

THE ALDE & ORE ASSOCIATION

Your Voice – Your Estuary



Draft Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the Alde and Ore Association

Reconvened meeting, following adjournment from 4 April 2020 necessitated by Covid 19 regulations, conducted by Zoom on Friday 23 October 2020.

Present:

Committee: Alison Andrews (Chairman and Temporary Honorary Secretary),

Birgitta Bostrom, Treasurer, Colin Chamberlain, Keith Martin, Roy Truman, Simon, Barrow, Monica Allen.

Members: 30 members attended and 10 registered to join but were not seen. (List available from Chairman)

1. Apologies: Sarah Gammon, John and Diana Grayburn, John Kerr, Andrew McDonald, Bobby Rusack, Angela Sydenham, Johnny Wheeler, Sir John F Wheeler, Bt. and Lady Wheeler, Sarah Zins

2. Minutes

The minutes of the previous AGM of the Alde and Ore Association held on Saturday 6th April 2019, with the addition of Chris Gill's name to the list of those in the Marketing Group in Section 5, were approved.

3. Trustees' Report for the year ended 31st December 2019

The Chairman summarised the report. 2019 seemed a long time ago but it was a year which saw making progress with the development of the Estuary Plan into a construction project, the succession from the Alde and Ore Estuary Partnership, as the planning work had been completed, to the Alde and Ore Community Partnership to represent the community, The Association dealing with several planning matters, responding to government policy consultations, the good work of the River Defence Committee under Roger Baxter, the Butley Ferry operations and what were our normal range of interesting walks and annual barbecue plus looking at how The Association might widen and deepen its membership.

The Chairman commented that with the delay caused by Covid, her report supplementing the 2019 report now ran for 9 months and said that while a lot has been going on it felt perversely as if much was been pending.

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The Association itself had to postpone all proposed walks and barbecue- but hopefully these would take place next year. A Zoom meeting for members to help understanding of what the Sizewell C plans might mean for the estuary the long term had been held. Members were invited to suggest other topics if they liked that form of communication.

Those members on email had received three letters updating on events during the summer.

While it does not make for very exciting reading, the Trustees had been ensuring that the estuary's interests were not overlooked in the many consultations going on and responding to the power company applications- the Association can and does make the case on behalf of its members, and being a body of 2000 it carries weight, but it was clear, from watching all the new online consultations, that active individual responses were important in re-enforcing the message.

The Association get results. It was good to read that the messages sent about how to achieve resilience in flood defences in last year's consultation on a strategy for flooding and coastal erosion, have emerged in the final government policy documents

Most recently, the revelation in relation to Scottish Power Renewables plans that there were not just two windfarms but possibly a further six or more may come in through the SPR gateway was a real concern. For The Association the entry on the coast is the issue: while SPR have looked at coastal processes they do not seem to have realised that the cliff they propose to dig under is extraordinarily fragile.

During the year, there have been several planning applications which, thanks to Keith Martin, had been followed up, including at Iken an application for a new large barn building which has been limited by conditions that it must be for agricultural use. As always Trustees want members to be the eyes and ears and not rely on a single person doing their best to spot applications that need attention. If anyone feels strongly about something affecting the estuary, please let the Association know.

Among the activities this year, the Chairman singled out the Butley Ferry team for special commendation. Despite Covid restrictions, the ferry team, under the indefatigable Trustee, Roy Truman, had made new steps in the river wall, constructed three sturdy resting seats, painted the hut, and cleared the fast growing seaweed off the jetties. They had run the ferry, despite the complications of Covid restrictions, from near the end of July with result that despite having less than half the normal operational days, three quarters of the usual revenue was earned. On top of all this activity a nomination for a Queens Award for

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Volunteers had been confirmed, actually getting it was the next step, but getting so far, the equivalent of an MBE nomination was a matter of pride in itself.

