

**Towans Partnership
Draft Notes of Meeting on Wednesday 13 October 2010
Passmore Edwards Institute, Hayle**

Present:

Ian Toy (IT)	Gwithian Towans Ratepayers	Alison Clough (AC)	Cornwall Council
Cllr John Bennett (JB)	Hayle Town Council	Sue Nicholls (SN)	Cornwall Council
Stella La Touche (SLT)	Landowner		
John Pollard CC (JP)	Hayle Town / Cornwall Council	Terri Winchester (TW)	Cornwall Council
Dick Goodere (DG)	Gwithian Residents Association	(Notes)	
Phil Drew (PD)	RNLI		
Greg Spray (GS)	RNLI		
Georgina Schofield (GS)	Community Archive/ Hayle Mill Pond Project		
Mr B Makin (BM)	National Trust		
Andrew McDouall (AM)	Natural England		
John Gorst (JG)	Hockin Trust		

Invited Guests:

Andrew Blewett (AB)	Environment Agency
Chris Barnes (CB)	Environment Agency
Paul McNie (PN)	South West Water

1 Introductions

2 Apologies

Brian Pocock CC (BP)	Cornwall Council
Michael Williams (MW)	Owner of Lethlean Towans
Cllr Ray Tovey (RT)	Cornwall Council
Peter Haddock	Safety Officer, Hayle Harbour
Dave Clarke (DC)	Cornwall Council
Julian German CC (JG)	Cornwall Council
Sally Foster (SF)	Gwithian Residents Association
Steve Crummay	Cornwall Council

3 Notes of Meeting 16 December 2009

Amendments

a) The notes were not reviewed but some corrections made. The notes were accepted as a record of the meeting.

4 Sewage pollution Gwithian Beach

Issue raised at the 13 July meeting

- 1) *The Storm Overflow at Reskadinnick - feeding into the Red River*
- 2) *Gwithian Village Sewage Treatment Works - feeding into Gwithian stream which connects with the Red River. Comments were made that the Gwithian Works was originally designed for the residential population of Gwithian village but now has to cope with two large camp sites!*
- 3) *The main North Cliffs outfall for the Camborne Works discharges at the base of the cliffs at Rescajeage. Comments were made that on occasions, the "slick" produced from this outfall was carried by tidal flow down the coast and could be observed off of Godrevy Beach!*

Actions

Actions

**Environment Agency and South West Water were asked about:-
Current arrangements for sewage discharge into St Ives Bay**

a) PM stated that Godrevy and Gwithian beaches have both met guide line compliance standards for the past 12 years. DG asked about recent closure and PM responded that SWW are working with Surfers Against Sewage (SAS) and the new directive requires notification of short term pollution and risks. The Directive becomes effective 2012 with a compliant date of 2015 (this is because the assessment cycle is 4 yearly). SWW are trialling the reporting mechanism with Cornwall Council (CC) through lifeguards. Wet weather events comparison work is ongoing but increased flow could have an impact on water quality, there is robust data for dry weather but not enough wet data yet. EA monitoring point for bathing water is at the mouth of the Red River and records overflow from Reskadinnick. IT commented that at times there is a visual impact, DG gave example of 2 weeks ago following heavy rain the river was brown and smelly, why wasn't it tested then and was Andy Cumming notified? PM explained that it is in the catchment drainage from Camborne and would include agricultural and mining drainage and the colour and smell would be a combined effect. DG asked what is the mechanism to report and get tested in these conditions, PM advised that CC should be notified, Graeme Martin is the lead Environmental Health Officer and on the steering group for the pilot project. Routine sampling has been extended to November. JB clarified that the concern is if the water is safe after rainfall, be it pollution from sewage, agriculture or mining. SN/BM/GM are discussing winter signage that will allow the public to make an informed choice. JB observed that priority is safety and signage is a solution but must contain the right information – PM advised that information is being drafted by EA and will include compliance data from previous years. Health Protection Agency (HPA) (Maggie Barlow) looked at mining waste pollution and data concluded that the metal content is not high enough to be a safety risk. JB asked if water could be contaminated by arsenic and phosphates from farming – PM responded 'yes' the water will always have background contamination. JB feels that we are being sent around the agencies, should we conclude that even if the river is polluted the bathing quality is fine? JP concerned that public will have to evaluate safety, he would like to be told whether safe or not. SN informed that initial signage is an interim measure for winter when there is no lifeguard presence, pilot project and communications with landowners will inform mandatory signage – JP feels that that signs are corporate speak for 'don't blame me' we need to know if level of sewage is a risk. PM confirmed that allowed standards for bathing water are being met, clarifying that standards apply to beach bathing and there are no standards for river bathing – JP questioned safety of polluted river water flowing across the beach: PM informed that monitoring is in accord with legislation

Plans for the future which will improve the current situation and also cater for the proposed housing expansion in Camborne/Redruth

b) AB explained that the existing system combines foul drainage and surface water which leads to overflow, but current planning regulations provide for separation, CPR Urban Drainage Plan takes account of recent developments and engineering design for Heartlands Project removes surface water from the drainage system.

