

PORTLAND TOWN COUNCIL

MARINE & ENVIRONMENT PARTNERSHIP MEETING HELD IN THE PETER TRIM HALL, ST GEORGE'S CENTRE ON WEDNESDAY, 2ND DECEMBER 2015

PRESENT: Councillors Ms S. Lees (Chair), Ms J. Atwell, Mrs S. Cocking, C. Flack, R. Nowak and R. Wild, Ruth Carpenter (Natural England), Mike Deadman (Heights Hotel & Portland Visitor Information), Philip George (Crown Estate), Leo Henley Lock (Dorset Wildlife Trust), Andy Matthews (Portland Community Partnership), Hannah Sofaer (Quarry Trust) and Peter Staddon (Working for a Better Portland)

IN ATTENDANCE: Catherine Bennett (Assistant Town Clerk)

1093 – APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Cllrs. J. Draper, C. Gover and D. Symes, Peter Allam (Weymouth & Portland National Sailing Academy) Geoff Peters (National Coastwatch Institute) and Matt Ryan (Weymouth & Portland Borough Council)

1094 – DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

1095 – MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 2ND SEPTEMBER 2015

The minutes were formally agreed and signed as a correct record. (For: 7 votes, Against: 0 votes, Abstentions: 4 votes)

1096 – MINUTE UPDATE AND MATTERS ARISING

Minute 1090 – Open Spaces, Hedgerows, Footpaths and Dry-Stone Walls

Cllr Flack informed the meeting that the moss had now been cleared at Maidenwell on High Street.

The Assistant Clerk was asked to write a letter to Stone Firms regarding the overgrown vegetation on Southwell Road and poor state of repair of the stone walls along Portland Bill Road, and the County about the highway safety implications.

1097 – CHISWELL / FLOOD LIMITATION

Mr Matthews said the Portland Community Partnership was holding some money made available by the Storm Wallace initiative to put towards the installation of a sandbag store. Nick Reed of the Environment Agency was due to meet up after the siren test on Friday 4th December to discuss funding options that would make up the shortfall of funds. It would be the Council that would host the grant application.

Cllr. Wild said flood procedures were among a number of updates to the Emergency Plan, which has been updated in November and a redacted version was now available for public view in Tophill Library. The Assistant Clerk was asked to put the redacted version on the website to make it more accessible.

1098 – DRY-STONE WALLS

Phillip George reported that the Court Leet was prepared to provide funding for repair, maintenance and training in the spring. The Court Leet would need a list of

walls that need work and a plan of action. He mentioned the Kingston Maurwood team being a ready source of support and training but we would need to have volunteers / trainees and wall sites ready for them to work on. Hannah Sofaer from the Quarry Trust will support and take part. She also suggested that we should be collecting slat as Inmosthay was the last quarry that this would be obtainable from and that this could be stored at Tout Quarry. Cllr Lees raised the issue of the ownership of the walls and clarified with Phillip George that no stone walls could be put forward for repair by the Court Leet. Most walls next to roads and paths were owned by Stone Firms which meant progress on repair and maintenance was difficult.

It was suggested that a meeting be organised in the New Year at the Drill Hall with the Quarry Trust, Cllr Lees, Mr George and Rachel Barton (who led on the previous walling sessions) to make some specific plans for the spring. It was thought that if one or two walls that could be worked on it would be a start to the project. The Assistant Clerk was asked to write an article in the Free Portland News explaining the project and asking for volunteers / trainees to come forward to start training in the spring and to ask for owners of walls to come forward. An email needs to be sent to Lyn Couch regarding any information she can provide on ownership of walls on the Island.

1099 – NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

Mr Matthews informed the meeting that the Economic Vision had been worked on over the last year and now an Executive summary was being developed. Dry stone walling as part of developing local skills could be built into the Economic Vision. However, they are now moving onto wider themes such as community and infrastructure. The plan is to have the Draft Policy Framework in place for March / April 2016.

