

**NEW ORFORD TOWN TRUST  
REGISTERED CHARITY 1053729**

**The Town Hall, Market Hill, ORFORD, Woodbridge, Suffolk IP12 2NZ**

**Minutes of the 204th meeting of the New Orford Town Trust held on  
Wednesday 18 January 2017, at 6.30pm in Orford Town Hall**

**MINUTES**

Fiona Tibbitt and Ros Preston (Natural England) and Luke Godwin (Eastern IFCA) attended the meeting to give a presentation and answer questions about the proposed Alde and Ore Marine Conservation Zone and how it might affect Orford and the NOTT. The Chairman welcomed them to the meeting and thanked them for attending. During the presentation Councillors asked questions.

Ms Tibbitt began by saying that Natural England had given this presentation to a number of stakeholders in the area during this pre-consultation period of informal engagement. She looked forward to hearing some more information about NOTT and the way it manages its stretch of the river. The presentation detailed the European and English and Welsh legislation under which management currently takes place. There are currently 50 MCZs which were designated in 2 tranches (2013 and 2016), and the aim the third tranche aims to complete a 'blue belt' to fill in the ecological gaps in the network. The 2 areas relevant to Orford are Orford Inshore and the Alde Ore Estuary. There will be a 12-week formal consultation will take place over summer 2017 and Natural England will put give their advice to Defra in February 2018. Stakeholders won't be able to see the advice before it goes to Defra, but will be able to view it then.

Ms Tibbitt explained that the reasons for designating the Alde Ore Estuary as an MCZ were that it contained: areas of sheltered muddy gravels (which give complexity into an otherwise muddy habitat); estuarine rocky habitats (Natural England is satisfied that these are man-made, and has passed this information onto Defra); it is a spawning ground for smelt; and it contains Orfordness geographical feature. Cllr M Finney pointed out that Orfordness is already designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), and Ms Tibbitt commented that if the MCZ designation goes ahead, then that would include the subtidal area from mean high water down to 5m depth.

Re Smelt, Ms Tibbitt said that there is evidence of spawning in the estuary (this can be evidenced through the size of the smelt), though the exact location is not known. It may be upstream from the sluice at Snape Maltings. Cllr P Smith queried if there were statistics relating to the population of smelt, and Ms Tibbitt replied that the Environment Agency might have that information. Cllr M Smy pointed out that the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) lists smelt as being in the category of 'least concern'. Ms Tibbitt responded that this might well be the case on a European level, but there is a discrepancy between the European and English smelt situations, and the MCZs are focussed on England. Mr Godwin likened this to the high conservation status the water vole enjoys in England, whereas in Germany it is treated as a pest. Ms Preston commented that there has been a huge decline in smelt levels nationally. Cllr M Smy said that no one in the estuary fishes for smelt, and asked what measures might be put in place to protect them. Ms Preston said that a fish ladder at Snape Sluice might be considered, and the rest of the estuary might be left alone. It was commented that the presence of smelt was an indicator of good water quality, but that water quality cannot be judged only on this factor.

Ms Preston said that data showed an increase in the amount of smelt between 2013 and 2015. Councillors questioned the testing methods, and Ms Preston said that she would try and get hold of the raw data. Councillors suggested that increasing levels of smelt show that the estuary is already being well managed, and Ms Preston said that Natural England had already advised Defra of this. Cllr M Finney commented that the reason it is in such a good state is that it has been looked after so well, and there is now a fear that we might be constrained and not able to carry on with what we are doing. Ms Tibbitt commented that there are processes which need to be gone through, and some activities need to be looked at. Such activities might include dredging and piling. After a question from Cllr P Smith she

also commented that the MCZs aim to protect the areas from pressures in the future.

Ms Preston took over the presentation to talk about Orfordness. The MCZ designation would protect the area around Orfordness from mean high water down to 5m depth. They know that this feature is mobile and that its form will change over time. Cllr J Robinson asked what it needed to be protected from, and Ms Preston gave an example of taking shingle away. Ms Tibbitt said that landing and anchoring would be unlikely to be affected. The other area proposed for designation is Orford Inshore, which is located 14km off the coast.

Re Management of MCZs, the Marine Management Organisation (MMO) is responsible for overseeing licensable activities, and Eastern IFCA has powers to enforce fishing regulations. Ms Preston reported that any restrictions would be put in place only after designation, but that once a site is designated it doesn't necessarily mean that it would be controlled. If there is seen to be no damaging interaction, then no measures would be put in place. Any options for management would be put in place in consultation with stakeholders, and when deciding on any management options, Defra would take into account any socio-economic impact. Any such impact is not within the remit of Natural England, but Mr Godwin said that IFCA would include a socio-economic assessment.

