

Dart Estuary Forum

Inaugural meeting notes of 18th June 2018, held in Follaton House, Totnes

Welcome - James Dodd – Harbour Board Member

Intro – Dart Harbour & Navigation Authority are a 'Trust Port' [www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Trust_port] with a particular focus for environment – Dart Harbour Strategic Plan 2016-2026 lists 'environment' as one of 5 key themes [www.dartharbour.org/strategic-plan]. Typically, everyone got different view on what environment is and it is hard to pin down; the Strategic Plan is prepared to put money into play to do 'positive environmental projects' for Dart estuary. Dart Harbour have 3 formally recognised stakeholder groups, CUG (Commercial Users Group), Leisure, Non-Beneficiaries – parishes, farmers, landowners, etc. - used to communicate & liaise with DHNA but could work better. What is missing? A Dart Estuary Forum concept - run for and by a local wider community forum- for ideas and projects, and able to come to DHNA for help - wish to work together and support but not control. Wishing those present and those still to join, to develop ideas and projects and take forward.



James enjoying the health & wellbeing benefits of the Dart estuary

DHNA's Role - Mark Cooper

Introduction - left the Royal Navy and straight into Harbour Mastery ... found out much about stakeholder management.

2015 – Plymouth University carried out a survey of the local community, river users, stakeholder groups - 500 people responded. A Forward Vision resulted - had a challenge to find out what it meant. Still asking questions on what DHNA need to develop - no knowledge?

2016 - Strategic Plan – enhance the River Dart! Spent 18 months trying to work out what that means.

2017 – set 3 objectives.



Vision

- To manage, protect and enhance the River Dart as a safe and thriving community asset

Objectives

- Objective 1 – Safe Harbour
 - A safe, effective and efficient operation that meets legislative requirements.
- Objective 2 – Stakeholder Satisfaction
 - A port that attracts river users and benefits the community.
- Objective 3 – Sustain Environment
 - Long term management of the river Dart safeguarding the environment for the future.

Environmental Workshop Nov 17 output

- Establish Dart Estuary Forum (as a cross stakeholder meeting plus environmentalists)
- Where possible link purchases to the green credentials of suppliers
- Investigate the viability of water bins and the most suitable/effective location to deploy them through partnership working with Plymouth University
- Share environmental statistics with Environment Agency (Oil Spill)
- Collect data on water and silt (levels of pollution)

Nov 2017 – Dart Harbour Environmental Workshop to understand views of stakeholders and environmentalists. Need some clear messages to pass out to river users, eg scrubbing, non native species, conflicting advice, Pacific oysters – good or bad – what is the message. Collecting data – got to know where starting from.

Cross stakeholder environmental view

Improved awareness of environmental issues - Clear messaging needed on environmental issues

Request for recommendations for DHNA involvement on how an environment budget may be best spent.

What HM/CEO wants

Cross stakeholder environmental view (Commercial-Leisure-Non Beneficiary)

- Improved awareness of the environmental issues
- Clear messaging on environmental issues
- Recommendations for DHNA involvement
- Planning Coherence with other stakeholder views

Planning coherence with other stakeholder views. Developments – good or bad, development below high water, getting views on whether good or bad, economic viability – hardest thing to do. DHNA wish to capture range of views.

Community Asset – Stakeholder Engagement

Key stakeholders identified in strategic plan			Other stakeholder examples		
Organisations	Agencies	Councils	Clubs & Communities	Business Representatives	Accredited Stakeholder Groups
 IFCA Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority	 Environment Agency	 Devon County Council	River Dart Youth Club Community Dartmouth Rowing Club Dartmouth Amateur Rowing Club Dartmouth Angling and Boating Club Dartmouth Yacht Club Dartmouth Yacht Club Dartmouth Sailing Club Dartmouth Fishing Association Dartmouth Boat Club Dartmouth Rowing Club Dartmouth Sailing Club	Trades and Director Council of Commerce Dartmouth and District Chamber of Trade Ltd (Dartmouth Business Forum) Dartmouth Business Improvement District (BDI)	Commercial Group (CAG) Association of Dart River Users (ADRU) Non-Beneficiary User Group (NBUG)
 MNO Marine Nature Organisation	 Food Standards Agency food.gov.uk	 South Hams District Council			

