

# SEVERN ESTUARY PARTNERSHIP

## Management Group Meeting

**Tuesday 31<sup>st</sup> January 2006, 10.00am – 1.00pm.**  
**Monmouthshire County Council Offices, Cwmbran**



## Minutes

**Chair: George Ashworth**

**ACTION**

**Attendees:**

George Ashworth, Chair of SEP Management Group & Monmouthshire County Council  
 Rhoda Ballinger, Cardiff University  
 Natasha Barker, Severn Estuary Partnership (SEP) Officer  
 Alastair Chapman, Forest of Dean Council  
 Gillian Ellis-King, South Gloucestershire Council  
 Vaughan Grantham, Cardiff Council  
 Phil Holliday, Associated British Ports  
 Jim Mitchell, SEP Access, Interpretation & Communications Officer  
 Rhys Morgan, Severn Estuary Officer, Environment Agency  
 Rob Niblett, Gloucestershire County Council

**1 Apologies for absence**

John Marks, Vale of Glamorgan Council  
 Jessica Poole, CCW  
 Cllr Peter Tyzack, Chair (interim) of Severn Estuary Partnership JAC & S Glos Council  
 Anne Valdes, Newport Council

**2 Minutes from previous Management Group Meeting (28<sup>th</sup> November 2005)**

The minutes of the last meeting were agreed as a true record.

**3 Matters Arising**

**All**

Recommendations and actions from the last meeting were checked:

- Nicholas Crane would be invited to the Forum but not as a fee-paid speaker. The Severn Wonders Working Group had recommended that we didn't pay high fees for speakers, only cover travel expenses where necessary.
- Partnership Agreement: copies of the 3 local authority responses were available at the meeting.
- Wye Valley AONB agreement – a copy would be useful
- Cardiff University & SEP MoU – a list of benefits paper was discussed by RB and NB with Prof Edwards, Head of School. A positive meeting from which it looks possible to retain the status quo for the time being, full economic costing could be avoided as the Partnership can be viewed as a charity by the Research & Commercial Division.
- Potential liabilities for Severn Wonders events were being investigated, including the possible need for assessment which would be checked with ASERA members.
- Communications Strategy – progressing alongside the Business Plan and had helped inform the preparation of Severn Wonders.
- Coastal Partnerships: Working Together – copies of proposal paper available at the meeting and would be circulated with the minutes.

All other matters arising would be picked up in this agenda.

#### 4 Finance

##### Feedback from partners to funding letters

As discussed at the previous meeting, the Partnership had a projected overspend by the end of the financial year of £11,000 based on current costs and forecasting the final balance of the COASTATLANTIC project. Staff costs allocated to the COASTATLANTIC budget had therefore been reduced and measures were being taken to help avoid a negative balance at the end of the project in August 2006. It was acknowledged that the project had brought many benefits to the Partnership, aiding delivery of many of the recommendations in the Strategy and that the SEP may not exist without the boost it had given to the funding position.

Requests for underspend had been sent to all partners (83 letters) at the end of November 2005 from George Ashworth, followed by a letter to the same representatives from Cllr Peter Tyzack in early December, asking for commitments to 2006-2007. Positive feedback had been received from several partners:

- Bridgend Council: £1000 for 05-06
- South Gloucestershire: £1000 05-06 (and possibly £1000 06-07) Environment Grant for Severn Wonders.
- Vale of Glamorgan: £500 underspend and increase to £2700 for 06-07
- Gloucestershire County Council: £500 underspend 05-06 and £1000 confirmed for 06-07 (no increase).

The following had presented positive replies but would need further exploration to realise any funding contribution:

- Welsh Assembly Government:: recognised SEP as 'nature/environment' so worth following up in relation to CCW grant and ICZM – wider remit
- GoSW: no budgetary allocation & issue with other partners but maybe opportunities through Natural England
- Forest of Dean: no increase but possibility of project based support

The following organisations had responded but could not offer financial commitment:

- Welsh Water: wary of setting precedence for other partnerships
- CADW: no core funding of this type
- Wales Environment Link: not very involved and a small charity

It was hoped that positive responses would be forthcoming, following recent discussions with:

- Environment Agency: 3 year MoA being reviewed
- Countryside Agency: interested in 'valuing the Severn' study
- CCW: 7 project proposals awaiting feedback.
- ALSF: JM attending a seminar to help progress a possible bid.
- Quantocks AONB service for funding Severn Wonders.

