

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

8 Dec 2014, St. Ninian's Church Hall, Pagham

On the panel:

- Chair: Cllr Bernard Smith
- Charlotte Eastley (Countryside Services Manager WSCC)
- Rob Carver (RSPB Site Manager)

Welcome and reminder of how the forum works

### **Actions from previous meeting:**

- The Boating code of conduct is available in the Visitor Centre and on the RSPB website and has been included on latest e-update to stakeholders, including the local Chichester RSPB group.
- The code is also now displayed at Sidlesham Quay, following the establishment of temporary signage here.
- The Environment Agency will be altering the sign at the Harbour entrance to reflect the public right of navigation (i.e. removal of wording 'no unauthorised craft in the harbour'), but it was not agreed to ask the EA to add the Code of Conduct onto the sign.

### **Site Manager's Update (Rob Carver)**

- Environmental Stewardship funded work completed at: Slipe Field, Pagham to provide arable food for over wintering buntings/finches and Turtle Dove, Church Norton Castle (The Mound) and Norton Priory Woods
- Good year for breeding shorebirds with 12 pairs of little tern fledging 12 young and 13 pairs of common tern fledging 7 young. Also good productivity for ringed plover and oystercatcher, plus breeding sandwich tern on Tern Island. Cameras have been used to monitor nests and predator activity
- It has also been a good year for nesting grey heron and little egret
- Overwintering wildfowl and waders so far: up to 3000 brent geese, 1000 wigeon, 800 teal, 80 pintail and 2500 lapwing. Wader numbers including black-tailed godwit low at present, perhaps due to mild weather (migrants have moved south and overwintering visitors yet to arrive).
- Wildlife highlights: 3 spoonbill in the harbour, hen harrier, cattle egret, great white egret, honey buzzard and osprey
- Pagham Lagoon water quality – awaiting survey results from Brighton University following baseline flora & fauna and starlet sea anemone surveys carried out in September, as part of ongoing monitoring.
- 22 summer events out of 44 for the whole year, including 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Picnic Party Celebration in August attracting over 500 people. Volunteers needed to support events programme

- Wildlife Explorers Group continues to grow with more youngsters signed up from anniversary event and additional leaders recruited
- School visits continued right up until end of summer term totalling 361 pupils for the summer, with a further 4 schools and 168 pupils in the autumn. Annual total of 529 pupils

### **Questions from the floor**

#### Pagham Spit car park

Concerns were raised over the Pagham Spit car park closure by a number of people, including reference to the management of Harbour Road and the car park in the past. Charlotte Weller confirmed that the landowner had asked WSCC, as tenant, to close the car park and that it was not within WSCC'S gift to change this.

#### Pagham Lagoon

Q. Were had the samples been taken from at Pagham Lagoon?

A. Rob reported that water quality samples had been taken across the lagoon, including along the walkway at the north-east end by the reedbed. The flora and fauna surveys had comprehensively covered the entire lagoon, including 9 survey points for Starlet Sea Anemone.

#### Breeding birds

Q. How many little tern young that had fledged on the Reserve?

A. Rob confirmed that 11 young had fledged from 11 pairs on Church Norton Spit and 1 young had fledged from 1 pair on Tern Island. Cameras on the island had evidenced predation of Black-headed Gull chicks by a fox. Fencing arrangements were re-enforced accordingly. Predatory birds were not thought to have a significant impact in the Harbour.

#### Bass Nursery

Q. Should the Harbour be registered as a Bass Nursery Site?

A. Rob advised that Pagham was well known as an important bass nursery area, even though it had no formal designation as this, likely due to its size or other larger/more important sites elsewhere around the coast. The reason for this and potential registration can be discussed with IFCA and the MMO. On a related question Rob was not aware of any immediate plans to repeat the fish survey undertaken a few years ago by EA and Portsmouth University, which was part of a project to establish the importance of saltmarsh for juvenile fish, but no doubt this will be undertaken by EA or IFCA at some point in the future.

