

PORTLAND TOWN COUNCIL

MARINE & ENVIRONMENT PARTNERSHIP MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY, 5th MARCH 2014

PRESENT: Councillors R. Denton-White (Chair), R. Hughes, A. Matthews, Mrs S. Reynolds. K. Tonkinson-Dutherford and R. Wild, together with Grant Armfield (Emergency Planning Officer, Weymouth and Portland Borough and West Dorset District Councils), Lyn Cooch (Dorset Countryside), Philip George (Crown Estate), Hannah Sofaer (Portland Stone Quarry Trust), Debbie Turner (Portland Port), Sandie Wilson (Portland Port) and Oscar Tollast (Dorset Echo)

IN ATTENDANCE: Pam Hamblin (Assistant Town Clerk)

979 – APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Charles Frampton (PSQT), Bob Elliott (Quality Time Training Ltd), Peter Allam (W&PNSA), Robert Sansom (HM Coastguard), Geoff Peters (NCI) and Sue Lees (Chesil Equestrian Centre)

980 – DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

981 – MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 4TH DECEMBER 2013

The minutes were formally agreed and signed as a true record.

982 – MINUTE UPDATE AND MATTERS ARISING

No issues were raised.

983 – COASTGUARD AND HELICOPTER SERVICE CLOSURES

There were no reports.

984 – OLYMPIC LEGACY

There were no reports.

985 – GRIT BINS

Twelve bags of rock salt have been purchased which have been placed on the lower ground floor of the Council Offices with the assistance of the Island Caretaker.

986 – ATTENDANCE OF A WPBC AT MEETINGS

The Borough Council is still seeking a volunteer and will keep us informed as to progress.

987 – DORSET COUNTY COUNCIL TRAFFIC AND CAR PARKING SURVEY

Cllr Denton-White said that this is a complex document which requires a professional response. Cllr Matthews had spoken with Dorset County Council and he is satisfied that there is no hidden agenda in the survey. It was agreed that he would prepare a draft response in the light of the Neighbourhood Plan and circulate it to members.

988 – DORSET QUARRIES LIAISON COMMITTEE

Discussion took place with regard to the purpose and work of the Committee. Cllr Matthews explained that it is a mechanism to look at a joined up process for quarrying and the other agencies involved at item 2 in its Terms of Reference.

Hannah Sofaer asked if there was any representation with regard to education and Cllr Wild suggested that any related issue would fall within 2(e) of the Terms of Reference if she wished to seek to contribute to any educational issue. After discussion, it was **RECOMMENDED** – the work of the Dorset Quarries Liaison Committee should report through this Partnership to the Town Council.

Cllr Matthews added that much of the work of the quarries and the future of former areas are already included in the Neighbourhood Plan.

989 – EMERGENCY PLAN

Cllr Wild introduced Grant Armfield to the meeting. Mr Armfield explained that as the Emergency Planning Officer for two councils he has a good sized workforce and a large area to cover. His background is that of a Chartered Engineer, having had over 30 years of experience in industry and local government. He worked on the tunnel at West Bay and the Victoria Square Pumping Station when working for Wessex Water.

He was asked to examine emergency planning in preparation for the 2012 Olympics. Portland has always had a number of key concerns – storms, the vulnerability of the beach road and communities at risk. He worked with Portland Port and Dorset County Council and put in place an off-site plan for the berthing of nuclear submarines at Portland Port. A Local Resilience Forum was formed, based on the Dorset Police Area, with all emergency services being part of the forum which comes together in times of emergency and use its reserves to mitigate the impact of any issues. It also looks at rock falls, landslips and pollution and works with Portland Port, Weymouth Harbour Commissioners and Dorset County Council on these.

In addition to emergency planning, he is responsible for business continuity in times of break down, for example if a hospital faced an operational emergency. He runs safety advisory groups and could come to address a town council to offer help and advice on local emergency planning. Such plans are the start of a linking the grass roots to tactical planning on a county basis and he stated that there are very helpful areas in our Emergency Plan.

In response to a question from Cllr Wild with regard to why, in the recent storms, residents were sent to the Portland Heights Hotel as a rest centre when this is not in the local plan, Mr Armfield said that there was a move from the Hotel to the Methodist Church as the storms continued. With regard to the recent storms, he said that the Met. Office can give 2-3 days' notice of storms and keep him updated. The Environment Agency then warns the community with alerts and warnings. If there are severe floods, as this year, for Chesil there could be a risk to life and then a procedure is put in place with for example, rest centres, timings of storms and tides and availability of vehicles on this side of the Island and the mainland.