**JM, NB**

##### Forecast 06-07

Our forecasted costs for 2006-07 amounted to just over £41,500 based on the renewal of staff contracts and a basic operating budget:

- Steve Knowles (ASERA Implementation Officer) : 1 day/wk (1 hr SEP and 7 hrs ASERA) until March 2007
- Jim Mitchell (Access, Interpretation and Communications Officer): 4 days/week (40% SEP, 40% COREPOINT) until April 2007
- Lia Moutselou (Partnership Assistant): 1.5 days/week SEP until August 2006.

It was noted that Natasha Barker (Partnership Officer) was funded by SEP 70% and COREPOINT 20% with existing 2 year contract until May 2007.

Income was anticipated at approx £50,000 for 06-07 based upon partner

contributions of £35,000, Les Esturiales £10,000 and other Secretariat duties £5,000. This relied on some substantial contributions from government agencies and/or new contributions from industry, as the level of contributions from local authorities was not enough to sustain the Partnership in itself.

Regular financial updates would be tabled at Management Group meetings.

**Recommended: Invoices for 06-07 to arrive with partners 1<sup>st</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> week March 2006. Include amounts due for Les Esturiales for 2006 calendar year. Assume all partners still on board unless otherwise clarified.**

NB

## 5 Business Plan Update

NB circulated the first 10 pages of a draft Business Plan, including an evaluation of SEP action commitments from the Strategy, our achievements to date and opportunities 2006-2009. This would help to inform the first annual report & action plan. Both reports would be developed in full for circulation prior to the next Management Group meeting in mid-March. It was proposed to prepare a detailed Business Plan report for the Management Group, with an accompanying 'marketing brochure', project and service sheets for wide circulation.

NB

A lively discussion followed on the role of SEP in monitoring implementation of the Strategy and the relationship between the JAC, Management Group and proposed Forum. The following points were noted:

- Highlight headline achievements of SEP at the Forum (e.g. Common Platform)
- Extract quotes from key documents (e.g. Wales Env Strategy, DEFRA documents, SW Regional Spatial Strategy) and make prominent the fact that SEP is supported by the Welsh Assembly
- The SEP should not be seen as a 'chaser/big brother' but provide a monitoring framework for delivery of the Strategy. The Business Plan should make a commitment to reviewing the Strategy.
- The Forum may have a say in the role of the JAC, there should at least be more widescale awareness of the purpose of the JAC.
- It was not possible to define whether the Management Group (MG) or JAC 'led' the Partnership as the MG was responsible for day to day leadership but the JAC, with Member representation, had to have the official decision-making authority if needed.
- In future the JAC could become a more active body making recommendations to strengthen the strategic voice and influence decision-making, but it was felt too soon to consider rationalising it into a smaller committee. The informal networking had just begun through the JAC (small conference-style) meetings, so it was agreed to review the position again after the Forum was established.

**Recommendation: SEP provide simple tabular version of Strategy sector & aims and ask all (JAC) partners to comment on their achievements, failures & new priorities. This would enable delivery of the Strategy to be publicised at the Forum and promote the facilitation service provided by SEP.**

NB

**Recommendation: The Management Group intended to endorse the Business Plan, Annual Report & Action Plan and recommend it to the JAC at the end of March. Funding partners should then adopt the Business Plan at the JAC in April 2006 (invited to a sub-group meeting at the beginning of the day). The published version should then be publicised through the Severn Wonders Festival and Forum in June.**

All

## 6 Annual Report & Action Plan Update

The Partnership Agreement would be used to inform development of basic Terms of Reference/operating procedures for the Partnership, to be included in the Annual Report & Action Plan. The issues raised by Gloucestershire County Council's solicitor and the discussion above (item 5) indicated why it was not possible to progress the Partnership Agreement at this stage in development of the SEP: it could not be viewed as a non-legal agreement and a legal agreement without clarity of responsibilities was not possible. However, it was hoped that more clarity about the Partnership's operating procedures at this stage, would be a step in the right direction.

**Recommendation: Basic terms of reference/operating procedures be adopted through the Business Plan/Annual Report & Action Plan.**

NB

## 7 Severn Wonders Festival & Forum

A working group had been set up and had a very constructive meeting in early January. Copies of minutes were available. Jim was co-ordinating events for the festival, for which 30-50 events could be expected. A project planning timeline and anticipated costs were presented and discussed. The current aim was to confirm events for publication of an events brochure in early March. A flyer to promote the festival and forum (new date of Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> June) would go out to all JAC members shortly.

