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## **The Moors at Arne Project, Stakeholder Liaison Group**

**12 June 2019, 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)

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 Ridge Yachting Centre Ltd

Representative of Ridge Residents Association

Representative of Dorset Wildlife Trust

Representative of Dorset Council

Representative of Ridge Moors Action Group

Representative of Dorset Bird Club

Representative of Arne Parish Council

Representative of CPRE

Representative of Open Spaces Society

One Ridge Resident

### **Welcome**

Welcome and introduction by the Chair.

### **Review of notes from last meeting**

Notes from last time agreed.

### **Brief project update and discussion**

The project team are continuing with the outline design and modelling of the project. The proposed locations of the banks has not changed since we last met. Unfortunately, the flood risk assessment work is taking longer than anticipated to reach its conclusion so we are not currently in a position to share this here as planned.

The National EA Framework for this type of work has changed. CH2M will complete the outline design work, including the outline Flood Risk Assessment. Atkins will be commissioned to do the detailed design and Kier the construction works.

## **Lagoons**

There are a number of factors that are considered when deciding where the lagoons would be best sited. This includes legislative compliance, buildability and maintenance, ecological functionality, cost and flood risk assessment (including freshwater drainage). There is still a question over where the western end of the main embankment would go (pending the results of the flood risk assessment). The northern lagoon is best placed in the northwest of the site as that area of the site is within the existing Special Protected Area (SPA), as long as the engineering allows it then that lagoon will go there. There are benefits in the lagoons being together from an ecological and cost perspective.

## **Siltation**

The Frome contains a relatively small amount of suspended sediment compared to other rivers. Clays, silts and fine sands are routinely moved down the river, suspended in the water. Sand and gravel is moved in a 'jerky conveyor' after storms, such as during the summer 2012 event. The river bed in the lower reaches of the Frome are influenced by Poole Harbour mud. Generally the harbour is a closed system with silt only being removed by dredging by Poole Harbour Commissioners. The river downstream of Wareham has been bordered by embankments for a long time and this has restricted its movement. Surveys have been done every 3 years by the Poole Harbour Commissioners using a single beam bathymetric survey and recently have extended to Wareham, this has allowed us to draw cross sections along the River and get a rough idea of how much and where the river bed is moving.

We will be commissioning further surveys to better understand the current movement of material in the River Frome and Wareham channel, including around Gigger's Island. This will continue during construction and after the breaches are made to check the modelling results match what is actually seen. We do not plan to do a scheme that is likely to cause significant changes to the channel or river. If the modelling predicts that there will be a negative impact we would look to either change the scheme or not go ahead with it.

The group commented that it was reassuring that the changes to the river were being looked at in this much detail.

## **Update on public access and traffic**

No changes to proposals since last meeting. DM has met with some members of this group to discuss the proposals in more detail, this was found to be very helpful.

## **Open forum**

A question was asked about car parking provision at Sunnyside Farm. IA wanted to give reassurance that NE currently have no plans to expand the car park but if car parking becomes a problem and visitors are parking on the streets and becoming a nuisance then there could be an option to enlarge the car park. The car park is owned by NE and they have no intentions to charge for parking there. RSPB and NE will consider what could be done if a rare birds turns up on The Moors and there are lots of people wanting to see it. This has happened already and a number of people were accommodated at Ridge Wharf.

A comment was made that one member of the group had read an article detailing that the RSPB has bought 46 separate sites over the last 15 years for wetland restoration. Careful surveys of wading birds have shown that the numbers of wading birds has increased. This sort of activity is therefore worthwhile as far as looking after birds.

The group discussed that one way of managing visitors is the size of available car parks. There are other ways of managing the site, in particular the amount of publicity can influence visitor number. Social media in particular can be very powerful in attracting lots of visitors as bird watchers respond to the news put out. The group discussed that soft management of the site would be considered along with everything else noting that it is hard to predict how it will be used.

### **Next Steps**

The project team are continuing with both their investigations and the outline design work. The group discussed possible dates for their next meeting and agreed that September would likely be a good time, with a focus on the Flood Risk assessment.