



Heritage Coast
Sunderland-Durham-Hartlepool

HERITAGE COAST PARTNERSHIP

STEERING GROUP

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 8 MARCH 2016
VENUE – DONNISON SCHOOL, HENDON, SUNDERLAND**

[Document consists of 8 pages]

I PRESENT

Niall Benson	Heritage Coast
Andrew Bewick	Sunderland City Council
Steve Bhowmick	Durham County Council (Env & Design)
Louise Harrington	Heritage Coast
Paula Hunt	Ryhope Community Association
Joe Lemon	Ryhope Community Association
James McLean	Northumbrian Water
Ed Mason	Ambassador
Steve Metcalfe	Natural England
Fred Rowe	Steering Group Open Seat Representative
Chris Scaife	Hartlepool Borough Council
Gary Shears	Durham County Council (Ecology)
Deborah Staines	Durham County Council
Ross Wares	Ryhope Community Association
Joanne Willey	Durham County Council

2 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Ross Wares, Chairman, welcomed everyone to the meeting.

3 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from :

Joanne Ashworth	Groundwork
Councillor D Boyes	Durham County Council (Easington)
Heather Brittlebank	Natural England
Councillor Bruce Burn	Mayor of Seaham
Darryl Cox	Durham County Council (Countryside)
Gaynor Crute	Monk Hesleden Parish Council
Chris Evans	Natural England
Mark Frain	National Trust
Deborah Jefferson	Hartlepool Borough Council
Myrtle MacPherson	Easington Colliery Parish Council
Councillor Maitland	Durham County Council (Murton)
Sarah Stevenson	Environment Agency
Councillor S Thomas	Hartlepool Borough Council
Nicol Trueman	Sunderland City Council
Ruth Tyson	Environment Agency

4 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

It was agreed that the minutes of the HC Steering Group Meeting held on 15th December 2015 were accepted as a true record of proceedings by all present.

5 MATTERS ARISING

HALLIWELL BANKS LANDFILL SITE

No further progress has been made since the last meeting. A full site report will be available by May 2016. Groundwater continues to be monitored.

Discussion ensued about the depth of the original bore hole samples being too shallow to reach the toxic waste (bore hole sampling went down to approx. 10m depth). Paula Hunt expressed concern that current testing may not be linked with the previous testing; that liaison is not taking place and the depths of bore hole sampling could possibly be to the same depth again and would not reach the toxic waste (at the bottom and capped with oil before it was used by Local Authority as a 'tip'). This could be due to staff changes and information not being passed on. Local knowledge has revealed that there has been no on-site activity of late which was worrying

Concern was again expressed about the devastating effects on the whole coastline if this section of the coastal strip breaches and the Partnership expressed disappointment that this issue had been on the agenda for 14 years and advancement seems no further forward.

James MacLean asked if someone from the Environment Agency could possibly come along to the next steering group meeting and discuss the report's findings. Niall Benson will write to the Environment Agency and request that they report their findings at the next steering group meeting in July. Paula Hunt asked if they could also provide information on the depth at which testing took place; concerned that if sampling has not taken place deep enough again the Partnership will be no further forward.

6 HERITAGE COAST OFFICER'S REPORT – NIALL BENSON

NETWORK RAIL FENCING

Discussions have been taking place with Network Rail about the fencing which has been installed at Easington Colliery in one of the more scenic parts of the Heritage Coast, adjacent to the coastal footpath. Unfortunately Network Rail are not recognising that this issue impacts on landscape quality. Niall has contacted all interested parties (National Trust (landowners); Durham County Council; Natural England; the local M.P. and the Press to advise them of the situation.

There was a similar issue a few years ago on the coastline (between Dawdon and Hawthorn). Niall complained then and was assured by Network Rail that they would listen and bear the landscape quality in mind next time. It is accepted that people need to be 'controlled' to protect their health and safety but it is the nature of the type of fencing installed which is the issue.

Mesh fencing painted green may have been an alternative solution, however Network Rail have offered to paint the existing palisade fencing green. Niall asked for the Partnership's views on this.

Steve Bhowmick said he was aware of the health and safety issues but that concern had been expressed with Network Rail in terms of this fencing being outwith the Planning System and this fencing was contravening all planning principles, albeit it does not actually have to have planning permission. In his opinion it was deemed an intrusion and should be removed.

