

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the Alde and Ore Association held at 10.30am on Saturday 22nd April 2023 at Thorpeness Country Club

PRESENT:

Committee: Alison Andrews (Chairman), Birgitta Bostrom (Treasurer), Susie Rixon (Honorary Secretary), Colin Chamberlain, Keith Martin, Roy Truman, Mark Goyder and Monica Allen

Members: 56 members attended.

1.APOLOGIES: Frances Charlesworth, Peter Howard-Dobson, Kay Laskey, Sholto Lindsay-Smith, Ian Macnab, Andrew Parker-Jervis, Kim Puttock, David Rea, Elizabeth Stanton, Lizzi Thistlethwaite, Rex Bourne, Elizabeth Aitken

2. MINUTES

The minutes of the previous AGM of the Alde and Ore Association held on 28th April 2022 by Zoom were approved.

3. TRUSTEES' REPORT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st DECEMBER 2022

The Chairman said that as members already had the Report for the year ending 31st December 2022, she would cover issues arising so far this year.

She began by saying that in 2021 the Alde and Ore Association missed celebrating its first 30 years, but now in its 32nd year everyone could celebrate the amazing news announced on 26th January 2023 of a breakthrough to allow the renewal of the river walls. The Upper Estuary Embankment Improvements were to go ahead with £11.941m of funding.

The timing of that announcement was indeed very welcome as it was almost on the eve of the 70th anniversary of the terrible storm bringing the surge and flooding of 31 January 1953. No one should ever forget that time. Such an event could and would happen again, but everyone in the Alde and Ore area needed to make sure they have done all that they could so that its impact would not be as disastrous.

The story behind the final breakthrough this January went back a long way.

Well before she joined the Alde and Ore Association Trustees around 2003, the Association had been ever pressing for the estuary to have its fair share of national investment in river defences. The Association was then, is now, and will continue to be the voice of the estuary. As government funding policies changed, the Association kept up the pressure, adjusting its approaches to maximise the impact on the policies.

The Association was instrumental in setting up the Estuary Planning Partnership around 2003. This was the very first time all local interests, stakeholders, government and local agencies had sat down together to discuss estuary issues on a regular basis.

Then in 2008, a full fifteen years ago, the Association wrote a 'Framework for the Future'. This warned the government that the threat to the area was devastating flooding caused by unmaintained river walls. They made the case that its proposed 100 year horizon only made no economic sense and that investment needed to be considered in 25 and 50 year stints.

A critical contribution from the Association's membership came when so many Association members wrote in response to the Alde and Ore Futures Consultation; there were some 240 responses, possibly many of those were from members. The overwhelming comment was that the proposal to

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the Alde and Ore Association held at 10.30am on Saturday 22nd April 2023 at Thorpeness Country Club

simply mend walls near settlements was wrong and what was needed was a whole estuary strategy; the estuary being the artery of the area and its economic, leisure and environmental heritage.

After that, the Association working in partnership with Suffolk Coastal District Council and the Estuary Planning Partnership, built the foundation of the first community partnership in 2012, the Alde and Ore Estuary Partnership, to develop an estuary wide plan.

This was the start of ten years hard work. Getting the strategy written, consulted on and endorsed, with the Estuary and then Community Partnership, the Alde and Ore Estuary Trust and the East Suffolk Internal Drainage Board working through the many ins and outs of getting a detailed construction plan over the line, to achieve approval to go ahead and funding.

All this time the Association had, through its active membership of the Alde and Ore Estuary Partnership and now the Alde and Ore Community Partnership, helped make sure that the Plan moved on and did not founder. The Association had, with others, kept at it, and it showed we can make a difference.

The strength of the Association was that it is always here and on the watch for anything related to the well-being and enjoyment of the area. Some issues come and go quickly, others need more sustained efforts but, without the Association the long- term stewardship of the estuary in its widest sense would have no voice or guardian.

She then turned to other matters that the Association had been watchful on:

On the energy front, there were two ongoing Judicial Reviews. The result of the one challenging the Government's decision on EDF's plans to build Sizewell C was expected early in May.

The Judicial Review for Scottish Power Renewables, a project which could mess up the coast at Thorpeness, was next month. The Association would continue to keep an eye on all this.

