



# DURHAM Heritage Coast

## **DURHAM HERITAGE COAST PARTNERSHIP**

### **STEERING GROUP**

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 20 MARCH 2014  
VENUE – DONNISON SCHOOL, HENDON, SUNDERLAND**

**[Document consists of 8 pages]**

**I PRESENT**

|                    |   |
|--------------------|---|
| Niall Benson       | Durham Heritage Coast                         |
| Steve Bhowmick     | Durham County Council (Design & Conservation) |
| Sarah Bowman       | Hartlepool Borough Council                    |
| Councillor D Boyes | Durham County Council (Easington)             |
| Darryl Cox         | Durham County Council (Countryside)           |
| Gail Craig         | Durham Heritage Coast                         |
| Chris Evans        | Natural England                               |
| Sue Goodman        | Environment Agency                            |
| Oliver Graham      | Groundwork East Durham                        |
| Louise Harrington  | Durham Heritage Coast                         |
| Paula Hunt         | Ryhope Community Association                  |
| Louise Johnson     | East Durham LEADER                            |
| James MacLean      | Northumbrian Water                            |
| Myrtle MacPherson  | Easington Colliery Parish Council             |
| Fred Rowe          | Steering Group Open Seat Representative       |
| Cllr S Tempest     | Hartlepool Borough Council                    |
| Nicol Trueman      | Sunderland City Council                       |
| Ruth Tyson         | Environment Agency                            |
| Ross Wares         | Ryhope Community Association                  |
| Florence Wilson    | Horden Parish Council                         |
| Gareth Wilson      | National Trust                                |

**2 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS**

Ross Wares, Chairman, welcomed everyone to the meeting.

**3 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from :

|                   |                                 |
|-------------------|---------------------------------|
| Colum Goodchild   | Northumbrian Water              |
| Deborah Jefferson | Hartlepool Borough Council      |
| Joe Lemon         | Ryhope Community Association    |
| Cllr J Maitland   | Durham County Council (Murton)  |
| Ed Mason          | Ambassador                      |
| Gary Shears       | Durham County Council (Ecology) |

**4 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING**

It was agreed that the minutes of the DHC Steering Group Meeting held on 12<sup>th</sup> December 2013 were accepted as a true record of proceedings by all present.

## **5 HALLIWELL BANKS LANDFILL SITE**

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

On 10<sup>th</sup> March 2014, the Church Commissioners, Sunderland City Council, Cemex and the Department of Energy and Climate change signed an agreement to carry-out assessment works at Halliwell Banks on a voluntary basis. This is a significant step forward for the site.

Because there may be ground nesting birds on the site between March and July it will not be possible to start the works on site until after these birds have gone. This means that the works on site won't start until August/September.

The EA are anticipating that the works will take around a year from the agreement being signed. Because of the over-wintering birds on the beach there may be requirements to carry-out ecological surveys at certain times of the year which may impact on this. This is still being investigated.

The outcome of this work will ascertain whether further works are needed to clean-up the site or not.

The EA will be working with the parties delivering the voluntary works to make sure that they are carried out to an appropriate timescale and that the right work is being done to answer any outstanding questions. Natural England will also be involved in the aspects relating to ecology.

The EA will continue to monitor the rate of coastal erosion in Area B where the worst contamination has been found. Despite the recent tidal surges, there are still low rates of erosion in this area. The EA will continue to monitor which voluntary work takes place and if the data shows that the situation is worsening the EA will look to take urgent action.

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

### **Business Plan Update – 2013/2014 Q4**

Niall distributed copies of the Business Plan Update for this quarter and ran through the contents.

### **Projects**

- Coastal Connections - the community have been involved with the consultation for signage and interpretation to the coastal path from Wearmouth Bridge to Ryhope Dene, this is currently out to tender and the programme will be delivered in the Summer.
- Coastal Access – the England Coast path launch event will be taking place on Saturday 12 April at Seaham Hall beach carpark, work has been ongoing since 2001 to link the path up from Seaham to Sunderland – grateful thanks to Paula, Ross and Nicol for their input into this.

- LEADER Nature Tourism Project – now complete. Louise Johnson (LEADER) will be presenting later.
- Research Programme – this bid will be submitted to the HLF in April (worth approx. £2m), and will extend North East. Work is already being covered Nationwide, DHCP will be working in conjunction with 6 regional universities and Partners.
- Little Tern Project – funding granted for €0.5m, working with Natural England and Hartlepool BC at Crimdon. Project will include extension of fencing, closure of some paths to allow the dunes to stabilise; there is a need to manage visitors to the site.
- Events Programme 2014 –

Low Tide Day at Seaham Hall Beach Carpark (17<sup>th</sup> May)- the Event this year will also include performances from Seaham Music Academy and attendance by East Durham Creates who are carrying out an arts engagement project.

