

BUDLEIGH SALTERTON TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES of the Annual Town Meeting held at the Public Hall, Station Road, Budleigh Salterton on 15 March 2023 at 7.00pm.

PRESENT

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

Town Clerk: Mrs J E Vanstone

Others Present: County Cllr Mrs C Channon, District Cllr A J Dent, District Cllr P M Jarvis, District Cllr T D Wright and twenty-five members of the public

Welcome by the Town Mayor

The Town Mayor, Cllr M C Hilliar welcomed everyone.

130. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received and accepted from Cllr A F Chaplin and Cllr Mrs C A Sismore-Hunt.

131. Minutes

The Minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held on Tuesday 21 April 2022 had been circulated prior to the Meeting. It was unanimously agreed they be signed as a true record.

The Town Mayor, Cllr M C Hilliar then introduced Kelly Cowling from Kier (attending via Zoom) and Dr Sam Bridgewater, Head of Wildlife & Conservation at Clinton Devon Estates, who would be providing an update on the Lower Otter Restoration Project (LORP).

132. Guest Speakers

Kelly Cowling thanked the Mayor for the opportunity to speak to the Meeting. She then went through the various parts of the Project:

New South Farm Road:

- The high voltage power and BT services had been removed from the landscape and were now within the road.
- The new road ramped up with main off-line surfacing had been completed in early February 2023 with tie-ins at South Farm Road and White Bridge completed.
- The road had been opened which was a major milestone for the project.
- The switch over of traffic to the new road would allow the decommissioning of the old road surface; this will be punctured to allow a drainage path and then a final layer of site won material pushed over to form slope protection.
- The existing Kersbrook ditch will be connected to the new creek at South Farm Road bridge where pipes will be installed allowing the remaining footpath to be completed to the North West

Tree Planting:

- In December 2022 the first of 23,000 trees were planted.
- Major planting locations include big bank, Pulhayes Farm and the former landfill area.

Breach works and footpath:

- Excavation of the footbridge (Dry side) will start once necessary works to the north Pier are done. The completion of the excavation will be the catalyst to start the main breach works and the site becoming intertidal. It should be noted that the breach will cover a duration of six weeks and will not be an instant visual change.
- The footbridge is to be delivered in sections and bolted together (wind dependant).

The scheme achieved another top score of 45/45 in their recent CCS assessment <https://www.ccscheme.org.uk/>.

She then asked if there were any questions.

Q Were there any specific drainage issues at the old tip?

A Kelly said this was now part of the creek network but she would double check this information and update the Clerk.

Kelly left the Meeting and Dr Sam Bridgewater then carried on the presentation. He said he hoped to fill in any gaps that Kelly had not covered.

He said once the work was complete, the site would revert to the East Devon Pebblebed Heaths Charity (PHC) to manage. The site was larger than previously so additional staff would be needed; a new Ranger had been recruited and would be starting in April.

The Otter Estuary was going to be considered as an extension of the Pebblebed Heaths Nature Reserve and sent out an important signal that it was a national nature reserve.

He realised the construction works had not been a good experience for some residents but it would soon be at an end. On the plus side, the area was starting to green up and there had been some great wildlife sightings such as black tailed godwits, snipe and white fronted geese which were good signs things were going in the right direction. He appreciated the area still looked like a building site; the western footpath had been completed but would be closed while the road was sorted out. South Farm Road would not flood in future as the new road was so much higher than the old road. The site was ready for the Fablink Project, if it goes ahead.

The footings of new foot bridge were going in now with completion in July; this meant with the breach at the end of May the footpath would be diverted until July.

He then asked if there were any questions:

County Cllr Mrs C Channon commented on the new road to South Farm – she said it would make a huge difference to those living there.

Q District Cllr A J Dent asked what was happening with the eastern footpath.

A Sam advised that the Public Rights of Way team (PROW) had closed a section between Clamour Bridge and Otterton. There was an easy fix and he hoped this would speed up work. In the long term the river/footpath combination would be problematical and potentially costly, but this was under PROW jurisdiction! He had a few ideas but they were for the longer term.

