



Lower Otter Restoration Project

Minutes of the Stakeholder Group Meeting

Seaton Wetlands Nature Reserve

11.00 am Wednesday 15 March 2017

1 - Attendees

Cllr Tom Wright (Chair)	East Devon District Council & Budleigh Salterton Town Council
Chris Woodruff	East Devon AONB
Cllr Geoff Jung	East Devon District Council - Colaton Raleigh
James Chubb	East Devon District Council
Cllr John Fudge	Otterton Parish Council
Ian Wycherley	Representing South Farm residents and businesses
Sam Bridgewater	EDPHCT / Clinton Devon Estates
Mike Williams	Environment Agency
Megan Rimmer	Environment Agency
Jayne Savage	Clinton Devon Estates
Andrew Howard	KOR Communication
Toby Wilson	Consultant CH2M
David Butler	Granary Lane residents
David Smith	South West Water
Roger Saunders	Otter Valley Association
Mark Rice	Environment Agency
Sarah Kingdom	Environment Agency
Luke Ritchie	South Farm
Jo Cullis	Consultant CH2M
Karn Shah	Consultant CH2M

2 - Apologies

Cllr Christine Channon	Devon County Council
Haylor Lass	Otter Valley Association

Introduction

After site visit of Seaton Wetlands hosted by James Chubb, Mark Rice, EA, welcomed everyone and explained purpose of the meeting which was to recap on the project objectives, to discuss feedback that had been received about the Long List and to condense all the current options into a Short List.

Recap

Megan Rimmer ,EA, confirmed the purpose of the project is to achieve more sustainable management of the Lower Otter in the face of climate change, and that it was important to focus on

the broad scale options – both those initially highlighted by the Estate/EA and also by third parties during past stakeholder engagement.

Options to be assessed against four criteria

1. Technical
2. Financial/Economic
3. Environmental
4. Social

1. Technical

- Desire to ensure the maximum amount of flood plain is functioning naturally.
- No increased risk of flooding to existing properties.
- To ensure EA involvement in the project there needs to be a minimum of 14.5 ha of intertidal habitat, of the right quality.
- Ensure no impact on drinking water abstraction.
- Resilient to climate change.

2. Financial/Economic

- Cost.
- Funding eligibility.
- Affordability.
- Maintenance requirements/ cost.
- Support of the landowner (desire from landowner to have as fully functioning floodplain and associated habitats as possible).

3. Environmental

- Habitat creation/improvements.
- Improved fish passage into Budleigh Brook.
- Improved status under the Water Framework Directive (WFD).
(it is a Heavily modified waterbody, so aiming for Good Ecological Potential).
- Deals with environmental risks (e.g. tip; pollution/ contamination; heritage/ archaeology; protected species). Potential for translocation of species (eg. orchids).

4. Social

- Maintain pedestrian access.
- Impact on footpaths, both national footpath and wider footpath network.
- Maintain satisfactory access to South Farm.
- Impact on tourism and recreation (including car parking).
- More certainty for local people in the face of climate change.

- The Stakeholder Group are involved now to:
- - check no vital options missed;
- - Help us to start collecting relevant information about options.

Question was raised as to weighting given to options from local resident support, businesses and the public.

Toby Wilson and Jo Cullis, CH2M Consultants, provided a report on the feedback received from Stakeholders and who they represent.

The purpose of the meeting was to discuss all the Long List options and to create a Short List. It was highlighted that a consensus would be desirable, although perhaps not possible.

The Long List options are:-

DN – Do Nothing – Not really a realistic option but used as a baseline as requested by DEFRA, could actually be a more expensive option in the long term.

DM – Do Minimum – Continue with what is currently being done (clearing culverts, repairing banks and footpaths with limited funds).

1. Taking into account the Nick Haycock report (keep water in BLUE section). See map Appendix 1.
2. Intertidal habitat with physical barrier.
3. Same as above but encourage water beyond the barrier into PINK area (shallower water increasing freshwater habitat).
4. Create a habitat in GREEN area (fresh not saline).
5. Putting back to how it was in the past (remove banks and landfill).
6. Existing assets/banks raised to protect properties.
7. Remove banks and impediments to river flow but not change the shape of the river.
8. Same as “Do Minimum” but also improve drainage.

Chart representing Stakeholders feedback Appendix 2.

EDDC Raleigh Ward – Cllr Geoff Jung reported that the feedback he has received would strongly object to the removal of footpaths if this was part of the project.

Granary Lane Residents – David Butler (representing 100 households, 60 bordering the estuary, 70 gave feedback). General message received was that they had chosen their residential location because of the view so why would they want it to change? A slow transition would be preferred, not an immediate mud flat. Some however do recognise that there has to be change. Also, confirmed support for South Farm and need to maintain access.

South Farm – Ian Wycherley raised the question of what is meant by “Satisfactory access to South Farm Road”. Main concern is vehicular access to South Farm should be 24/7. Probably option 6 would be their preference.

Otterton PC – Cllr John Fudge reported that they are happy to leave decision to the experts. Highlighted the need to ensure no properties are flooded during or after the project. Recognise the need to protect South Farm. Concerned that parking in Otterton should not become more of a problem.

OVA – Feedback had not been received by EA or CH2M before the meeting so not included on chart. Roger Saunders reported that they favoured Options 2, 3 and 5, with Option 5 probably having the most support.

Cllr Tom Wright reported that all areas under discussion are within East Budleigh P.C. or Otterton P.C. None is within Budleigh Salterton Town Council and therefore Budleigh Salterton Town Council are interested in and support the aspirations of the project but are not in a position to give their views on the options. Budleigh Salterton Cricket Club is their main concern.

A question was raised as to whether the Haycock Report was still valid as it is now 8 years old and focused mainly on drainage. Jo Cullis confirmed that although useful, the Haycock Report was not the driving force of the project or being used as the basis for decisions.

There were no further suggestions of options to be added to the Long List.

The meeting moved on to consider the other constraints of the project and where each option meets the needs of:

- Compensatory Habitat – There needs to be environmental benefit to meet the criteria for additional funding.
- Flood Risk – EA confirmed that Option 6 may not necessarily prevent future flooding.
- Landowner Support – Clinton Devon Estates would like to see as naturally functioning an estuary as possible; would not necessarily stand in the way of other options but not favoured.
- Funding Potential – This relates to EA funding not Heritage Lottery.

The conclusion was that Options 1, 4, 6 and 8 should be removed from the Long List.

Options DN, DM, 2, 3, 5 and 7 should remain and become the Short List.

David Butler was concerned that the DN and DM Options should not be discounted and only included to satisfy DEFRA requirements. Granary Lane Residents are in favour of the DM Option and therefore should continue to be considered along with the other options now on the Short List. Jo Cullis confirmed that DM will be considered as a variable option.

Megan Rimmer reported that there will be a Technical Steering Group meeting next week which will be attended by Natural England, Clinton Devon Estates, AONB, EA, South West Water, Devon County Council, the Otter Valley Association and Cllr Tom Wright (on behalf of the Stakeholder Group). This will be followed by a Project Board meeting in April to assess the Short List and discuss the public exhibition which is to be held in May or June.

Megan to draw up and circulate a List of Components - unconstrained breaches, car parking, (potential loss along South Farm Road) cycleway, park and walk.

Next meeting Wednesday 10 May 2017
Clinton Devon Estates, The Rolle Estate Office.