

# ALDE AND ORE COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP

## DRAFT MINUTES TO BE AGREED

### MINUTES OF THE INAUGURAL MEETING OF THE ALDE AND ORE COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP

HELD ON THURSDAY 30 JANUARY 2020 AT 6.30PM IN ORFORD TOWN HALL

PRESENT: Nominated representatives

Tim Beach (TB)	<b>Interim Chairman</b>	Snappe Parish Council
Andrew Reid (AR)		Cllr. Suffolk County Council
Ray Herring (RH)		Cllr. East Coast Council
T-J Howarth-Culf (T-J H-C)		Cllr. East Coast Council
Peter Palmer (PP)		Cllr. Aldeburgh Town Council
Andrew Cassy (AC)		Cllr. Boyton Parish Council
Ben Coulter (BC)		Cllr. Butley Capel St Andrew and Wantisden Parish Council
Peter McGinity (PMcG)		Chair Chillesford Parish meeting
Judi Hallett (JH)		Parish Clerk Hollesley
Colin Chamberlain (CC)		Cllr. Iken Parish Council
Frances Barnwell (FB)		Cllr. Orford and Gedgrave Parish Council
David Robinson (DR)		Cllr Chair of Sudbourne Parish Council
Niels Peterson (NP)		Cllr Tunstall Parish Council
Alison Andrews (AA)		Alde and Ore Association
Edward Greenwell (EG)		IDB Board Member

ADVISERS/ATTENDEES:

Jane Maxim	Alde and Ore Estuary Trust (AOET)
Giles Bloomfield	East Suffolk Internal Drainage Board (ESIDB)
David Kemp	Environment Agency (EA)
Ed Boyle	Natural England (NE)

MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC: 16

## AGENDA

**Introduction.** Tim Beach welcomed everyone to the Inaugural Meeting of the AOCP and thanked them and the 16 members of the public for coming. It was very much hoped that the new Partnership would be able to fully engage with as wide a community as possible. He explained that he was acting as the Interim Chairman to start the meeting and was happy for anyone to take on the role. As Vice Chairman of the former Alde and Ore Estuary Partnership (AOEP) for 5 years he had been quite involved in the work creating the Community Partnership to take over from the Estuary Partnership which had developed the estuary flood defence strategy but a new body was needed now work was moving into the actual construction work being undertaken by the ESIDB while the new Partnership remained there for the community. The idea for this inaugural meeting was to give all in as much information as possible about the strategy, plans and future roles so that the new Partnership was in a position to take the work forward and then decide on officers and work to be done.

**1. Apologies:** Harry Young -business representative, Karrie Langdon and Andy Palmer-Cllrs Hollesley- nominated alternate representatives, Karen Thomas- Coastal Partnership East, adviser, Simon Amstutz- Suffolk Coast and Heaths AONB, Diane Ling- environmental adviser to former AOEP (Note- Friston PC invited but no reply yet)

**2. Declarations of interest:** Noted that annual forms would be circulated for declarations of interest, but for today personal introductions would be made.

**3. Introductions:** all nominated representatives introduced themselves at this inaugural meeting, plus advisers -Giles Bloomfield ESIDB, David Kemp, Environment Agency, and also Jane Maxim (AOET) and Richard Pipe Chairman of the ESIDB who were in attendance.

**4. Presentation on formation and origins of AOCP and how it is part of the Alde and Ore estuary community and management.** Papers 4 and 5 had been circulated on the history of the Alde and Ore Estuary Partnership and its evolution into the Alde and Ore Community Partnership, and on all the Relevant Bodies involved in the management of the estuary flood defences.

#### 4a. Presentation of the Remit of the AOCP:

- i. TB drew attention to Paper 2 which set out the simple structure for the delivery for the Alde and Ore Estuary Plan in its new phase- while apparently simple it had taken several discussions to arrive at. The ESIDB was at the top being in charge of the construction of the estuary project, the AOCP was there essentially helping and supporting the IDB to deliver the plan, and the AOET would be responsible for funding coming from local and charitable donations or trusts.
- ii. Paper 1 set out the background to the roles and likely future range of work of the new Partnership. The Estuary Plan had been endorsed as a document of material importance in planning terms by all the relevant authorities in 2016, that is Suffolk County Council, Suffolk Coastal District Council and the EA's Eastern Region Flood and Coast Committee (RFCC). The project to implement the Plan was now being undertaken by the ESIDB, who had full responsibility for this and, being a Risk Management Authority (RMA), would carry the risk of the work being done on behalf of our community. The first remit for the new Partnership now was to be the guardian of the Estuary Plan, consulting with the community in conjunction with the ESIDB on any changes or adaptations of the Plan and Programme of Works that may be required, and deciding on any significant alterations. So far, the works plan had had been drawn up and completion would depend on sufficient money being raised. The second role was ensuring community engagement. A criticism of the AOEP was that it had not appeared inclusive so, now, with the inclusion of all, not some, of the parishes bordering the estuary, and county and district councillors, (whom he thanked for showing their support), it was hoped to make a new communication approach to overcome this criticism.

