

## Notes on the Chairman's review at the 2017 AGM

I have not been notified of other business other than my own contribution to bring you all up to date on what has been happening in the estuary since the start of 2017 as far as the Association is concerned and what may be coming up this year.

The Spring Newsletter, copies of which I hope you picked up when you came in, should be arriving shortly on your doorsteps. I hope covers all the major issues and we have sought to ensure we have articles covering the upper and lower parts of the valley and estuary as usual. We always welcome ideas for more articles, so if you think we should have covered something let us know. I do want to recognise the fantastic work of Derek Bingham who has returned to help us again as our Newsletter Editor, and a splendid job he does. I can't help thinking that among our members there must be a few others who would enjoy helping with or editing the newsletter twice a year.

Turning to what has been happening since the start of the year:

First, there was the surge on 13/14 January. We will hear the full story on that shortly from our Guest Speaker David Kemp.

The Estuary might be thought of as a place of summer activities but Association action continues throughout the winter too.

On planning, the Association put in another set of objections to the detailed plans for extending Jumbo's Cottage, Iken, required by the Planning Application approval, on the massive works required to dig out much of the promontory on which the Cottage stands in order to double the living area and provide for parking. This is now under consideration by SCDC. I know Iken Parish Council are much exercised by this too and they had a meeting dealing with that amongst other business last night.

There has been no news that I have heard on whether the developer at Brick Dock will appeal against the rejection of plans for 43 more houses. Please let me know if you hear of anything.

Comments were also submitted to the Sizewell C consultation, as it is clear that too little thought has gone into the impact of the huge growth in traffic and to the housing needed in this Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Also importantly more research is needed on plans, which themselves have yet to

be defined, on the possible impact of new sea defences and a jetty on the shoreline development further down the coast.

Lastly, and this is far from being a planning matter yet, Snape Maltings are seeking to talk to all the surrounding area about their ideas to make better use of the complex while keeping their musical and historic ethos and to cope with the fact that Arts Council funding is continuing to decline and new income sources have to be found. But they also have to address the fact that their current parking capacity is barely enough for a full concert and there are times when more parking is needed. It is this need which is proving very difficult and controversial to meet as an option is a site on part of a field between the Crown and the river. Snape Maltings are seeking to explain their ideas to all local people and take in comments and to be very conscious that anything they do has to be appropriate for an area of outstanding natural beauty and one of such environmental sensitivity. Snape Maltings are having a further meeting for all people locally who are interested or might be affected on 19 April but stress that at this stage they are taking soundings and adjusting ideas. The plans are a very long way off being developed to be taken forward for planning permission. Different Association members take very opposing views on this. The Trustees remain in listening mode and will watch how plans evolve.

On river defences, the AOEP are tasked with the development and management of a rolling programme to bring all the walls up to a suitable standard. The Association continues to play a strong role in helping move implementation and delivery of the plan forward.

Briefly, the AOEP is seeking to deal with the upper Estuary first, that is Snape and Aldeburgh, then Iken and will then move south although the AOEP has agreed that the worst points lower down the estuary may be addressed sooner, rather than waiting until the plan rolls all the way down the estuary. Currently, the AOEP are awaiting the results of further modelling of flood risk to check that what is proposed in the upper Estuary will not impact adversely elsewhere the estuary. It is hoped that the results, due later in the summer, will then allow the necessary flood risk analysis and business case for what government funding can be had in time for works to begin in 2018.

Meanwhile this year some additional work is being completed on the first stage of the Aldeburgh Marshes river wall. This extra work has been necessary as these ancient walls, built over centuries, come up with surprises. In one area the clay underneath new wall squeezed out into the marshes and has to be

stopped by filling part of a soke dyke and the new wall returned to the desired height.

An interesting aspect of the wild life of the area has also come to light. There is a plentiful population of water voles. In every other part of the England these are very rare but here there are great numbers, but following environmental rules they need to be moved to new homes before any wall building can start, a process that can take a few weeks. This is yet another aspect as well as the composition of the material of the walls which adds to the complexity of getting the river defences into the shape that will safeguard the future.

Essentially the Aldeburgh Marshes work shows that through a partnership approach combining the EA original plans to remedy an earlier wall construction and the AOEP plan, the walls and all that is protected by them can be proofed against overtopping for three hours in a 1:200 year event in 2050. The end plan is that there should be a good wall about 3.3 metres high, 3 and a half metres wide at the top and with a broad relatively shallow back slope so that any overtopping simply runs down over the grassed surface and cannot start to cascade on steep parts at the back of the wall. The plans are continuing the stewardship of the estuary begun by our ancestors several centuries ago.

All this is going to cost money. As was said last week at the open meeting for the Aldeburgh area, some £12million is needed for the Estuary as a whole over the next 10 years, hopefully less, and that is on top of the possibly £2million we may get from the Government. What is good is that as the AOEP is working closely in partnership with EA and the IDB. We have the full support of the SCC, SCDC and RFCC who all approved estuary plan last June making it a document of material importance in Planning terms. In this way, the voluntary partnership can make progress as it is being helped and supported through the technical and legal mazes which are attached to any flood defence work.

The AOEP and AOET have a strong fund raising team who are all working to ensure a good launch for fund raising from the community. The whole estuary community needs to be involved. It is our estuary and in all our interests that the plan can be taken forward. The Fund raising launch is likely to be on 14/15 October. By then the aim is to have ensured that half or more of the sums needed is coming in from any one with land on the estuary, and the government funding possibilities will identified as far as possible. So the community, house owners, businesses and all those of us who enjoy the estuary, can make our contribution as well. I would like to mention again how

very generously David Andren left money for the river defences; there is still a little more to come from his estate but the sum is about £630, 000, immensely generous- a wonderful example which he hoped others will follow.

Turning to the summer, the Association has three great walks lined up. For this much thanks to John Grayburn and George Knight who has kindly come forward to take on more of the walk organisation. You will find in the flyers about these with the Newsletter and on the website. The Annual Barbecue will, thanks to Simon and Sheena Barrow, be at Cowton with a wonderful hill top view of the estuary.

The Butley Ferry is, with great works by the ferrymen this winter, ready to start on Easter Saturday and any of you who go there will be much impressed by the renewed duck boards on the Gedgrave side, so you will not get muddy feet.

There will be more work too to be done to protect our estuary and enjoyment of it. Natural England are expected to start consultations on the coastal path route around the Estuary. There will be yet another consultation on the estuary being made a possible MCZ early in the summer. We will keep you alerted through the website and the odd email but the cost of postage is so great we will try to do as much as possible, other than the twice yearly newsletters, on the internet.

So with all that and contributions to river defence work and fund raising we have a busy summer ahead.