

# THE ALDE & ORE ASSOCIATION

*Your Voice - Your Estuary*



## **Draft Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the Alde and Ore Association held on Thursday 15 April 2021 by Zoom**

### **Present:**

**Committee:** Alison Andrews (Chairman), Birgitta Bostrom (Treasurer), Kim Puttock (Honorary Secretary), Colin Chamberlain, Keith Martin, Roy Truman, Mark Goyder, Monica Allen

**Members:** 39 members attended and 11 registered to join but were not seen. (List available from the Honorary Secretary)

### **1. Apologies:**

Caroline Clark, Caroline Donsworth, Mervyn and Jane Hall, Michael and Jane Hannen, John Kerr, Kathrin Peters, George Theo

### **2. Minutes**

The minutes of the previous AGM of the Alde and Ore Association held on Thursday 23 October 2020 by Zoom were approved.

### **3. Trustees' Report for the year ended 31st December 2020**

The Chairman read out her report.

In the papers for the meeting, you have the report for the year ended 2020 which can be noted but I will bring us up to date with a report on the first three and a bit months of 2021 and then we can have an opportunity for questions.

Our apologies to those of you who are members via AYC who will be getting the Spring Newsletter in early May. As the AYC AGM was postponed until 24 May, our mutual mailing arrangement was out of sync.

In the first three months the Association has taken action where covid restrictions have not applied. So, while we have had no walks and meetings, the Association has been much taken up by planning matters, national and local, addressing ways of widening the reach of membership, the River Defence Committee volunteers have started their annual spring surveys, and the Butley Ferry is going full steam ahead. And the Association's walks booklets written by Angela Sydenham have been selling well from the Aldeburgh Bookshop.

As of yesterday, there are now two major national powerplant infrastructure planning application hearings on the go. Working within its charitable remit, the Association is not commenting on energy policy as such, or indeed the seeming lack of it, but focussing on making sure the potential impact on the Suffolk coastline is well understood and, should permission be given to those projects, monitoring and mitigation plans set in place. In both cases the Alde and Ore

Association's concern is because these developments could adversely affect the natural coastal erosion and sedimentation flows and might, given the longevity particularly of the SZC buildings which will eventually project out into the sea, adversely affect the shoreline bounding the Alde and Ore Estuary.

In the dark early winter months The Association played an active part in the National Planning Inspectorate's Public Examination of the Scottish Power Renewables Project to bring wind farm power in at the fragile Thorpeness cliff and take it inland by digging huge channels for underground cables all the way to Friston. This Examination has now been extended for a further three months to July.

Simultaneously, despite pressure to delay the Sizewell C Examination, we learned yesterday that the massive SZC Examination too will from now go on all summer until October. Again, The Association will focus mainly on concerns about the long-term impact on the coastline which could affect the shingle bank forming the eastern bank of the estuary.

There have also been a couple of small local planning applications to East Suffolk Council so far this year but nothing yet of major significance.

Another development, or rather disappointing lack of progress, I want to bring you up to date on, is that the Estuary Community is still waiting to hear whether the Environment Agency (EA) will approve the plan for refurbishing the estuary river defences. This was expected late last year. The wait continues. Some of you may have come across a very ambiguous document called a Community Update which the EA issued in March to explain the process of its investigation of the possible dumping of clay at Iken (the AOCP's understanding from the IDB is that this is not waste but clay for the future repair and maintenance of the river walls), but the EA's line is that while this investigation is underway no other action can be taken in the estuary. The ambiguous update led to misleading press reporting and it is no way the case that work had been paralysed since Sept 2018, indeed in that time the full grant submission and flood defence project has been put together and submitted, so once approval is given work can, with seasonal limitations, crack on. The AOCP, of which The Association is a member, and AOET, the Estuary's treasury, are issuing responding statements for public record to correct the public position reached by the EA and will be tackling the EA further. The strong feeling is that the investigation cannot drag on or the business plan should be detached from it, and that refurbishment must be allowed to continue apace before more winters pass and that case is being made.

Looking ahead for The Association, this was, indeed is, the 30th anniversary of the Alde and Ore Association. We had had in mind some events to make this a memorable year but with current covid restrictions and no great certainty even after the hoped for freeing up on 21 June and the likelihood of continuing with hands, face, space rules, launching major events with large numbers in close proximity seem unwise but the year is not passing unnoticed.

First, thanks to Monica Allen and help from Birgitta Bostrom, a splendid photographic competition has been launched so that everyone can go out and about the estuary and take photographs to enter a competition to celebrate the river. If it proves possible, we hope to have a small exhibition of the photographs but in any event, they will be seen online. There will be prizes for the best in each category - children, those under 18 years and adults.