The public's priorities - 5 themes

- Environment
- Infrastructure for leisure users
- Infrastructure for marine industry
- Marketing
- Communication

The Salcombe Experience - Ken Carter

Chair of Salcombe-Kingsbridge Estuary Conservation Forum (SKECF)

Ken has lived in Kingsbridge for 35yrs and worked for SHDC for 25 yrs, retired in 2012 - having more time to enjoy environment. Now Chair of the SW Coast Path Association - national trail partnership - rep of Coast path. Chaired the SKECF for 4yrs. Estuaries Initiative first promoted by the Nature Conservancy Council* in ca. 1984 – NCC gave SHDC some funding to look at improving estuaries with first Salcombe estuary environmental management plan published in 1994 and Nigel employed as Estuary Officer in 1996. [*latest evolution of NCC are now Natural England]. Estuaries are very complex environments, lots statutory bodies with different roles and interests, many different users - sometimes conflicting. NCC were concerned about raising the profile, understanding and conservation of estuaries. Role of Forum, to help identify issues, discuss solutions and suggest ideas to build into the management plan. SKE plan was the first to be produced; 1998 – Ray Humphries was employed estuary officer for Dart - inaugural Dart Estuary Estuaries Forum was on 19/01/1995 – 20 yrs ago, quite telling that some of the things said 20yrs ago are still as relevant today.

Estuary management plans are non-statutory – 2000 made South Devon AONB unit responsible for production of the statutory South Devon AONB Management Plan, covering most of the Dart estuary. AONB partnership set up after that. South Devon AONB Estuaries Management Plan has now been incorporated into the AONB management plan - current AONB management plan is presently being reviewed. Having Forums like this is very important.

SKECF has a diverse range of members, from stat bodies through to local individuals who take an interest – always great to have a room of people passionate about the estuary environment - only ever as good as the members make it. SKECF is formally recognised as a Salcombe Harbour stakeholder group and can raise things with the Harbour Authority and an item on agenda every meeting invites matters to be taken to Salcombe Harbour Board meetings and progress is updated back to the Forum. Each member organisation is invited to give a relevant update on issues, forthcoming events and progress towards the Estuaries Management Plan.

Meet in Spring and Autumn, people often refer to bird counts, pollution incidents and water quality updates, National Trust matters. Have people who take pride in the estuary. Ground roots, taking ownership of the estuary they enjoy. Individual doing work with plastics, raising profile of looking after estuary, Westcountry Rivers Trust (farmers and landowners), regular input from parish councils. All about local people taking responsibility and care for the area where they live. Hearing about research going on in the estuary. Don't just talk about it. Learning and getting out doing stuff. Always get input from people doing bird counts, bat projects, etc.



Be interesting to hear and be part of discussion. Originally about getting idea for docs, now about what we can do and how can coordinate this to be transferred to the Dart.

South Devon AONB Estuaries Partnership – Nigel Mortimer, Estuaries Officer

The South Devon AONB Estuaries Partnership is funded by SHDC, DCC, Natural England – Defra, Dart Harbour Authority, Salcombe Harbour Authority, Duchy of Cornwall, National Trust and Catchment Based Approach hosting – Environment Agency. The 'membership' of the Estuaries Partnership is vastly bigger and includes the many wider community organisations, authorities, groups, etc. that are affiliated to the separate estuary forums.

Estuaries are a very complicated and dynamic environment, making them harsh for most wildlife – for their global importance they support an unusually low diversity of wildlife but are dominated by a very high biomass of that that can survive the conditions, mostly marine species that can tolerate freshwater or migrate with the tides.

South Devon AONB has 5 estuaries, each with a forum or management advisory group. Erme Management Advisory Group only comes together when a need arises; Yealm Management Group membership is by invite, meets in office hours and enjoys a good attendance of main authorities; Avon & Salcombe-Kingsbridge estuaries are open evening meetings and enjoy a good attendance of local groups and associations. Swings and roundabouts but the more open forum meetings feel more inclusive. Membership organisations and groups can request particular talks, helping raise awareness and are able to communicate to the wider membership through the meetings and their notes, or via the AONB.

Estuaries are hugely important for their carbon sequestration and lock up; they are also important natural 'waste treatment systems' for the catchment's natural and not-so-natural runoff of organic debris – autumn leaves, etc. They



are important for many fish species as nursery grounds. Since most SW estuaries are ria-type or drowned river type estuaries, they tend to be deep and narrow and have a long history as ports and harbours, and increasingly as our wet watersports playgrounds. We are increasingly aware of the importance of estuaries for the health and wellbeing for the people using, enjoying and living around them.



