



# DURHAM Heritage Coast

## **DURHAM HERITAGE COAST PARTNERSHIP**

**STEERING GROUP**

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 25 JUNE 2013**

**VENUE – DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL OFFICES, SPECTRUM BUSINESS PARK,  
DAWDON**

**[Document consists of 8 pages]**

**I PRESENT**

Wayne Appleton	National Trust
Niall Benson	Durham Heritage Coast
Steve Bhowmick	Durham County Council
Sarah Bowman	Hartlepool Borough Council
Gail Craig	Durham Heritage Coast
Chris Evans	Natural England
Norman Gettings	Environment Agency
Sue Goodman	Environment Agency
Louise Harrington	Durham Heritage Coast
Paula Hunt	Ryhope Community Association
Joe Lemon	Ryhope Community Association
James MacLean	Northumbrian Water
Myrtle MacPherson	Easington Colliery Parish Council
Councillor J Maitland	Durham County Council
Eddie Mason	Ambassador
Fred Rowe	Steering Group Open Seat Representative
Councillor C Snowball	Seaham Town Council
Ross Wares	Ryhope Community Association
Florence Wilson	Hornden Parish Council

**2 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS**

Councillor Wares, Chairman, welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced two new representatives to the steering group – Councillor J Maitland, Durham County Council (Murton Ward) and Councillor C Snowball, Seaham Town Council.

**3 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from :

Jim Cokill	Durham Wildlife Trust
Darryl Cox	Durham County Council
Colum Goodchild	Northumbrian Water
Deborah Jefferson	Hartlepool Borough Council
Brian Oram	Steering Group Open Seat Representative
George Patterson	Ambassador
Gary Shears	Durham County Council
Cllr S Tempest	Hartlepool Borough Council
Gareth Wilson	National Trust

**4 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING**

It was agreed that the minutes of the DHC Steering Group Meeting held on 14<sup>th</sup> March 2013 were accepted as a true record of proceedings by all present.

## **5 HALLIWELL BANKS LANDFILL SITE – SUE GOODMAN, ENVIRONMENT AGENCY**

Sue Goodman, Environment Agency (EA), provided an update.

At the last meeting on the 14<sup>th</sup> March the Environment Agency intended to serve a Remediation Notice on 5<sup>th</sup> April if voluntary remediation was not forthcoming.

Since then, a number of the Appropriate Person's have agreed to carry out voluntary remediation (subject to various conditions). Unfortunately, the Church Commissioners have not agreed to carry out voluntary remediation.

The Environment Agency have written to them asking them to reconsider their decision and the Church Commissioner's are meeting this week to discuss this. A reply is awaited by the Environment Agency which is expected in the very near future.

Once a response is received we will then have a clearer understanding about whether the work will be done voluntarily or whether legal action will be needed (i.e serving a Remediation Notice).

The preferred action is that the first phase of remediation is carried out voluntarily as the works on site are likely to take place more quickly than via legal action.

If legal action is needed then the documents are prepared and are ready to be issued.

Disappointment was expressed by all at this development. Paula Hunt expressed concern over erosion occurring internally on the site, especially given the recent wet Spring. Joe Lemon reported that discharge is also coming upwards (through the ground) when there are large tidal movements. Sue Goodman asked that Joe telephones her when this next occurs so she can make arrangements to get this investigated.

Niall enquired if in the event any notice is served, whether this document would be in the public domain. Sue Goodman responded that it is available publicly. Should this development unfold, Niall will circulate the document to the steering group.

Niall has also written to the Secretary of State through Julie Elliott, MP about the situation. To date he has received no response (albeit he did receive a response last time). Niall will send a reminder or telephone Julie Elliott once the Church Commissioner's response is known.

Fred Rowe enquired whether the Church Commissioner's had been invited to any steering group meetings. Sue Goodman said the Environment Agency

had invited them to a meeting so representatives could meet to discuss. Niall has also met with Church Commissioner's agents on a regular basis, but progress is marred by frequent personnel changes.