- Q County Cllr Mrs Channon asked if it were possible to put in something similar to the section beyond Otterton.
- A Sam said willow and stakes was a good solution but expensive (a short section cost in the region of £5000) and was riparian responsibility. He felt long term solutions should be sought.
- Q He was asked about the works at Otterton Ledge.
- A He said the sewerage pumping station pumped to Exmouth but surface water and sewerage was mixed and after heavy rainfall this system could not cope so it had to be pumped out to sea. In an ideal world there would be no need for this to be done. It was hoped that the pipe under the estuary would mean fewer issues. He reassured the audience that the road was not for new houses – the road would be removed once work had finished.
- Q Would the western footpath above South Farm Road link to South Farm or would there be a barrier?
- A Sam said it would link up but he was not sure how that was going to be done!
- Q Once the breach was carried out, would there be certain times when the road and paths were not accessible?
- A He advised that there would be periods when the western footpath would be out of action. He said that when the breach was done, the tide would creep in – it would not be dramatic! The full effect would be seen when there is a spring tide.
- Q Would the barriers be screened so not visible from Lime Kiln?
- A When all the trees were established the barriers would not be visible.
- Q The new road has kerbs on one side but not the other – how would that side of the road be protected from deterioration.
- A Sam said he did not know the answer to this – it was a question for the engineers, who he knew had discussed the issue at length.
- Q Would reed bed management happen every year?
- A Sam said the reeds needed to be cut down regularly to encourage rejuvenation. The main reason for doing it this was to encourage wildlife to move away from the site – if Schedule 1 bird species started to nest in the reed beds, this would mean when the breach takes place the birds would be under threat.
- Q What surveys were carried out to work out how many people might be attracted to come to the area?
- A Sam said that historical footpath counters had been undertaken by the East Devon Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty as well as visitor surveys. The purpose of the Project was not to create a visitor attraction.
- Q As the area was going to be part of the Pebblebed Heaths, would that mean any control over the watersport usage?
- A Sam said in any tidal area there was a presumption of tidal navigation so if someone wanted to come in from the sea and go up the river to Otterton. Can PHC stop them by law? The answer was “No”. Planners had tried to design out this type of access so there was no right to launch from the car park. As the site was a National Nature Reserve this enabled PHC to get bylaws in the future but they were unable to get bylaws for something that had not yet happened.
He added that all signage would be worded to encourage people to look after nature reserve – the new Ranger would speak to the offenders if possible.

The Town Mayor, Cllr M C Hilliar advised that the Meeting would break for refreshments and to give the audience a chance to read the Reports Pack and ask questions.

133. Reports

The following Reports were received:-

- Chairman of the Town Council (Cllr M C Hilliar)
- Chairman of the Planning Committee (Cllr R D Sherriff)
- 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)
- County Councillor
- District Councillors

134. Open Forum

The Town Mayor then introduced Andrew Drodge (Treasurer) and Caroline Roper (Fundraiser Committee) of Budleigh Salterton Cricket Club who were going to give an update on the move to the new ground.

The Club was excited to move to a new site with no more flooding. Recent flooding had cost the Club an awful lot of money. The Lower Otter Restoration Project offered the opportunity to keep cricket in the town for many years to come with League cricket plus junior and minor Devon league matches. The season started in April and they would be playing at ground from then. The Club had more teams so more cricket would be played – First, Second and Third teams plus an U19 youth team and ladies' and soft ball teams and a girls' youth team using a hard ball. During the 2023 season they would have to use a temporary clubhouse and toilets.

There was a need to build a clubhouse that was fit for the future – there was no point building something on the same scale as existing clubhouse. They had spoken to other clubs and come up with the now approved design.

The two storey clubhouse would have four changing rooms on the ground floor and a function space on the first floor. They were excited about that space which would be available for the town and wider East Devon area. There would be a bar and commercial kitchen with seating for 110.

They would be able to hold functions at same time as cricket was being played.

The Club had the funds to build and fit out the clubhouse but want additional funds to finish the building to a high standard.

The building would be watertight by mid-April and completed by the end of September/beginning of October.

They were delighted that Sir Alastair Cook had agreed to carry out the official opening ceremony.

A tree planting day would be held on 25 March and was a chance to look around the site.

Opening Night would be 21 April.

Q Jo Vanstone asked if there was sufficient on-site parking when there were two matches and a function taking place.

A There are 74 spaces plus room on the smaller pitch which can be utilised when the Third Team is not playing.

Q What was the purpose of a Third Team?
A Mr Drodge explained that this team would consist of older players who would help the younger players come through to the Seconds and eventually the First Team. The Community League would continue on Sundays and the Friday night socials would be making a return.

Q Had the trees planted on the boundary survived.
A These trees had come from the Woodlands Trust and were planted during one of the hottest summers. Sadly, most had perished.

The Town Mayor thanked Mr Drodge and Mrs Roper for the update and asked if there were any other questions:

Q Mr Woodman thanked the Councillors for what they do for the town. He then asked why the Precept had not been increased which seemed strange as the Chairman of the Finance Committee had mentioned many projects to pursue.

A Cllr Hayward said the last few years had been quite strange with Covid and the War in Ukraine and as such a lot of projects had been put on hold. He said he had balanced the books to a point where he felt it was not necessary to raise the Precept.

Q Mr Woodman commented that the Council's Reserves were not available to see.

A The Town Mayor, Cllr M C Hilliar said the Council did have reserves and all the information was on the Council's website. He suggested that Mr Woodman spoke to the Clerk who would be more than happy to go through them.

Cllr Mrs L D Evans added that whilst the Hall roof was in fairly good condition, the floor might need to be replaced at some point.

The Clerk said that she was aware some of the audience had had difficulty hearing Kelly Cowling and would therefore ask for a copy of her notes, which would be available from the office.

There being no further business, the Meeting closed at 8.21pm.

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Chairman

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Date