

DUDDON ESTUARY CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

Minutes of the AGM of Duddon Estuary Partnership held at Walney Community Centre, Central Drive, Barrow in Furness on 12 November 2009.

Richard Scott, Walking to Health (Chair)
Brian Wright, Millom without PC
Val Garnett, Millom without PC
Maggie Cumming, Kirksanton Action Group
John Turner, Lonsdale Estates
Cam Ross, CCC & Cumbria Sea Fisheries
Ian Dixon, Environment Agency
Paul Pearson, CCC (notes)

Jenny Wain, DEP Secretariat
George Cubiss, Ramblers Association
Pauline Preston, Kirksanton Action Group
Derek Lyon, Friends of the Lake District
Rob Eccles, NW & NW Sea Fisheries
David Southward, CCC
Bill Shaw, Amphibian & Reptile Association

1. **Introductions and Apologies.**

The Chairman welcomed Members and guests to the meeting. Apologies were received from Graham Ford-Keyte, Brian Crawford, Bob Mandale, Jack Park, Janette Jenkinson, Joss Curwin, Ian Cameron and Jim Ratcliffe.

2. **Minutes of Meeting 15 July 2009.**

Agreed and signed by the Chairman.

3. **Matters arising**

Website – movement to upgrade the information since last meeting however still not completed. The improvements will make the website more user friendly with linkages to other organisation and websites, contact numbers to partner organisations and updates on topics.

4. **Presentation – Natterjack Toads in Millom and Cumbria – Bill Shaw**

Bill is half way through a 2½ year natterjack project funded by Natural England. He briefed the meeting on the role the Duddon plays in providing habitat for Natterjacks. There are three good sites around the estuary at Dunnerholme, Haverigg with the jewel in the crown at Sandscale Haws. This is probably the most productive site for natterjacks in the country. The site as a good natural habitat for the Natterjacks to breed in and is well managed by Pete Burton and his team from the National Trust. Improvements are also happening on a new site further along the coast at Red Gutter, on land owned by Cumbria County Council. It is hoped to improve interconnectivity between this site and Sandscale Haws and improve the genetic grouping of the toads in the area. Haverigg Point has good breeding pools on the beach but the dunes, once a haven, are poor due to a lack of grazing. In Askam, several regeneration projects are helping to improve the sites for natterjack toads in the area. There have been recordings of Natterjack breeding grounds moving further inland.

There have been some disappointments along the way. North Walney has had money and resources put in, creating large areas of barren wilderness, with increased grazing and the blocking of ditches to make artificial wetlands but as yet it hasn't encouraged significant numbers of Natterjacks to colonise the area. The number of breeding ponds on the reserve at Millom Ironworks declined following the closure of the Ironworks, however, it is hoped that the current work of the Friends Group and Management Team will help improve the breeding grounds and increase the numbers of Natterjacks on the reserve.

Plans for the future include working with seven farms around the Duddon who have applied for funding through the Environmental Stewardship Grants to develop habitats. Bill is assisting with a multi-farm application to cover areas that would not normally be permitted as development under the scheme if they applied individually.

5. **Annual report and Budget (attached)**

Circulated prior to the meeting. Expenses for this year have been for website hosting and room hire. There has been no income, as the partners will only commit funding for specific projects. The end of year balance is around £5500.00.

6. **Election of Chairman**

Richard Scott was re-elected into the Chair for a further 2 year term. This reselection comes with his own proviso, Richard is heavily supportive of renewables, and should there be a conflict of interests and he is uncomfortable with his position, he will stand down. The nomination was

seconded from the floor.

7. Standing items

(a) The Bay - Regional Park or Morecambe Bay and Duddon

Further funding was forthcoming from NWDA to continue the feasibility study. A prospectus is out and will be circulated to members with these minutes. The steering group is taking forward the scoping work and governance arrangements, and there is to be another major conference in the New Year. Not all the Cumbrian district councils who border the "Bay" are on board, but there is major support from Lancashire, Lancaster and the Wyre Councils. The Duddon Partnership could benefit from inclusion to the Regional Park or from an association with the Energy Coast and the Partnership are keen to look at both options.

