

DUDDON ESTUARY CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

Minutes of the Duddon Estuary Consultative Committee meeting held at The Chetwynde Hotel, Abbey Road, Barrow in Furness on 14 July 2010 at 2:00pm.

Richard Scott, Walking to Health (Chair)
Jenny Wain, DEP Secretariat
Bob Mandale, RSPB member
Brian Crawford, Millom Town Council (Vice Chair)
Brian Wright, Millom without PC
Derek Lyon, Friends of the Lake District
Cam Ross, Cumbria Sea Fisheries
Phil Clague, LDNPA
Joss Curwen, SLDC
Adam Larbalestier Environment Agency
Paul Pearson, CCC (notes)

Bob Morrish, Kirkby Ireleth PC
Pete Burton, National Trust
Neil Forbes, National Trust
Bob Morris, Kimberley-Clark Ltd
Bob Landale
Jill Graham, BECWC
Rosie Mathisen, BECWC
David Hayes, BECWC
Peter Kydd, Parsons Brinkerhoff

1. Introductions and Apologies.

The Chairman welcomed Members and guests to the meeting. Apologies were received from Wendy Battersby, George Cubiss, Mary Jardine, David Southward, Maggie Cumming, Pauline Preston, Jack Park and Bill Shaw. The Partnership was informed of the death of two of its members, Messrs Copley and Hartley from Kirkby Ireleth Parish Council.

2. Presentation by Jill Graham, Britain's Energy Coast – Duddon Tidal Feasibility Study

Jill was supported in her presentation by colleagues. The study is an update of an earlier study, commissioned in 1994 by the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), to look at the potential of positioning a tidal barrage across the Duddon Estuary. With the UK's Government commitment to renewable energy and the building and siting of a new nuclear power station at one of three proposed sites in west Cumbria a new electricity grid system would be required. Discussions around the grid raised the profile of the barrage / bridge and the potential to support a grid cable across the Duddon.

Rosie Mathisen introduced the project team of David Hayes, Jill Graham and Peter Kydd. Each gave a short update on their respective roles in implementing the feasibility study. Rosie has worked with Britain's Energy Coast (formally Westlakes Renaissance) for sometime and pulled together this project team to work on this study and the grid network connectivity. There are many challenges to improving the grid; climate change, energy security and the raising of many probabilities and sustainability benefits for the economy and tourism.

David Hayes gave a view from Westminster. This is the "Greenest" government yet! Setting the most challenging and ambitious targets for renewable energy and climate change, and a reduction in CO2 emissions by 35%. The government is looking to speed up the planning process and finalise National Energy Policy Statements. It is looking to provide £10m to support of offshore windfarms, new marine energy technologies and marine energy parks. The government is also promoting and encouraging community owned renewable energy schemes, higher energy efficiencies in older housing stock and businesses.

Jill gave a briefing on what has happened to date on the tidal feasibility study. They have held two workshops with key stakeholders and a draft report has been issued. Some feedback is still forthcoming on the draft, following on from this BEC will be holding further workshops, in September, with a much broader stakeholder remit looking at the issues, concerns and opportunities in more detail. BEC are looking to involve the Partnership and hopefully the presentation would be the catalyst to open dialogue. The final draft of the feasibility study is expected towards the end of the year.

Peter Kydd gave a more technical presentation building on from the '94 feasibility study. Technically, it is possible for there to be a tidal barrage across the Duddon but more detailed studies would need to be done into the environmental and ecological impact to the area if a scheme was ever to be proposed. The Duddon Estuary is protected under both national and international legislation and is designated as: Special Area of Conservation, Special Protection Area and is a Site of Special Scientific Interest. The Duddon along with Morecambe Bay is also classified as a European Marine Site. The preferred route for a barrage is from Haverigg to Sandscale Haws, possibly with a viaduct across Scarth Bight to minimise the disruption to the bird breeding and

feeding areas on the salt marshes. It would generate power on the ebb tide. Clarification and further groundwork would be required to understand and mitigate the effects on migratory birds and marine life; on areas of salt marsh and the species that inhabit such areas e.g. natterjack toads; changes to water levels would provide flood defence protection and the effect on intertidal mudflats. It could produce 280gW of electricity a year. It has been estimated that a barrage could cost between £650m - £700m. The feasibility study included a design to carry a 2 lane road. It would also have the potential to carry a grid cable if a scheme was developed at a similar time to the grid upgrade. Using the barrage as a road would greatly reduce travel times along the west coast, open the area to "green" tourism and make access to and from Sellafield easier. Should a decision be made now, to take this project forward completion would be estimated by 2019, but as already stated a lot of work still needs to be undertaken to work up a proposal.

Following the presentations there was a question and answer session. Topics raised included effects of migratory birds and birds that winter on the salt marshes; lack of consultation with Parish Councils on the routing of the grid overland, siting of pylons on greenfield sites, its effects on using such land for affordable housing; secure local employment should the grid / nuclear new build go ahead and the timescale involved – will this match the government's timescale for completion of new build and a grid upgrade?

Members suggested organisations that should be included in the next round of workshops, if not already: Lowther Estates, Boughton Estates, Environment Agency, Herpetological Association, RSPB, British Ornithology Trust and Network Rail.