For our local estuaries, our main issues are not single source issues but more cumulative – a significant problem of cumulative issues is that the sources may so small as to feel individually insignificant, but their frequency of occurrence can lead to significant environmental impacts e.g. the excessive input of nutrients entering our estuaries from agriculture, aquaculture, land management, gardening, household sinks, washing machines, etc. that can support algal blooms such as the green algal mats over the mudflats that affect their ecology – birds feeding, etc. Other similar issues include litter and marine plastics, many pollution incidents, land runoff of soil from land management and

building developments, dolphin disturbance, boat wake, etc. The issues across our estuaries tend to be fairly generic but we feel that it is important that the local estuary community identify with their estuary and take ownership of its value, issues and care.

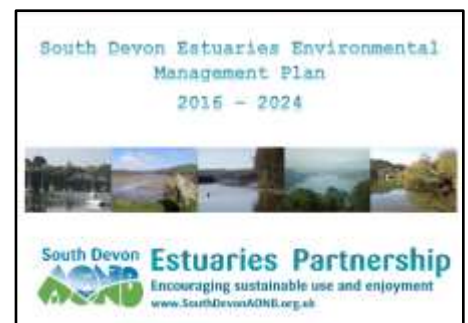
Invasive Non-Native Species are a potential and difficult growing issue – we have relatively little chance to be able to manage such species once they are established but our luck so far belittles their potential impact and prevention is key. Although, Pacific oysters on the Yealm estuary are now a very real and significant problem – the management of which we have some funding to trial.



(Dart Estuary BioSecurity Plan can be downloaded from www.bit.ly/2Ltohv1 [1MB pdf])

A challenging issue for estuary conservation is that much of the crown assets, the colour, the worth, the natural capital, variety and beauty is often hidden from view by the tides, their microscopic size and / or current science and understanding. Even when known, there is a need to keep drip feeding the reminders and guidance to avoid the complacency that comes with living within a special area for some time and becoming blasé to its beauty.

Originally five separate estuary management plans (and three estuary officers with support staff), at the last review, they were brought together within one South Devon AONB Estuaries Environmental Management Plan – and only one Estuaries Officer now. The new Estuaries management plan deliberately aims to dovetail more closely with the statutory AONB management plan and visa versa through the current review of the AONB management plan. We trust that the Estuaries Management Plan will form the local detail of the regional Marine Plans. (South Devon AONB Estuaries Management Plan can be downloaded from www.bit.ly/1U9mWqW [2MB pdf])



South Devon AONB Planning Guidance document – an annex to the AONB Management Plan that provides detailed guidance on how development can conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the AONB – includes a section on Coastal & Estuarine Development – download from www.bit.ly/2shZ8KP [6MB pdf]



To ensure a healthy estuary, we really need to care for the environment of the estuary itself but also both the coastal waters that flow into the estuary with each ebbing tide and especially for the Dart estuary, which is very freshwater dominated, the waters that flow



down into the estuary from its water catchment area. The Catchment Based Approach is an Environment Agency led initiative that encourages the wider community understanding of water catchment issues and care for healthier water quality & environment within and flowing out from the water catchment area. The South Devon AONB and Westcountry Rivers Trust co-host the South Devon Catchments Partnership on behalf of the EA – the SDCP naturally overlaps with the interests of the Estuaries Partnership but has a more freshwater focused membership and interest. See www.south-devon.org

Moving forward – we the Dart estuary community can make a big difference to the environment of the estuary – we are now aware of the harms of cumulative impacts but if we turn this on its head and set the example to make best and active practise the norm, even very small positive changes can have a very significant positive change if we move enough people to follow our lead. With a small amount of funding from the EA, we commissioned the production of an animation about water catchments and positive change – ‘The Drip’ – only 5mins long, the animation may be viewed at www.youtu.be/bSrgPLkvP8Q

The Dart Estuary Forum will now be a useful estuary community stakeholder group for relevant consultations and communications, communications and notices e.g. the Devon & Severn Inshore Fisheries & Conservation Authority consultations on local fishery byelaws, and Defra consultation on 3rd tranche of Marine Conservation Zones – upper Dart recommended as one of these and Defra request to let them know what you think.

