

# SEVERN ESTUARY PARTNERSHIP

## Management Group Meeting

Monday 28<sup>th</sup> November 2005, 10.00am – 12.50pm  
Council Chamber, S Glos Council Office, Thornbury



## Minutes

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**Chair: George Ashworth**

**ACTION**

### Attendees:

George Ashworth, Chair of SEP Management Group & Monmouthshire County Council  
Rhoda Ballinger, Cardiff University  
Natasha Barker, Severn Estuary Partnership Officer  
Gillian Ellis-King, S Glos Council  
John Marks, Vale of Glamorgan Council  
Jim Mitchell, Severn Estuary Partnership Interpretation & Communications Officer  
Rhys Morgan, Environment Agency  
Lia Moutselou, Severn Estuary Partnership Assistant  
Rob Niblett, Gloucestershire County Council  
Cllr Peter Tyzack, Chair (interim) of Severn Estuary Partnership JAC & S Glos Council  
Vaughan Grantham, Cardiff Council

### 1 Apologies for absence

Alastair Chapman, Forest of Dean Council  
Andy Hicklin, Environment Agency  
Phil Holliday, Associated British Ports  
Jessica Poole, Countryside Council for Wales  
Anne Valdes, Newport Council

### 2 Minutes from previous Management Group Meeting (9<sup>th</sup> September 2005)

The minutes of the last meeting were agreed as a true record except for the spelling of Arfor dir on page 1. It was also suggested that the minutes are altered with reference to item 10, to reflect the progress that was being made in the COREPOINT project

### 3 Matters Arising

Items with actions from the last meeting were to be covered within this meetings agenda, except for:

- The position of SCOSLA had been mentioned at the JAC i.e. SEP to provide a platform to convene meetings as and when required.
- Les Esturiales files had been received from Portugal.
- A bid had been put into CCW for the SEP to deliver ICZM training with Cardiff University.
- Aggregates levy funding was pending further consultation with the Welsh Assembly Government.
- GEK provided example project activity sheets for the Business Plan. A Contents List of the proposed Business Plan had been presented to the JAC but the draft had yet to be developed.

### 4 JAC minutes & feedback

There were no actions that would not be picked up in this agenda, but it was reported

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that there had been good feedback from the professional nature of the Secretariat Service and an enthusiastic guest speaker. Minutes were available from the Estuary Chairs Group Meeting which followed the JAC, it had been agreed to meet once/year following the Spring JAC meetings. Nicholas Crane has since been in touch with the SEP to thank them for the opportunity to participate in the meeting.

**Recommendation: It was suggested that the SEP regularly updates Nick Crane on its work and future forthcoming events.**

## 5 Partnership Agreement

A revised copy of the Partnership Agreement had been completed and sent to all JAC members in advance of the meeting on 10<sup>th</sup> December. This clearly identified it as a non-legal statement of intent to document the operational procedures of the Partnership, with a presentation made on this at the JAC inviting partners to sign. However, no signed copies had been returned. Feedback had been received from:

- Vale of Glamorgan – happy to sign based on non-legal agreement
- South Glos Council – happy to sign
- Glos County Council – legal team not prepared to advise the Council to sign it
- Cardiff Council – legal team still concerned about liabilities
- Monmouthshire – ok to sign subject to a review of all partnerships.
- Requests for copies of the Agreement had come from Gloucester Wildfowlers Association and the Severn Estuary Conservation Group.

There was still significant concern about the liabilities the Agreement introduced to Local Authorities. The example of the Wye AONB agreement which Monmouthshire and Gloucestershire County Councils are involved in was worth looking at as an example.

**Recommended:**

- **Forward comments from LAs received to date to other LAs for further consideration.** NB
- **GA to circulate Wye Valley AONB agreement to Partners through SEP** GA
- **Reduce SEP staff time input on the Agreement.**
- **Draft basic ToR/operating procedures to include as an appendix to the annual report & action plan for next Spring.** NB

## 6 Cardiff University & SEP MoU

A draft MoU had been prepared by RB based on the Thames Estuary Partnership MoU, with an accompanying list of benefits. A constructive meeting with colleagues in the Marine & Coastal Environment Group of the School of Earth Sciences at Cardiff University had been held. However, the legal advisor in the Research & Commercial division of the University had advised that the MoU should not be progressed until the Partnership Agreement had been confirmed. This was seen as a difficult situation considering the Partnership Agreement is not progressing. It was also advised that the Thames Estuary MoU is not used as a basis due to its pseudo-legal nature - introducing financial liabilities – but that they were happy to help draft an MoU for us in due course.

**Recommended: SEP & CU staff to develop the list of benefits and discuss the future of any MoU with the Head of School. An annual list of mutual benefits would at least strengthen and partly formalise the current hosting arrangement.** RB

The potential liabilities of the SEP team being involved in or organising events was discussed.

**Recommended: SEP team to ensure liabilities for meetings, conferences & events are clarified beforehand. Ken Howell at Cardiff University could advise.** NB

## 7 Partnership Services

### Contacts Database

- The Contacts Database is in the process of being updated with approximately 400 returns so far from the 'Contact Response Form' mail-out. These would be used to update the 'Who's Who Directory on the website.

### Severn Tidings

- The new version has been well received and the SEP team are building up a wider distribution list e.g. Parish Councils.

### Severn Estuary Day Invitation

- So far approximately 100 people had expressed interest in the day, with 30 organising events. Jim was in the process of following up links with the latter.

### Website re-launch

- The site had been refreshed and re-launched on 1<sup>st</sup> November and was receiving about 400 hits/month, 100 of which were new visitors. There was more potential for growth. Minutes of most meetings were made available on the site.