Sue Goodman agreed to forward a plan to Councillor Maitland who is unfamiliar with the site and the problems associated with it. Niall also offered Councillor Maitland a briefing session of the coastline and current issues it is facing.

The coastline is continuing to erode and there have been some fairly large losses over the last few months. Fortunately none of these were at the areas where there was the least distance between the edge of the fill and the cliffs and approximately 12m of land remains. The Environment Agency will continue to monitor this.

Paula Hunt asked what impact this would have on the Coastal Connections Project in the Ryhope area. Niall responded that it will have an impact on the principal access point.

## **6 HERITAGE COAST OFFICER'S REPORT – NIALL BENSON**

### **Eastern Area Coastal Interpretation**

- East Area Committee are providing £50,000 for interpretation – welcome information boards, public transport information, nice seating etc.
- Provision at key points on coastal footpath – between Seaham and the Heart of Sunderland
- Aligned with implementation of English Coast Path (Natural England's National Coastal Trail)
- Thanks to enthusiasm and support of community, particular thanks to Paula Hunt, Ross Wares and Cllrs Ellen Ball and Alan Emerson
- This will help getting communities, particularly in the Hendon area, connected with their coastline again
- Niall will arrange a steering group visit in the future

### **Little Terns**

Devastating news about the theft of around 80 eggs from site, the Police are currently investigating and persuing a local link. The last theft was in 1999.

News about a European funding application (Life+) for €3.5m is awaited, which will mean around €500,000 locally for the development of the little tern project.

### **Coastal Communities Fund**

No funding achieved last year. Another bid has been submitted this year focussing more on the coastal economy – business activity and the creation of around 270 jobs. Sunderland City Council have been of great assistance following their successful bid last year. Hopefully some news will be heard by early July.

This will mean around £200,000 for the Partnership for volunteer development (working locally) and linking arts engagement with physical access improvements at the Marina. Funding for Round 2 of this will possibly be in January 2014.

### **Bathing Water Quality**

New signs will be sited at Seaham (2 No) and Crimdon early next month, sponsored by Northumbrian Water. There have been no ‘fails’ so far this year and the long term trend is positive.

Defra have launched a large bathing water consultation, focussing on the length of the bathing water season, the closing date for this is 22<sup>nd</sup> September. Niall put forward Defra’s proposals and asked the steering group which they would prefer him to put forward for the consultation. Niall also urged members to respond individually.

The options in the consultation include:

Option 0: No change. Maintain the national season of 15 May to 30 September.

Option 1: Maintain the national season of 15 May to 30 September but allow individual bathing waters to set their own season, based on current and historic bather usage patterns. This could be longer or shorter than the current season.

Option 2: Set regional bathing seasons which could be longer or shorter than the current season, based on current and historic bather usage patterns. Regions would be based on Environment Agency regions.

Option 3: Lengthen the national season for all bathing waters. Suggested dates: 15 April to 31 October (28 weeks).

Option 4: Reduce the national season for all bathing waters. Suggested dates: 1 June to 31 August (13 weeks).

Eddie Mason said that bathing water quality was not just centred around swimming, and should include for a variety of water based activities, especially in the light of the new Marina development in Seaham and the activities which may be associated with this. Some recreational activities use our coastal waters 365 days per year (surfing etc).

It was noted that the Environment Agency test waters by what is written in the Bathing Waters Directive.

Discussion centred around sewage outlets being disabled outside the current bathing water season (5 out of 6).

As the group agreed that healthy coastal waters was of paramount importance, the consensus of the steering group was that the longest season possible should be selected for the consultation response (Option 3, 28 weeks).

### **Litter Free Coast and Sea**

Marks and Spencer and the British Autism Society are still engaged and the initiative is being rolled out to other businesses. A website diary will be created and training for litter picks is currently being procured.

