



DURHAM
Heritage Coast

**DURHAM HERITAGE COAST
PARTNERSHIP**

STEERING GROUP

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 14th MARCH 2013
VENUE – RYHOPE CRICKET CLUB, RYHOPE VILLAGE**

[Document consists of 9 pages]

I PRESENT

Niall Benson	Durham Heritage Coast
Sarah Bowman	Hartlepool Borough Council
Darryl Cox	Durham County Council
Insp. Dave Coxon	Durham Constabulary
Gail Craig	Durham Heritage Coast
Colum Goodchild	Northumbrian Water
Sue Goodman	Environment Agency
Louise Harrington	Durham Heritage Coast
Paula Hunt	Ryhope Community Association
Deborah Jefferson	Hartlepool Borough Council
Joe Lemon	Ryhope Community Association
Myrtle MacPherson	Easington Colliery Parish Council
Councillor E Mason	Seaham Town Council
Brian Oram	Steering Group Open Seat Representative
George Patterson	Ambassador
Fred Rowe	Steering Group Open Seat Representative
Nicol Trueman	Sunderland City Council
Ross Wares	Ryhope Community Association
Gareth Wilson	National Trust

2 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Councillor Wares, Chairman, welcomed everyone to the meeting, including Inspector Coxon, Durham Constabulary (Peterlee) who has been involved in the Coast Watch initiative (see page 5) and Gareth Wilson, the new National Trust representative.

3 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from :

Andrew Bewick	Sunderland City Council
Steve Bhowmick	Durham County Council
Gary Shears	Durham County Council
Mark Taylor	Sunderland City Council
Cllr S Tempest	Hartlepool Borough Council
Florence Wilson	Horden Regeneration Partnership

4 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

It was agreed that the minutes of the DHC Steering Group Meeting held on 12th December 2012 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.

The Remediation Notice is being finalised and EA are planning to send letters to the Appropriate Persons in the next few days advising that it is the intention to serve the Remediation Notice on 5th April if voluntary remediation is not forthcoming before then. The Appropriate Persons will have 21 days from the date that this notice is served to appeal. It is likely that one or more of the Appropriate Persons will appeal and any appeal will be heard by the Planning Inspector.

The actions in the Remediation Notice will include installing further boreholes and sampling, and, technical assessments. This information will then be used to assess whether further clean-up is needed or not. If it is, a Remedial Options Appraisal will be carried out to identify the most appropriate way of doing this. A further Remediation Notice may then need to be served to get any further clean-up delivered.

EA are continuing with the regular coastal erosion monitoring next to Area B. Since December 2012 the rate of erosion has generally increased and 1/2m loss has been recorded over several months. This loss has not been at the narrowest point so there is still around 12m remaining at the narrowest point. Concerns were expressed about why EA hadn't responded sooner given that coastal erosion is such a problem. Sue outlined that when EA first became involved with the site the rate of coastal erosion next to Area B was thought to be around 6m per year and that there was around 14m remaining between the cliffs and the edge of the fill. EA have been regularly monitoring the rate of erosion in this area and this data has shown that the rate has been much slower and there is currently around 12m remaining at the narrowest point. Its only data from the last few months that has shown that the rate has increased and EA are responding to this by issuing the letters to the Appropriate Persons and moving towards serving the Remediation Notice.

EA have collected another sample from the discharge from the cliffs at Area B following reports that this has become worse (i.e. high flow, smellier and sometimes producing a visible oily sheen on the sea). The analysis showed that the concentrations of some hydrocarbon contaminants has increased. Concerns were raised about the potential water quality impacts of the discharge. EA have consulted water quality experts and given the likely quantity of contaminants entering the sea, the fact that these contaminants are likely to be broken down by natural processes such as volatilisation and exposure to wave action and sunlight, and that they will be diluted significantly by the sea water EA feel that there is unlikely to be a notable water quality impact. However, in response to concerns raised by DHC about water quality impacts (and in particular the potential impacts on swimmers at Seaham beach) EA will analyse a sample of the sea water.

Frustration was expressed about why action can't be taken now, recovering the costs later. Sue explained that money is still needed up front to do this and EA don't have this. In response to questions raised about liability Sue confirmed that the Appropriate Persons that EA are intending to serve the remediation Notice on are RMC Logistics Western Ltd, North West Aggregates Ltd, Sunderland City Council, Department of Energy and Climate Change and the Church Commissioners. Questions were raised about Northumbrian Water's liability and Sue advised that they don't have any liability that EA are aware of. Questions were also raised about Sunderland Councils responsibility as the site is in their area and Sue advised that the responsibility for taking the site forward under the Part 2A contaminated land regime transferred from Sunderland Council to the Environment Agency which is why we are leading on the site.

