

Spurn Advisory Group

Notes of the first meeting on Wednesday 11th January 2017

Present:

Martin Batt	YWT (initial Chair)
Lyn Healing	ERYC ward councillor
Adam Stoye	YWT
Dave Tucker	ERYC ward councillor
Andrew Wells	Westmere Farm B&B
Tony Smith	Parish Council
Terry Smithson	YWT
Christina Keyworth	Youth Club
Rob Adams	SBOT
Dave Steenvorden	RNLI
Roy Clubley	Parish Council
Andy Wainwright	ERYC strategic planning
Haris Livas-Dawes	Parish Council
Richard Burton	ERYC councillor and cabinet member

Apologies:

Jackie Cracknell	ERYC ward councillor
Fred Firman	ABP Hull

1. Welcome and introductions

MB welcomed the attendees and thanked them for taking the time to come to this first meeting of a new advisory group set up by Yorkshire Wildlife Trust with the help of East Riding councillors. After each attendee had outlined their background, MB explained that the group includes the ward councillors for South Holderness, who are invited to every meeting. It was recognised that the a body such as this should have been established at the outset, and probably years before that, given the complexity of the site and the many different community and special interest groups involved. The intention was to have an open, level headed discussion of the issues that have arisen, not least the proposed visitor centre that has proved so controversial.

2. Scope and objectives of the group

The lack of a formal group of stakeholders interested in the future of Spurn and the way it is managed had prevented YWT from fully understanding issues arising from the Trust's ownership and management of the Spurn peninsula over many years, and this was brought into focus as the proposals for the visitor centre became clear. Whilst YWT did hold meetings with some of the stakeholders about the development, it did not convene a consultative group to enable wider communication of its plans and to seek feedback from the broad range of interests. YWT recognises that it has suffered a loss of trust and that this new group will be essential to the successful future of the National Nature Reserve, whatever the outcome of the planning decision on 26th January.

The scope and operating guidelines of the group are based on the experience of MB and Cllr Richard Burton in the consultations for the new RSPB visitor centre at Bempton Cliffs in 2010-13.

With advice from East Riding councillors the new Spurn Advisory Group has been established with the following scope and objectives:

1. The primary purpose is to repair the relationship between YWT and the local community, businesses and other key partners
2. The advisory group has the full support of the executive and Board of Trustees of YWT. It will be expected to come up with ideas, challenges, recommendations and proposals that will contribute directly to the management and development of the whole site. Ultimately, decision making will lie with the Trust, which undertakes to send a director or Trustee to attend a meeting of the group to explain why any particular recommendation is not to be adopted.
3. The full membership of the group has yet to be finalised but the names of the initial invitees appear at the start of this report. Ward councillors are invited to attend every meeting
4. The planning application for the visitor centre will be allowed to run its course and it is recognised that the group will have a vital role whatever the outcome of that decision, to create a positive future for Spurn. Whilst there will inevitably be disagreements in the future, YWT recognises that we are more likely to achieve a satisfactory resolution for all stakeholders if a group like this is in place.
5. MB was the initial chair of the group, but he expected to hand over to a suitable permanent independent chair with appropriate mediation skills, acceptable to all members of the group before the next meeting.
6. The aim is to meet monthly initially, as there are a number of important issues to address.
7. The advisory group is expected to have a long term existence in helping the Trust to manage such an important site.

3. Feedback – what are the key issues and opportunities at Spurn?

The group was asked to offer key issues and opportunities which should be explored. Although there was some discussion around some of the points raised some attempt was made to limit this in order that the priorities could be picked up in more detail during later meetings.

