

**Draft Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the Alde and Ore Association held at 10:30 am on  
Saturday 7th April 2018 at Thorpeness Country Club**

**PRESENT:**

**Committee** Alison Andrews (Chairman), Birgitta Bostrom (Treasurer), Sally Walton (Secretary), Amanda Bettinson (RDC), Simon Barrow, Colin Chamberlain, Roy Truman, John Grayburn, Keith Martin, Diana Paterson

**Members** 80 members present, excluding the Committee. List held by the Secretary.

**APOLOGIES:** Nick Barker, Juliet Brereton, Richard N Brunt, Colin Chamberlain, Michael Flint, Andrew Freese, Richard Hickson, Sir Christopher Howes, Simon and Paula Kerr, Andrew McDonald, John and Julia Waite

**1. MINUTES**

Minutes of the previous AGM of the Alde and Ore Association, held on 8<sup>rd</sup> April 2017, were approved.

**2. TRUSTEES' REPORT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 2017**

The Chairman said that the Trustees' report was included with the papers for the meeting. It provided a useful summary of the activities in 2017 and was required by the Charities Commission given the Association's status as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation. The Chairman invited comments on it. None were made from the floor but the Chairman spoke to one sent by email by Andrew McDonald, who had sent his apologies, relating to the mission of the Association and its compatibility or otherwise with Enabling Development. The Chairman said that the Association was not against any development per se, just as the AONB authorities do not challenge every development, and there are always a number on going in the estuary. For Enabling Development which was being carried out under the Estuary Plan, the criteria were clearly set out, and the Enabling Development team were undertaking very extensive consultation, far more than might happen under other planning applications in the area. That said, the AOA would challenge any inappropriate development proposal made by any body or organisation if it was thought that it would adversely affect the river and its bank and such land adjoining them or upstream as may be considered to affect them. The Report was duly noted by the meeting.

Turning to matters since the start of 2018, the Chairman commented that as members had just received the Spring Newsletter they were now mostly up to date, but she wanted to draw their attention to the more recent work in relation to the Estuary Plan and to all the vital activities of the Association.

Touching briefly on the AOEP plan, she said that after a lengthy period with interactive modelling to ensure that mending one part of the estuary defences should not cause flooding to another part before that is done, she was happy to report that the Alde and Ore Estuary Partnership (AOEP) plan was on track to achieve over the next few years walls in most parts up to 3.3m in height with a broad back slope, that is a resilient structure. The full details would be given at the AOEP Annual Community meeting the following Saturday at Snape Maltings Recital Room, and members were encouraged to attend.

As a result of the two incursions of the Beast from the East, the Chairman reported on the large swelling of shingle on the shore to the North of Martello and a huge carving out of shingle from the spit into the sea at Slaughden, not forgetting also the massive change at Shingle Street. It was an ever changing coast. She was very grateful to David Kemp, EA, who would give an up to date assessment of the position after the formal AGM proceedings.

On fund-raising for the Plan, the Alde and Ore Estuary Trust (AOET) was making good progress. Over £12m was needed over the next few years. Money was coming in. So far, since the October launch, £500k was already in the bank with promises of rather more phased over the next few years, plus landowners' contributions in cash of up to £1 million and land for Enabling Development. Jane Maxim, Chairman of the AOET Funding Group, was at the meeting and would answer questions in the general discussion session. Continuing the flow of donations was very much needed to ensure the estuary was there for coming generations. There was also David Andren's immensely generous bequest of over £600,000 which he made in the hope that others would also follow his example.

The Alde and Ore Association Board of Trustees had agreed during the year to contribute £25k of the David Andren bequest to the fund-raising effort, specifically to initiate enabling development. Trustees were aware that not everyone approved of enabling development but with the opportunity to raise £3 – 5 million for the river defences in this manner, which had been clearly set out in the approved Estuary Plan, the Board found the approach necessary and something that it should support. Trustees had been very mindful of David's bequest and love of the estuary and the energy he put into getting things moving. There is still over 90% of the bequest, some £600,000, remaining.

For an update on the AOEP enabling development plans, members were again encouraged to attend the AOEP Annual Community meeting the following Saturday.