DHC are to contact Natural England expressing concern about the nature of the discharges getting onto the beach and the impact that this may have on the SPA.

6 HERITAGE COAST OFFICER'S REPORT – NIALL BENSON

News

Niall showed an article on the Heritage Coast from the Chinese Landscape Institute magazine – 'Worldscape Professional Journal'.

Coverage of the Heritage Coast was continuing in our big cities, promoted by Visit County Durham's Regional Growth Fund, who had also been instrumental with the publication of a Travel Guide feature supplement in the Independent newspaper, showing the coast in a fantastic light, Blackhall is being used to promote the area pictorially.

Litter Free Coast and Sea

Groups from Marks and Spencer and British Autism Society were now on board – the initiative is being rolled out to other businesses, linking into Pride initiatives. A website booking diary is currently being built and training is being established, especially Sharps training.

Coastal Access

The final report has now been passed to the Secretary of State for decision. Delivery will start over the next few months, signage with steps. The key change is the link between Sunderland and Seaham. Work is underway on agreeing signage and key interpretation, using local branding.

Marine Data Study

A gap filling research programme is being developed in parallel with the terrestrial research programme. Partners will be appraised of the programme and opportunities for joint working will be promoted.

Bathing Water Quality

As previously reported last summer's rainfall has had a serious impact, the long term trend is still positive. New signage will be installed at Durham's bathing beaches, sponsored by Northumbrian Water. Niall will be continuing to input into the policy and spending plans of key partners (Environment Agency and NWL).

Nature Tourism

Project funded by Leader. A Destination Development Plan is being developed. Work has included Network forming, Schools engagement, new media being developed and business skills training. Louise Harrington is leading on this Project (update on page 7).

Durham Coast Watch

This project is an extension of Neighbourhood Watch – working with landowners, Street Wardens, Police and DCC Ranger Service, using established reporting systems to share feedback on environmental crime (issues include animal baiting, fly tipping, shooting etc) encouraging the public to feedback and report using one key contact number. This initiative will be officially launched at Low Tide Day at Seaham Hall Beach on 25th May. A logo is currently being developed and literature will be produced for people who regularly use the coast and are willing to sign up and provide regular updates e.g. local dog walkers can see 'patterns' of anti-social behaviour which can be very helpful etc. Any information produced will be circulated to the Partnership to help distribute.

Inspector Coxon said the idea stemmed from environmental crime occurring on the coast in non-residential areas which was resulting in some information not being shared efficiently. Having looked at all the issues, flytipping and anti-social behaviour it was decided to establish the Coast Watch scheme, which would reply on reports in much the same way as Neighbourhood Watch operates. The initiative will be communicated to Cleveland and Northumbria Police so it extends into and beyond the Police area borders. It is hoped that Residential Groups and Parish Councils, and their Councillors, will also be involved in helping to roll the initiative out in their local areas.

Brian Oram reported that he had previously been involved with a team of volunteers, based at Castle Eden Dene, and said that the area at Lime Kiln Gill, Denemouth was a hot spot for fly tipping then and still is. However, problems evolved once fees were introduced at DCC waste disposal depots – Durham County Council were prepared to pay for the disposal of fly tipping from their side of the site (where the road forks) but not from the land owned by Natural England.

Fred Rowe said when reporting a recent incident relating to flytipping he had been informed that Police would need to see the perpetrators (carrying out

the crime) in order to take further action as firm proof is needed. Inspector Coxon said that measures were in place to combat environmental crime through the Coast Watch scheme as this has a massive impact upon local communities.

The Partnership agreed it was an excellent idea and will inspire more members of our local communities to get involved.

Equine Sector Study

£15k Leader Funded research project looking at the value of the sector, barriers to growth and opportunities for growth. A particular issue involved Crimdon – there is no legal access to ride horses on the beach, however it is not an offence to ride there. As a local riding school do have access, it is assumed by the public that access is available for everyone. The problem stems from fragmented and inconsistent bridleways. A study will be commissioned which will hopefully resolve issues such as this.

Business Plan 2012/13 and 5 Year Business Plan

Niall handed out updated copies of the Business Plan 2012/13 and the 5 Year Business plan. It was agreed that these documents are useful as they act as a guide for the coming year. Highlights include :

- Securing additional funding for Coastal Connections, joining up Hendon/Grangetown/Ryhope.
- Completing the Leader Programme, Louise Harrington will leave in June, her contribution has had a huge impact, it would be desirable to keep this role going.

