season with two pairs on Tern Island and 16 pairs on Church Norton Spit. Ten young have already been fledged, and some pairs are still feeding young at the nest.
- 'Trail cameras' (small monitoring cameras) are in place on some of the Little Tern nests as part of a project to monitor which fish items are being brought to the chicks.
- Other breeding shorebirds are doing well, especially Ringed Plovers with maybe 16 chicks having been raised, the best figures for about 20 years.
- Breeding wading birds (Lapwings and Redshank) have suffered predation, mainly by Foxes and Crows.
- For the first time ever on record, a pair of Nightingales bred on the reserve.
- A full events programme is out for the summer.

### **4. Redecoration of the LNR boundary**

- CW summarised the background: that because Pagham Harbour Local Nature Reserve has many different landowners, their personal circumstances might mean that sometimes land drops in or out of the LNR. As such, it is down to WSCC to redeclare the boundary so that it is accurate.
- The public consultation occurred in February 2015. There is no further consultation due.
- WSCC received formal approval from Natural England to re declare the boundary that week.
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- The redeclaration paperwork is now with WSCC solicitors for signing. An announcement will then be made in local papers.
- Once that is complete, it will pave the way for WSCC to re-examine the byelaws. The process for that won't start until September. The process will involve public consultation.
- Cllr Oakley asked which body will be responsible for the enforcement of the byelaws. CW confirmed it would be WSCC.

### **5. Actions from previous meeting**

- The minutes from the previous meeting and previous Contract Management Meeting are now on the RSPB website.
- The issues with the Environment Agency's water control at Pagham Rife and the Breach Pool will be discussed at the September meeting of the Pagham Rife Management Group. There, it is anticipated that the Environment Agency will put in place a simple protocol that EA will

follow in managing the Rife. The RSPB will seek confirmation from EA for contact numbers should there be an emergency.

- Cllr Radmall noted the importance in engaging with the ADC developments at Westhampnett and Aldwick which could send more water more quickly into the rife system after rain.

#### **6. AOB**

- Cllr Radmall noted the Pagham village housing allocation (125-130 houses) and how Natural England is asking for more funding for access management at Pagham Harbour as a result.
- A participant asked whether the cycle route(s) from Selsey to Pagham Harbour were complete. AT confirmed they are still being worked on.
- The wording regarding navigation on the large sign at the entrance to Pagham Harbour has been painted over.
- Cllr Radmall noted that the lifeboat crew are not happy to take the Inshore Lifeboat into Pagham Harbour given the hazards (rocks) currently in the fast-flowing channel. An attendee confirmed that members of Pagham Yacht Club also do not venture into Pagham Harbour these days because of the dangers.