Turning to the Association itself, the Chairman stressed that it was concerned with **all** aspects of the river, not just its defences. While the AOEP was the focus for the programme and projects to get the river wall in good condition for future generations, and the AEOT, the Trust, was the Treasury for the keeping and using the river defence funds for the projects, the Association with its 'A' was about All the estuary. The Association's mission was to preserve the rivers and their banks from Shingle Street inland and such adjoining land with features of beauty, historic or public interest in that area. The Association was still the membership body for those wanting to take part in preserving the estuary: Trustees and members who volunteered helped to do many things to keep our estuary in good heart.

On planning, the main concern currently was the third phase at Brick Dock. She reminded members that the Association relied on them all to alert Trustees to developments which might not be good for the estuary. At Brick Dock, the developer wanted to put in 43 more homes. He had appealed against SCDC's refusal of his application to the Secretary of State. The Secretary of State had decided on holding a full planning hearing starting on 11 September. The Association was currently discussing with other Aldeburgh groups how best to marshal forces and arguments. The Association certainly did not consider 2 ½ storey buildings with views across the river and a sea of roofs would do anything for the AONB, the river, light and landscape pollution. More details would be put on the website when they were available.

On a more positive note, the ferry season started last Saturday with a fully refurbished boat – every bit of wood and paint is new. Well done, the ferry men and their new leader Roy.

And the Association sought to ensure all could enjoy walking near the river. It aimed to do three walks a year to give members a chance to see some less well-known parts. One was already organised for 11 May in the upper Alde, and two other ideas in the making, but if anyone had special favourite routes which may not be well known or require land owner permission please could they get in touch so members could explore the hidden jewels of the estuary.

The annual barbecue this year, thanks to the Skepper family, would be near Ferry Farm, just up from Slaughden, opposite the newly refurbished river walls. The correct leaflet would be sent out shortly.

Another aspect of preserving the estuary was the saltings trials. This work was started by the Association as the saltings were an important part of our local heritage. The work was now being taken forward by the AOEP. The Association still had a role: there would be a call for volunteers to make more hazel bundles next January.

In the interests of members and the estuary the Association kept an eye on coastal policies. This included keeping in tune with information and informing the Suffolk-wide body SCAR as well as the presence on the AOEP. This area was seen in London as an exemplary initiative with local coordinators both authorities and volunteers. Hopefully a new weapon to use in getting support for the estuary was the Government's recently published 25 year Environment Plan with its stress on the value of natural capital – something our estuary was very rich in.

In summary, planning, walks, barbecue, funding, the Association's volunteers' surveys and commissioning important scientific assessments and surveys to help ensure having a sound basis for protecting the estuary, and keeping touch with all those in authority were all part of the many actions of the Association.

Trustees were always open to ideas on AOA activities and how members wanted to be kept in touch. Ideas for a fresh approach were welcome especially if it meant that more people could bring their energies and organisational powers to achieve them. More on that in the general discussion to come.

The Chairman said that she would like to thank many people for all the work which goes unseen:

- A big thank you to John Grayburn for master minding and managing the website, not to mention managing the complexities of the mailing list which had to be updated in tandem with the Aldeburgh Yacht Club list.
- To the 30 or so River Defence Committee volunteers – each reporting on state of walls, fronts, saltings and paths in different flood cells in writing and with photographs with the results being collated to pass to the Environment Agency and providing a record and continuing baseline on what needed to be done – so thank you Roger Baxter who was now chief guru on this, his wife Mary Ann and John Grayburn for the final presentation of the reports in readable, IT consistent and useable form.
- To all the ferrymen and to Vicki Bingham for organising the production and massive regular circulation of leaflets.
- The Barbecue this coming year would be master minded by Lizzie Clark.
- To Keith Martin who leads on the Association's approach to government proposals for the MCZ, our concern being over regulation which might unnecessarily affect the enjoyment of the river and may well be unnecessary in an estuary which is already well guarded by environment protection requirements.

- And huge thanks to, not forgetting the constant calls on their time which is very willingly given, our Treasurer Birgitta Bostrom, our legal adviser trustee Colin Chamberlain and our Secretary Sally Walton.

### **3. ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 2017**

The Treasurer presented the accounts which were in the format suggested by the Charity Commission guidelines. The accounts were in good order and had been approved by external examination. Income was a little less than last year, owing to there being fewer members, and not so much income from BBQ and walks, but the Butley Ferry had continued to be very popular and made more profit. Regarding the expenses, it came as no surprise that £1000 more than the previous year had been needed to be spent on repairs to the Ferry. Financial help was provided to AOEP to pay for the fundraising brochure and a grant of £15,000 had been made to AOET to help them pay for administrative assistance to start the fundraising required. A reserve of over £41,000 remained in unrestricted funds. The final portion of the David Andren legacy had been received during the year, and as mentioned by the Chairman earlier £25,000 of the funds had been spent making a year end balance of £620,878 in restricted funds. All monies were placed in interest bearing accounts.