Cllr Denton-White asked how did the sea defences hold up in the storms and why was water drainage carried out on the beach road during the day and not at night. Mr Armfield explained that he is not an engineer in his role as Emergency Planning

Officer and that the situation could be discussed with the Environment Agency, coastal engineers and emergency planners at the meeting at The Ship Inn, Portland between 4pm-7pm on 6th March 2014. He added that some defences did not hold or were weakened and visible efforts to recover are ongoing with military assistance. The reasons for any failure or weakening are affected by; the height of the tide, the surge, the wave height and the wave period. On 14th February 2014 one particular difficulty was the tidal impact which was spread over a longer period than usual. In addition, there were other areas of coastline to deal with including Lyme Bay and West Bay.

Hannah Sofaer mentioned environmental change and predicted rising sea levels in general and alternatives need to be found to deal with these. Mr Armfield replied that rising sea levels and increasing 'storminess' have been factors over the past two years. The severe weather has had a considerable factor but it may be a 'one off'. Hannah Sofaer said that the pattern is set already and asked again about alternatives. Cllr Matthews responded by saying that plans are in place for 100 years. Mr Armfield said that there is much local and national interest now in the storms and that work and research will be done to look at sea defences having learned from the recent experiences.

Cllr Hughes asked if we had missed an opportunity with the Olympics to raise the Beach road to a higher level as the drainage was unable to cope. Mr Armfield replied that this could be a different solution to the problems.

Sandie Wilson indicated that the better the condition of the Portland Beach Road, the better it is for Portland Port but that there were no issues for the Port due to the closure of the road. However, she stressed the importance of having a good road which is always open.

Mr Armfield stated that he felt that the Portland Beach Road was managed well. There were two potential flood risks – over Chesil Beach and flooding due to high tidal surges in Portland Harbour. Teams were on the road to put closures in place when they felt it was too dangerous. If such a situation was to become more frequent, temporary arrangements can be put in place as he recognises its importance as an arterial road. Cllr Wild said that the public were not informed as far back as they should have been of the closure which caused traffic problems. Mr Armfield replied that after the storms on 5th and 6th February 2014, debris from the waves on the cobbles together with standing water made it too dangerous for traffic which was travelling at speed, throwing up pebbles. The police and Highways Authority were consulted and it was decided to operate a one-way system.

Philip George said that he had no official perspective from the Court Leet on this topic but added that the 14th February was exceptional and he felt that the sea defences from the 1960s had stood the test well.

Cllr Hughes asked if the pebbles on the promenade mixed with tarmac are to be removed and Mr Armfield said that the Borough Council would clear but the priority is the sea wall and clearing up there. Philip George asked that the community be complimented on their voluntary work to clear Chesil Beach and the coastline. Cllr Denton-White said that he hoped the press would report this.

Mr Armfield agreed to meet with the Town Council in the next two months to consider its Emergency Plan.

990 – WEST WEARES

Cllr Wild reported that the Borough Council had indicated that they would erect a 'No Camping' sign if the beach hut owners paid the costs. Cllr Denton-White said that they would not pay and asked the Assistant Clerk to email the Borough saying that this proposal was not acceptable and that a sign should be erected at their expense. Lyn Cooch suggested that Natural England could be asked to be involved in this.

991 – TOURIST INFORMATION CENTRE

Cllr Matthews explained that the Portland Community Partnership had evolved the strategy for the future of tourist information and had encouraged the Portland Heights Hotel to become involved and therefore the PCO supports their proposal as a starting point. **RECOMMENDED** – the Council supports the proposal for a Tourist Information Centre at Portland Heights Hotel and that the current Tourist Information Points should carry information and leaflets about local attractions which they currently do not do.

Cllr Wild asked what may be the future of the Portland Bill Lighthouse. Philip George replied that he had no further information and Lyn Cooch reported that she had been asked to remove the Dorset Countryside displays and that the lease had come to an end and no further news was available. Cllr Matthews added that part of the PCP strategy is to have information at other venues on the Island to encourage visitors all year.

