

DRAFT MINUTES: Pagham Harbour Local Communities Forum: 15 June 2013

St Ninian's Church Hall, Pagham

On the panel:

Chair: Cllr Margaret Whitehead Coleman (WSCC)

Charlotte Eastley (Head of Countryside Services, WSCC)

Rob Carver (RSPB Pagham Harbour Manager)

Adrian Thomas (RSPB Interim Reserve Manager)

Q = question from the floor

Comment = comment from the floor

1. Welcome, introduction and welcome to new Chair, Cllr Margaret Whitehead

2. Pagham Harbour Byelaws (Charlotte Eastley)

Recent changes in terms of our understanding of what can and can't happen in the Harbour – specifically regarding fishing, boating and bait-digging – means that the existing byelaws have some incorrect clauses. A note will be posted online with the byelaws to this effect. The byelaws will then be revised once the LNR boundary has been redeclared – it is anticipated that this will be in 2014, once all the revised Local Nature Reserve agreements have been revised.

There is a Right of Navigation in the tidal waters of the Harbour. A Boating Code of Conduct has been agreed by the subgroup of stakeholders. Canoe England is very supportive. A small change to the map is likely to be made given changes in land ownership. Natural England has accepted the Code and the Environment Agency has made no objection.

Q: Will the fishing permits be revised? CE: The permits are no longer needed.

Q: Where can a copy of the Code of Conduct be found? CE: It will be posted on the RSPB website.

Q: Is the Harbour used much for boating? RC: Generally not. The Harbour is not suitable for most forms of boating, and the RSPB has no rescue service.

Adrian Harland (Chair, Sidlesham PC) warned of the dangers of boating in the Harbour.

Q: Is all land ownership resolved? CE: No, there are still some areas to be resolved.

Q: Is the reserve boundary likely to change at redeclaration? AT: Only in a very few places around the edges.

Q: Will it mean that any of the rights of way change? AT: No, rights of way aren't affected by whether an area is designated or not.

Q: What will happen to the EA sign at the entrance of the Harbour? AT: It is a large sign, so it will take some removal, but we would like to change it.

Q: Who owns Church Norton Spit now its area keeps changing? It has ramifications for parish boundaries.

Action: RSPB to speak to the District Councils to get a definitive position

3. Pagham Spit Hide

Pagham Spit hide is a very useful asset for watching wildlife and sheltering in cold and wet weather, but on (mainly) summer evenings it is being used for drinking. Q: What does the RSPB propose to do about it?

The problem is that if the hide is locked in the summer, windows and doors are vandalised to gain entry; if the hide is left unlocked, it is used for antisocial activities. The RSPB, liaising with the landowner, will be looking to see whether the hide can be replaced by a less enclosed structure that still affords shelter.

Comment: It would be a great shame to lose it.

4. Pagham Rife roles and responsibilities

There was confusion locally last winter about who had the right or obligation to do work on Pagham Rife (which forms part of the Chichester Flood Relief Scheme). The simple answer is that the EA has the responsibility, and the RSPB does not. The RSPB has worked with Environment Agency to produce a factsheet to make the situation clear for all concerned.

Comment: EA dropped the sluice sills, which drained Breach Pool, and forgot to put them back.

RC: We are liaising with Environment Agency to be confident that they are going to tweak the sluices to provide the right water levels for Breach Pool and for the Rife.

5. RSPB Annual Report 2012/13, including spend on uplift

The RSPB produces an annual report each year as part of the charity's processes. The RSPB then presented the summary achievements against the Management Plan objectives to WSCC at the Service Level Agreement Contract Management Committee.

Q: What is the purpose of the fencing on Church Spit? RC: To stop foxes

Action: RSPB to post annual report on RSPB website, although financial information which includes wages will have to be redacted

Short presentation from RC:

- On Tern Island, great success with 4 pairs of Little Terns, 14 pairs of Common Terns, 3 pairs of Sandwich Terns
- Excellent breeding of wading birds that use the shingle beach – 3 pairs of Oystercatcher, 12 pairs of Ringed Plovers.
- Up to 31 Avocets, the RSPB's logo bird, has been using Ferry Pool.
- Overwintering birds – 2,500 Brent Geese and 1,200 Black-tailed Godwits, both species for which the reserve is important.
- Very good numbers of pairs of Little Egrets with 17 pairs
- Work to create cover crops on Slipe Field attracted a flock of 400 Linnets
- Lots of Bee Orchids flowered this spring

- There has been a big increase in the number of volunteers, with now 18 new reserve guides, and four volunteers have been recruited to help set up a weekend Wildlife Explorers group for children.

The Environment Agency is doing exploratory work on the shingle causeway at the southern end of Pagham Lagoon to see what needs to be done in terms of flood defence there.

Financially, the amount of money that the WSCC pays to the RSPB as set out in the Service Level Agreement includes £25K over each of four years to help pay for an uplift in standards at Pagham Hbr. It does not have to be spent in the year it is accrued. In 2012/13, the RSPB spent approx £14K of WSCC monies on buildings and maintenance, and about £15K of RSPB funding was invested. The RSPB is very confident that much more will be spent in years to come, but plans need to be worked up, community support sought first.

6. Plymouth University project to monitor storm effects on Church Norton Spit

Some time this autumn, Plymouth University will temporarily (5 days) put up a camera tower on Church Norton spit and bring in a small trailer so that they can monitor the effects of storms on the shingle spit. This is a national project, but will hopefully generate useful information for flood risk management of the shingle at Pagham Harbour.

7. AOB

Q: Is Pagham Yacht Club doing an annual sail this year? Yes, early in September.

Date for next meeting to be advised – pre Xmas 2013. Venue to be sought in Selsey or Hunston.

NOTE: The meeting will be Weds 27 November, Selsey Centre, 6.30-8.30.

Action: RSPB Management Plan to be posted on RSPB website.