

Minutes of the 106th Fleet Study Group Meeting

23rd November 2012

Present: Ed Harland, Don Moxon, Rachel Waldock, John Dadds, Lynn Baldock, Jonathan Cox, Kevin Donnelly, John Bass, Angela Scott, Richard Edmunds, Sue Eden, Steve Feist, Sue Powner, Geoff Poole, Ben Jones (Ilchester Estate), Duncan Gamman (NE), Neil Constable (NE)

The order of the meeting was changed as the main part of the meeting was to discuss Coastal Access with Neil Constable from Natural England. The normal part of the FSG meeting was held at the end of the discussion on Coastal Access

Ed Harland welcomed Neil Constable and Duncan Gamman from Natural England who were to discuss with the FSG the implications of the Coastal Access Policy as the section of coast from Rufus Castle to Lyme Regis was starting to be investigated by the NE team.

The Fleet Warden, Don Moxon, gave a short presentation on existing access arrangements:

- There is no official right of way along Chesil Bank from the Bridging Camp to Abbotsbury, although Portland Crown Common land below the Bridging Camp has open access
- The section of Chesil Bank from the Bridging Camp to Abbotsbury is managed as private property
- Members of the public are permitted to use it only between October – March, leaving it undisturbed at other times for nesting birds
- The public are encouraged to use the outer side of the beach where it is allowed because of the fragile ecosystem on the Fleet side of the beach
- The current situation has satisfied people for several decades
- People who wish to use the beach are accommodated where possible
- The top end of the Fleet is non-tidal and, therefore, private. The Estate keeps it free of disturbance to benefit the wildlife
- 22 landowners are involved in owning and managing the 22 SSIs around the Fleet
- Fishermen have probably established 'right by custom' but most do it illegally
- Landowners have always been fairly easy about access but that might change if more people start using it.

Neil Constable then gave a presentation outlining the procedure to be used leading to the finalising of arrangements for open access. There was much discussion during the presentation and afterwards. The presentation with comments on the discussion can be found in a separate annex to these minutes. Following the discussions it was proposed that the FSG selected a small representative team to consult with Neil re the Fleet area

Q from Don Moxon – he asked what degree of transparency is there at Stage 1 so we know the views of groups who want open access?

A – The route has got to follow the criteria and there has to be a balance between conservation and public access. All the information has to be public and the FSG can be an influence if they produce a good case

Q from John Dadds – is the West Fleet ‘coastal’ because it is non-tidal?

A – yes

Neil said that it was important to separate the FSG environmental issues from issues put forward by the Ilchester Estate and Natural England.

He was thanked by Ed for coming

The presentation and discussion finished at 4.30.

The following are the minutes from the FSG meeting that followed on from the presentation

Apologies – Alan Holiday, Denys Brunsdon, David Bucke, Steven hale, Emma Rance and Sandie Wilson

Minutes – they had been sent early but distributed late. Lynn asked for an earlier distribution of them after future meetings

Actions

- Ed said that the 100th meeting docs had been corrupted on the web site. He was trying to recover the situation. John Dadds agreed to let Ed have the poster files and Lynn said she would send scanned copies of the proceedings

Reports

- DCF – the next meeting was at the beginning of December but there was nothing on the agenda directly related to the FSG. Rachel was to attend as a rep for NE
- Portland Harbour Consultative Committee was to take place on 18/12. The agenda included topics on an Olympic update; the Portland Castle Pier – has changed hands to the holiday camp in Osmington – not sure what it is to be used for; Waste and Environmental Plan – with agency for approval
- Richard Edmunds reported that the British Archaeological Survey has been doing resolution profiles of the cliff and beach at Burton Bradstock. There are some concerns about what they have found but that they think it is unlikely that monitoring will give any prior warning about imminent cliff slides. It is particularly bad around the Hive Beach. He also said that he had some interesting pictures of ‘cut throughs’ at BB – the end result of all the rain and floods – he could provide photos for the Fleet Archive
- Jonthan Cox - reported that he was continuing the small mammal survey
- Proposed projects – John Bass said that that due to the lack of a local university, there were no funded research projects currently being undertaken on the Fleet. Steve Feist added that Portsmouth University wanted to place someone at CEFAS - this was only possible because they live in Weymouth. It was suggested that there should be a ‘wish list’ of proposed projects to see if any other local students were interested – John Bass said he would send round a list
- Lynn reported that there was a possible new species in the Fleet. It had come from some of the zosteria material that Rachel had collected at the Bio Blitz in 2011. It had been looked at by Prof Green. Is it *Victorella* or *Bowerbankia*? Lynn said she would send a sample to the Natural History Museum

AOB

- John Bass asked about the availability of water quality data on the Fleet from EA. Rachel said that it was still difficult to get data from the EA and when they did supply it, it was unanalysed and therefore difficult to interpret. Don indicated that the EA are going to do regular collections in the Fleet, and they had requested permission to use a boat with an electric motor. The collections do not include sampling of the streams entering the Fleet. He suggested that we should try and support them but was reluctant to set a precedent for the use of a motor
- Ed asked for the names of people who wanted to form the small group representing the views of the FSG to the Coastal Access Team. John Dadds and Lynn Baldock put themselves forward and John said he would ask Alan Holiday if he would be willing to join them. They said that they would arrange their own meetings to discuss the groups responses to the CA team

Meeting finished at 17.30

Next meeting 15th March 2013 at Chesil Beach Centre