There was discussion around a report picked up by Cllr West regarding an internal review on the cost benefits of building a Western Relief Road. The figures discussed were the cost to tunnel £95m and the cost to go over the top £35m. The report found it would need to cost less than £60m for there to be a cost benefit to the local economy. Cllr Wild wondered why cutting and covering was not discussed using Walker Crescent and the back of the Caravan Park. It was suggested that a series of smaller interventions such as park and ride could aid investment on Portland. Cllr Nowak felt it was unlikely that funding would be available and that the Western Relief Road just shifted the problem to Ferrybridge. He felt that the County could deal with incremental issues like Boot Hill reasonably cheaply and there were plans to deal with it specifically next year.

1100 – BROADBAND ON THE ISLAND

Mr Matthews stated that it was in the Neighbourhood Plan to work with the County to improve the provision for employment sites on Portland.

1101 – PUBLICATION OF COASTAL ACCESS REPORT: LYME REGIS TO RUFUS CASTLE AND CONSULTATION

There is a new ordnance survey map in the proposal stage. The map shows pink areas which will be areas of open access. There will be some areas excluded, for instance, if they are livestock areas. If the proposal goes ahead Cllr. Lees said she was pleased as this would give us better access to the coast. Ruth Carpenter

explained that all the representations and objections and the responses to the objections had been collated and will go before the Planning Inspector and then onto the Secretary of State. The first part of the route from Lulworth to Rufus Castle had been pushed through earlier to coincide with the 2012 Olympics and now the second route from Rufus Castle to Lyme Regis was in the pipeline. West Fleet would have a summer and winter route due to nesting birds. The paths and stiles would be maintained by the County but Natural England would pay for them.

1102 – PARKING ON THE ISLAND

Mr Matthews put forward the idea of village car parks and said that these could be put forward in the Neighbourhood Plan. Cllr Flack mentioned problems with people parking on grass verges. It was discussed that you can put mesh on the verges to protect the services from damage when they are close to the surface. Phillip George informed the committee that most verges on Portland were under local authority responsibility not the Crown Estate. The item will be carried over to the next meeting due to Cllr Gover not being present.

1103 – REFUSE BINS

Peter Staddon updated those present that there was some generally good news regarding Portland getting some more refuse bins. Cllr Nowak reported that it was a decision made at the Management Committee of Weymouth and Portland Borough Council on the 1st December that all wards in the Borough should receive more bins. However, there was a caveat that this should be within existing budgets. Overall, it is a good sign because there has been a shift in policy that all car parks should have a bin which is in direct contrast to the previous policy. Councillors and Mr Staddon would put a list together of sites for bins and would ask for 10 bins for each ward so a total of 30 bins. There is no guarantee Portland will get 30, but it will get more bins than we have at present. Budgets will include collection costs. Bins will need to be on Council or Crown land with the correct permissions being completed. The Court Leet has been working on getting bins at Portland Bill and the Chesil Beach Centre. Councillors will liaise with Jack Creeber, the new car parks manager. There is now real progress and this will go some way to valuing our landscape.

1104 – PORTLAND'S VISITOR INFORMATION CENTRE

Mike Deadman from the Visitor Information Centre reported to the meeting that they would have a new product for 2016. It was the "Portland Passport". This would also be hosted off Portland to bring people to Portland. In discussions with Matt Ryan from the Borough it was agreed that it would be stocked at all Tourist Information Centres in Dorset. Visitors will be able to get the passports stamped and if they get all the stamps from different sites they have a chance to win a free Island break. There is a breakfast meeting on the 7th January at 10.00 am at the Heights to discuss the website www.portlandtourism.co.uk, the passport and possible venues for them.