PD recalled that overflow issues were previously looked at and fitting retro suds was considered too expensive. PM advised that currently water from A30 Roseworthy Dip discharges into the Red River, AB confirmed that it does but not into foul sewer so is not causing overflow. PM informed that 30% of drainage into Reskadinnick sewer is rain water – SWW’s current advice is that when you build a pumping station you separate it. BM suggested trying to eliminate problems eg. cattle access to steams, domestic septic tanks and farm dung spreading. DG asked for clarification on beach closure – PM explained that it would be to allow council sampling which on that occasion started within 6 hours of notification, whilst most of the bay was fine the issue was where the Red River meets the beach, based on survey results if the bathing water is 200mtrs from contamination it is fine. Practical measure would be to move the bathing area away from river. GS explained that lifeguards are testing red flag system – PD added that 2 days after the event they had to make a decision because beach closure affects businesses, surfers and other users. The timeline on pollution incidents has delays because council do not generally work weekends and decisions are made in Truro but should be based on site assessment. Lifeguards on 57 beaches provide advice to public but there are 23 beaches without lifeguards so no opportunity to monitor bathing. Rolo Deards, Beach Safety Officer is CC contact and HPA leaflet [Beach Streams Information](#) provides information but responsibility lies with landowners. JP suggested that most people have no conception of danger of hand to mouth transfer caused by poor beach hygiene, it is important to educate and raise public awareness. AB observed that if all rivers have background bacteria should the government have an obligation to tell public of risks? New Directive has revised terminology. DG concerned about inadequate sewage provision for Church Town following collapse of pumps last August, since system was put in 10 years usage has increased. PM advised that legal action is outstanding on the incident of 25 August CC tested for bacteriological waste on Gwithian Stream and beach and data shows that Red River was not affected. DG concerned that sampling was not immediate – PM responded that sampling is done weekly by CC. IT asked if just because there is a smell it may not mean river is polluted – PM confirmed that is correct, the tankering out from the sewage was to allow replacement of reed beds. IT asked if the works is capable of taking the waste from camp sites; Pm responded that it is currently being assessed and EA have the right to review the consents or change the conditions, they hope to have assessment of loading by the end of the year. PM agreed to provide feed back. PM advised that if new treatment plant is needed they would have to get power to the site, JP enquired if it could be pumped to St Erth and PM confirmed that it could be an option with money, land and power. PD mentioned farming pollution at Watergate Bay in 2003 and feels that we haven’t moved forward, and AB informed that best practice is followed for cattle issues and they are trying to regulate spread periods and crop management.

PM

PM left the meeting

- c) GS asked AB if he could explain EA actions at Mill Pond – inner pond to estuary was blocked on carnival night and 2 engineers put in 4 planks rather than replacing all 18 and the pipes are still crumbling. AB offered to take question back to flood defence colleagues. GS added that planks were used in the first place because they got flood

AB

levels wrong by 6 inches – JB added that water level had dropped but EA had not accepted responsibility, they seemed determined to keep water levels low but higher level is needed to support wildlife. JB informed that model boats had used the pond for decades but now water is too shallow AB suggested writing to EA but GS explained that they already done that but EA had taken out water and left a bund of silt

5 Progress of Work Programme Reports

Cornwall Council

Appendix 1 – Report

AC gave a presentation and further discussion and comments ensued on:

- a) Gwithian Towans scrub encroachment needs to be controlled with regular rolling programme
- b) Waste - improvement in use of dog bins. SN advised that one bin had been stolen and another burnt out and that rubbish left in area of dog bins is higher at weekends. AC confirmed that policy is not to provide litter bins partly because they attract foxes. RJ concerned about amount of rubbish left around dog bins – SN suggested reporting concerns to council who will log problem and respond; there is one bin emptier for whole of county and evidence from tracker system show an improvement. BM advised that fly tipping is a problem. DG suggested that camp sites should take action on clearing rubbish
- c) Dog warden – SLT feels that nobody takes any notice of warden
- d) Beach access provision – options discussed with engineers. IT suggested taking route near to lifeguard hut, it would be near main access for camp site
- e) Sand Dune Code of Conduct – not specific enough and need to be revamped with corporate logo. Leaflets will also be handed out
- f) Conservation grazing – hope to get 4 ponies back to Gwithian by end of the month and may try cattle in future.