Overall it was a big complicated project and as full community involvement as possible was needed, but the two roles of the AOCP were fairly simple to express.

- iii. The Remit paper also listed potential tasks. One task might arise if there was a significant divergence from the plan, or if there were to be a significant shortfall in grant funding from the £10 million being bid for; then the Partnership would need to review the position. Responding to a question, TB said that the tasks were not listed in any particular order but were the main issues the Community Partnership would have to tackle over time as they cropped up. On communications, he indicated issues would include how often the partnership met and the need to offer, at least annually, a big public meeting. It was also important in the future not to leave communications just to the IDB in the areas where work was currently going on, but to ensure communication across all the estuary. The estuary plan and its implications needed melding into the bigger picture of the whole area, both the District and County. It was not just about saving 300 houses but the whole local economy.

**4b. Memorandum of Understanding with the Alde and Ore Estuary Trust (Paper 3):** TB explained that clear delineation and different roles of the Partnership, the Alde and Ore Estuary Trust and the ESIDB needed to be understood, but all needed to work together to achieve the estuary plan. The MOU (*entitled "Framework for future relationship between the Alde and Ore Estuary Trust and the new community partnership(AOCP)"*) set out how coherent working together might be achieved, with the Community Partnership working on community engagement through communication and the Trust dealing with paying grants and raising funds. He mentioned that the AOEP historically had helped the AOET with events, such as the two pub quizzes, so it was intended that the two bodies should work hand in glove. He pointed out that the AOEP had formally revoked its original constitutional role of being the sole member of that charity, so the Trust now acted entirely independently but with the same aim to raise funds and pay grants to the IDB for work done.

**4c. Likely action in the next few months.** TB said that there was unlikely to be anything to do on the Estuary Strategy role until the results of the Business Case application to the Environment Agency had been received (more on that in agenda Item 5). For now, the focus needed to be on the communications role which would be in cooperation with the IDB, and some activities would be time dependent. There had been some glitches in communication in the past, and with a new approach now the issue was how to raise levels of interest and knowledge within Parish Councils and wider within parishes, and that would include generating money. As an example, for Snape he intended to ask the IDB to attend the Parish Annual Meeting.

**4d. AOCP name.** AA explained that the Head of Planning and Coastal Management of ESC had tentatively asked whether the new body would reconsider its name, to avoid any potential confusion for the public and communities alike

with the eight Community Partnerships which had just been established by ESC. The general view in the meeting was this was not likely to be a problem as the other Partnerships covered different areas and addressed issues other than flood defence. As the name AOCPP covered the area involved, and this was indeed a body for the entire community, and was a partnership, the strong preference was to confirm the name Alde and Ore Community Partnership.

## 5. Estuary project implementation

i. Giles Bloomfield, ESIDB, gave a presentation on the process of drawing up the plans for implementing the flood defence strategy programme of works. The programme had been developed around the fact that the different parts of the estuary, the flood cells, were interdependent. In 2018 IDB had to ask HRWallingford to update old models of how the estuary worked to confirm the soundness of the Estuary Plan, show that it had merit yielding benefit, and assess the phasing of wall work that would be compatible with how the river now flows. The results showed that the estuary worked essentially in two halves, the upper and the lower, with the only overlap being five properties in Sudbourne that could be affected temporarily by upper estuary works, and these could be managed (Karen Thomas, when working in the IDB, had spoken to the owners about this).

ii. The strategy was to deliver resilience against overtopping in a 1:200 year event by providing for 3 metre wide crests of the river walls with a more gentle back face, as could be seen in the Aldeburgh Phase 1 works. This resilience approach was a step change in the design of such walls and for a while was ahead of its time. It was good that central government approach towards flood defence had now shifted towards adaptation and resilience which meant that the Estuary approach was fully compatible with policy. Overall, the programme would take 6-7 years, subject to funding being available.

iii. It had been decided to divide the Business Case, applying for grant and the various permissions needed into two halves for the upper and lower estuary, both because it was very complicated and because a business case could not be submitted until the funding was in place physically or in commitments in writing. The overall cost for the entire estuary project was about £26 million and some £10million in grant towards this was being sought. This compared with the entire area's economy being worth more than £100 million a year, taking account of homes, leisure tourism, agriculture, and in addition it had many specially protected designated areas and there were large swathes of habitat yielding significant biodiversity, all of value. To capture that value in order to secure a higher level of government funding (FDGiA- flood defence grant in aid) the IDB, with advisers, had used innovative methods of calculation to ensure full account was taken of these special features and that was why there had been an extended iterative process with the Environment Agency to ensure that all information in the Business Case was correct and understood before it was finally accepted for consideration for grant. They were near the end of that process now. GB would like to think that all would be finally submitted by the end of February. The work on the second Business Case covering the Lower Estuary would then start immediately. The consideration of the first Business Case by EA and NE could take up to 6 months.

iv. GB provided figures on the likely cost for each flood cell, and added that Boyton was also a possible site for a managed realignment.