Crimdon Half Marathon/Little Tern Event (15<sup>th</sup> June) – the National Trust's coastal half marathon was well attended last year, places will definitely sell out again this year. The Trust are also planning the inaugural Horden Park Run which is scheduled to take place on 25<sup>th</sup> May at Cotsford Field.

Celebrating our Coast at Dalton Park (19<sup>th</sup> July) – this event is held annually and hosted by Dalton Park, very well supported by Partners

DHC will also be attending Seaham Carnival (6 July) and Ryhope Carnival (9 August).

Paula Hunt reported that Ryhope Community Association had received the Sunderland Excellence Award 2014 for the Best Community Event in Sunderland for the Ryhope Carnival; which is a great achievement for all the organisers and those who help run this traditional annual carnival.

- Big Lottery Fund Application – community engagement work on the heritage coast - this is now being picked up by Groundwork.
- Volunteer Rangers – this forms part of the Coastal Communities Bid which Niall is working on with Durham County Council.
- Limestone Landscapes Project – this project is due to finish this year. No further news has been received regarding Lime Kiln restoration as part of the programme. Niall will ask if they can come along to June's steering group meeting to give a presentation/share information.

- Water Quality – good results last year. A new storage scheme is being installed at Dalton Park (by the end of Summer 2016) which will improve water quality results at Seaham Beach. DHCP are working with Northumbrian Water on forward plan and the Environment Agency on signage requirements.
- Three Rivers LNP (Tyne, Wear, Tees) – an expression of interest has been submitted to Defra and has been well received, this is a large project (£8m). The Wear Catchment Partnership covers a large area of inland coastal streams, including Castle Eden etc. A Sub-Group will be formed from the Partnership. A formal bid will be submitted next year.
- Policy Changes – input into EU proposed directive on ICZM with the national Coastal Partnerships Network.
- East Durham LEADER – DHCP are continuing to support this initiative which is in transition stage; currently forward planning and developing a strategy for the next stage of funding.
- Management Plan – will be delivered, Niall requested that everyone read and input into this.

## **7 LOUISE JOHNSON, EAST DURHAM LEADER**

Louise gave a resume of the 31 projects which have been funded through the East Durham Leader programme. Copies of Leader's 'Making a Difference in East Durham' booklet was distributed which details the projects in more detail. The Heritage Coast's Transnational Project with Finland was funded by Leader and included in this publication.

Leader are currently forward planning and are in the process of creating a strategy to deliver the next phase of Leader funding which has to be submitted by December 2014. There has been a request that this date may possibly be brought forward. Leader are currently awaiting guidance on rural classifications – the programme is on hold until this clarification is received.

Leader will be holding a first Consultation Event at the beginning of April followed by a further Consultation Event at Seaton Holme on 8<sup>th</sup> May, Heritage Coast will be assisting with hosting this 2<sup>nd</sup> event which will have more of a heritage/arts & culture/coastal focus. Hopefully these events will enable the consultation process to cover a wide range of people. 75% of Leader funding results in direct economic benefit. The current area covered by Leader may be subject to some change but will cover rural East Durham and will not be based 'on wards' as the current East Durham Leader mapping system is. Louise invited everyone in the Durham Heritage Coast Partnership to attend the Leader event at Seaton Holme on 8<sup>th</sup> May, invitations will be sent to all.

## **8 LOUISE HARRINGTON : NATURE TOURISM PROJECT UPDATE**

### **HLF Horden Denes Project (Phase 3)**

Phase 3 will include a carpark entrance with parking areas; new link footpath, interpretation, seating and a picnic area.

Tenders for the works on site are due back on 31<sup>st</sup> March, the contract award will be made soon after this, hopefully works on site will have started by the next meeting.

Boulders have been placed at the bottom of Whitesides Gill to combat illegal 4x4 access onto the beach banks which have had disastrous consequences for the site.

Two new leaflets have been produced. Castle Eden walk leaflet has been revamped with help from Chris Evans, Natural England. A Horden leaflet has also been produced with help from Fred Rowe and Horden Regeneration Partnership; there are now a total of 7 leaflets for the area. A Horden Denes booklet covering ecology etc for the area is also in the process of being produced; Durham County Council Ecology Team are assisting with this.