Secondly, a bumper Autumn edition of the Newsletter is in hand about the past, present and future of the Estuary area and the Association. If anyone has ideas for, or can write, articles or challenges to go in this edition, we want to hear from you.

And for all our summer enjoyment, the Butley Ferry is fully operational every weekend and bank holiday - it started on Easter Saturday and goes on until the middle of October, so you have every reason to enjoy walking over that side of the estuary and explore the Butley river. I commend the ferry team under Roy Truman for getting the boat painted, launched and all the jetties ready in the 5 days available once people were allowed to meet in groups of six and in time for the Easter Saturday start.

For the bird watchers among you the Suffolk AONB Unit are looking for help on monitoring redshanks - Suffolk and Essex populations have declined by 44% in the last 25 years so you will find information about this on the AOA website. But while we are around the estuary, we are asked to stay 75 metres away from redshanks, keep dogs off the mudflats and stick to footpaths.

In the summer too, there will be some more thinking within the Association - what is the Association here for and how is it seen. Trustees have been somewhat frustrated by covid restrictions in getting face to face discussions going, but with Sholto Lindsay-Smith's help and two new trustees we are in the process of addressing clarity of focus on what the Association is about, its place in the estuary jigsaw of organisations and actions and what activities would be valued by current and a wider membership with the aim of continuing to sustain support for preserving and protecting the estuary and its enjoyment. We hope to surface on this either by focus groups or a new meeting later this summer.

On other fun ahead, it is beginning to look really possible that the AOET's plans, which have been in the making since 2019, to run another flotilla for swimmers and paddle boards may take place Sunday 4 July from Aldeburgh to Orford - do tune into the AOET website. And let me know if AOA members would like to walk in company to cheer on those in the water, quite possible as we will be well in the open air and spread out, along the bank as before.

Lastly, I do want to thank a good number of people but will do that under Agenda Item 5.

Looking to the rest of the year, I do hope that covid situation improves and that we can all get out and about and enjoy a lovely summer and autumn in the estuary area.

The Association remains very much the custodian of the wellbeing of the area and, in all that, all members are included, so please keep sending in comments or offering to help. If anyone wants to take up specific projects to help with aspects of the Association activities such as walks or talks or new activities, current trustees would be delighted- the broader the spread of skills and enthusiasms, the livelier the Association can be.

#### **Questions:**

Peter Howard-Dobson asked if there was any way the Environment Agency (EA) could be brought to account in regard to whether they will approve the plan for refurbishing the estuary river defences as it appeared that the EA can stall the decision indefinitely. The Chairman clarified that it was more a case of getting the EA to separate the business case from the investigation. A lot of pressure is already being placed on the EA from a higher level. It appears that it is not understood

by the EA that every winter that passes misses an opportunity to repair the walls. The East Suffolk Internal Drainage Board had advised the Alde and Ore Community Partnership recently that the EA have got it wrong thinking that the business plan is dependent on bringing in free clay from building sites. The EA is referring to the clay as “waste” which means that people are being interviewed under caution for having dumped it and hence EA say that it cannot move forward with the decision on the project ahead of the investigation. IDB had assured the AOCP that the project is completely viable regardless of whether there is any clay there currently or it needs to be brought in and the costings and contingency costings take into account that clay may need to be brought in. The need is to press EA to detach the two. The Alde and Ore Estuary Trust and the Alde and Ore Community Partnership will continue to press hard for a decision to be reached and as an Association we are inside of the AOCP and we will support them with this endeavour.

Ian Robson asked if our local MP could assist with moving this forward if it was purely a case of the EA being unreasonable and not responding? The Chairman confirmed that Janey Marson, Chairman of the local Internal Drainage Board, had advised that Theresa Coffey has been very active including organizing a meeting at ministerial level and had then come up against the investigation problem. It is understood that Theresa Coffey will continue to help.

Colin Chamberlain asked for clarification as to whether or not Theresa Coffey was aware of what the EA were investigating as it may help us understand how to approach the matter. The Chairman said that the issue was not known, but it has been assumed that because the EA are interviewing people under caution that the EA think that the clay has been dumped as opposed to stored. The AOCP was trying to make clear to the EA that the clay is there because it is being stored for river walls and repairs and emergencies.

#### **4. Accounts of the Association for the year ended 31st December 2020**

Birgitta Bostrom, Treasurer, presented the accounts for the year ended 31 December 2020. 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 £14,122 compared with £42,281. Expenses were £7,316 compared to £13,449 year before Total funds balance at the end of 2020 stood at £706,638. In detail, both membership and gift aid were very similar to 2019. Income and expenses from activities were all down due to the COVID virus. income and the Butley Ferry managed to operate for 2.5 months which was great raising an income of £1,787. The ferry expenses for the year stood at £885, compared with £2,931 in 2019. The big expenditure for the year was our newsletter which we produce twice a year. The expense for the newsletter went up from £3,409 in 2019 to £4,467 and the reason was due to increased postage costs. Normally the AGM notice and documents are sent out with the spring newsletter, but as the AGM was delayed until October, the notice and documents had to be sent out separately. We were also unable to coincide the distribution of our newsletter with the Aldeburgh Yacht Club (AYC). In previous years we have been able to “piggyback” on the AYC mailing.