Updates form Other Organisations

Natural England – AM reported

- a) Appendix 2 Summary to be circulated with notes
- b) SSSI some management agreements with Higher Level Stewardship (HLS) Gwithian. Currently two existing Countryside Stewardship Schemes Gwithian Towans expires in 2014 & Lethlean Towans expires this year.
- c) Conditional Assessment aims to bring Towans into positive management. HLS applications are not straightforward. Management Agreement for Mexico Towans is progressing. New HLS agreement with Mr Williams for Lethlean and negotiations with Claire? Williams for Phillack. Negotiations with Chris Harvey holiday park. Gwithian Green annual payment
- d) or management of sand dunes and green - one agreement to keep costs down. If no action then paths will narrow and disappear
- e) DG commented that educational funding for Gwithian Green is excellent
- f) 10 year agreement for whole of Towans apart from Beachside; Beachside not keen to have management agreement. Hope to have positive management by end of year that may include cutting and grazing
- g) DG informed that some scrub is good for butterflies – AM confirmed that the aim is not to eliminate scrub but balance it with the rest of the habitat

AM

Cornwall Councils Environmental Officer Report – Appendix 3 circulated
h) Events – Duchy want details in writing and they will use RNLI for safety

Beach Zoning – management group due to meet soon and they will control

RNLI – PD reported

- i) ? Off of beaches apart from Porthmeor
- j) Rescued kite surfers from Hayle Harbour
- k) Full statistics for year are not yet in but there was 600 rescues and first aid incidents with 6 lives saved
- l) New unit middle beach, surfers felt surfing area compromised and zoning scheme made it harder to manage. Run in with surfers at National Trust car park almost exploded into a fight. Overall there was positive feedback for the central unit. Red and yellow flag area in front of it acts as a buffer for users and the south area can be flexible for surfers if not many bathers there

Community Archive / Hayle Mill Pond Project – GS reported

- m) Re-launch of The Pump publication
- n) Problem with garden rubbish being dumped at back of wood
- o) Safety issue for children – GS intends to visit schools to educate youngsters
- p) JB informed that life belt is missing – SN will investigate
- q) Tyres – EA have done what they promised and some tyres have been moved but the owner has died

SN

Gwithian Green – DG reported

- r) Butterflies – Silver Studded Blue sightings notable; 20% butterfly species in decline and of the 25 species mentioned we have over half in this area. Butterfly surveys will be done annually and results show evidence that nature is thriving. DG would like to see other transits developed

National Trust – BM reported

- s) 80K cars for this season with 80% of visitors Trust members
- t) Re-turfing and re-seeding top field at Godrevy
- u) Archaeological survey of bronze age barrow
- v) PD recalled that in 1976 people used to jump from the gun turret at Mexico Towans onto the beach but now the distance is too steep: JB observed that grass is falling into the sea where erosion is taking place causing loss of sand and movement of shore