1105 – PORTLAND MAPS

Mr Deadman informed the meeting that the Portland Map had been produced and funded by the Community Partnership. Unfortunately, the maps have now run out and need financing to produce another run. It was stated that the maps had proved popular in all of the venues that hosted them and that they were a large part of the strategy to convince visitors that Portland was more than a drive to a lighthouse. The Council was asked to provide funding. It was agreed that this would need to be given to the Finance Working Group first and then onto full Council for a decision at the

next meeting on the 16th December 2015. Cllr Atwell asked that if the Council did fund the maps they be acknowledged. It was stated that this would be the case and Hannah Sofaer asked about updating some of their photos.

1106 – POCKET PARKS

Pocket Parks is a funding stream that community groups / charities supported by the Borough could possibly tap into to improve or create new open spaces on Portland for all to enjoy. Mr Matthews was unsure that this funding would return next year but Cllr Lees had heard that we should be ready for it with a proposal for next year. This funding had an urban slant and the criteria need to be read carefully. However, it may be that tightly populated Underhill with just one formal open space (Victoria Park) may qualify. The Quarry Trust is hoping to put forward through Simon King at the Borough for an entrance feature at Priory Corner for an improved entrance to Tout Quarry Sculpture Park. Therefore, it is possible that Portland may benefit from this funding this year if the bid is successful.

Mr Matthews mentioned that money from the carrier bag tax will be available again and there is an extended timeline on this. It is hoped that Easton Gardens will benefit from some extra lighting next year.

Cllr Nowak pointed out that more funding streams will develop and that the Council will need to take the lead and support community groups with tapping into these for the benefit of Portland.

1107 – LITTER ON WEST WEARES

The litter had been cleared on West Weares. It was discussed that another clear up was planned. It was suggested that Incline be a venue and that a clean-up should take place in the morning so lunch can be offered to the volunteers. Tesco funded the previous clean-up lunch but no funding was in place for the next one.

1108 – CLEARANCE OF VEGETATION

The Council's purchase of equipment to help volunteers to do clear ups and keep overgrowth cleared was discussed. Cllr Cocking felt the issues of PPE, risk assessment, insurance, maintenance and storage would be too great for the Council to take on. There was also the point made that in many cases the land owner should be taking responsibility. Cllr Wild wondered whether the Council should still purchase basic equipment such as litter pickers. Overall, it was felt that grants to local volunteer groups was the best way to support them. The Council had offered a previous grant to Working for a Better Portland. Any future grants would be awarded to them through the Community Partnership.

1109 – RESTORATION OF QUARRIES

Some questions were raised from on behalf of Cllr Leicester regarding clearance of cotoneaster and buddleia on the Island and the issues of striking the right balance. Leo Henley Lock gave his update and addressed the concerns raised by Cllr Leicester. The cotoneaster removal has now nearly come to an end and great effort was made to ensure that where root structure had to remain that this was done and therefore, not all cotoneaster has been removed. Buddleia is a pioneer species and moves into any disturbed ground and spreads easily. This and the cotoneaster need to be controlled or their spread put the very important grassland habitats on Portland at risk. Generally, grasslands are high on the agenda to protect because they are at

risk from disappearing. The population of blue butterflies rely on the plants that would grow if buddleia is not allowed to colonise. This is particularly important on Portland because it is the home to exceptionally rare breeds of blue butterflies. There is now a project over the next few years for mixed scrub removal and the Dorset Wildlife Trust will organise a walk if Councillors would like to be given further information on this.

The Quarry Park was discussed and was stated by Mr Henley Lock that it was to be a focal point to pull the threads of the environment, archaeology, history, industry and art together. The idea of providing wildlife corridors by joining good quality habitats together was discussed and how important the north Tophill sites would be for this. The plan includes sites already owned by The Dorset Wildlife Trust as well as “aspirational areas” that were still being discussed with quarry firms. Any working quarry areas that will be restored as quarrying completes will, of course, not be for public access. It was discussed that even the new quarries operating now would in the near future become industrial history when quarrying ceases on Portland and they in turn will become valuable landscapes and part of the community legacy. Dorset Wildlife Trust and Natural England wanted to reassure Cllr Leicester and anyone else concerned that the sites have SSSI status and that the stone companies are engaging with them on their plan for The Quarry Park and for proper restoration of the current quarries. The Quarry Trust were pleased that Portland had the Dorset Wildlife Trust and Natural England to take a particular interest and lead on Portland.

