



The Moors at Arne Project, Stakeholder Liaison Group

12 September 2018, 17:30 – 19:30, Wareham Town Hall

- **Attendees:**

Project Team

Helen Morgan – Environment Agency Project Manager

Kevin House – Environment Agency NEAS (National Environment Assessment Service)

Neil Watson - Environment Agency Coastal Engineer (Wessex)

Vanessa Dare - Environment Agency Comms and Engagement Officer

Catherine Farrugia - Environment Agency Advisor (Flood & Coast Risk Management)

Dante Munns – RSPB Area Manager

Ian Alexander – Natural England

Chair – Peter Moore, Independent Chair

Representative of Ridge Farm

Representative of Purbeck District Counsellor

Representative of Ridge Yachting Centre Ltd

Representative of Ridge Resident

Representative of Redclyffe yacht Club

Representative of National Trust in Purbeck

Representative of Birds of Poole Harbour

Representative of Dorset AONB

Representative of CPRE Dorset Branch

Representative of Ridge Moors Action Group

Representative of Dorset Bird Club

Representative of Ridge Resident

Representative of Arne Parish Council

Welcome and introduction by the Chair

Introduction to the project

Neil Watson delivered a presentation with an introduction to the project, explaining why the Environment Agency want to do the scheme and the requirements for habitat creation in Poole Harbour. He showed images of the site as it is now and outlined the short listed options presented last year. He discussed the work carried out so far, including engagement with stakeholders and the community.

Investigations have been carried out on groundwater and Ridge surface drainage. A public meeting was held to present the findings of the surface water drainage issues and a meeting will be held on 25th September to present the results of the groundwater surveys. The project team is currently working on the preferred option for the scheme. A public exhibition will be held to present this in late November / early December.

Terms of Reference

The Chair discussed the purpose and status of the group, which is advisory not decision making. The Terms of Reference were agreed by the group unchanged. The group will review any new challenges as they arise and the terms of reference will be updated accordingly.

Membership

The Chair asked if anyone knows someone or group who should be invited to be part of the group. None were suggested. Current membership to continue.

Contracting

A comment was made that we should publicise the website more as not everyone is aware of it, project team agreed to consider this further as part of their general comms activities. The Chair checked the time of the meetings, did an early evening meeting suit all? Also, was the venue and location suitable? All agreed that the time and location of the meeting was acceptable.

Flooding

Catherine Farrugia delivered a presentation, giving an overview of what has been done so far and the different types of flooding: tidal and river, surface water and groundwater. She reiterated that the project will not make the current risk of flooding to Ridge worse. Investigations show that the project would not affect the surface water drainage for anyone in Ridge. We are working with other authorities to see if other drains could be adopted as currently a lot are the responsibility of the landowner to keep clear. Our ground investigations have helped us understand the geology and groundwater of the area. Geology shows layers of sands with clays in-between. In summary, we understand the flood risk and want to reassure people that the project won't make things worse. Surface water won't be affected by the project and neither will groundwater, we don't have all the answers yet around the details and specific levels but we are collecting more data and are continuing to study it. The Chair said the promoters had provided a degree of reassurance on some key issues but stakeholders would no doubt look forward to further study results to offer additional reassurance.

Public Access

Dante Munns delivered a presentation on access to the site and outlined the principles the RSPB are working towards.

Comments from the group included:

Could there be an additional Visitor Access Principle to say no impact on the community of Ridge?

No cars is a far-fetched idea, visitors are likely to want to drive there.

Infrastructure barely copes now, would need changing.

Long distance from car parks to hides at the existing Arne Reserve for those unable to walk, it makes it difficult. There is an opportunity to provide a car park next to the hides on this site.

The group requested more information on what and where the access would be.

Could a shuttle bus be an option? Providing something for the community.

The chair checked whether people were concerned about traffic or people on foot?

Predominantly traffic although there is a risk to life for those on foot or cyclists.

Do we develop this as part of this group? We need to engage with stakeholders to understand. When we have an idea of layout of the site, it will make this easier.

Construction traffic

Helen Morgan discussed the concerns that have been raised about the impact of construction traffic.

We aim to reduce the impact of traffic during construction as much as possible, our aim is to excavate material as much as possible from site to reduce the number of lorries required Also to have the embankment as low as possible by building on existing areas of high ground.

Comments included:

Most important that the embankments should be appropriate and strong enough to last. Don't want to compromise effectiveness by having lower embankments. Happy for short term traffic if we get good new embankments.

Wouldn't affect integrity of the embankments, they would be lower because the ground they are built on is higher, crest elevation would be the same wherever the embankment goes.

Do you know whether banks would be built on the peat area?

We won't be able to avoid this entirely, however *we will try to minimise this as much as possible.*

We are hoping to build a short trial / demonstration embankment next year which could then be incorporated into main scheme. This would help us understand what could be possible using material from the site.

Location of main embankment

Ian Alexander discussed the location of the lagoons within the site. It is important that we looked at different options in case there were engineering reasons to say that the lagoons could not be located in the west. Our investigations so far show that there are no engineering restrictions on having the lagoons on the western side of the site. The habitat regulations suggest that we should therefore put the lagoons on the western side of the site, within the elephant's ear area to coincide with the existing SPA.

Comments included:

Birds already use this area, why alter it?

Is there a possibility that it wouldn't be attractive to birds?

It would be very difficult to maintain such a small area as grassland that would be attractive to birds. It is not easy at present when the SPA fields are part of a much larger site (providing greater management flexibility). Trying to maintain such a small area (on the wettest part of the site) as grassland would almost inevitably lead to juncus (rushes)

becoming the dominant vegetation and making the area unattractive to many of the bird species we need to provide for.

There have been a number of habitat creation schemes around the country and we haven't had a site yet that hasn't been attractive to birds. We are confident it will be.

Emerging option

Kevin House gave an update on the emerging option for the embankment alignment.

This is 'hot off the press' for us and we are temporarily calling it the 'blue line option'. One aim is to tie it into high ground, making use of that doesn't necessarily reduce the length of embankment but does reduce the height (i.e. reducing the height we need to build on top of the land, not reducing the overall height above sea level).

This alignment helps with freshwater storage and gives a larger area for species associated with fresh water. Water would be evacuated through new drainage points. It makes use of the natural valley in the middle of the site and splits freshwater area into two. Further work will be done to further refine the best location for the embankment but this is the sort of thing we are looking at, at the moment.

Siltation

People have expressed concerns over siltation. Initial modelling does not suggest that the project will change the silt regime noticeably (either through providing more silt to the system or changing the energy regime). However we need to be sure that we can give an assurance of no detriment. Work is ongoing to further explore the likely impact of the project on siltation levels in the River Frome and Wareham Channel. Further discussions to take place on this when the surveys and analysis has been done.

Future topics for discussion

The Chair asked if there is anything any one would like to add to the next agenda, it was agreed that the substantive items on this agenda were the main ones and that these should be used as the basis for the agenda for future meetings.

Next steps

Groundwater survey results - A meeting will be held at Stoborough Village Hall on the 25th September from 14:00 – 18:30, all members of the group are welcome to attend.

Overall project programme is changing, still aiming for construction of main works to start around spring 2020, but all still indicative outline at the moment.

Date of next meeting

To be confirmed via email.