During the work on widening and deepening the membership, a question which has kept coming up in this context was – “ Why do we have three estuary bodies?” Briefly, it would be easier in one sense to have only one but at present they all do different things and answer to different procedural and customer and legal needs:

- the Alde and Ore Association, set up in 1991, is there to preserve and protect all the estuary for the enjoyment of the public. It is about All aspects of the estuary not just flood defence but planning, other developments affecting it and helping ensure its enjoyment, as through the ferry and walks.
- the Alde and Ore Estuary Partnership (AOEP) was set up by Suffolk Coastal District Council, Estuary Planning Partnership and The Association in 2012, to develop a coherent estuary flood defence plan. It has done that. Now in the next phase, the Alde and Ore Community Partnership (AOCP or Partnership), successor to the AOEP, is the guardian of the estuary plan to keep the river walls, and therefore all the life of the river that depends on it, in good heart. It has a key role in communicating to all the communities in the estuary, particularly through the Parish Councils about what is going on.
- the Alde and Ore Estuary Trust (AOET or the Trust) is the estuary’s treasury. It was set up by the AOEP as a COI to be a watertight charitable structure to ensure that the raising and use of funds to complete the Estuary Plan could be seen to be on a sound legal footing. It is there to raise funds and provide these to secure the construction of the river walls and related matters that are needed for the future and to implement the plan.

So briefly The Association---- All aspects: the AOCP---Plan: and the AOET ---Treasury. The Association works to ensure that there is a great awareness of the beauty of our area and the duty of care we have for it and contributes to the focussed but key functions of the AOCP and AOET. We have to think in terms of working together constructively. Members can be assured that The Association played a very central role in getting the estuary plan to a state where it can be implemented.

This year The Association played its part in helping to get the new AOCP underway with its changed membership bringing in all local councils, the district and county councils to make it more a community partnership but still including landowners and businesses and The Association, the only organisation encompassing all the estuary.

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Apart from the impact of Covid, the feeling of being in suspense also comes because of awaiting the outcome of the application and detailed business case for flood plan approval and grant aid for the first part of the estuary plan, the upper estuary. This was accepted for consideration by the Environment Agency in the summer. It is now well on in the internal processes in EA– hopefully there will be a positive result so that work can start in the coming year but, as with everything, Covid makes processes take longer.

Meanwhile too trustees have been considering how to make the Association more fun for current and wider membership. The Chairman thanked the Marketing and Focus Groups for the time and reflections and ideas given by them and Sarah Ladbury for her excellent facilitation to tease out the issues facing The Association. Simon was reporting on this further in Agenda Item 6.

The Chairman pointed out that The Association was an organisation for all those who love the Alde and Ore and up to now had been entirely run by volunteers. She stressed that the existing band of Trustees was diminishing and those left could not go on indefinitely- indeed for a vibrant organisation, change was needed. Equally there was so much more which could be done, such as engaging with schools, more on wild life, estuary related events but more people were needed to share the load otherwise only the absolute essentials could be done.

Looking to the rest of the year, at the very least the many energy projects, for which the Association's concern are the possible implications for the coastline, will be time consuming. There may be more.

But being positive, the estuary makes a wonderful place to be in and around, so many times in recent months so many people have said, frequently, how lucky we are to live or visit here. It remains very much the case that The Association and its members are the custodians of the wellbeing of the estuary and The Association intends to keep it that way whether its own many activities, keeping a watch for any activity and planning developments which may do no good or need encouraging, being alert to influence any government policies so estuaries are not forgotten, or supporting the AOCP and the AOET with fundraising and generally keeping the estuary in good heart for future generations. So please continue to support the Association and indeed come on board as a volunteer so we can continue to have a substantial impact.

Questions:

In response to Michael Flint, Keith Martin explained that as East Coast Council no longer provided regular updates on new planning applications to those who asked, as has been the

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practice a good number of years ago, he generally looked at the ESC Planning web site every week and followed up ones likely to have an impact on the estuary, discussing them with other Trustees. The Chairman asked members to let the Committee know when they were aware of coming applications as relying on a single person to pick everything up was a tall order.