The accounts were Examined and signed off by our accountants Ensors of Saxmundham.

**Questions:**

Rufus Gilday asked what the cost would be of emailing the documents as opposed to posting them. The Treasurer confirmed that the cost of printing the newsletter for 2020 was around £2,000 and therefore funds could be saved if we could email the newsletter to all members, but she felt that probably many of our members would prefer a hard copy. Mr Gilday acknowledged that the cost appeared to be value for money. The Treasurer thanked Mr Gilday for his question and said that the organisation would try to ascertain if some members might be happy to receive the newsletter via email.

Ian Robson sought clarity on whether the Association receives reduced price postage as the AYC have a franking machine and it costs less to post. The Treasurer confirmed that the Association receives the maximum price reduction for sending out bulk mailings.

Robert Tindall, Vice Commodore from Slaughden Sailing Club mentioned that they had gone to publishing their quarterly newsletters online. For those who don't want to receive the newsletter online they receive a hardcopy. This has proved very successful so far.

**5. Election of Trustees**

This part of the agenda falls in to three parts.

The Chairman said that she remained extremely grateful to the Trustees who all contribute very significantly to making the Association work for the benefit of the estuary- Birgitta the Treasurer, Colin as legal adviser, Keith who carries the work on planning assiduously tracking down possible developments and is also Chairman of SCAR, and Roy who runs the ferry. She also stressed that Monica Allen who while not being a Trustee is our splendid Newsletter Editor and is injecting a lot more life, creativity and interest bringing all her energies to it, witness the last two editions.

Secondly, the constitution provided that one third of serving trustees should retire by rotation but may offer themselves for re-election. This year it was the turn of Birgitta Bostrom and Roy Truman. The Chairman was more than delighted that both of them, Birgitta our amazingly efficient Treasurer and source of good governance advice and Roy Truman who is leading the ferry to delivering an even more splendid service every year, including excellent covid precautions, huge enthusiasm and spreading the word and appreciation of the wonderful estuary area, were both happy to stand again.

Keith Martin proposed that Birgitta and Roy were re-elected. Peter Howard-Dobson seconded the proposal, and all voted in favour.

Thirdly, the Chairman was delighted to introduce two new trustees whom the other Trustees appointed pending election at the AGM. We are so pleased that after a short time with the Committee, they have wanted to join as Trustees. Short relevant biographies were set out on the agenda but briefly:

Mark Goyder has been a very constructive and positive contributor to the Marketing Group which Simon Barrow led, and we looked forward to having the benefit of his wise council on perspectives of securing wider membership and the work of the Association and making the Association's activities come to life.

Kim Puttock had, as the new Honorary Secretary, already been well tried and tested and had contributed a great deal to the Association's operations. Not only was she Hon Sec but, realising that the Membership Secretary work is greatly changed with the internet and IT facilities, has also cheerfully taken on the Membership Secretary work and was also now the web site mastermind. If members had not looked at the web site [www.aldeandore.org](http://www.aldeandore.org) recently she urged them to do so the Association was getting into the swing of posting more news and reports, so it was always being refreshed.

The new Trustee appointments were proposed by the Committee and seconded by Bobby Rusack. All voted in favour.

## **6. Any Other Business:**

The Chairman particularly asked for ideas on what members would like to see the Association doing, whether to celebrate the thirtieth year, which could be next year when hopefully larger events may be more easily organised, talks in person or on zoom or any other activities, or indeed how communications with members can be enhanced to give trustees a greater insight into the detail of what people want.

Robert Tindall wanted to thank Keith Martin publicly for assisting him with a large problem relating to a planning application to protect the shoreline at Slaughden Sailing Club.

Jonathan Hunt said that in relation to the waste point, mentioned earlier in the meeting, there seemed to be similarities with this situation and how the Countryside Alliance had dealt with a similar situation. The Countryside Alliance example related to a shoot in Derbyshire where they had been clearing 8 small circles to place the guns and they were effectively being criminalized for having done that. Jonathan suggested it may be worth speaking with Countryside Alliance who are dealing with similar problems to see if there is any mileage in combining forces in order to carry the day. The Chairman thanked Jonathan for the idea and would mention to the AOC.

The Chairman thanked everyone for attending and invited members to write in separately to raise any points of concerns or with suggestions.

3 May 2021