Aldeburgh £1.8m,

Snape £0.8m,

Snape Village £1m.,

Iken £4.8m,

Sudbourne/Orford/Gedgrave £10.1m,

Chillesford £1.3m,

Butley £0.07m,

Boyton £7m

Of the total of £26.9 million cost (including £5.1 m allowed for contingencies) about £16 million needed to come from other sources, which included local drainage board levies paid by landowners, an increase in which had secured a public sector loan of £3 million. There would be little FDGiA available until 2021, and any funding by government was subject to change and availability.

v. There was also an opportunity for works, ahead of the Lower Estuary works, at Orford to improve defences in the front of the main town using the Andren legacy.

vi. David Kemp explained further about government funding- FDGiA. Government funds were administered by the Environment Agency and FDGiA was paid only to Risk Management Authorities (RMAs) which meant that the Partnership could not apply for it directly. An RMA must apply, acting as an RMA not a contractor, otherwise it would lose its eligibility. The grant application consultants used by the IDB had hopefully found more money than was originally thought possible, hence the extended iterative process on valuation of particular new elements. Government flood defence funding went in 6 year cycles, with the current cycle ending in March 2021. Application for grant had two stages: first was for the application to be approved as a good scheme but that did not bring money with it, and the second stage was when money was allocated which was done on an annual basis. At the moment all the money in the current cycle has been allocated so there would be none now until after March 2021. But if the Business Case were approved and some money came free after all, the plan would be in a good position to receive it.

vii. DR expressed concern that by splitting the business case into two parts the lower estuary might not get done were there to be policy changes. GB said that while less grant money might be forthcoming for the lower estuary because the overall benefit of the investment gave a return of about 8:1 compared with 14:1 for the upper estuary, it was still a good benefit to cost ratio. There was always a risk with public money, but the IDB had taken out the public loan and there was still some years in which to raise money for the lower estuary. TB said that having to divide the estuary necessitated an element of trust, but he had recently seen allocations for Local Levy in the RFCC budget of £ 1 ½ m to be given in equal parts of for the upper and lower estuary.

viii. BC asked whether, given that any 6 year government pot would be finite, there was a risk of competition from other areas seeking grant, DK said that would not be known until the bids were considered in 15 months' time. But he was hearing potentially good news that the Partnership Funding Calculator, which determined how much was given, might be adjusted to include matters other than housing. The estuary's extensive area with good habitat features could well benefit from such a change. On a further question as to the possibility of being bounced into a further 6 year cycle, GB added that the Partnership Funding Calculator was a leveller, and given its strengths on agricultural land and environmental habitats the area was in a good position. The first step however was to get the business case in and if any money came spare in the current cycle we would be in a good position to get some as some of our projects were 'shovel ready'.

ix. Responding to DR about the several permits GB had mentioned a year ago as necessary to secure, GB also explained these were falling into place as those from Natural England had been signed off as part of the Business Case and those for FRAPs would be a formality once the Business Case was approved. IDB had also submitted a bespoke licence application for beneficial end uses of waste (clay for wall refurbishment): it had made a wrong application a few years ago, but now was now seeking the appropriate permit.

x. Asked if the model of the whole estuary could indicate the increased risk for the lower estuary if there was any delay, GB explained that the only risk would be to the 5 properties which he had previously mentioned and for which arrangements were being made. TB added that the reason to have the new wider partnership was to provide the opportunity for all questions like these to be addressed.

xi. FB asked whether the Orford section using the Andren money was independent of the second Business Case. GB said it was because the works should not change the flood risk, but he was checking that this was definitely the case. There was no intention to leave the lower estuary out, but for 2020 the focus had to be on the business case so the Orford section was not likely to be done in 2020.

xii. AR said that the key point for communication on this project was making sure that everyone understood how all this was going to work and why: communications was the priority. TB expressed thanks to Giles and David because they had always made themselves available for public meetings to explain what was going on and why.

## 6. Method of working

**a. Meeting frequency:** TB said it was for the Community Partnership to decide how to work and there seemed no need to meet every two months, particularly in relation to the strategy overview, so perhaps 2-3 times a year might be enough once things had settled down. AR said work streams would start to emerge: it was advisable to keep plans flexible. TB said that had worked well before and suggested that a smaller, 'officer', group could do the day to day issues but that was for the AOCP to think about.