Nicholas Bridges asked if the Association had responded to a recent planning document by ESC. The Chairman mentioned that only two weeks previously East Suffolk Council had announced its final decision that the revised Shoreline Management Plan Policy for the area just south of the Aldeburgh Martello Tower was being changed to Managed Realignment or managed resilience to keep the shingle shore going from the year 2025 to 2100. In response to Nicholas Gold, she confirmed that the policy did not mean that funds would be necessarily be found to do any work as the authorities were not obliged to do anything but said that the fact that the agreed policy was in place meant that, should work need to be done, the issue of whether it was done was an important step further forward, being one of funding not principle. She acknowledged that any shingle needed could come either from Nicolas Gold's land to the south or from another source in the North Sea.

Nicholas Bridges said he had been referring to "Draft Coastal Adaptation Supplementary Planning Document Covering the coast from Holkham in Norfolk to Felixstowe in Suffolk Initial consultation document Consultation dates 4 September 2020 – 16 October 2020". He asked if The Association had said anything about enabling development. The Chairman said that the enquiry was about ensuring planning guidance was up to date, what extra data or background might be provided in relation to helping the public respond to planning matters and delivering planning policy and The Association had not commented.

4. Accounts of the Association for the year ended 31st December 2019

Birgitta Bostrom, Treasurer, presented the accounts for the year ended 31 December 2019. She outlined the key points of the accounts pointing to the relevant pages in the Annual Report and Accounts. Total income for the year was £42,281 compared with £19,637 the previous year due to a very generous bequest of £21,250 from Mrs Rosemary Unwin of Orford. Expenses were only £500 less than the year before, so going forward the balance is £697,184. In detail, both membership, gift aid and activities income and expenses and were very similar to 2018 with slight variations, including the Butley Ferry losing some income because 8 days were lost with bad weather. The ferry expenses would have been £3000

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higher but Roy and the ferry team had done well to secure local government grants to cover the costs of repairing the walkways and jetties. The annual barbeque was once a bit of a fund raising event but now more of a nice occasion to get together, but the 2019 event secured a profit of £400 due to the kindness of Salter and King who provided the hog roast at cost: the profit was passed to the Alde and Ore Estuary Trust, the fund raiser for the estuary. A further almost £400 was raised on a walk organised in parallel with the AOET flotilla event and was also passed to the AOET. Overall, the Treasurer reported everything was healthy and the accounts look very much as they did last year.

Questions were invited. Frances Barnwell suggested that it would be nice if bequests were acknowledged. The Chairman apologised for not mentioning specifically Rosemary Unwin's kind bequest and said that it would be mentioned in future fund raising opportunities. She said Trustees had inquired as to whether Rosemary Unwin had any particular purpose in mind. The intention was to use it for something really positive. Full recognition would be given.

To adopt the accounts, the Chairman said that given the limitations of Zoom could everyone show their hands if they agreed. **All indicated they would, so the accounts were adopted.**

5. Election of Trustees

The retiring Trustees were Simon Barrow and John Grayburn. The Chairman said that The Association was facing a serious problem. There should have at least six Trustees. With the retirement of John and Simon, there now were five. She was delighted that Monica Allen had bravely taken up the role of Newsletter Editor. She knew that John Grayburn would continue for a short while until successors are found for his webmaster and emailing tasks, and that Simon would always be on hand to help on marketing aspects, but to make a great impact more trustees were needed to share the load of seeking to preserve the wonderful landscape for future generations and their enjoyment.