992 – AGENDA ITEMS (by exception)

a) Disused Quarries

Hannah Sofaer asked how the empty quarries would be used and that she would like to see them revert to open spaces. Cllr Matthews said that he is writing an evidence paper with regard to housing and open land and the question is part of the Neighbourhood Plan.

Lyn Cooch reminded the meeting of Portland Quarries Nature Park and that Dorset Wildlife Trust had a grant of £1m to look at access points and a strategy is being formulated for consultation. The Heights Hotel is a good access point from which to sign visitors and it would be of assistance if the car park is made a public one.

b) Litter and Fly-Tipped Material

Cllr Wild agreed to prepare a report on the work of the Island Caretaker for the next meeting.

c) Run-Down Areas

Cllr Denton-White accepted that the Town Council has few resources to deal with these itself. Cllr Matthews drew attention to Groundwork South which is an agency set up to look at the generation of greening and that they have a contract to tidy up Osprey Quay. Lyn Cooch added that they are working with her in respect of planting for wildlife using native plants and involving local schools. Little progress has been made recently due to the bad weather. Further, they are keen to get involved in projects such as E-Battery below the naval cemetery. Cllr Matthews stressed that it is local people who should be involved, providing employment and training; we

should take ownership of our environment and that the Island does not benefit as much as it should from such projects.

Cllr Denton-White asked whether there was any further progress on opening the path from the Naval Cemetery to Nicodemus. Sandie Wilson responded by saying that the Port is always looking for new projects and that this can be considered again. It would be a very expensive undertaking and there are other issues such as the security of the Port to be taken into account.

Lyn Cooch mentioned that the volunteer Coastal Rangers are currently organised by Dorset County Council and that the South West Coastal Path Association would prefer a joining of forces to report regularly to the Association. It was agreed that a representative of the SW Coastal Path Association be invited to the next meeting with a view to becoming a member of the Partnership.

Cllr Wild, on behalf of Sue Lees in her capacity as the Dorset representative of the British Horse Society, mentioned that the Society has given monies to upgrade paths to bridle paths and it may be that some Portland paths could be upgraded as a result.

d) Dry-Stone Walls

The Assistant Clerk reported that the dry-stone walling near the Bill was now scheduled for repair by DCC Highways Authority.

993 – ISSUES RAISED BY PARTNERSHIP MEMBERS

Cllr Denton-White reported that he and Hannah Sofaer had spent time in preparing a response to the Jurassic Coast Communities Forum with regard to Portland and the Jurassic Coast. He stated that the Island is left out of most of the areas of concern especially geological, environmental and arts policies. Any response from the Forum will be discussed at the next meeting of the Partnership.

Sandie Wilson raised the issue of cruise ships arriving at Portland with a view to the passengers visiting Stonehenge. She suggested that we should be marketing local tourist opportunities. Cllr Denton-White asked if the Town Crier was involved with the cruise ships. Cllr Matthews added that Angie Mustill was keen to discuss with Portland Port the idea of a minibus tour of Portland with a pick up at the Port for cruise passengers. The members indicated that they will look forward to feedback from the Portland Heights with regard to tourist information at the next meeting.

Cllr Hughes asked if there is a plan to reopen a diving facility at the Port. Sandie Wilson said there was not. Cllr Denton-White thanked the representatives of Portland Port for attending the meeting and they then left at 8.45pm.

Hannah Sofaer said that the training of young people under the Quarry Trust is ongoing and that several people from mental health groups are making nice work. One local person had been commissioned for future work.

Cllr Tonkinson-Dutheridge said that he had a problem with dog fouling on his land and asked if anyone knew where he could purchase some containers. Cllr Wild responded that if Cllr Tonkinson-Dutheridge provided the bins perhaps the Island Caretaker deal with it. Cllr Wild said that the Borough charges £250pa to remove it. However, it is a private road and they will not collect from there. Lyn Cooch said that

there are three trial bins at New Ground, Portland Bill and the Tout car park which are collected by the Borough. However, she had received reports that the bins were being used for general waste. She suggested that Cllr Tonkinson-Dutherford obtains a bin, places it on the collection route and seeks to persuade the Borough, via Mark Pizzey, to collect it.

994 – DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The Chair advised members that the next meeting of the Partnership would take place at the Council Offices on Wednesday, 4th June 2014, starting at 7.00pm.

The meeting ended at 8.58pm.

Signed (Chair) Date