

# Dart Estuary Forum

## Terms of Reference

### The Purpose of the Dart Estuary Forum

- To provide a co-ordinating and advisory role in the conservation, enhancement and sustainable management of the Dart Estuary and where relevant, its water catchment area and adjacent coast.
- To promote effective co-operation between those involved in conservation and enhancement management in and around the Estuary.
- To oversee and engage in the preparation, monitoring and implementation of the South Devon AONB Estuaries Environmental Management Plan.
- To promote the awareness, understanding, appreciation and active conservation and enhancement of the special qualities, status and natural processes of the estuary.
- To advise the Dart Harbour & Navigation Authority (DHNA) on relevant issues.

### Geographical scope

- The Forum will focus on the Dart Estuary, the tidal waters of the River Dart, while also having regard for the wider water catchment area, its waters and communities insofar as they affect the estuary.
- The Forum will also have regard for the receiving waters of the adjacent local coast and its designated Marine Protected Areas.

### Thematic scope

- The Forum's remit includes a wide range of sustainable management and environmental issues including wildlife and habitats; landscape; heritage and archaeology; natural resources including air, water and soils; agriculture and land management; public access and recreation; and environmental awareness and education.

### Forum structure

- The Forum will seek to maintain a structure and procedures that are effective and relevant to the conservation of the Dart estuary.
- The Forum's terms of reference and structure will be reviewed every five years alongside the review of the Estuaries Management Plan, or sooner if circumstances require, with change introduced as needed.

### Organisation of Forum meetings

- The Forum will normally meet twice a year. The quorum for meetings will be five member organisations or groups present.
- The South Devon AONB Estuaries Officer & Dart Harbour Office will be jointly responsible for the organisation and practical arrangements of meetings.
- Notice of the dates of Forum meetings will be sent out to members at least one month in advance of a meeting at which time members will be invited to submit items for inclusion in the agenda.
- Agendas and any papers will be sent out to members at least one week in advance of meetings.
- Meetings of the Forum will be open to any members of the public and representatives of interested organisations to attend.
- The aim will be to distribute notes of each meeting to members within one month following the meeting.
- The Forum may, at the discretion of the Chair, invite any person or representative of an organisation to address and take part in a meeting where his or her knowledge or experience would contribute to a relevant matter on the agenda.
- The Forum may establish Technical Groups to consider appropriate issues and to provide a specialist focus on the implementation and monitoring of the South Devon AONB Estuaries Environmental Management Plan or to undertake specific tasks. The Forum will provide clear terms of reference for any such group. A Technical Group may be wound up following a decision of the Forum.
- Alterations to organisational arrangements may be made by the Forum

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### Membership

Membership is open to any organisation or interest group with an interest in the conservation and management of the Estuary.

Members representing authorities, organisations, groups, societies, etc. are expected to represent the majority view of their organisation on items during discussions.

### Appointment and termination of Forum membership

- It will be for each member organisation etc. to appoint its representative to the Forum, who will normally attend meetings.
- A member of the Forum may resign his or her membership or may be replaced by a new nominated representative of his or her organisation.
- The Forum may, at its discretion, appoint additional members by co-option or make alterations to its membership.

### Appointment of Forum Chair

- A Chair and Vice Chair of the Forum will be elected from the membership of the Forum, normally for a two-year period.
- The Chair would be expected to act as a “champion” for the estuary; to be committed to the purposes of estuary designation and management; and to act as an effective chair of the Forum meetings.

### Link to Dart Harbour Board

- The Dart Harbour Board member with responsibility for the environment, or his/her nominated representative, will attend Forum meetings to provide a channel for communications between the Forum and the Board.

### Publicity and public relations

- In respect of press and publicity, only the Chair, Vice Chair and Estuaries Officer may speak on behalf of the Forum.
- The proceedings (agendas and minutes) of the Forum will be available to the public on request and will be uploaded to an appropriate website (South Devon AONB website).

### Limitations

- The Forum is a co-ordinating and advisory group and does not in itself hold executive powers or authority. It does not replace or assume any statutory duties of relevant authorities for the management of the area.
- Whilst the Forum will seek to operate by consensus this will be limited to the membership attending any particular meeting and the Forum will not express a view unless there is a very clear majority.

*Formally adopted by the Dart Estuary Forum on the 30<sup>th</sup> April 2019*