Education – Louise has been working with OASES developing a website which will include a virtual tour of the site. James McLean (NWL) has been giving advice to David Etheridge who is developing the website with a web designer. Louise has also been working with Horden Youthy following a contact from Dennis Allison, helping a group of local youngsters gain their Johh Muir Discovery award. The group have enjoyed finding out about their local natural environment. Nicol asked whether there was an age limit for this award; there is no age limit but it involves the engagement of a Youth Worker and funds for transportation, activities etc. It was noted that the Heritage Lottery Fund have a ‘Young Roots’ funding scheme that can be accessed specifically for young/environmental awards.

Litter Free Coast and Sea/Beach Cleans – Seaham Asda have been coming out every month helping clean Seaham beaches, they have collected 50-60 bags so far. Seaham Beach Clean Crew, led by Nicola Beldham, have also been assisting; they also do survey work for the MCS; usually at Red Acre Beach. There will be another Beach Clean on World Environment Day (5<sup>th</sup> June).

## **9 BLACKHALL ROCKS INTERPRETATION – DARRY COX, DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL**

The Durham Coast Grazing Project is going well, cattle were on site this winter for the second year running.

The fencing erected has been accepted by local people. Bird surveys have been carried out; recovery of the grasslands is progressing well.

The Limestone Landscapes Project have funded improvements to the Blackhall Rocks picnic area which has resulted in local people and visitors enjoying visiting the area and treating it with more respect. Hard landscaping works have been carried out; in a similar vein to the works at Seaham Hall and Crimdon with the use of oak and the same design template. Darryl passed around plans of the area to all present. As well as hard landscaping works there is new interpretation; new easy access path and new carparking. There has been a great response from local people who showed initial concern for the scheme at the consultation stage; they have inputted into the design of the site; the Parish Council have also been on board.

Steve Bhowmick commented that this was a great opportunity in terms of a 'brand' for the heritage coast; a strong image being presented at key sites. Darryl said the use of wood will also apply to the works being undertaken at Horden.

Discussion ensued about effective use of social media for publicity; the use of smart phones is becoming very popular.

## **10 BUSINESS PLAN – NIALL BENSON**

Dene Holme, Blackhall – the road to Dene Holme is being used by 4x4's which has caused severe disruption in the area; there is also a lot of fly tipping occurring which has resulted in consultation taking place in the area about closure of the road. The formal process has now started, the road will close in June, there will be a gate at the north end of the allotments.

Business Plan – a draft copy was handed out.

EU Habitat Directives – local plans are now being developed in 3 local authority areas which consider development plans near the coast, there is the opportunity to connect the work we do with local plans. Sunderland has quite substantial development plans between Ryhope and Seaham; the Partnership will be working with them on this. There needs to be a balance between ecology and development/number of people using and accessing the coast e.g. extending the coastal path from Crimdon to the Headland needs to be managed so the little tern colony are not affected etc. Recent ecology survey results show the impact of development and solutions need to be found relating to how we use the coast in future and how we manage people; this could mean restrictions applying. Leaflets can help re-route people.

Equine Sector Study – produced with Leader, this also impacts on how we use the coast with horses.

Northern Lands – this project links into sustainable travel and is looking at the use of an electric bike network in East Durham

Local Government Budgets – cuts will impact on what local authorities will do in our coastal area. We need to ensure improvements are made and maintained.

Seaham Marina – now a key gateway site.

We need input from Partners; to look at the South and Northern ends of the coast; a trip will be arranged for input from them.

Steve Bhowmick said that today's meeting had been a huge step forward for the Partnership. The next 12-18 months will see new challenges and pressures. Steve suggested inviting Planners from Durham County Council to talk to the Partnership to identify where 'hotspots' will be which will help us to understand and give us more detail.

## **11 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

Fred Rowe said that flytipping was taking place at Horden and Durham County Council Highways were also using the site for parking vehicles – Louise will look into this.

Fred also mentioned 2-3 off shore vessels at Horden which had been in situ for a number of weeks. These were thought to be linked with Teeside petrochemical operations.

Myrtle MacPherson said the steps to the beach at Easington Colliery were proving too steep for many people to access the beach. A second handrail might help alleviate the problem. The steps were originally put in place by the National Trust some years ago, they were aware of the issue but resources are not in place to rectify at this current point in time. Niall will keep this in mind if any additional funding becomes available at any time to rectify them, steps are very expensive to replace (two sets of steps further south at Crimdon have been closed and not reopened due to financial constraints).

Councillor Boyes raised the issue of the new Local Nature Reserve at the former pit site in Easington which will adjoin National Trust land. There is an inaugural meeting on 27<sup>th</sup> March at 2.00 p.m. at Easington Welfare Hall which Gareth Wilson (NT) and Niall Benson will also be attending.

## **12. DATE OF NEXT MEETINGS**

Thursday 3 July 2014

Annual Forum – Thursday 18 September 2014.