Later this summer more activity was expected. This time it would be the statutory consultations about the Sea Link and EuroLink proposals to bring more wind farm generated electricity on shore to then transfer it to other areas. Given the Association's primary purpose as a charity, it would especially keep an eye on the projects continuing to avoid the estuary. It would insist that they should properly address any impact on coastal flows and erosion. All of these energy proposals affected the estuary's surrounding landscape, but for those members with inland concerns away from the estuary, a recommendation was made to link up with SEAS (Suffolk Energy Action Solutions).

Looking ahead on brighter matters, she reported that the Trustees were currently assisting Alde Valley Academy which readily took up a suggestion for a short project about flooding inspired by the anniversary of the 1953 floods. A cohort of 12 year olds led by their excellent geography teacher was working on this using material provided by the Association on the 1953 and 2013 surges and river and sea defences. The Association would be giving the AYC Junior Regatta organisers a short daily briefing to help give some understanding of the river the juniors sail in.

Thanks were extended to George and Ali Watson as this year's annual barbecue would be on Sunday 6th August in the extraordinary setting at Chillesford, with a wonderful view of the marshes with a rising tide. Colin Chamberlain was very kindly taking the lead in organising this with some of the Trustees but would be asking for volunteers to make the task do-able. Colin also had a really nice circular walk around Orford lined up for the 1st of September. Circulars on both of these will go out by

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the Alde and Ore Association held at 10.30am on Saturday 22nd April 2023 at Thorpeness Country Club

email shortly and would be on the website, but not sent by post. If anyone else would like to organise and lead a walk please let the Association know.

The Association liked to fund surveys on matters of importance to the estuary. It is a while since it had an economic survey, or funded wildlife and vegetation surveys but asked if anyone has ideas or contacts to come forward. The Association would particularly like help with an economic survey so that they would have their third, ten yearly assessment in place within the next 12 months.

The Butley Ferry was going from strength to strength. The superbly refurbished boat was launched at Pinneys smokehouse on the Gedgrave side of the river and rowed to her summer berth. Very auspiciously about four seals stirred themselves from lying on the mud banks and followed at a distance, ever vigilant, keeping an eye on what humans get up to.

The River Defence Committee volunteers under Roger Baxter, were currently in full swing making their annual surveys of the state of the river walls.

She hoped that everyone could sense the growing momentum of all the work of the Association and its members, working in partnership with others. To illustrate this further, she drew attention to the important water quality monitoring project. This was being led by Bobby Rusack and Miv Hall. They had gathered a good and growing team, a formidable undertaking, involving weekly sample collection and analysis. Two SCC councillors had both contributed funds to cover the equipment costs. It was a brilliant example how everyone in all parts of the estuary can do something and together the collective effort really benefits the whole area. The Association wanted to see and support such activities and provide a focus and platform so the estuary has a voice.

The Chairman extended very many thanks to all the Trustees and went on to say that from all the reports it is evident there is a lot to cover. The Association does all it can, but could do so much more if there were more people to help share the load. In particular a spread of skills was needed to:

- Help equip them to challenge government or other policies or planning applications.
- Help people enjoy the estuary more whether through more walks or specific talks.
- Enable more discussion sessions about issues on and around the river and its surrounding landscape.
- Be ready to contribute to the work they have embarked on with schools and young people.

In addition

- More marketing expertise was needed on how to approach matters through traditional means or, if the Association was to enter the modern media world (may be members have views on that?), they cannot do it without more resources and that did not mean simply buying in services, but having the trustee time to ensure the services meet what is needed.

The Chairman concluded by saying that she hoped today's account of the Association's stewardship had shown that the Association, like those seals in the river, keeps a watchful eye on every activity that can be identified on the river, so that its primary purpose was fulfilled which is to 'take care of our rivers and landscape today and tomorrow'.

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the Alde and Ore Association held at 10.30am on Saturday 22nd April 2023 at Thorpeness Country Club

4. ACCOUNTS OF THE ASSOCIATION FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st DECEMBER 2022

Birgitta Bostrom, Treasurer, presented the accounts for the year ended 31st December 2022. She reported that the accounts were in good order. Birgitta explained that the Trustees had opted to have the accounts examined every 2 years and extended thanks to Ensors who had approved the accounts for the year ending 31st December 2022. She mentioned that Ensors offered preferential rates to registered charities.