Can agree projects and ideas – e.g. litter – Spring/Autumn clean – can tell a lot what is going on in the area from the litter that is being found. Similar sites have shown seasonal shifts in littering – spring – boat maintenance; summer – tourism; autumn/winter – coastal fisheries.

Forum may choose to organise and attend events. Please do advertise the forum and encourage others from the community to join, become involved and to set the new norm – encouraging the wider community to follow.

Action – forward Defra consultation on recommended Marine Conservation Zone for Upper Dart Estuary

Investing in the Future – Professor Tom Hutchinson (Plymouth University)

Tom has lived in South Devon for 30 years. Chairman Totnes Canoe Club. Presently working at Plymouth University, Head of Environmental Science within the School of Geography, Earth & Environmental Sciences - asked to give a few ideas for positive environmental action to the Dart Estuary Forum.



Current challenges – Invasive Non-Native Species, Litter, Soil Run off, Water Quality.

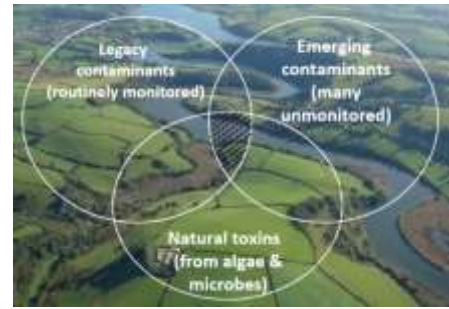
Otters are making a comeback – after years of not being able to breed because of pesticides used in the past. Work showed that these chemicals become ‘magnified’ up the food chain, most affecting the top predator (bioaccumulation). ICI reviewed the work – Tom worked looking at profile of these pesticides, moving towards natural insecticides that don’t magnify in the environment. Why otters and ospreys are back to more healthy numbers.

Water quality is surprisingly complex and ever more so when new and emerging contaminants, the legacy of historically used contaminants, and natural toxins come together

We need to identify and question the issues, engage and use science to evidence them and help seek solutions. We may be able to help you do that.

Education and Research – Uni can be a catalyst in range of ways, short term projects (undergrad), PhD projects, Citizen science – big data sets come from well co-ordinated projects.

Can invest in projects that could benefit.



Issues from Forum Members

Round the table intros.

Main Issues – from Forum

Marion Adams – opp sharpham quay steps, never been stairs – major concern – put in planning for buildings at top of steps. Seen otters there. Aware of that – retrospective application, representations have been made. MMO all has to be licence. Everything should be licenced. On foreshore SHDC and MMO for permission. Tom Stratton trying to get better cohesion, Duchy also not aware.

Rob Price – important that members of the public know what they can do and where to find information e.g. AONB Slipway information panels around the Dart estuary

Roger Robson - Run off – white fluffy blobs in the creek, Prone to fouling associated with run off, boat boating community or others. Is it polluting? NM – there are several types of foams and scums – some perfectly normal and natural but can also be man-made. Have heard of a Guide to foams but never managed to find it

Penny Woollams – facility for people to go to report matters, e.g. builder's waste down drains. Who do people go to. Can forum produce and list of where to go to report issues. NM – team estuary – who's who – positive and negatives.

Buckfastleigh - overflowing. SWW not aware of area flooding, treatment process works well there, doesn't get into the treatment system. Nothing there that would cause sewage to go out into the river. Combined sewer, when overwhelmed, settlement stage – consented outfall.

Mike Pearey – where is the boundary – are we a catchment forum or estuary forum – NM, a bit of a fuzzy line

Mark Cooper – how do we measure the middle of the triangle, what do we need to set up long term monitoring. Issues of litter plastics, with saline limits, water quality from up river also has big impact. For certain specific issues should link with freshwater.

Tom Stratton, lack of collation of what is going on, helping starting point.

Within catchment plan, has work been done – **NM** more actions than plan. A lot going on. Water quality is a catchment issue and should be discussed here.

Action NM – will inform the forum when SD Catchment is meeting, so can choose to attend, will send notes, actions progress – certain amount of information exchange.

MC – talking about species and changes in the estuary, long term about species and habitats. Indicators. MC – metals in the mud – e.g. antifouling need to know impact of things.