The Treasurer clarified the position regarding the David Andren legacy, footnote in the accounts. When the legacy was made it was thought that the estuary could be upgraded one cell at a time. It is now clear that all the estuary flood cells had to be seen as inter-related pieces piece of work to be done in a specified sequence. The footnote had been changed to reflect this and to clarify that the Will did not require that the funds be specifically spent on one flood cell.

**These accounts were approved and adopted unanimously by the membership present.**

### **4. ELECTION OF TRUSTEES**

The Chairman reported that this year two great Trustees had retired. With great regrets, we had lost both Tim Dudgeon who has retired to Devon and Mandy Bettinson who has served for probably 15 years and would like to give someone else a chance.

Tim Dudgeon, who was Ferry Trustee for 3 years, had moved back to Devon. It had been wonderful to have such a positive leader, who, amongst other things, ensured that all ferrymen did a First Aid course. Tim had been presented with 'the Order of the Rowlock' by the Ferrymen on his retirement.

Mandy Bettinson who joined as Honorary Secretary and had served for 15 years, had also stood down. Many of these years were with David Andren as Chairman, and Mandy will be remembered for having done an enormous amount for the continuing life of the Association. She had been the moving spirit behind the River Defence Committee, succeeding Richard Marson, and her verve, commitment and ideas would be greatly missed but would not be lost to the estuary as she remained secretary to the Alde and Ore Estuary Partnership. The Chairman asked members to express their thanks to these heroic volunteers.

Alison Andrews and Sally Walton offered themselves for re-election. They were proposed by Rufus Gilday, seconded by Simon Barrow, and unanimously elected.

Roy Truman, who was appointed during the year as Ferry Trustee was formally proposed by Alison Andrews, seconded by Birgitta Bostrom, and unanimously elected.

## **5. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

There being no further business the formal proceedings of the AGM were closed at 11am.

### **The meeting then moved on to allow discussion on issues of interest to members.**

David Kemp, Environment Agency- Coastal Partnerships & Strategic Overview Team Leader, East Anglia Area, was asked by the Chairman to give an update on recent developments along the shingle bank to the west of the river.

He reported that the strong east winds of 20<sup>th</sup> February had bitten into the shingle ridge north of the Martello Tower as would have been expected. The rock which had been placed north of Martello two years before did a good job, and the amount of shingle there had increased. However, a fortnight later the wind had come again and did more damage taking out most of the haul road leaving there just an arret of shingle. He commented that it was lucky this event took place in February/March at the end of the winter rather than October/November.

In order to measure the shingle on the move, a plane taking LIDAR measurements was sent up to monitor the situation on 21<sup>st</sup> March. There had already been steps put in place to recharge the shingle on to that part of the ridge with assents from Suffolk Coastal District Council and Natural England in November being obtained last year. Now a licence had to be obtained from MMO and the required paperwork had been submitted. The optimum time for the work would be September.

He offered a word of reassurance. The shingle ridge had responded to the weather conditions as academics predicted. For a breach into the estuary to occur, water would have to cut through enough of the marsh sediments underneath causing a 150m breach wide and this could take 20 years. Anything less and the breach would self - heal. Since the event the shingle has been returning and more would come back over the summer. Work would, however, be needed to repair the haul road and widen and heighten the shingle bank and there was the issue of funding to be tackled and he was trying to find it.

Concurrently with this, work was going on with Suffolk Coastal Forum reviewing the Shoreline Management Plan and it was important that works undertaken now did not affect what needed to be done in the future. The Shoreline Management Plan (SMP) currently stated the interim policy was to hold the line south of Martello until 2025, with no active intervention afterwards. The policy was now under review looking at 2<sup>nd</sup> epoch 2025- 50. Again, a problem was that the plan did not come with funds attached. One of the problems with Slaughden is that there are no properties affected to influence funding available. The most likely cause of flooding would be a tidal surge affecting Orford, Iken, Aldeburgh and Snape.