7 Sand Extraction

- a) Nothing to report – Hayle Harbour meeting scheduled for this afternoon

8 Any Other Business

- a) Nothing raised

9 Date of Next Meeting

Provisional date 15 December 2010
Passmore Edwards Institute, Hayle

Appendix 1

Towans Partnership Meeting

Report from Cornwall Council's Countryside Officer for Hayle Towans

13 October 2010.

Progress Report

- Cut back encroaching scrub on 'bends' in road at Gwithian Towans.
- Ragwort removal by BTCV at 3 pony grazing sites at Gwithian Towans.
- Led Guided Walk on history & folklore of St Gothian Sands Local Nature Reserve – 26 July.
- Installed & maintained Beach Zoning Signs at St Gothian Sands & Gwithian Towans between 10 July – 5 September.
- Litter picked at St Gothian Sands & Gwithian Towans Top Car Parks once a week & as necessary through summer season.
- Removed graffiti from information signs at Gwithian Towans.
- Liaised with Dog Warden re patrolling Towans sites & additional 'dog information' signs put out on Towans sites.
- Inspected several cliff falls reported to be affecting access to the beach at various sites on the Towans. Where not on CC land reported to landowners. Also maintained hazard warning & diversion signs at 'High Tide Access' point at west side of St Gothian Sands – vandalised twice.
- Meeting with Richard Hocking, CC Engineer, to discuss beach access provision.
- Requests for Countryside Information & Events Diaries received – deliveries made to 9 local Holiday Parks this season.
- Sand Dune Code of Conduct Signs updated to show 'No cycling/mountain biking'. Installed at St Gothian Sands & Gwithian Towans sites & with agreement from Mr James, at the entrances to St Gothian Sands LNR from Churchtown Farm Campsite in an attempt to stop fires, camping & mountain biking on the Towans.
- Attended 'Gwithian Green Advisory Group' Meeting 21 September.
- Several meetings held with Natural England & landowners at Mexico & Lethlean Towans & Gwithian Green to discuss Higher Level Stewardship agreements for various sites on the Towans. Current Countryside Stewardship Schemes are coming to an end in this autumn. If successful, this should allow conservation grazing to continue on the Towans during the winter months. Also to discuss changes to arrangements for provision of ponies' by Natural England from the Lizard this season.
- Pot hole filling close to Top Car Park at Gwithian.

Winter Work Programme

- Conservation grazing with ponies, to be resumed on several Towans sites. CC to continue to manage the grazing project.
- Scrub clearance to be carried out on Towans & along road at Gwithian Towans, probably funded through Countryside Stewardship & Natural England Schemes.
- Look at improving countryside information provision at the Towans – Sand Dunes Code of Conduct etc.
- Maintenance work at Peter's Point steps to be carried out by Duchy College students.
- Improvements planned for Top Car Park & along road to Gwithian Towans; drainage, dragons teeth & resurfacing/pothole filling.

Appendix 2 BRIEFING FOR THE TOWANS PARTNERSHIP 13 OCTOBER 2010

PROPOSALS FOR FUNDING POSITIVE MANAGEMENT OF THE TOWANS

Andrew McDouall, Natural England

Existing agreements

Higher Level Stewardship (HLS) agreement: Upton Towans and Loggans Moor 2008 – 2018 (agreement with Cornwall Wildlife Trust).

Countryside Stewardship (CSS) agreements: Lethlean Towans – expired end September 2010
 Gwithian Green – expires 2011
 Gwithian Towans – expires 2014

Proposed new agreements

The SSSI condition assessment carried out in 2009 found that much of the SSSI is in unfavourable declining condition due primarily to scrub encroachment and invasive species. As a result, Natural England is currently negotiating and assisting the preparation of HLS applications for Mexico Towans, Lethlean Towans, Phillack Towans, the part of Upton Towans owned by St Ives Bay Holiday Park and Gwithian Towans, Gwithian Green and St Gothian Sands.

If these applications are successful and lead to agreements, funding for positive management for the land included in the agreements will be in place for 10 years. This will include annual payments and, in addition, funding for specific capital works, including for example scrub management and infrastructure to support grazing. Natural England hopes to have agreements in place within the next year. Delivery of the management agreed will be through a partnership between the landowner, Natural England and Cornwall Council.

Much of the management required will be to tackle the problem of scrub and invasive species which, if left unmanaged, will lead to a loss of dune grassland. The potential scale of the problem can be seen by walking along the coast path between St Ives Bay Holiday Park and Beachside Holiday Park. Specific scrub management implementation plans will be prepared for individual land holdings. Factors such as the requirements of species such as butterflies and moths, historical features and access will be taken into account when planning habitat management works. The aim is to maintain the rich biodiversity of the area.

It is hoped to implement more grazing, perhaps with cattle in addition to ponies, where this can be done safely and without compromising other interests. The grazing undertaken by Cornwall Council in partnership with landowners and Natural England in recent years has demonstrated positive results in terms of public perceptions as well as habitat management and it is hoped to build on this success.

The proposed agreement for Gwithian Towans, Gwithian Green and St Gothian Sands will replace the CSS agreements on Gwithian Towans and Gwithian Green. It will include St Gothian Sands bringing additional land into positive management. Funding for educational access is proposed under this agreement to build on the educational work already taking place at Gwithian Green.

Post meeting notes: The sand dunes at Porth Kidney Sands are also affected by scrub encroachment as well as intensive use by people and dogs. Natural England is in the early stages of discussing management with the landowners.

Some management work at Porth Kidney Sands and Gwithian Towans is planned for this coming winter, to be carried out by BTCV and funded by Natural England.

Natural England wishes to thank all landowners involved in planning and carrying out positive management of important habitats in the Towans area, including the SSSI, and Cornwall Council and Towans Partnership for their support.

DRAFT