Devon Wildlife trust – some science projects – shore search, does monitoring of species on the shoreline. Job of forum to identify citizen science. Prioritise what needs monitoring. Be aware of other species (e.g. bats) that use wider environment.

Exeter Uni – some barometers that exist, some sites monitored for water quality, must be some Environment Agency monitoring. Env Agency – could be used as a barometer.

Rob Price – catchment data explorer – Dartmouth in search it will bring up data available and can also give sources against water framework directive. Bathing water directives – Dartmouth is excellent. www.bit.ly/2uAoshx

Jules Florey. SWW – discharges, sampling and analysing. Biodiversity – finding better way to collate better. Lots of water quality data provided to Env Agency. SWW can set up. SWW Plan tends to produce a 5 year plan. Just about wrapped out being finetune 20-25 in Sept this year. Forums – job to share plans and for Forums to hold SWW to account.

Jonathan Hawkins – Would be good for info to be link on websites.

Env Agency – Westcountry Rivers Trust – very good colour coded map, can see good news and concerns, useful for – really fantastic.

Next Forum – SWW, SWRT Env Agency item on water quality.

Sue Pudduck – big success of Blue Planet was the images – way to communicate is to take science/data and turn into understand concepts. What it needs.

New video on non native species –

Another Forum – pragmatic examples – Danish, Dutch.

Hesp – efficacy can you recommend antifouling that could be used on the Dart.

RYA – paint – best thing to do is use your boat – in and out of Dart could – fresh/salt.

Forum Structure

From when Ray Humphreys – used to struggle between Totnes and Dartmouth. How about Golf Club – struggled to find halfway house. Public transport. Consensus – **Follaton House. Agreed.**

Working Groups – eg for data collection. KC – don't have formal groups, but do have things happening between meetings, deal with issues there and there. Data - could be a number of people get together to report back to the forum.

DHNA – provide secretarial services.

Selection of Chair

Not formal and democratically set up.

KC – we aren't a lobby body – come together to. Up to individuals to take specific issues forward. About exchanging information.

Propose Mike Pearey (Geoffrey Newman), Sue Pudduck seconded. MP happy to do it.

Selection of Vice Chair

Jon Hawkins – proposed Sue Pudduck. Declined – better to have academic –

Tom Hutchinson = Plymouth Uni V- Chairman

Terms of reference from other forums – NM will send out for information. Review in Autumn.

Date next Forum – Spring and Autumn

Theme – SWW, Env, SWRT to report to next Forum sources water quality data, monitoring taking place and how forum can fit into that. Take virtual ownership and get feeling, be aware and observe change, any why change taking place.

Jules -SWW – photo of foam, particular site – NGRs .

NM

Upland catchment – linking to SD Catchment Partnership.

Regulatory frameworks to set the context – fill in gaps of knowledge – reasons and purposes.

Venue – Follaton House

JD – used to know nothing about authorities, if an issue who do I talk to, public don't know. Worry of structure and collecting data, don't see a solution, discuss at future forum – how to let the public know. Still worries me. Great fan of Professor Tom, got people who can do stuff, we need to say what they do. Engage with Universities, but need to come up with ideas.

NM – bathing waters issue –

Roger Jobson – success criteria for water quality.

KC – observing what there, keep coming back and reporting on what's changed, monitoring helps to input to that. Being part of forum about personal observation and input. Citizens science, ideal for this forum – there all the time. Unless there are indicator species – something to work on.

Penny W. With data Salc/Kings can you point to improved public awareness. Is there noticeable improvement in public awareness. NM – don't collect data. PW – has it make a difference. NM – hope so. KC – working for plastics. NM anecdotally people saying improved, guarded, litter from sea could just be wind indifferent directions.

University – graduates part of training to go into organisation – just the sort of things that could help with Plym/Exeter Uni Studies.

Roger E – can compare with work going locally.

Step change in consciousness – Guy with life raft? Tons out there – people getting the message.

National Trust – done load of beach cleans, quadrupled number of people taking part.

Jackie someone. Cllr . will forward stuff to NM

NM – leaflet – being produced. Parish Councils – raw leaflet.

MC – reporting – not covered, who sharing with who – simple link to incident report form. Palm oil – report things through and will pass on – Council contact list. Good and Bad things.

Env Agency incident helpline 24/7

NM – information panels – level of where to report different incidents too.