Birgitta directed members to the Accounts beginning on page 8 of the Trustees Annual Report and Accounts which had been circulated in hard copy.

She outlined the key points of the accounts. Total income for the year ending 31st December 2022 was £28,932 compared with £15,647 the previous year. Membership fees were down a couple of hundred pounds, but donations were higher thanks to an unexpected final bequest from David Andren's estate.

Income from other trading activities was up after lockdown and included income from the Barbecue (£3,420). A proportion of the sale of two maps of the Sailors Path was generously donated to the Association by the artist himself, John Dunthorne.

The Butley Ferry was still popular with an income of £2,994 in 2022 and income from walks bringing in a further £530.

Government Grants to help with the water testing project totalled £776. Investment income was up significantly due to higher interest rates. Funds continue to be invested in CCLA Charity Deposit Funds.

Overall, the total income was £28,932 which was higher than 2021 (£15,647) but for part of that year we were still in lockdown.

On expenditure, the cost of raising funds was just over £4,169 broken down into 3 areas:

The annual Barbecue- £2,085

Walks-£100 donated to the RSPB for allowing walks on their land with a guide

The Butley Ferry-£1,984 compared with 2021 (£3,485).

The newsletter continued to be a big expenditure - £5,436, slightly up on 2021 (£5,070) due to the increased cost of printing and postage.

Birgitta concluded by saying that total funds amounted to £720,240.

There were no questions on the Accounts.

Rufus Gilday congratulated Birgitta on an excellent presentation, noted the cost of the AGM, approximately £2,000, and requested that in future biscuits be provided. The Chairman responded that this had been an error on her part, and that biscuits of course would be provided in the future.

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the Alde and Ore Association held at 10.30am on Saturday 22nd April 2023 at Thorpeness Country Club

5. ELECTION OF TRUSTEES

The Charman began by sharing the news that other pressures mean that Kim Puttock and Sholto Lindsay-Smith have had to resign as trustees but that she was incredibly grateful that both had said they would help as far as they can in but a more limited way. Kim was still doing the membership work and the website, and the Trustees were very grateful to her for keeping it so up to date. She mentioned that it would be good to have a new membership secretary.

She said that Sholto had been inspiring in helping to see the way forward on all aspects of marketing, whether on membership matters, or more widely on the Association's activities.

She went on to say that she was delighted that Susie Rixon had volunteered to take on the administration work of the Association as Honorary Secretary. Wonderful news. Some members would already be familiar with Susie's expert skills organising volunteer working at Aldeburgh Yacht Club, and would know how lucky the Association was that she is joining the Committee.

Turning to annual elections, the constitution required a third of Trustees to stand down each year but they may be re-elected. The Chairman thanked Keith Martin and Birgitta Bostrom for agreeing to stand again. She mentioned that she was much relieved as both were invaluable. Birgitta was the most efficient Treasurer possible and also part of the barbecue team, and Keith in particular for his meticulous and rigorous eye on planning, as well as interviews and knowledge of the river. The Committee made a proposal for them both to continue as Trustees. Louise Mangeot seconded the proposal.

6. THE WAY AHEAD

The Chairman began by saying that last year, the Committee had explained their strategy to broaden and strengthen the Association's approach with its basic aim to take care of the rivers and their landscape for today and tomorrow.

The Association had been building a growing momentum exploring several things including outreach to other organisations, communications, and educational outreach, and these would be reported on next when undertakings from last year's AGM would be commented on.

She went on to say that all the Trustees had taken up their new roles and that more would be heard from some of them during the course of the meeting. She mentioned that there was possibly a new volunteer from Aldeburgh who may help with marketing.

Addressing the issue of identity discussed last year, the Chairman recognised the confusion people found with there being three organisations concerned with the Alde and Ore Estuary. She explained that they all had distinct functions but all were working to the same common end, the wellbeing of the Alde and Ore estuary.

The **Association (AOA)** was concerned with all aspects of the area whether defences, protecting the landscape and environment from detrimental activities, supporting positive activities and helping secure its enjoyment.

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the Alde and Ore Association held at 10.30am on Saturday 22nd April 2023 at Thorpeness Country Club

The **Alde and Ore Community Partnership (AOCP)**, which succeeded the Estuary Partnership once the Strategy had been completed, took on the role of guardian of the estuary strategy and communications, both ways, with the local communities.

