

Minutes of the 123rd Fleet Study Group meeting

Held on 11th July 2018

Present: Ed Harland (chair), Alan Holiday, Jonathan Cox, Rachel Waldock, Charlie Wheeler, Angela Thomas, Steve Hales, Don Moxom, Maxine Chavner, Emma Rance, Andy Powell (CEFAS), Robert Hatfield (CEFAS), Alix Green (UCL)

Apologies: Lin Baldock, Jon Bass, Kevin Donnelly, John Dadds, Steve Feist, Stephanie Ashman, Ruth Carpenter, Nick Owen, Matt Doggett, Simon Pengelly

Minutes of the 122nd meeting: Approved.

Reports from representatives

Portland Harbour Consultative Committee

- Curiosity Park for divers now located in Balaclava Bay is nearing completion, having been installed there by divers from Castletown.
- Buoy to be added to mark the end of the Whitehead Pier for better visibility at entrance to the Fleet.
- Buoyed swimming area to be created in Portland Harbour, to reduce risks of interactions between swimmers and windsurfers.

Dorset Coastal Forum

- Newsletter received. Comments on the third tranche of Marine Conservation Zones to be sent to Defra by July 20th.
- DCF are seeking to employ an Aquaculture development officer

Portland Harbour Oysters Several Order

- Several Order allows an organisation to fish for shellfish (oysters, scallops, mussels, etc.) or issue licences to others who wish to do so. Order is currently dormant. Portland Harbour Authority are now seeking their own Fisheries Regulating Order.

Coastal Access inquiry

- Still no news after 19 months.

On-going and planned research

- Temperature logging at Langton Hive has been carried out by Jon Bass and Lin Baldock.
- Kingston Maurward College are planning a research project on the Fleet.
- Lulworth Skipper survey being carried out along coast, including between Tidmoor to Burton Bradstock

Natural England TAG (Technical Advice Group) (Maxine Chavner)

- Conservation advice for SPA and SAC will be finalised later in year.

- Drone survey of the Fleet has been carried out.
- NVC (National Vegetation Classification) survey of the SAC to be carried out by Footprint Ecology.

Chesil Bank & the Fleet Nature Reserve Activities (Charlie Wheeler)

- Dorset Beach Clean occurred at Abbotsbury Beach in April, with very high participation of 44 volunteers, including 30 members of the public. 17 bags of litter for landfill collected, plus other items for recycling.
- Charlie Wheeler interviewed on Radio Solent regarding the nature reserve and the film 'On Chesil Beach', based on the book by Ian McEwan.
- Jurassic Coast Challenge long-distance walk/ run organisers have been advised regarding the event, and the route modified to protect the reserve.
- Two people who became stuck in mud in the Fleet have been rescued.
- Code of conduct to be drawn up for fossil-collecting groups in the reserve.

Fleet Study Group Field Days

Information regarding the planned field days for the litter survey (probably in August) and the Wadeway survey (probably in September) to be communicated separately by Ed and/or Don.

Fleet Shellfish Sampling Project

Andy Powell of CEFAS described this project, which involves the sampling of molluscs, primarily bivalves, to analyse the occurrence of a toxic bacterium called *Vibrio* within the molluscs. DNA sequencing is being carried out. There is also an idea to analyse bird droppings for toxins.

Analysing the sedimentary carbon content of seagrass in the Fleet

Alix Green of University College London gave a presentation on her PhD work, a study of 'blue carbon' that is absorbed by seagrass beds, mangroves and saltmarshes. These habitats store more carbon than equivalent areas of tropical or temperate forests. 13 sites are being studied along the south coast. The Fleet is a significant site for carbon storage on the south coast.

Archaeological dowsing – Roman activities south of Abbotsbury

Peter Emery gave a presentation on his archaeological dowsing work and Roman activities near and in the Fleet, including quarries, water channels, roads, tracks, a fort, and a landing stage and causeways in the Fleet.

Any Other Business

Emma Rance described the Community Marine Protected Area project, DWT working with others including NT and IFCA.

Maxine Chavner described the work to study hydrocarbon pollutants near the Fleet, the levels of which are high near Langton Hive Point.

Steve Hales described his moth recording work with Phil Sterling, with more than 400 species having now been recorded in the area, including rare species.

Future meetings and venues

Thursday November 15th 2018, at 11am – location to be confirmed.

The March 2019 meeting will be the 125th meeting of the group. Ed suggested this could be a review meeting in which members give short presentations on their area of interest reviewing the current situation on the Fleet and Chesil Beach.