A copy of the presentation is available to download on the Duddon Estuary Partnership website – see Tidal Energy Presentation - www.duddon-estuary.org.uk/newsEvents.htm

3. Minutes of Meeting 10 March 2010.

Agreed and signed off as a true record by the Chairman.

4. Matters arising

None

5. Standing items

Budget

The Partnership, since the last meeting, spent £412; £232 was spent on updating the website and £180 was spent on annual website hosting. The Partnership has just under £5k remaining in its budget.

Energy Infrastructure

I. Renewable Energy / Grid Review

The Partnership is eager for individual organisations and members of the Partnership to engage with the tidal workshops that Britain's Energy Coast will be organising later this year. Both Natural England and the National Trust are in direct dialogue with BECWC on the conservation issues relating to tidal energy in the Duddon.

BECWC are putting in a bid for £60m funding and as part of this bid is the improvement of highways in west Cumbria.

A scoping opinion has been received for 4 wind turbines at Haverigg Prison for. A planning application has not been submitted for this site or other sites where developers have shown an interest near Millom and Kirksanton.

II. Nuclear New Build Update

The secretariat of the Partnership has received a confirmation letter from DECC in response to the Partnerships' submission opposing the Nuclear New Build at Kirkstanton. In the letter it stated that 3168 responses had been submitted, and the new Government is assessing these responses and will be renewing the National Energy Policy Statements for late Autumn.

Marine and Coastal Policy

I. Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authorities (IFCA) Update

Appointees to the board have been interviewed and the Members will be announced in August. Brian Crawford has been interviewed and if successful would be Cumbria's representative for recreational anglers. Concerns have been raised by some of the relevant Authorities due to a change in the geographical area, funding split and number of seats on an authority has on the board. The new structure will leave Cumbria with only 2 seats, but funding 40% of the cost of the IFCA. In the past, Cumbria County Council had 6 members on the Sea Fisheries Committee. Cumbria Sea Fisheries representatives are in dialogue with IFCA on the number of seats on the board and transitional arrangements between the Sea Fisheries Committee closing and the IFCA starting in April 2012.

II. Coastal Access

The new Government is keen to see this taken forward. Legislation is in place to take this forward countrywide in 2011. In Cumbria the first phase will focus on Gretna to St Bees. The evidence from the mapping of the coast line will contribute to local authority plans and strategies. However, the programme could be subject to cuts in the Annual Spending Review in the Autumn.

III. Marine Conservation Zones

Potential offshore zones have been identified by the Irish Sea Conservation Zones Regional Stakeholder Group. These have been published, in draft, for consultation. The maps of offshore areas are only tentative and are based on limited information and are liable to change. The areas were identified as possible conservation sites through three facilitated workshops held earlier this year. The only location identified off the coast of Cumbria is around the offshore wind farms known as Walney Offshore wind farm and West of Duddon Sands offshore wind farm. Inshore zones are to be looked at later in the year. Final recommendations should be submitted to Government by end of year and public consultation commencing 2012.

Nature Conservation

I. Millom Nature Reserve

It's been a poor year for natterjack toads on the Ironworks site, the exceptional warm weather during the breeding season dried up the ponds, but there are plans to dig another pond on the site in a different location to help in the future. Breeding has been better for the toads on Haverigg dunes which is a more natural habitat. The reserve has been awarded £50k funding from the Community Spaces to support further work on the site. New access gates are to be erected to make it easier for people with disabilities to gain access on to the reserve.

Four pairs of skylarks have been seen on the reserve, but unsure of the how successful the breeding has been.

Unauthorised Commercial Activities

The Sea Fisheries representative was unable to attend the meeting and provide an update on issues. No other issues were raised at the meeting.

Rail Liaison

Nothing to report.

6. AOB

a) Millom Railway Group

A request has been made by the Friends of Millom station to see if the Partnership could help fund an interpretation board at Millom station. This is a gateway for visitors and tourists and provides an opportunity to promote local heritage and sites of interest. Over recent years Millom station has been upgraded by Network Rail and the Friends' have received funding from Millom Town Council and other benefactors to improve the platforms with floral decoration and seating. The Partnership working group thinks it would be appropriate to provide a small amount of support as it would raise awareness of the special interest around the Duddon Estuary. The Partnership supported this approach. JLW to liaise with the Friends on this issue.

b) Ewewright – Visual Art

"Walking Drawings" is a new concept of the visual arts. It uses volunteers, walking across

the sands following a pattern which is filmed, with a soundtrack added later. The drawings are to be produced on Morecambe Bay and Duddon Sands on the 2 & 3 week of September. The company are looking for volunteers and if you are interest you can email them at evertan@evewrightstudio.com or find out more at www.evewrightstudio.com/

c) Water mains at Millom

United Utilities and Balfour Beatty have submitted proposals to improve the water mains at Millom. The Parish Council representative, Brain Wright, hadn't been consulted. Jenny informed him that the improvements could be permitted development, and as such no consultation is required also this type of application. If a planning application was required it would be dealt at a district level not at county level.

7. Date of next meeting:

11 November 2010 at Victory Hall, Broughton in Furness starting at 7:00pm

(please note this meeting is being held in the evening to accommodate those members who are unable to attend during the day).