The task of implementing the strategy was given to a body with the skills and status to lead the design and construction to the flood resilience the strategy sought, namely the East Suffolk Internal Drainage Board, renamed only last week as East Suffolk Water Management Board (a new acronym ESWMB).

The **Alde and Ore Estuary Trust (AOET)** was the treasury for the estuary. It was a registered charity whose role is to raise and handle the funds required to make up the shortfall of those coming from government.

The Association had continued to participate in the Alde and Ore Community Partnership to which it provided one of the representatives. Officers were mostly elected from representatives and the Association's Chairman also served as the Alde and Ore Community Partnership Honorary Secretary. Over the coming year now that grant aid had been unblocked, there would be community presentations and members would see how all the organisations were working together. The next Alde and Ore Community Partnership meeting at the end of June would focus on the forward thinking for the Lower Estuary, Phase 2 of the project, and as always members of the public would be able to attend to hear and contribute to the thinking. The information about these would be on the Association web site as well. Towards the end of September there would be a whole estuary presentation, possibly at Snape Maltings, for anyone who wanted to attend to hear what was needed and why, together with the plans for the next four years in the upper estuary, and progress on the business case for the lower estuary.

The Chairman referred to talks that she and Mark Goyder, also an Association Trustee, had with the Alde and Ore Estuary Trust as they previously said they would, and handed over to Mark to talk about these in more detail as well as outreach to other organisations with which the Association can make common cause.

Mark began by thanking the Chairman. He said that she was admirable in the way that she models partnership, and so effective as an ambassador.

Mark continued by saying that over the past year, the Association has worked on the basis of its shortened charitable objective, based on that set out in the Constitution, expressing its core value and purpose which was 'To take care of our rivers and landscape today and tomorrow'. In pursuit of this objective, he had taken on responsibility for supporting the Chair and other Trustees in strengthening external relationships.

He and Alison had met two of the Alde and Ore Estuary Trust trustees, Jane Maxim and Elizabeth Stanton, in order to build a closer relationship with more regular communication. with very positive results. The intention was that the Association and the Alde and Ore Estuary Trust would be modelling partnership in everything they did, strengthening the habit of reciprocity at the same time as understanding the constraints that confronted each organisation. This also included advice from the Alde and Ore Estuary Trust that the Association was seen and valued by others as a monitoring and lobbying association. Its role in championing the needs of the estuary, was seen as valuable, and if anything, the Association could be more vocal.

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the Alde and Ore Association held at 10.30am on Saturday 22nd April 2023 at Thorpeness Country Club

Mark also mentioned the contact he had made with the Suffolk Preservation Society and the Alde Valley Academy. On the latter project that was now being developed with the Academy to help students learn about the 1953 floods and the importance of river and sea defences, he hoped that it was the start of getting more involved with the next generation. On that theme, he had spoken to Susie Rixon who was a Trustee of the Aldeburgh Yacht Club Schools Sailing Trust which provided opportunities on and off the water for local school children, and that there was an opportunity to be more involved there. Mark handed back to the Chairman.

The Chairman continued by saying that the Association had always wanted to get more closely involved with local schools and indeed Lydia Freeman mentioned reaching out to young people at last year's AGM. The initiative with Alde Valley Academy, thanks to a link by Mark, was a project over 5 full afternoons on the 1953 flood, involving why looking after the area matters, bringing in the local economy, the history of walls, towns, and buildings, what flood defences are, what climate change means and the impact of rising sea levels. She hoped that the students would feel inspired with the material provided and the introductory session that herself and Roy Truman, also an Association Trustee, attended earlier in March, following on from the brilliant power-point that the teacher, Mr Spinx, had put together beginning with a wake up question 'How old was Mr Spinx in 1953?' The answer 'minus 23' drew laughter from the audience. The children had also had a sunny afternoon's walk, but in force 5 winds, to see the various types of sea and river defences around the Slaughden river wall. The Association had great hopes of small presentations to a local primary school, possibly quizzes and word searches in the future.

The Chairman then moved on to the subject of marketing and communications. She said that getting good communications with members so that the Association served the purposes that members saw needed to be met to preserve and protect the area, in addition to all the communications about matters impacting on the area to the authorities and stakeholders, was very important. She called on Monica Allen, Association Trustee, and Newsletter Editor.

