

BUDLEIGH SALTERTON TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES of the Annual Town Meeting held at the Public Hall, Station Road, Budleigh Salterton on Thursday 21 April 2022 at 7.00pm.

PRESENT

Cllr R D Sherriff (Town Mayor)
Cllr M C Hilliar (Deputy Town Mayor)
Cllr A F Chaplin
Cllr Mrs L D Evans
Cllr A J Harris
Cllr D J Hayward
Cllr A L Jones
Cllr Mrs M P Lewis
Cllr D Tate

Town Clerk: Mrs J E Vanstone

Others Present: District Cllr A J Dent, District Cllr P M Jarvis, District Cllr T D Wright and eleven members of the public

Welcome by the Town Mayor

The Town Mayor, Cllr R D Sherriff welcomed everyone.

125. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received and accepted from Cllr R J Doorbar, Cllr Mrs C A Sismore-Hunt, County Cllr Mrs C Channon and Mr R Harris.

126. Minutes

The Minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held on Tuesday 27 April 2021 had been circulated prior to the Meeting. It was unanimously agreed they be signed as a true record.

The Town Mayor, Cllr R D Sherriff then introduced Dr Sam Bridgewater, Head of Wildlife & Conservation at Clinton Devon Estates, will give an update on the Lower Otter Restoration Project (LORP).

127. Guest Speaker

Dr Bridgewater thanked Cllr Sherriff for the invitation to speak to the meeting. He then explained that consent for the Project had been received in January 2021.

A main compound/HQ had been set up at the top of Granary Lane. The Environment Agency was the project lead, the main contractor is Kier, assisted by Jacobs (who are looking after the ecology aspects). The relocation of the Cricket Club wickets (both senior and junior) had been done and the coming season would be the last at Ottermouth; from 2023 the Club would transfer to new site. He added that the Cricket Club was taking on the delivery of the new clubhouse.

He then advised that some hedgerows and trees had been removed with the work done under the correct licences, outside bird breeding seasons etc. Ecologists had been on hand to check beforehand – the following had been found:

- three active dormouse nests – 30 inactive
- seven active harvest mouse nests – 130 inactive
- slowworms

This process was now largely complete.

Machines would be seen in the valley “mowing” the grass to keep it low and discourage nesting etc.

400 southern marsh orchids had been relocated along with Translocated Divided Sedge and Gallingdale (nationally scarce plants).

The open estuarine inter tidal area had been cleared of trees and would look better without dead trees.

The creek network had been dug north of South Farm Road and when the tide came in, it will be naturalised – white footed geese and glossy ibis could be seen there.

The team was getting ready for the new South Farm Road which would be raised by 2.5m, the surface being the same height as White Bridge. Material had been stored on the old tip and then when all in, the embankment would be created. Once consolidated, the road will be built on top. He said that it might look very high but would not be.

Pilings had gone in to create a coffer dam – 30m road bridge between South Farm Cottages and the old tip so when the area does flood, access would be OK. Approximately 40 pilings had gone in as well as the footings for the bridge.

70m footbridge would be built with public access maintained at all times, so residents could walk up embankment. The northern part of footpath would be closed for a time. The LORP website and Kier newsletter contain all this information and there would also be an exhibition at Fairlynch Museum.

He then asked if there were any questions.

- Joanna Knott said that with the earth removed, it looked as if it could be used for housing and asked if that was the plan.
Dr Bridgewater (SB) said the soil had been removed so that the field could be returned to agriculture after the project was completed. He explained that if it had been left, it would compacted.
- Alan Tilbury asked if the pebble ridge would be removed.
SB said it would be left. It had been in its current form for many years and predated the embankment. When the tide was let in there would be some movement and it would take a while for natural environmental evolution and there would be some natural change from the end near the lifebuoy. He said South West Water would be carrying out some infrastructure work in Lime Kiln Car Park so the outflow would be fit for the future. He added that a planning amendment would be submitted relating to the western footpath to raise the path to safeguard access. He was not sure if the FAB Link project would be go ahead but the LORP work should not interfere.
- Bob Wiltshire asked about recreational use of the estuary.
SB explained that there was an assumed public right of navigation in tidal water – the odd canoe would go up and go out to sea again. This could not be stopped unless a detrimental impact on the Site of Special Scientific Interest can be proved. He hoped this could be controlled by signage or design out the ability to launch craft but as landowner there were limited powers to do that. The Environment Agency, Natural England or East Devon District Council (EDDC) create bylaws. The project was to create an inter tidal habitat with minimal disturbance and there was no definite answer to this issue.
- Bob Wiltshire also asked if there was going to be a warden.
SB said that there was not a lot of work to be done on the estuary. However a ranger would be beneficial and one would be appointed at some point, although he was not sure of timings etc.
- District Cllr A J Dent asked if SB was concerned by the recent big cliff fall.
SB said he was not particularly concerned as there was a lot of coastal erosion although he was aware this was a thorny issue.
- Cllr Dent then asked if everything had been removed from the Cricket Club.
- SB said this was a complicated scheme largely driven by money as the funding from Interreg ends in March 2023 and that was why the phasing was tight!
- Cllr Dent asked if the project was on time.
SB said it was time, but tight like all projects.