Discussion ensued about the Partnership's efforts in keeping a balance between enjoyment of the coast (attracting visitors) and also protecting it in terms of landscape quality.

Ed Mason said that there had been some big issues at Seaham involving Network Rail and it's effects on people's properties with very little movement from them in view of the fact that solutions were offered to try and rectify situations.

Fred Rowe said that alternative solutions may be available e.g. hedging. Niall said that hedging had been removed to install the fence. It was felt that hedging would hide the fencing; although in no way was deemed to be a perfect solution. Access had also been forced onto sites; leaving gates open and allowing 4x4's onto the coast which exemplifies a lack of respect and engagement.

Disappointment was expressed with the complete lack of engagement and Niall is having to correspond with Network Rail through the local M.P. Discussion took place that it was felt that Network Rail did not feel they had to 'answer to anyone'. Similar situations had also occurred in AONB's and National Parks. Although existing relationships with level crossing staff were good, there appeared to be no liaison between departments. There is currently no forward plan, Network Rail have spoken about closing the existing level crossing and diverting it which would make the situation worse. Natural England have also taken this on board and it has been escalated to National level.

Chris Scaife has had similar experiences in the past (in Hartlepool) until relatively recently when Rights of Way officers had been invited to a training day by the office who regulates Network Rail (in relation to level crossings) – good relationships had formed from this and Network Rail regularly attended meetings now (Local Access Forums etc). Chris Scaife said he could pass on contacts in the North East region to Niall.

Reconnecting Communities to Coast

HLF funding has now been awarded for this project (£90k over two years). "14" funding bid has also been successful. More from Louise later in the meeting.

Coastal Communities Team

Developing a booklet for whole coast path from Hendon to Hartlepool Headland.

Coastal Streams Partnership

Castle Eden Dene Catchment Improvement Project - This is a one year £60k water quality project working with Wear Rivers Trust, Natural England, Groundwork and Caterpillar which will also include schools engagement.

Includes investigations into the new building development planned for Ryhope Dene.

North East Water Science Hub

Working with Universities (Newcastle, Durham and possibly Sunderland). ERDF bid for £1.25m has been submitted.

Easington Local Nature Reserve

Tesco have been involved with litter picking on site; the site will be developed as a Gateway to the Coast.

CIO Registration

This is continuing and has now been submitted three times. Consultants are working on the registration and have advised to develop this as a CIC instead as the way forward. Paula Hunt said that more stringent regulations may come into place about the opening up of more 'charity' bodies.

Transnational Project

Currently developing a Citizen Science Project with our Finnish Partners – more activity is needed in terms of volunteer engagement.

Motorbikes/Kissing Gates

These are currently being installed to protect the coast. Niall urged anyone witnessing illegal activity to report it immediately on 101- even if the culprits have left site by the time the Police arrive – the numbers of bikes and timings can assist the police with information gathering; looking at patterns of use etc. Fred Rowe said this should be reported as illegal behaviour (rather than it being viewed as anti-social behaviour); an incident number will be issued. This issue will be highlighted at future Coast Watch meetings. There is an issue at Ryhope beach regarding unwanted adult behaviour occurring more regularly, this has the potential to become a major issue and extremely worrying in relation to visitors to our coastline.

Andrew Bewick said that the process had commenced to employ a coastal warden who will work with Louise Harrington.

Niall and Louise have a meeting with Northumbria Police next week about Coast Watch in Sunderland and this issue will be raised there.

Business Plan 2015/16 Update

Niall circulated the Business Plan – Q4 (attached).

Draft Business Plan 2016- 2021

Handed out and discussed.

7 LOUISE HARRINGTON : PROJECT OFFICER'S REPORT

Reconnecting Communities and Coast

Heritage Lottery Funding has now been received for this project with additional funding from the "14" Community Foundation Programme. The project (Seaham to Hendon area) focusses on empowering local communities to be actively engaged in the landscape; improving access, addressing vandalism, fly tipping and anti-social behaviour, managing habitats, survey work and organising walks, talks and events to promote a better understanding of natural and heritage features.

Louise is currently based and working from Ryhope Community Centre 2 days a week, lots of contacts are now being made in the Ryhope area with community groups; more work will be done on forming links into Hendon. Sunderland City Council's Ranger will hopefully be in place from April 2016.