- **Better communications.** Haris Livas-Dawes: Problems have arisen because of differing perceptions about what YWT is planning or doing. We need an effective vehicle to communicate better. A special newsletter directed to the people of Kilnsea and Easington could list the many preconceptions identified in the responses to the consultation and debunk them one by one, to replace some wrong ideas with the reality.
- **Advisory Group needs an independent chair.** Rob Adams: better for group to have an experienced independent mediator as chair. Dave Tucker suggested chair best not to be emotionally involved and recommended Cllr Burton.
- **Lack of open dialogue.** Dave Tucker: YWT has not been able to facilitate an open dialogue with stakeholders. Dave Steenvorden – YWT can often seem inflexible or dismissive of stakeholders for example straight “no” to suggestions for Point road. Terry Smithson – YWT often attempting to balance needs of stakeholders and legal requirements and sees real strength in discussing issues in an open forum so that stakeholders aware of various needs and constraints.
- **Lack of toilets/limited facilities at the Point:** Andrew Wells: visitors complain at the lack of facilities after a long walk or Unimog trip to the lighthouse. Only by RNLI stepping in to help is this being mitigated at the moment, but RNLI felt railroaded into use of their cesspit.

- **SBOT/YWT relationship:** Rob Adams: cited poor relations at site level, agreed works not often carried out, frequent changes of YWT point of contact responsible for the site, infrequent contact with senior management, all of which have not helped build effective relationships.
- **Location of the proposed visitor centre:** Tony Smith: concerned that the rationale for choosing the location had not been communicated effectively. Rob Adams: SBOT have always maintained that, should YWT submit a planning application for the Triangle field, then SBOT would strongly object; and were the site to be moved to Well Field or an existing building (Blue Bell or Southfield Farm) then SBOT would unconditionally support the application.
- **Twitichers descending on Kilnsea:** Roy Clubley: confusion over status of visiting birdwatchers and YWT. YWT was often considered responsible, perhaps unfairly, for influx of birdwatchers putting pressure on local services, trespassing, trampling graves, driving fast. Andrew Wainwright suggested that attendance of ERYC at these meetings can help to try and address some of the wider issues.
- **Opportunities for young people to learn about Spurn.** Christina Keyworth: Spurn is not just for birdwatchers, has worked with YWT to organise successful bike rides, guided visits and feels this should expand to adults. Haris Livas-Dawes - YWT should discuss options for providing better access (re the breach) and plans for more local people to visit the site; e.g. offer Unimog Safaris street by street in the parish to show parents in particular what a special place it is, and encourage them to get involved. Andrew Wainwright pointed out that Easington gas terminal forum has become real driver for local understanding and change.
- **YWT should engage with the community:** Dave Tucker – it can appear that YWT are locked away in the Blue Bell rather than being seen on site, rather than simply handing out information YWT organise public meetings. Adam Stoye – YWT staff and volunteers active across 3 mile long site with Blue Bell as the office base. The Trust hopes gradually to increase staff and volunteer resource but current negativity is having detrimental impact on staff and volunteers.
- **Potential visitor numbers:** Haris Livas-Dawes - people are scared of the potential 60,000 visitors that has been mentioned. Members of group noted that it has often been busy at Spurn, that 60,000 more typical past peaks, and in those days, the pressure was spread (effectively along a 3.5mile car park). Even these apparently large numbers are spread throughout the year, and actual vehicle numbers will be much less.
- **Membership of the Advisory Group.** Rob Adams: the present list of attendees did not include a suitable representation from the local community. The group was asked to propose a list of potential attendees.
- **Better partnership working:** Haris Livas-Dawes – more partnership working, many other local organisations could offer help e.g. South Holderness Society.
- **Better public relations needed:** Haris Livas-Dawes – YWT Spurn should develop better public relations. This includes both contacts with the community and with the press
- **Dealing with the breach:** Dave Steenvorden: options for providing better access should be brought forward to assist RNLI and ABP in particular.

YWT suggested that the group select the “top three” which could be explored at the next meeting. This was welcomed and agreed.

4. Future working of the Advisory Group

It was agreed that a monthly meeting would be optimal for the initial period as the group works through the issues discussed, after which the frequency might well extend to quarterly.

The chairmanship had been identified as an immediate issue. After some discussion the group unanimously selected Councillor Richard Burton as chair, taking over at an agreed future date, with Andy Wainwright as Deputy Chair

5. **Date of next meeting:** Monday 20th February at Easington Community Hall at 5.30 pm.