Management Plan

Delayed due to resources and priority, however key building blocks are now in place to allow progression – the addition of additional staff members will help enormously. Top priority for the coming year.

Partnership Structure

As agreed at the last meeting, Working Groups will be established for

- Coastal Connections (incl. Halliwell Banks)
- Coast Watch
- Nature Conservation and Access & Tourism
- Ad hoc Water Quality Group
- Adhoc Task or Project groups

Summer Events

DHC main events this year are :

- Sat 25th May, Low Tide Day at Seaham Hall Beach Carpark with Coast Watch launch and Transnational Singing/Dancing event, community fun day. The Chairs of Seaham Town and Council and Durham County Council will be invited to launch each initiative
- Sat 20th July, Celebrating our Coast at Dalton Park

Other events include

- Sat 15th June, Sunderland Festival at Herrington Country Park, supporting the Limestone Landscape Partnership
- Sun 9th June – Durham Coast Half-Marathon, supporting the National Trust who are keen to involve people to use coastal land for sporting activities. Colum Goodchild will provide a contact name in NWL communications who are involved in the Kielder Marathon which may assist with the event organisation. NWL are also providing water bottles for the event
- 27/28 July, Seaham Carnival, supporting Seaham Town Council
- Sat 10th August, Ryhope Carnival, supporting Ryhope Community Association

Funding

Groundwork are currently bidding for a project entitled 'Life's a Beach', which focusses on using the beach as an educational resource.

Coastal Communities Fund – a larger bid will be made for the second round of applications for this funding.

7 NATURE TOURISM PROJECT UPDATE – LOUISE HARRINGTON

This project is divided into three main sections :

- Appreciation and Awareness – 'Explore, Inspire, Protect'
 - local school at Murton - children have been engaged in developing two different themed leaflets, getting it produced and put onto school's website
 - tour with Journalist from the Independent who produced an excellent article in the Durham Travel supplement
- Transnational element
- Business Training and Development

A revamp of the coastal footpath leaflet is underway using clearer maps and including QR codes. A bliobook version is also being devised for use on

smartphones. The suite of 'village walk' leaflets is also being updated with the help of Durham County Volunteer Rangers who are assisting with the routes and rights of way passages and landmarks which are marked on the current maps.

Car Free Initiative - The possibility of a coastal shuttle bus is also being looked at which will run from May over the summer period. The bus would be branded and it is intended to link this in with summer events and produce a leaflet to support this. The bus will be free of charge, a research study (questionnaires) will precede this to assess demand in the first instance. Inspector Coxon said this bus service would also be a good way of communicating the Coast Watch initiative with the public.

Training - Durham Wildlife Trust are assisting with the delivery of a one day course looking at geology, grasslands etc at Hawthorn.

Business Engagement and Training – consultation is taking place for the development of a Destination Plan with businesses in East Durham – cafes, farmshops, B&B's etc – brainstorming and networking, all businesses involved are engaged and keen to continue with development.

Transnational Partners – are involved with a singing event at Low Tide Day, a song is being written and will be performed by them and local choirs, the song will be recorded by Peterlee College. This is a chance for the public to be involved on the day and will also mark the end of the project.

Councillor Mason will send some leaflets which were produced for a Seaham school a few years ago (similar vein to Murton School walks project).

George Patterson asked if there was any planned Partnership involvement in the relaunch of the George Elmy lifeboat to Seaham. It is understood the lifeboat is nearing completion of renovation works.

10 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Ross Wares announced that Councillor Mason was retiring from Seaham Town Council which would mean he would not be the representative from STC any more. However, in view of the support shown by Councillor Mason over the years on critical issues and given his profound local knowledge of the Seaham area, it was suggested and agreed by the Partnership that Councillor Mason continue to support and attend the Partnership meetings as an Ambassador, in a similar manner to George Patterson.

Councillor Mason said that STC had reported to him that the steps at Blast Beach/Frenchman's were deemed to be unsafe and would need repair work. The National Trust, as landowners, would carry out a site inspection. Louise Harrington said it was probably a question of replacing washed away dolomite.

George Patterson mentioned the steepness of the steps at the beach access at Easington, particularly for the elderly. Gareth Wilson agreed to visit to check on this.

Niall said that maintenance budgets for the new national coastal path had recently been agreed at the National Coastal trail meeting.

II. DATE OF NEXT MEETINGS

Tuesday 25th June

Thurs 19th September – Annual Coastal Forum

Thurs 12th December