She wanted to thank a good number of people for their contributions to the Association and its cause. First, the Trustees who were continuing their terms of office who had all worked valiantly- Birgitta the Treasurer keeps everything in immaculate order and provides wise and sound advice on policies, Colin our legal adviser and with his ear to the ground in Iken, also

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serving on the AOCF, Keith not only our planning guru but also now Chair of SCAR (Suffolk Coast Acting for Resilience) and Roy under whom the ferry is not only flourishing but everyone and everything is in very good order.

In particular she wanted to thank John Grayburn, who had formally retired at what would have been the April AGM, after giving fantastic service in both walks, ferry and website and digital membership lists over a good number of years, and she commended his cooked ham provided to the walks lunches which had been renowned in its deliciousness. But even now without John The Association would not have a running website and be emailing those of you we can.

In equal measure she gave huge thanks too to Simon who had been a trustee since 2005 and in his time had taken the ferry forward for several years beginning many traditions – a special hat, loudspeaker, ferrymen's lunch and lasting enthusiasm,- and he had remained a ferry man and taken up the marketing challenge with great energy. So at this AGM on behalf of the Association she wanted to formally express real appreciation for both their contributions.

And only this week the fantastic membership secretary, Diana Grayburn, who had been doing the work for 12 years, as well as masterminding the ticketing of the Annual Barbecue had said that she would like to stand down. The Chairman said that she would personally miss her as it had been wonderful to have key tasks reliably and safely in happy hand but did understand it was time for her to do other things. Now, how to find someone to fill her shoes.

The Chairman was also sorry that Richard Brunt, one of the Committee's co-opted members, who represented the Wildfowlers on the estuary had also found his other duties must now take him away from The Association. He has been a most regular attendee and always provided helpful advice and insights, not to mention encouraging articles for the Newsletter, so many thanks to Richard too.

There were no elections to be made but the Chairman put in a strong plea- "there must be someone with some time and energy who really cares about the estuary and keeping it in good heart as a place to live and play: if they could come forward to us we would love to consider potential trustees or anyone who would like to help in any one way. There is so much to be done in and around the estuary, I can't believe there is no one who has the skills or enthusiasm to take The Association forward. Trustees can have fun as you will have heard in relation to John and Simon's experiences."

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6. Marketing – update on progress

Simon Barrow, in his last appearance as a Trustee presented his thinking on how to take forward the marketing drive to widen and deepen our membership and its involvement in activities.

First, a real challenge was that while there were some 2000 members, where was the pressure from them on Trustees? There seemed very little when seen against the controversy, challenges and real risks facing the area. He thought that Trustees should be under tremendous pressure, in the same way as leaders in relation to the Third Runway at Heathrow were, but it seemed that our members trust us to get on with it. He thought that the pressure came when people saw that a way of life is on the line, so why did that not happen here? His theory, having done a little research, was that in contrast to third runway, if your own house is under threat that was one thing but when the threat was not so clear, people were more relaxed: but he said, but people here should not be more relaxed- more passion was needed. He was writing an article to say that where ever we live in the estuary area our way of life would be threatened if we lost our river and sea defences, whether our roads, sailing, Snape Maltings and more and whether our houses were the above or below 5 metre contour- its reputation as an expensive and fashionable place with lots of employment would go. He recognised that this was a dangerous card to play and some might not like it, but we had to make more of a fuss about the possible impact. Then perhaps we would have more people

Second, even with a membership of 2000, this in no way reflects the broader social economic groups here and The Association needed to get out an appeal to all parts of the community, especially the range of wonderful independent businesses and skills contributing to the community, and indeed everyone here had a stake in this place. He also commented that two thirds of the support organisation for the Lake District did not live there and the same support should be secured for the Alde and Ore.

Third, The Association was the only membership body involved covering all parts of the area but it was not yet truly membership driven, it was not close enough to our members, to be a true membership body it was necessary to know more about members and their wishes but The Association only had addresses and with luck their email addresses: it needed to know more to work properly for them .While .there were many limitations on data collection and

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use, big commercial companies knew a very great deal about all of us so more data could be collected.