Mr Godwin advised the Trustee that IFCA is only concerned with fishing, and that the MMO deals with issues regarding licensable activities. Both IFCA and MMO would advise on any potential restrictions and would engage with stakeholders on this. MMO would still have to carry out a formal consultation. Cllr M Finney asked if the MMO would be as helpful as Natural England/Eastern IFCA have, and come to a meeting to speak with the Trustee. Mr Godwin believed that they would be helpful. The Clerk reported that a private company (APBmer) has been tasked with carrying out a study into the impact (or lack of) of recreational activities on the marine environment, and that she has emailed Councillors with a link to the study, which would certainly be relevant to NOTT.

Ms Tibbitt reported that the deadline for evidence to be passed to Defra has now passed. The 12-week period of public consultation will take place in the summer. There will be forms for members of the public and stakeholders to fill in. Cllr M Smy mentioned the use of 'reference areas'. These were to provide areas which demonstrate the un-impacted state of a broad range of marine features, and were intended to provide a comparison for other areas. Ms Tibbitt said that it was accepted that the use of these areas was flawed and they were no longer used, and have been taken out of MCZ projects.

Cllr M Finney pointed out that this is the second attempt to get the Alde Ore Estuary designated as an MCZ. He asked what had changed since the first attempt was unsuccessful. Ms Tibbitt confirmed that the criteria for designation haven't changed, but that in the Alde Ore Estuary there is now more evidence of the relevant features and habitats. Ms Preston pointed out that in the original surveys (prior to the first attempt at designation) there was only one location where muddy gravels were found. More recent surveys have identified 10 locations. Cllr M Finney pointed out that locations of such features would change after, ie, the recent storm surge. Ms Preston acknowledged that this was the case. Cllr J Robinson asked what damages muddy gravels, and Ms Tibbitt responded that things like dredging, anchoring and piling. Cllr F Finney asked what would happen if areas of muddy gravel were found, for example, in the moorings area. Ms Tibbitt responded that they would look at activity and interaction before making any decisions regarding possible restrictions. Councillors commented that NOTT was nervous that our activities might be affected, and that they provide a source of income for us. Ms Tibbitt pointed out that the habitats were already subject to natural stresses and that additional stress would not be desirable. She suggested that designation might have its advantages, with more people visiting and benefitting the local economy.

Cllr M Smy asked where NOTT stands as owner of the river bed. Ms Tibbitt acknowledged that they need to know more about how NOTT manages the area. Cllr P Smith asked if the minister had legal powers to designate our area, even though it is in our ownership. Ms Tibbitt replied that in terms of other designations (ie SSSI), these do occur on private land, but she Natural England has informed Defra about NOTT's ownership.

Mr Godwin gave a short presentation about IFCA's role in working towards sustainable fisheries, healthy seas and a viable fishing industry. IFCA also has a research team which looks into the impact of fishing activity, and he stressed the importance of dialogue before deciding on any regulations. He said that designation as an MCZ would not automatically mean regulation, and that there is the possibility that it might have no effect. After designation there is a 2-year window to assess any sites and to bring in any measures necessary. It's about getting a balance between good management and enabling activity. Cllr M Smy mentioned a case recently where someone had applied for a fishing licence from NOTT, but had been turned down, yet he had been seen in the river. Mr Godwin said if designation went ahead, NOTT might be able to agree certain management measures (such as limiting the size of vessels allowed to fish in NOTT's area of river) which Eastern IFCA could help to enforce.

Ms Preston said that she would email the Clerk the PowerPoint presentation for her to forward to members of the Trustee.

The Chairman thanked Ms Tibbitt, Ms Preston and Mr Godwin for attending the meeting, and they then left.

Present: Cllrs I Thornton (Chairman), D Brenchley, M Finney, M Golder, M Green, J Howard, M Iliff, A Macro, R Mallett, J Robinson, M Smy and P Smith. Clerk in attendance

**1. Apologies for absence**

Full trustee in attendance.

**2. Declarations of interest**

Cllr D Brenchley: allotment holder; Cllr M Finney: member of Orford Sailing Club, river user, Chairman of the Orford and District Inshore Fishermen's Association, Trustee of Orfordness Lighthouse Trust, Director of Cobra Mist Ltd; Cllr M Golder: relative lives in Bakers Lane cottage, supplier to Orford Country Market; Cllr M Green (allotment holder); Cllr J Howard: Commodore of Orford Sailing Club, plot holder; Cllr M Iliff: member of Orford Sailing Club; Cllr A Macro: allotment holder, supplier to Orford Country Market, Chairman of the Recreation Ground Charity, and married to a quay user (fisherman); Cllr R Mallett: relative of an allotment holder; J Robinson as a river user and member of Orford Sailing Club; Cllr P Smith as a river user and member of Orford Sailing Club; Cllr M Smy: allotment holder, plot holder, mooring holder.