A meeting with Northumbria Police (Coast Watch) has been arranged for next week with Niall, work will take place on developing this initiative and launching it.

HLF Learn 2 Love Project

Funding has now been approved for £25,000 (through the HLF Young Roots scheme) to continue the work with Durham Constabulary and the Restorative Justice Scheme and also to carry out a project with Murton Ribbon School running the John Muir award with pupils commencing in April 2016. There will also be the opportunity of training for leaders so the project can sustain itself.

Beach Cleans

A recent beach clean on Seaham Beach with 30 volunteers had resulted in 150 bags of rubbish; this is deemed a worthwhile use of resources. There are a lot of plastic bottles collected at every beach clean, one alone lasts 450 years.

Niall added that two University students will be monitoring micro-plastic on beaches.

A problem along the coast involves fishing waste which is dangerous to children and dogs. Joe Lemon said enforcement rules by Angling Clubs work, that ask Anglers to pick up their waste or forfeit their membership. The tidal drift means a lot of waste 'catches' at Seaham beach. Ways of tackling this problem are currently being looked at with Joe's help.

Restorative Justice

The group had recently been involved in digging a hibernaculum at Easington Colliery LNR with Gary Shears. Joe Lemon is also involved with the group (angling session at Easter time)

Jimmy Kays Touring Exhibition

Now finished at The Art Block, Seaham (EDAN), with good attendance figures. This Friday the exhibition will move to Blackhall Community Centre until the 29th April and after this (17th May – 30th June) it will move to Seaton Holme, Easington Village

Capturing Coastal Memories Project

HLF funded project (£9200) – looking at all different coastal memories, growing up on the coast; working in collieries – anyone with any interesting stories can be involved. Project also involves working with 3 local Blackhall schools next year – children will be encouraged to 'interview' their grandparents; be engaged in artwork; and will take part in trips to Horden Heritage Centre, the George Elmy Lifeboat House, the Donnison School and possibly Beamish. Elderly visitors had recently been warmly received in schools, telling stories of growing up and working on the coast so the children can learn about their local heritage. A book will be produced at the end of the project and a celebratory event will be held. More interviews will take place this year – any volunteers to be interviewed welcome.

Paula has also arranged for Louise to lead a session with Ryhope reminiscing group.

Heritage Coast Festival – Reach for the Beach

Covering half term week, from Saturday 28 May to Sunday 5 June 2016. This will take place through half term week with some exciting events held along the coast including rock pool rambles, photography walks and much more. Seaham Marina staff are also keen to be involved – they will be providing some kayaking sessions and there will be a Fun Day with the George Elmy Lifeboat House staff. Louise ran through the programme – if anyone can help promote this it would be appreciated and if anyone has any further ideas please contact Louise.

Other events so far in 2016 include :

- Peterlee Show
- Ryhope Carnival
- Hartlepool Summerhill Coast and Countryside Festival
- Castle Eden Dene Family Fun Day

8 PARTNERSHIP STRUCTURE

The independent review is continuing of the governance of the Partnership. The work of the Partnership can be 'themed' into 4 areas – landscape, access, conservation and coastal streams. Groups would report independently to the steering group. Partnership members would be involved in one or more of the proposed sections. It is proposed that there are two steering groups (December and July) per year and the annual forum.

Joanne Willey and Deborah Staines (Durham County Council) handed out a draft Terms of Reference document which they had worked on with Niall, which now needs to go to Partner bodies; this has not been revised since 2003. The Terms of Reference will apply to each of the thematic groups.

Benchmarking had also taking place with Partnerships in other parts of the UK to compare the Terms of Reference.

9 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Heritage Coast (Status) will be 15 years old on 1st April – celebrations at the next meeting.

Annual Forum – Thurs 6 October. Ed Mason requested a speaker on climate change and the impacts on the coastal environment and habitats.

Niall will come with some proposals at the next meeting.

More focussed discussion was requested (Fred) and more engagement with attendees was requested by Paula; attendees would relish the opportunity to input more – fewer speakers (less issues) and more discussion.

10 DATE OF NEXT MEETINGS

Tuesday 5 July 2016
Thurs 6 October 2016 (Forum)
Thurs 15 December 2016