Fourth, our identity, being one of three organisation serving the estuary, needed to be clearer. He saw two issues. There could be times when we had to stand alone and wave our sword. But it was also important that the communications of all three bodies to all those who love the area must have brilliant coherence, we must be coordinated.

Fifth, our reputation as a charity to work for-we have to do some effective marketing on that and shows an exciting place and has interesting people working for it.

As this was his last meeting Simon wanted to say some special thankyou: - to Trevor Wilkinson one of the former Chairmen of The Association who asked him to take on the Butley Ferry, one of funniest and fun years Simon had had in any organisation for 10 years, and indeed no one wants to leave the ferry. He thanked the Marketing Group for wonderful discussions hosted by William and Akiko Eddis, which started the ball rolling, and Sarah Ladbury outstanding independent facilitator- there had been an uncomfortable discussion but everyone there cared and while not always correct, they cared and if the Association did not exist they would invent something else. He thanked his Fellow trustees warmly. And finally thanks to Sholto Lindsay-Smith who may, after exploring the marketing challenge, may do some work to help us and he asked Sholto to speak.

Sholto said thank you, was really excited about getting involved, as this was a bit of coast he was very fond of. From his perspective he could see that The Association needed to increase and broaden membership to continue to be effective. He wanted to think though clearer representation of the organisation to get more active and involved membership in the wider community and there were many sorts of simple things which could be done, such as new media channels, surfacing some of the fantastic work being done already- he was really excited to be involved.

Simon said Sholto would need help. He would need an updated Marketing Group to help him and make sure action happens, so his message to the existing MG was how welcome you are but we may need more people bringing in other and different marketing skills.

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Mark Goyder, a member of the Marketing Group, wanted to acknowledge Simon's leadership, energy and wise approach. Work with Marketing Group had been very positive, it had done some listening, was getting a sense of what is missing, and he was keen to work with Sholto to move this forward. Amongst the things needing to be done, in his view this was a moment when we will need to make some investment in paid employment once the plans are clear and so be able then to say to members look at the vision and outreach and contribute more financially to show they value their membership.

The Chairman concluded that clearly going to be a lot happening, and hopefully be able to report more at next AGM but invited more comments.

Roy commented from his ferry experience visited by around 1000 people a year: they were not really interested in river walls but in the beautiful landscape and wild life. Marketing goes in many directions, for example he sat on a Deben marketing team to try to get people to look at and enjoy the Deben Peninsula: in the same way, the more people using the ferry, the more we can teach about the many things that go on in the estuary. The ferrymen also provided an interesting example- some come from a distance such as Kent, York, Ely, Norfolk as well as locally in Suffolk, because they love the area: if we can get people to come from outside the area we should be able to get more interest of people who live in the area, who may be a bit blasé- we have a lovely area want to preserve and it needs to be marketed.

Michael Flint commented that years back The Association had a system that whenever anyone moved into a new house, local people were designated to talk to newcomers about the area and get them to join. This was agreed to be a good approach.

Colin Chamberlain proposed using a further marketing opportunity, an Association guide to the Coastal Path when it opens, which would get more people in touch with the area and help give the Association a good brand. The Chairman agreed and added need someone prepare to pick up and run with it- someone with that skill.

Frances Barnwell asked in relation to walks on river walls, could The Association put pressure on repairing the state of footpaths as it did not fall to Environment Agency's responsibilities. Currently, at either side of Orford, the wall was now entering its winter state of being a 'skating rink', the river wall was being eroded and in an appalling state. The Chairman agreed and said that was the case at Slaughden as well: she would take that

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forward and contact the Suffolk County Council Rights of Way Department.

7. Any Other Business: None notified.

Conclusion: Thank you all very much for coming and if you can energise other people, or if they are worried about anything with to us, and thank you so much to all the trustees, Colin Chamberlain added and huge thank you to you Chairman too.

24.10.2020