JM, NB

A list of potential speakers was presented. Speakers from the Welsh Museum/Cardiff University/Southampton Uni were suggested on climate change; DEFRA on making space for water. Support was given to the idea of inviting James Lovelock although it was not desirable to get too involved in nuclear debate, only as part of discussion on renewables. RegenSW and RDA may have speakers on renewables. It was seen appropriate to host a workshop on aggregates on the boat as the other four themes (coastal & marine policy; climate change; renewables & flood risk planning) were well connected for the theme of the main conference. There would also be workshops on the boat for the ASERA Advisory Group and COREPOINT Research Strategy.

NB

### **Recommendations:**

- ***The forum be promoted as a conference and training event***
- ***The flyer to be sent out shortly to ask for bookings now***
- ***Clevedon & the Waverley on Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> June should work well***
- ***The Waverley be booked as whole by SEP for the event and possibly negotiate an arrangement with them to administer bookings for public spaces just for the boat (£10-£15?).***
- ***A £25 flat-rate fee per individual was acceptable for the Forum conference and boat trip.***
- ***The Forum conference and boat should be used as a significant opportunity to promote SEP with flyers/banners/displays etc.***

## 8 Partnership Services

Over 70 requests for the GIS CD had been received and were being prepared for distribution. The CD had been presented to the ASERA AGM and Access Forum in February. This was seen as a very good output from the COASTATLANTIC project and good opportunity for the future development of SEP services.

**9 COASTATLANTIC Progress Report**

The Access Forum was meeting on 7<sup>th</sup> February. Four panels were in production and due to be delivered soon. The JAC could be offered the free use of images that had been developed through this work.

JM

The SEP had responsibility for producing a final report on stakeholder involvement for the COASTATLANTIC project. This was overdue since 25<sup>th</sup> January, Natasha had obtained an extension until 3<sup>rd</sup> February. The draft report would be available for comment next week.

NB

The nature conservation and archaeology guidance notes were in their final stages of production.

SK, JM  
GEK

Various options for finalising the project with a healthy budget transferred to SEP were being progressed. A useful meeting had been held at Cardiff University with Paula McGlauchlan who advised the UK on Interreg.

NB

**10 COREPOINT Progress Report**

Iwan Ball was researching other Partnerships for experience with Research Strategy and Fora. A report would be presented at the next Management Group meeting with options for progressing the Severn Estuary Research Strategy and Forum. Recommendations could then be taken to the JAC on the way forwards, prior to a workshop during the Forum (probably on the Waverley).

Tim Stojanovic was progressing the Local Information System theme selected at the last Management Group meeting, in conjunction with work in Essex and Sefton.

Jim's remit would be orientated towards maritime heritage 2 days/week from April 2006, this element of the project had been brought forward to enable his contract extension.

**11 LES ESTURIALES Progress Report**

The transfer of funds (58592 euro) had been received into the SEP budget yesterday. Hosting the Secretariat brought with it time demands on SEP with an estimated 13500 euros/year for network management, 4500 euros for hosting a bureau meeting and 30,000 euro for an annual conference. The next Bureau meeting was anticipated to be in Poland (new members) in May/June this year.

It was recommended by GEK that NB check with Patricia from Lisbon on the timing of invoicing the LES ESTURIALES partners, but it should probably be before the Bureau meeting this May/June. Check previous minutes.

NB

**12 Any Other Business****Meetings & Conferences attended by SEP staff since last meeting:**

Partners:

- Rhys Morgan, EA
- Jacky Martel, Countryside Agency

Conferences/Meetings:

- Coastal Futures 2006,
- International Coastal Conference Organising Committee for the Institute of Civil

Engineers.

Forthcoming:

- Wales Coastal & Maritime Partnership, 9<sup>th</sup> Feb, Bangor – NB & RB attending.
- Presentation on COASTATLANTIC & SEP to CIWEM at EA Exeter – NB, 15<sup>th</sup> Feb

It was noted that SEP could charge for giving presentations.

## **12 Date and Venue of Next Meeting**

**Monday 13<sup>th</sup> March, 10am**, venue tbc (possibly Forest of Dean)

**NB**