(b) Nature Conservation Issues – Millom Ironworks Nature Reserve

Currently applying for funding (£40K) from the Open Community Spaces Grant Scheme to provide and improve facilities for the disabled on the reserve. The group have been successful in obtaining a development grant with which they have been able to take on Shirley Muir, a consultant, to further assist with the development plans for the reserve. The Friends group has been active throughout the year and have been involved in several workshops and survey work. Judy Palmer, County Council's Ecologist, has provided assistance with the monitoring of wildlife flora and fauna on the site, which has been welcomed by the group. The Yellow Wart is, at present, showing beautifully around the site with an abundance of flowers.

(c) Marine and Coastal Policy

Marine Bill Update

The Bill has had all-party support in both houses and achieved Royal Assent today. As part of the changes being brought in by the Bill the Sea Fisheries Committees will be transforming into Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authorities (IFCAs) over the next year or so. North Wales will be joining forces with the rest of Wales from April 2010 and the North West Sea Fisheries are merging with Cumbria Sea Fisheries the following year to become the NW IFCA. The next year would be one of transition. Cam Ross was able to inform the group that a special meeting had been arranged the next week to discuss the transition and would report back any progress to the Committee at the next meeting.

With regard to the Bill and implementing Coastal Access, CCC have been working with Natural England on a pilot along the Cumbrian coastline from Gretna to St Bees. This is one of several pilot areas that is looking at the practicalities and resource implications of rolling out Coastal Access. As the final programme is developed there will be opportunities for the Partnership to be involved. JW will talk to the Local Access Forum's Coastal Access Working Group about the role coastal partnerships can have. The Rambler's association have monitored 5% of all the Cumbria footpaths.

Shoreline Management Plan Stage 2 Issues and Objectives

Consultation is taking place until January 2010 on the NW Shoreline Management Plan. Three areas of the Duddon are being looked at in this stage of the plan. Organisations of the Partnership were encouraged to respond to this consultation individually.

(d) Unauthorised commercial activities

Sea fisheries have received complaints of illegal netting in the Duddon. When investigated these turned out to be unfounded. At present there are no illegal activities around the Duddon Bar and sands. As reported at an earlier meeting Chinese Mitton Crabs have been caught/seen in the estuary. RE was happy to inform the committee that to date he hasn't seen any.

(e) Rail Liaison

Network Rail has set aside capital to repair the flood defences by Kirkby Station. Joss Curwen would like Network Rail to take the opportunity to see if they can clear an area for work equipment which would be able to be used as a car park for rail users in the future. The redesigning of Millom station and the sustainable planting has been completed, and similar projects are being undertaken at Foxfield and Bootle Stations. Green Road station was nominated and won an award for the floral decorations on the station.

(f) Low carbon and renewable energy

Grid Upgrade Workshop

West Lakes Renaissance has been carrying out a number of workshops to look at issues that might arise with the proposed grid upgrade. There are 4 areas that are considered particularly sensitive - Duddon, LDNP coastal section, Solway Firth and Morecambe Bay. Workshops have been held in each of these areas. The Chair, Vice Chair and Secretary of the Partnership attended the Duddon workshop. The workshop discussed issues and options of use of pylons, under ground cables and any sensitivities and opportunities that need to be considered when designing the grid upgrade. It would appear that routing the grid offshore grid isn't feasible at the present time. The information will be fed into discussions with the National Grid and help inform the next round of decisions.

Nuclear Sites Update

Government has opened consultation on its National Policy Statements. These cover a range of energy issues and ports. The closing date for submissions is 22 February 2010. One of the National Policy Statements considers nuclear energy and includes a list of 10 potential sites across England and Wales. There are three sites proposed for Cumbria; Sellafield, Braystones and Kirksanton. It was agreed for the Partnership to set up a working group to look into the Kirksanton site and make written submission on behalf of the Partnership. A meeting will be arranged for early December, with a follow up as necessary in January or February.

8. Dates of Next Year's meetings

Please note it was agreed that meetings would be held in the daytime from now on. The meetings will be held at 2pm. Venues to be arranged.

10 March 2010 – 2pm

14 July 2010 – 2pm

11 November 2010 – 2pm