The Chairman thanked David Kemp for this update. She mentioned that the review had been prompted by the completion of the Alde and Ore Estuary Partnership. She said that she was part of a working group representing the AOEP. During the first stage an important study which was taken into account was the work by Professor Pye which the Association had commissioned. For the time being it was accepted that no active intervention after 2025 was not a good idea. Options for managing the shingle which runs nearly to the lighthouse were being looked at, in addition to all the other issues such as environmental impact. There was likely to be a public consultation about the proposed changes towards the end of the year.

Then followed a number of questions:

1. Chris O'Dwyer asked if the shingle wall repairs would just be shingle recharge or something more permanent?

David Kemp said that the cheapest remedy would be used first, possibly recharge to the front, and maybe also to the back. This also linked to what the conclusions were of the revised Shoreline Management Plan. Options there might include more expensive solutions such as groins, rocks, a shingle engine, large amounts of shingle offshore, but it would all come down to who would pay.

2. Following on from the question of who pays, Mark Goyder commented that there was an apparent contradiction in the fact that the Government's newly published Environment Plan was based on natural capital, whilst the Treasury talked about properties being affected. He questioned whether there was not a case for longer term funding based on natural capital.

David Kemp responded that the Environment Plan was now in place, so it could be of use. There are a number (10) of pioneer areas, one being Suffolk. However, details such as the valuation of natural capital and benefits of flood management relating to natural capital were not yet particularly well defined.

3. Simon Barrow, Trustee with marketing responsibilities, wanted to hear members' views on the Association's communication with them and how it might be changed and a wider age range reached. He asked a number of questions and made a number of points:

How safe is our data? - The answer was very, as all the Association knew was names and addresses but it meant that we knew very little about members and what they might want. How do we replace ourselves with young people, being a group of average age late 60s? We would love the average age to be late 40s. We might have to do things we haven't done to date, such as some analysis of our membership. He asked for agreement or otherwise to this proposal and the majority of those present at the meeting agreed.

Following on from this he said that everyone present had a view – would they like the Association to know more about these views, which would mean the Association possessing more revealing data. Without this information it would be difficult to improve our marketing to involve younger members. He asked for views on a questionnaire: he agreed that would need to be thought through very carefully and there would be no point to having information which was not used. It might be that a questionnaire was not the way to go, and instead we might hold group meetings in the various Flood Cell areas. Agreement was given to this suggestion.

He asked what was the number of full time inhabitants under 50 in this area? The answer was not clear but there was a population of 15,000 approximately in the Alde and Ore area and perhaps 30% are under 50. How might they be engaged?

- Vicki Bingham suggested that we all persuade our children to join the Association.
- Richard Marson suggested more activities which reached out to more people such as lectures or groups undertaking particular activities just as the River Defence Committee currently did.
- William Eddis: It would be a good idea to have a meeting like this with a presentation in the summer when more people were in the area. At the moment it is mostly permanent residents.

A question was asked regarding our membership fee. The Chairman said that the cost of membership was only £5 and it would remain at this level as long as we could cover the cost of our newsletter and other incidentals. As a consequence of this low subscription we had a very wide

range of members. Many people did contribute an extra amount and the Association was in good financial condition.

Simon Barrow asked for help in taking forward thinking on how to engage more and younger members. At the meeting Rufus Gildray and Chris Gill offered their support, and others were asked to get in touch with Simon if they were interested.

4. Frances Barnwell asked a question about costs and timing of estuary defence plans: Given that Orford was at risk and that the plan for the upper river was underway with Orford looking at a wait of 3 – 4 years before work would be done on its flood cell, how could we be certain that costs would not have increased by then, and would the Association give thought as to how Orford might be protected in the meanwhile?

The Chairman explained that the Association was involved with setting up AOEP which had been given the task of developing the Plan for the estuary and all agencies involved have agreed the plan and in what order it should be undertaken. The upper estuary was the most vulnerable part as the 2013 surge had shown and hence would be dealt with first. A small number of homes in Iken and Orford might be affected by upper estuary works but the Environment Agency would not permit any upper estuary work to go ahead until these properties were appropriately safeguarded. The Business plans needed to secure Flood Risk assents and secure what government funding was available would be completed this year so hopefully work on the upper estuary would begin next year. The entire estuary plan would take some years as work cannot be done during the winter, or when birds are breeding. However Orford is next in line after the upper estuary.

The Discussion Session then closed and the 20 minute version of the film ' Save our Suffolk Estuary' was then shown.

*There being no further business the meeting concluded at 12.00 midday.*

April 2018