#### Meeting minutes

Q. Please could the last contract management meeting between WSCC and RSPB in early December be added to the RSPB website along with the Community Forum minutes?

A. Rob agreed to arrange this.

#### Dog walking

Q. What is the RSPB'S view on providing dog walking facilities as part of housing developments to offset potential disturbance on the Reserve?

A. Rob replied that it was important to provide mitigation for additional pressure on the Reserve and that a number of measures, including building in green space for dog walkers, should be considered in consultation with Natural England.

Q. In relation to the increasing numbers of dogs and dog fouling on the North Wall, could the District Council dog control orders replace the dogs on leads bylaw when the bylaws are reviewed?

A. Rob replied that the Districts would enforce dog fouling penalties, but it was understood that at least for the time being the bylaws would continue to be used within the LNR to enforce dogs on leads (other than those routes/areas set aside for dog off lead walking). This would be reviewed, particularly in relation to the North Wall. Responsible dog walking is obviously encouraged.

#### Breach Pool water levels

Q. Concern that Breach Pool had recently been low, while earlier on during the autumn migration period when muddy margins were desirable to provide feeding areas for waders, it had been full.

A. Rob agreed to speak to the Environment Agency who control the North Wall/Pagham Rife sluices to find out the cause and rectify the situation, as EA had agreed to adjust the water level controls to provide the right conditions on a seasonal basis.

#### **Local Nature Reserve agreements and re-designation update**

The following statement was read out to summarise the current position:

*"The RSPB and WSCC between them have been in discussion with 21 landowners and occupiers in and around Pagham Harbour to seek their views on the inclusion of their land in the re-designated Local Nature Reserve.*

*Of these 21, 17 have either signed and returned new agreements, or have agreed to enter into them and we are awaiting completion, or there are existing agreements already in place which can be used as a basis for re-designation. 4 have either declined the invitation to be included in the re-designation, or have not responded.*

*We would like to extend our gratitude to the many landowners and occupiers who have taken the time to meet with us, and who have kindly indicated that they are prepared to allow for their land to be included in the Local Nature Reserve."*

The area of the LNR will increase only slightly and will remain similar in size overall at around 550ha.

The RSPB will meet with Parish Councils in January to keep them informed and this will be followed by a drop in event at the Visitor Centre in February (date and details to be provided nearer the time via our e-update, posters, Parish Councils, website etc) and an advertisement in the local press.

#### **Jetskis within the Harbour**

It has been confirmed that jetskis are now classified as personal watercraft to which the public right of navigation applies. Reference to jetskis (as being excluded) has therefore been removed from the boating code of conduct.

Under the Merchant Shipping Act jetskis are classed as small powered vessels with a 6 knot speed limit.

It was suggested that speed restrictions may be enforced through Natural England's 1941 Act, the 1981 Wildlife and Countryside Act or the 2010 regulations, but not under the LNR bylaws.

The Marine Management Organisation (MMO) may be able to ably bylaws via the MCZ designation.

(See Personal Watercraft Partnership administered by the RYA for management of environmental sensitivities)

## **AOB**

The Friends to share the bursary funded visitor survey study by Harriet Nichols at the next meeting.

Tim Wright asked if the foreshore in the area Viscount Drive, Pagham, would be included within the LNR re-designation, as enforcement of the bylaws had been discretionary here in the past. RSPB/WSCC confirmed that the Pagham foreshore would be retained as part of the LNR

Concerns were raised over damage to Pagham Beach SSSI due to coastal defence works. This area lies outside of the LNR and is being monitored by Natural England.

Pagham Lagoon Causeway – consideration is being given by NE, EA and the RSPB on how to facilitate any exchange of water between the harbour and the lagoon, without compromising the integrity of the causeway, as part of EA's flood defence works.

**Next meeting:** 6 July at the Selsey Centre