**3. Minutes of the 203rd meeting held on 16 November 2016**

These were agreed and signed as an accurate record.

**4. Matters arising from the 203rd meeting held on 16 November 2016**

- The Clerk had written to Ms Coffey at the end of November regarding the proposed MCZ. Having had no reply, the Clerk re-sent the letter via email, with no response as yet.
- Re internet banking: the new Treasurer is looking into this.
- The Clerk reported that a parishioner had come forward who was willing to help with Village Voice. Previously the editor had put together each issue on a desk-top publishing programme and emailed a PDF to the printers. For the past few months the Clerk has been emailing a Word document for Leiston Press to set, and this is costing an additional £24 per month. The parishioner in question would do what the Clerk is doing now. It was suggested that NOTT should purchase a desk-top publishing programme and that the Clerk should put the Word document into the correct format, emailing a completed PDF to Leiston Press. This would also mean that the office has sight of the newsletter before it goes to print. It was agreed unanimously to proceed with purchase of the software.
- The Clerk reported that work on the planking on the Quay was now complete. It was agreed that in future 3 quotes should be obtained where at all possible.
- The Clerk reminded the Trustee that at the previous NOTT meeting, the Trustee had agreed to proceed with its own website. Mr Hipwell had then sent a further email saying that he could reduce NOTT's space to one page, and that the charge for this would be £55

per annum. The Clerk had forwarded this email to all Councillors, and the outcome was to stick with the original decision to proceed with a new website, which would still be cheaper.

- Cllr I Thornton reported that there was a pile of spoil close to the area where the concrete pad had been laid for the bins. It is believed to have come from the digging out that was done, and it was suggested that this should have been spread out along the bank. Cllr J Robinson agreed to look at this and contact the contractor if required.
- Stony Ditch: Cllr I Thornton reported that no reply had yet been received from Iain Mills at Crown Estate, and it was agreed that a follow-up letter should be sent.
- Cllr J Robinson reported that he would meet with Mr Rindy Frost about his request to lease a plot of land.

## 5. Treasurer's report

Cheques and balances from 1-30 November 2016  
These were accepted by the Trustee.

## 6. Committee reports

No **Estates/Highways** meeting this month

No **Riverside** meeting this month

Firework incident on Quay: on New Year's Eve a large firework was set off at the Quay, resulting in damage to the non-slip fibreglass panels on the edge of the Quay. It appears that fireworks have been let off here in the past, but that there is usually no damage.

The Clerk reported that a parishioner had asked if they could put some sand onto the children's beach area. The Clerk had written to advise them that this would not be possible as MMO regulations do not allow it.

It was reported that during the recent storm surge there had been a leak in the river wall behind the Sailing Club.

**ACTION Clerk to report the above to the Environment Agency**

It was reported that the slipway needed to be cleaned.

**ACTION Cllr J Robinson to ask Quay Warden to clean**

## 7. General Trust business

- Clerk's report on outstanding matters
  - The Clerk reported that planting of the 3 alder trees by the riverside pond, and the 2 silver birches in the cleared area of the car park was now complete. The plan is to put grass around the silver birches, and Cllrs M Smy and R Mallett offered to do this. It was agreed to purchase some more grass seed from Walnes.
  - The Clerk has chased the National Trust again regarding the outstanding leases.
  - The Clerk reported that she had had to cancel Kerway from carrying out the work resurfacing the car park after the oil spill last year. There is some issue with the insurance, and the Clerk is waiting for confirmation that we can go ahead and get the work carried out.
- Discussion re proposed MCZ: Councillors to consider the presentation given this evening to consider any follow-up questions which need to be asked.
- Website: the Clerk reported that the new Parish Council and NOTT website is now up and running, and she wished to thank Maria Brenchley for allowing her photographs to be used on the website. The OBA website contains a link to the new PC/NOTT website and it was agreed to put a link to the OBA website on our new one. The Clerk had come across an Environment Agency widget showing if there were any flood alerts in the area, and it was agreed to put this on the website.
- The Clerk reported that a parishioner had contacted her after he had hit his car on the

Quay Street car park bicycle racks in the dark. He had wondered if NOTT's insurance would cover the damage done to his car. The Clerk had contacted NOTT's insurance broker who had said that it would not. It was suggested that the Clerk should get this in writing.

**8. Correspondence**

There was none.

**9. Items for next meeting**

Quarterly accounts to 31 December 2016

Budgets

The meeting ended at 8.25pm.

**10. Date of next meeting: Wednesday 15 February at 6.30pm.**