### **Coastal Access**

- Final Report has now been passed to the Secretary of State for decision
- Delivery will start over the next few months, signage, steps etc
- Main change is the link from Sunderland to Seaham
- Route markers will be substantial oak posts (within Heritage Coast)

### **Durham Coast Watch**

Officially launched at the Low Tide Day event in May by the Chair of Durham County Council. This is an extension of the Neighbourhood Watch scheme, using similar police systems, working with Landowners, Street Wardens, Police. Results and involvement so far include a persistent 4x4 offender, mini-motorbikes and the little tern egg theft.

### **Equine Sector Study**

Leader funded (£15k) Research Programme of study of horse usage in East Durham. There is huge potential for growth in capacity (50%) – however infrastructure currently acts as a barrier to growth opportunities. There are no opportunities or events for horses on the Heritage Coast, development of a bridleway is being looked at.

### **Business Plan 2012/13**

Niall handed out updated copies of the Business Plan 2012/13 and the 5 Year Business plan was given to the two new representatives, Cllrs Maitland and Snowball.

## **Partnership Structure**

Working groups still under development, these will be shaped as we progress through the year.

## **7 NATURE TOURISM PROJECT UPDATE – LOUISE HARRINGTON**

Project funded by Leader. This has included :

- Transnational project with Finnish partners. They were present at Low Tide Day, which was a great success, around 1500 attended. Issues worked through with Finnish Partners included the impact of tourism on the environment – tourism is being built on the Heritage Coast but it is well established there. Rivers in Finland are heavily polluted, especially with the increase in motor boat usage. Differences in interpretation were also looked at as the Finns are keen to develop their communications through this method more.
- Destination Development Plan produced
- Schools and volunteer engagement – Murton Ribbon School have been involved in designing two leaflets for their local environment, a nature walk and a history walk. The project has covered many areas of the curriculum – protected species, recycling etc.
- Little tern flier – coastal shuttle bus running all weekends until 1<sup>st</sup> September. Fairly slow progress on initial usage; more posters will be produced and displayed, timetables are already on display at main bus stops on the route, although the bus does stop at all bus stops on the route.
- Leaflets – the coastal footpath booklet has been updated, it is now more colourful and contains more user friendly maps. The suite of village walks leaflets has also been reproduced in the same format covering Seaham, Dawdon and Dalton-le-Dale, Easington Colliery, Hawthorn and Crimdon. A leaflet has also been designed for Castle Eden walk, currently on hold due to problem with one of the bridges on the route. Once this is fixed the leaflet will be produced. Hopefully more money may become available so a leaflet can be produced for Horden, taking in the water treatment site etc., then all the coastal villages will be covered.
- Durham Wildlife Trust Training – free training sessions taking place at Hawthorn Community Centre focussing on ecology.
- Business Cluster development – a follow-up meeting has been arranged for next week, focussing on tourism.

## **8 NATIONAL TRUST HALF MARATHON REPORT : WAYNE APPLETON**

13.1 mile route from Nose's Point, Dawdon to Crimdon. The event attracted runners from all over the country. Event was a big success and already enquiries are being made for applications for next year's race. Many

positive comments have been received, particularly in relation to the stunning scenic route. The event has earned the accolade of being the 'toughest half marathon in the North East'. This good feedback has resulted in ideas forming for smaller runs of 5k and 10k and a Parkrun at Horden, however more funding would be needed in order to run these.

Niall mentioned the whole coastal footpath forming a full marathon event. Steve Bhowmick thought this was a good opportunity to develop this with Partner Authorities and encourage businesses to support it.

Fred Rowe mentioned there are still flytipping incidents in some parts around Horden (Lime Kiln Gill) which would need to be addressed. Paula Hunt said the more involved people are in their local areas the more they tend to naturally police it.

## **9 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

Chris Evans, Natural England mentioned a gate at the entrance to Castle Eden Dene –action is needed to combat flytipping. Local Councillors are keen that we involve the community in the whole of the decision making process. The process has already commenced with Durham County Council.

## **II. DATE OF NEXT MEETINGS**

Thurs 19<sup>th</sup> September – Annual Coastal Forum at Shotton Hall  
Thurs 12<sup>th</sup> December (venue tbc)