

Minutes of the 60th Meeting of the Fleet Study Group, held at
West Yard, Abbotsbury on 25th July 1997

Present: A Carr (Chairman), D Elton (Secretary), P Connelly (EA), Sarah Welton (DWT), John Hayes (DCC Dorset Countryside), Tony Saunders-Davies, S Eden, D Seaward, K Coombe, V Copley (EN), E Morris (Ilchester Estates), G Poole.

Apologies: J Churchouse, D Moxom, D Wheeler, E Green (Ilchester Estates), S Cooke (DCC), Suzanne Palmer, J Whittaker, P Sterling (DCC), M Ladle, J Fitzpatrick, J Brenchley (Kew), P Dyrinda, M Macleod (DWT).

1. Minutes of the last meeting

These were approved as a true record.

2. Matters arising

i) Marine SAC LIFE Programme

VC reported that EN would be doing the following:

- seeking tenders for a project to consider the breeding success of the little terns
- arranging workshops for statutory authorities (ie W&PBC, DCC, EA and EN) to consider lagoon interests and management. EN would lead initially.
- funding a study of nutrient status of the Fleet over the last 500 years, to compare with present; a contract would be let in the autumn, it was hoped.

VC sought FSG advice on this and discussion followed on various suggestions and difficulties with this topic.
Any further thoughts to Vicky please.

ii) Presentations at meetings

AC again explained that FSG meetings had recently tended to become more 'administrative', with less exchange of information amongst participants, or field meetings and was anxious that this should change.

Suggestions by group members for future meetings: JW, Alasdair Bruce and Adrian Parker at November meeting, re results from November 1996 borehole; Peter Dyrunda's work on the Fleet (half-hour presentation); KC offered slides on cores/boreholes at a future meeting.

Any further suggestions to Deborah please.

iii) Posford Duvivier contract for shoreline management plan
(Start Point - Portland)

There would be a presentation on 31st July at Lyme Regis, to which anyone could go. Comments due by 15 August, via Deborah please. In the outline document received there was no reference

to the existing coastal defence features at West Bay, and very little reference to Chesil/Fleet interests.

4. Research reports

i) Borehole project

Adrian Parker and Alasdair Bruce were continuing work on the November borehole cores. AB had subsequently persuaded the army to undertake a series of boreholes between Ferrybridge and West Fleet as a training exercise, and this was currently in progress, but proving very unsatisfactory. Don was providing a great deal of logistical (and other support) which was very much appreciated. AB wanted 4 sites just above bedrock for his PhD studies, but so far only two sites had been attempted, at Ferrybridge and East Fleet.

ii) Professor Andrew Goudie of Oxford University's Dept. of Geography had applied for £25,000 of Leverhulme Trust money, for more borehole work and the result of this application should be known by the end of the year.

AC confirmed that, despite recent failures/difficulties, it was possible to obtain good results from boreholes, as had been done in the early 1970s.

ii) Other projects

a) The work on the reproductive biology of Zostera undertaken by Kew was reported to be complete; a report would follow shortly, from Jennie Brenchley.

(Note: This has now been received; one copy has gone to the FSG archive and a second will be circulated at the next meeting.)

b) The rare red seaweed Gracilaria bursapastoris had recently been found in the Fleet.

c) TS-D reported that his paper on rotifera found in algal pools at Ferrybridge would be published soon. He'd found that marine rotifers dominated the invertebrate taxa for 2-3 months early in the year, but as they have a short lifespan and can't reproduce at high temperatures they disappear for the rest of the year.

5. Reports from representatives

i) Geomorphology research

KC had attended a recent Dorset coast research meeting at Oxford, following on from the earlier meeting organised by Portsmouth University. Further research and a symposium were proposed, especially regarding mud flows and the supply of material to Chesil Beach.

ii) Dorset Coast Forum

DS reported that the April meeting had focused on the coast as an educational resource, and that knowledge of the sensitivity of

the marine environment was essential in this. Coastal Policy officers had now formed a coastal environment working group.

iii) LIFE programme

VC reported that under the LIFE programme it was planned to establish a geographic information system for the Fleet, ie incorporating map-based information, and the FSG archive database would be linked in.

6. Research agenda

DS' original list of possible research topics was circulated as a basis for discussion.

Comments included the problem of vandalism of markers, and the desirability of surveying in some permanent features; the improvements in photogrammetry equipment now available; the need for fish studies (JW), (but possibly now covered by Peter Dyrinda); the possibility of an official weather station.

VC said that suitable projects from the FSG list could be added to EN's list of student projects. DM would also like a 'project list' for students to look at when they contact him.

(Note: Copies of DS list attached to these minutes for those not present at the meeting.)

Feedback/additions/suggestions please for the next meeting

ACTION: ALL

7. Any other business

i) Ideas for a presentation to Jeanne and Mike at the next meeting were discussed.

ii) DE reported that Bill Farnham had now officially resigned from the Group, and had provided a recent paper for the Archive.

iii) It was reported that the Estate were considering how to mark the Millenium, and the FSG were invited to contribute to this. One suggestion was that a 'position statement' regarding the current state of knowledge might be appropriate. (For further discussion.)

iv) FSG symposium. DE reported that she had now obtained disks of the bulk of the text to work on, and hoped shortly to receive the tables and figures. Some new inputting of text would be required.

v) Archive. DS reminded members to send him contributions. He would not produce another update of the catalogue until it seemed necessary. He had recently found a reference to a semaphore signal station at Herbury, c.1815, one of 19 on the Dorset coast.

vi) Environment Agency

Philip Connelly reported on recent work. Biologists have done a benthic baseline survey of Portland Harbour, taking chemical and biological samples.

A report on the Fleet water quality study was not likely before end 1996 but Mitch Perkins can be contacted before then to discuss preliminary results.

In March and May there had been pollution incidents originating on farms and affecting streams running into the Fleet; slurry on the upper Portesham stream in March and silage in Rodden stream in May. There was also a sewage pollution incident near the oyster farm. At least one prosecution was likely.

vii) West Dorset LEAP. DS reported a public meeting would be held at Bridport on 30 July to discuss the issues.

viii) It was reported that marine biologist Francis Bunker would be filming on the Fleet, funded by WWF as part of their education/promotional work on lagoons generally. Members could contact him via Don with suggestions and ideas.

8. Date and place of next meeting

AC requested that the date be changed. It will now be held on

FRIDAY 28TH NOVEMBER

at English Nature offices, Slepe Farm, near Wareham.
(Please ring English Nature, tel. 01929 556688 if you require directions.)

The meeting closed at about 4.30 pm.