PP asked how often there would be project updates as that could affect the timing for meetings. GB said that generally IDB reported quarterly at government level but they also had weekly staff updates such as on water vole catching and returns- this could provide material for communications too. On projects, FB spoke of the need to reach people before work started and then give appropriately frequent updates. GB said that was the plan and in practice where work was close to dwellings very frequent updates were needed, but in isolated areas where few people went less frequent was possible. JM said GB was selling himself short- a key part of the project was communication and the AOET gave money for communication: she had seen a draft communication plan and knew it entailed IDB going into every parish before works start and talking well beforehand. TB said that although that had been tried before, clearly the message had not got

through, so it was agreed that the new AOCP provided the opportunity to reset the project and its presentation and relaunch it.

b. **Communications:** TB suggested that Parish Councils, now all were involved, would be finding out what people wanted. FB said that while a lot in the papers was necessarily top down, parish councils would want to find out from the bottom up what people wanted to know, how they want to know it and how often, otherwise they would not feel involved however good the intentions at the top and this would be part of taking the communications work forward. There was also the need to carry on the regular messaging in places like the Village Voice. AR said that as we were all playing for one thing, this brought us back to communicating what we are doing. Also it was commented that projects are so complex now and people are beginning to realise why it all takes so long but communication will be key.

Ideas were given on what might be done, including small stories as well as big pictures. It was suggested that with 70+ parish councillors there should be communication expertise to call on. T-JH-C pointed out that everyone could help by drip feeding into Facebook and similar pages already in use, and others suggested there were parishes with social media which could be piggy backed upon. So all agreed to have meeting very soon.

AC (Boyton) felt a lot had been done in secrecy and wanted to know more about involvement, what engagement meant, what would have to be done to provide support and what if a community was not in favour? GB said that IDB was more than happy to communicate and hoped everyone would buy into the plan. Generally the IDB did not aim to impose compulsory solutions and would not try to deliver what was not possible, but he had never been in that position: he asked AC to phone him if that was ever the case.

**It was agreed** to keep the programme for strategy level meetings flexible. The immediate focus should be on communications including how the information was put over and how it might be presented to Parish Councils and the public at large. The meeting recognised RH's point on the need to provide new momentum and how what was done would affect public support and funding. It was **agreed** that the Community Partnership approach to communications should be the focus of the next meeting.

c. **Finance:** Referring to the Finance paper, AA explained that from the former AOEP accounts (copies of the final AOEP accounts were available for anyone to see) there was £6,025 in the unrestricted funds to be spent and £7,643 in restricted funds. The source of administration income from SCDC/ESC had been discontinued at the end of 2019. All agreed that AOCP, along with other estuary partnerships, should seek via SCF to have this restored. AR advised that provided a case was made explaining what was needed, funds could be found.

EG explained that the bank account needed re-arranging as HSBC had closed the AOEP account and made a cheque out to AOEP. It was suggested that when AOCP set up its new account it might be with a bank that championed climate change- as that would be yet another message to people.

**It was agreed** that a Treasurer could be appointed. Chris Gill, who had prepared the final AOEP accounts volunteered to do this.

d. **Secretariat** The meeting took note that a permanent secretary was needed. The work, essentially note taking, distribution of agenda and papers and some communication work might take at the minimum 3 1/3 days a month. It was suggested that if a volunteer could not be found then the post with some remuneration might be advertised once finance was clear. **Agreed.**

e. **The Alde and Ore Estuary Trust** TB invited JM to give some detail on the AOET and it was agreed that a paper would be circulated, now attached to these minutes.

## 7. **Election of officers**

As this was the first year of the AOCP, and the AOCP had not yet specified any set terms of office, the officers were elected for one year as follows

- i. **Chairman.** After a brief discussion, Tim Beach was unanimously elected to serve as Chairman,
- ii. **Vice Chairman-** Two names were suggested and it was agreed to have one from the parish council representatives. Frances Barnwell was then formally proposed and elected nem con,
- iii. **Treasurer-** Volunteers were asked for. (after the meeting Chris Gill, who had prepared the final AOEP accounts, volunteered)
- iv. **Representative at Suffolk Coast Forum-** agreed subject to checking there was no interest barrier with TB also sitting on RFCC, that TB would be the nominated representative.

## 8. **Date and time of next meetings**

All expressed a preference for meetings at 6.30pm and that Thursdays were generally the best day of the week.

Agreed that meetings would be open to the public, as today.

Next meetings

- a. One to be by early March focussing on communications
- b. Full AOCP meeting- date to be advised once progress or results of Business Application is known ( unlikely to be before end April)

8 February 2020 draft