Cllr Rod Wild proposed and it was **RECOMMENDED** – that the Council take the lead on liaising between the Dorset Wildlife Trust, Natural England, the Quarry Trust, Crown Estates and the Community Partnership through the Marine and Environment Partnership. (13-0-0)

It was agreed that Cllr Wild would reply to Cllr Leicester with an update from this meeting.

1110 – WASTE COLLECTION

Members compared notes on areas cleared of rubbish and problems still occurring. There were still problems on Weston Street and in Westcliff. Councillors had received complaints from the public. Mr Matthews suggested Caroline Punchard, the Acting Head of Dorset Waste, was the best person to approach. The Assistant Clerk was asked to write to Dorset Waste regarding the ward walks promised in their previous letter of 22nd September to ask when they might take place. It was suggested that ward walks would be very useful for Dorset Waste to see the specific problems on the Island.

1111 – STANDARD AGENDA ITEMS (by exception)

a) Disused Quarries

Hannah Sofaer informed the meeting of plans for a project to create an outdoor theatre (amphitheatre) at East Cliff just above Church Ope. However, the site would need clearing where concrete has been dumped. Access is difficult, but there is some access through Bumpers Lane.

b) Litter and Fly-Tipped Material

It was suggested that there is some improvement on fly-tipping at present.

c) Run-Down Areas

The dilapidated house on the left near the top end of High Street was discussed as it is still very much an eyesore. Cllr Nowak updated us that the house has been compulsorily purchased by the Borough and it is condemned, but the Borough has not gone as far developing the site with some more housing which had been suggested by the Councillor. It was suggested by Mr Matthews that this could be a possibility for a Land Trust housing area under the neighbourhood plan.

d) Open Spaces, Hedgerows, Footpaths and Dry-Stone Walls

It was reported that the old Wakeham lookout for the quarry had recently been cleared.

Cllr Lees reported that the hedgerows from Cheyne Weares towards the Bill and from Cheyne House to Southwell were overgrown and dangerous. Some belong to Cheyne House boundary. Cllr Lees asked if Mr Staddon could approach Jane Richards at Cheyne House to do some clearing up along her boundaries.

Cllr. Lees referred to information from Tara Hansford from Dorset’s Local Access Forum that there is money to be spent on improving accessibility of paths in Dorset. It was suggested that we should see if Tara Hansford could attend the next meeting and that members should think of some possible paths that could be made more accessible for people with disabilities so we could access some of the available funding for Portland. Hannah Sofaer from the Quarry Trust informed the meeting that Tout was wheelchair accessible. Cllr Flack mentioned that the footpath between Avalanche and Ripcroft is too narrow at present and is not accessible for wheelchairs or buggies.

1112 – ISSUES RAISED BY PARTNERSHIP MEMBERS

It was suggested by Mr Staddon that the coastal path from Priory Corner should be sealed off completely because it was still possible to get along the coast path and he felt it was too much of a danger. Others present mentioned the existing fence and notices to the south of the Lano Bridge entrance to Tout Quarry. It was suggested that the public would need to heed the existing notices and that there would be an order putting the footpath through Tout Quarry. David Ackerley is the Rights of Way Officer and would be the one to approach if there were further erosion to the coastal path. The high possibility of further cliff falls was discussed.

1113 – DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The Chairman advised members that the next meeting of the Partnership was schedule to take place on Wednesday, 2nd March 2016.

The meeting ended at 9.25 pm.

Signed (Chair) Date