Cllr Sherriff thanked Dr Bridgewater for his time and enlightening the audience on the Project.

Cllr Sherriff then gave an update on the Community Actions of the Budleigh Salterton Neighbourhood Plan (BSNP). He said that the Plan had been 'made' in 2017 and contained policies which the Town Council (BSTC) used when considering planning applications. The effectiveness of the policies would be mentioned in Cllr M C Hilliar's planning report later in the meeting. BSTC had considered 96 applications during the past year and only three had been overturned by EDDC which showed the policies were working.

He then explained that when the work on BSNP had started, questionnaires had been sent out to the community and these responses had been included in the Plan as Community Actions. He explained that just because they were in the plan did not mean that hundreds of residents had asked for their inclusion – it could have been just two or three!

He said that a full review of the Community Actions had been circulated earlier but he would go through the more interesting ones:

- H1 – Maintain contact with EDDC. BSTC had an excellent relationship with EDDC and three great district councillors who worked hard on behalf of the Town. Wherever possible BSTC would take account of residents' views and pass them on to EDDC. One example was the rewilding of The Green.
- B2 – Maintaining/improving street furniture. New bollards had been installed in the High Street and the former gas lighting bollards around the town had been repainted. EDDC had started to re-stain the benches on the seafront and he hoped that work would be finished in the next couple of months.
- NE1 – Planting and regeneration of trees. The BS Climate Change Group were looking at this and BSTC was working with EDDC to plant new trees on The Green; rewilding is an ongoing action which will be continued for the foreseeable future.
- EC5 – Signage at key junctions. He said this was a bit of an issue and it was unfortunate that County Cllr Mrs C Channon was not present. Some directional signs needed some attention but BSTC would take action during the coming year. Budleigh Salterton was the only town wholly within the East Devon Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and Budleigh Salterton Town Council and EDDC had to take consideration of this when making decisions.
- CLW2 – Keeping the beach and seafront attractive. Budleigh Salterton Lions had done an amazing job over the last year with litter picking. Other litter picks had been carried out by the Marine Conservation Agency and EDDC Streetscene had done an excellent job, keeping bins empty and toilets clean during covid. BSTC has employed someone to clear weeds in public areas and this was working well.
- CLW3 – Provision of water sports activities. A Licence had been given to a firm for renting kayaks and paddleboards. This was excellent but did lead to issues of mis-use and members of the public paddling up the estuary. He hoped that some legal parameters could be used to stop this.
- CLW9 – Provision of a Multi-use Games Area. He was pleased that a MUGA had been installed at Greenway Lane in 2018.
- TT1 – Provision of footpaths at locations where there were none. This was one of the most contentious Community Actions. Many roads did not have footpaths, but the worst was the lack of a footpath at Evans Field – this was an area of dispute between the developer and Devon County Council and was concerning as something should have happened some time ago but had not.

- TT3 – Appointment of a planning consultant to review the High Street. Changes to the layout of the High Street had attracted a universally negative response on social media. A survey had been commissioned, which had attracted a poor response (4% of population). During the last couple of years BSTC has been supporting residents of the town affected by covid and it needed to make sure that the community was not disadvantaged by BSTC spending money on something which was not needed.

One member of the public left the meeting.

Cllr Sherriff suggested breaking for refreshments during which time the audience could read the reports pack and ask any questions afterwards.

128. Reports

The Reports of the following Committees were received (these are in the Reports pack appended to these Minutes):-

- Chairman of the Town Council (Cllr R D Sherriff)
- Chairman of the Planning Committee (Cllr M C Hilliar)
- Chairman of the Finance Committee (Cllr D J Hayward)
- Chairman of the Public Hall Committee (Cllr Mrs L D Evans)
- Chairman of the Foreshore & Footpaths Committee (Cllr R D Sherriff)
- Chairman of the Community Gardens Committee (Cllr A F Chaplin)
- Chairman of the Community Infrastructure Levy Committee (Cllr D J Hayward)
- Chairman of the Budleigh Salterton Traffic Group (Cllr A L Jones)
- Chairman of the Budleigh Salterton Emergency Group (Cllr A J Harris)
- Chairman of the Budleigh Salterton Climate Change Group (Cllr M C Hilliar)
- Budleigh Salterton Covid Support Group (Cllr Mrs M P Lewis)
- County Councillor
- District Councillors

129. Open Forum

No questions had been received prior to the Meeting and none were raised by attendees.

- District Cllr T D Wright advised that the EDDC Annual Car Park permit cost just £120 whereas the hourly charge had increased to £2. He said the permit had been designed for residents and encouraged the audience to spread the word!

The Town Mayor, Cllr R D Sherriff thanked everyone for attending.

There being no further business, the Meeting closed at 8.00pm.

.....
Chairman

.....
Date