### Communications Strategy

- JM updated the group on the draft Communications strategy. It was commented by the MG that there should be promotion of the achievements of the Partnership highlighted in the strategy and evidence of this used as much of possible. It was also added that the project sheets, once developed, will be very useful in promoting successful projects / achievements.

**JM to redraft and submit to next MG**

**Recommended: Partnership services continue to be strengthened**

**SEP team**

## 8 Severn Estuary Forum

Feedback from the JAC 'Suggestions Form' indicated increased interest on the theme of climate change/sea level rise/shoreline management and public speakers/conference style event and/or physical activities for adults/children. Holding conferences on Saturdays was not viewed favourably.

Following discussion amongst the SEP team and in a preliminary Working Group it was suggested that we organise a series of events, such as 6 themed days, culminating in a multi-themed Severn Estuary conference as our Forum meeting in a conference style.

Suggested speakers included Nicholas Crane and someone from the Met Office. It would be good if we could get live news coverage every evening of the themed days on regional news.

The Waverley Boat or Balmoral would be good venues, but should be looked at early regarding cost and availability. The consideration and booking of these two venues should be proceeded upon with particular attention to potential liabilities and risk assessments that need to be conducted. An outdoor venue at the Severn Bridge Service Station was also suggested. Other venues could include ports and the CREATE centre in Bristol. The dates for Wales Biodiversity Week and a celebration of Brunel should be checked.

**Recommended: Severn Estuary Forum day moved to Friday 9<sup>th</sup> June and look for the potential to support another event to promote to the public on Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> June.**

**SEP team**

**Cllr Peter Tyzack to provide contact from the MET office**

**PT**

## 9 Annual Report & Action Plan Update

Feedback from the JAC Suggestions Form indicated preference to prioritise issues relating to ICZM, marine aggregates, the long term response of the estuary to pressures and work on simple identifiable aims & gains, the most urgent issues and those with funding.

The proposed format for annual monitoring for the implementation of the *Strategy for the Severn Estuary* was reported to the JAC. A review of the Strategy would identify the 'gaps' in delivery to help target the role & future direction of SEP services.

**Recommended: Circulate a simple questionnaire based on policy areas, to partners responsible for delivering actions in the Strategy, asking them how they view delivery performance.** NB

## 10 Business Plan Development

Feedback from the JAC Suggestions Form indicated interest but not much existing use of the website, positive feedback on Severn Tidings and excellent feedback on Secretariat Services. Comments about our approach to audiences: public– limited and partners – good, efficient & professional, with the need to work out channels that do not preach to the converted & define the relationship between partners and the Communications Strategy. Ideas for potential new partners included the marine aggregates sector, Countryside Agency/Natural England, DEFRA, the R&D Community and SW Regional Development Agency.

NB had met with the following partners individually since the last meeting: English Nature; CCW, Somerset County Council and Gloucester County Council.

Positive feedback has been received on the outline and contents of the Business Plan.

**Recommended: The SEP Partnership Officer continue to develop the Business Plan alongside the Annual Report & Action Plan.** NB

## 11 Finance

NB explained briefly the background to the Budget Position Statement presented to the Management Group and that approx ¼ of SEP Officer time had been spent on investigating our budget position and setting up a monitoring system over the past 6 months. Reasons for forecasted overspend by the end of March 2006 were based on current money in the account and monthly expenditure, not using the COASTATLANTIC budget to cover staff costs any more (due to the forecasted overspend of that budget by the end of August 2006).

**Recommended: SEP approach all partners with an urgent request for funding support for this financial year, based on new outputs anticipated (Business Plan, annual monitoring framework, Communications Strategy, planning for Severn Estuary Day). Follow this up quickly with request for confirmation of funding commitments to 2006-7. This should be the most urgent priority.** NB

## 12 COASTATLANTIC Progress Report

A good meeting in Blaye, France in October meant the project was progressing well. Reports had recently been prepared by all theme leaders including JM on access, SK on GIS and natural heritage and S Glos on cultural heritage and urban-rural interdependencies. NB would be producing a cross-cutting theme report on stakeholder involvement by 20<sup>th</sup> January. It was noted that the whole project was under-spending and that SEP were in discussions with the UK Interreg contact point and lead partner to try and obtain an increased budget (due to our forecasted overspend). NB

## 13 COREPOINT Progress Report

RB reported that work on the Research Strategy and LIS were now underway, for November 2005-06. The Research Forum would be part of the Severn Estuary Forum Day. It was noted that the project was funding 1 day/week of NB's time and could be used to help extend JM's contract after March 2006 to deliver cultural heritage project work. RB, NB, JM

Tim Stojanovic gave a presentation on options for the Local Information System:

focusing on shoreline management/local coastal planning policies/cumulative impacts. It was decided to focus on coastal planning policies to inform cumulative impacts and shoreline management.

#### 14 LES ESTURIALES

The AGM in Blaye had passed over Secretariat of the network to the Severn Estuary Partnership for two years from October 2005. This meant approx 75,000 euros to be held by SEP, with 17500 euros (approx £10,000) available per year to support the network. There was interest in developing a project on climate change.

Post-meeting note: Cllr Tyzack, Gillian Ellis-King and NB agreed that the simplest way to manage the Les Esturiales fund was within the SEP account.

***Recommended: NB confirm proposed budget arrangement with Gironde Council and provide account number for Cardiff University to hold fund within SEP account.***

NB

#### 15 Any Other Business

There could be a conflict of interests between a potential patron (such as N Crane) and Cardiff Council.

NB had prepared a proposals paper to CoastNET and DEFRA to improve networking between coastal & estuary Partnerships (outside SEP time).

NB

***Recommended: NB circulate paper to all MG members.***

#### 16 Date and Venue of Next Meeting

Tuesday 31<sup>st</sup> January 10.00am Cwmbran (before the ASERA Working Group meeting)