Monica began by speaking about printed material. She referred to the recent leaflet expressing succinctly the purpose and activities of the Association as well as inviting people to join, that had been produced last summer following the AGM and people were probably sitting on the copies that had been placed on the chairs at the meeting. This was a very informative leaflet that had also been distributed with the Autumn 2022 newsletter as well as being handed out on the Butley Ferry, and through one holiday rental company. Members were encouraged to pass the fresh copies on to friends and neighbours.

She then spoke about the newsletter of which there are two issues each year. The aim now was to make it at least 20 pages long and to include articles on a range of different subjects. It was hard work, but fresh ideas and articles were constantly needed and members could help with this given their wide range of knowledge and expertise in the area. She gave examples of Sue Wallace-Shaddad's contribution after the last AGM, and Tony Newman's write-up of the Snape Wetland walk with added insight into the importance of wetlands. She asked for more contributions, however short, or leads that could be followed up on. Birgitta commented on how the newsletter is so much better and all agreed.

As Sholto Lindsey-Smith was not able to join the meeting, the Chairman read his following statement in relation to progressing communications.

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the Alde and Ore Association held at 10.30am on Saturday 22nd April 2023 at Thorpeness Country Club

"We hope to launch a member survey in the next four weeks, with the aim of gathering views on what you think are the priorities for the Alde & Ore Association. We also hope to gather feedback on the types of activities that members would like to get more involved in.

The survey will be sent out via email and publicised on the website and through other membership organisations. We hope to extend the reach of the survey to other people in the community so we can get a better understanding of what they know about us and gauge their interest in joining. So, it would be fantastic if you can help us promote the survey when we launch it. We will alert you when it is ready to launch."

The Chairman reinforced the need for web and media experts and encouraged any volunteers to come forward.

She said that the Association had been in touch with Aldeburgh Yacht Club, following comments made last year. Rather more would be said about the Association on the Aldeburgh Yacht Club website to clarify the importance of the link, and also of supporting fund raising to ensure that estuary embankments were improved as the improvements were designed to last for 50 or more years.

She then recognised the continuing good work of Trustees. The excellent work on regular planning monitoring and challenging applications led by Keith Martin, and the amazing Butley Ferry led by Roy Truman, which continue unabated with improvements being made all the time and the work of the River Defence Committee and the excellent water monitoring project. All these were part of the continuing momentum of the Association and kept the modest number of Trustees more than occupied. She encouraged members again to think about using their skills in these endeavours.

The Chairman concluded by looking ahead to commitments during the next year. Trustees hoped more people would want to help. They will shortly conduct the survey of members and potential members and act upon that, plus as always, being on planning watch, running the ferry, walks, and responding to policy developments or major infrastructure plans as and when they arose.

If the Association was not there how would the Alde, Ore and Butley rivers have a voice? The aim was to make sure it has one.

Questions/Feedback

Simon Barrow referred to the partnership of the Association with Aldeburgh Yacht Club and asked about a partnership with Orford Sailing Club.

The Chairman thanked Simon for his question and went on to explain that the Aldeburgh Yacht Club had a joint membership arrangement with the Association. Orford Sailing Club was much smaller and run by volunteers. Its choice was not to have joint membership as it did not have the administrative capacity to run joint membership, but for members to know about the Association.

Andrew Curtis, in relation to the project run in conjunction with Alde Academy, asked whether the Association had an intention to work with Orford Primary School in the future.

The Chairman thanked Andrew for his question and acknowledged that there was indeed a school in Orford but Alde Valley was the Association's first school project. She asked the audience if anyone

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the Alde and Ore Association held at 10.30am on Saturday 22nd April 2023 at Thorpeness Country Club

had a link with Orford Primary School that could be followed up. Chris Gill mentioned that Orford Primary School was keen to work with external organisations on activities. Mark Goyder thanked Chris and agreed to follow this up.

Richard Bodek asked a question about the current state of the water quality in the river.

The Chairman thanked Richard for his question and responded that it wasn't too bad, unlike the River Deben which has a large sewerage processing plant at the head of its estuary. On current test results, if you swim in the Alde you should be fine.

7. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

No other business was raised.

The Chairman thanked everyone for attending and invited members to contact her separately to raise any points of concern, or with suggestions.

The meeting then moved to a presentation by guest speakers on the newly released Alde and Ore Estuary Embankment Improvements project.