

FLEET STUDY GROUP

Minutes of the 79th meeting of the Fleet Study Group, held at County Hall, Dorchester, on the 21st November 2003.

Present: D.R. Seaward (Chairman), G. Le Pard (Minutes), J.E. Whittaker, P. Dyrinda, E. Green, D. Moxom, Rachel Waldock (EN), Jeanne FitzPatrick, Lin Baldock, Suzy Witt (ecologist, EA), Sue Eden, Sue White, G. Poole, D. Dorsett, D. Wheeler.

The meeting welcomed Andrew Pollard of DWT to talk on the Dorset Biodiversity Strategy (Item 9), and Duncan Riches of the EA to talk on flood defence and coastal monitoring (Item 10).

1. Apologies for Absence: K. Coombe, R. Edmonds, Richard Acornley, P. O'Sullivan, Geraint Weber, Alasdair Bruce, Denys Brunsdon.

2. Notes of Last Meeting: (78th of 18th July 2003). Accepted as a true record.

3. Matters Arising

3.1. The *Wreck Detectives* television programme (5.3 of the last Minutes) on a wreck off Chesil Beach will be broadcast in late March 2004.

3.2. The Rapid Coastal Zone Assessment of Dorset's Coastal Archaeology by Wessex Archaeology, English Heritage, and DCC is underway and will be completed by the Spring 2004 (6.3 of last Minutes).

3.3. Channel Coast Observatory (6.1 of last Minutes); see below 4.2.1 and Item 10.

4. Reports from Representatives

4.1. Joint Dorset Marine Committee of 2nd September 2003. The main item of interest was the Dorset Wildlife Trust Marine Conservation Programme arising from the DWT Biodiversity Strategy Audit. See Item 9 of this meeting.

4.2. Dorset Coast Forum of 11th June 2003. Among a large programme, items of particular interest to the FSG were:

4.2.1. The next Forum (April/May 2004) plans to feature the topic of Diffuse Pollution with a pilot study by EA on the Fleet.

4.2.2. The Archaeology Act of 2000 extends site protection out to sea to the 12 mile limit.

4.2.3. Channel Coast Observatory: see Item 10.

4.2.4. Ship-to-ship oil transfers in Lyme Bay. There have been meetings between representatives of DCC, DCF, Devon CC, DTI and MCA to discuss the recent increase in ship-to-ship oil transfers in Lyme Bay. The MERHAS (Marine Environment High Risk Areas) Report is expected to be published by the end of the year. This will pave the way to making the draft regulations for

such transfers law. There will be a further meeting to discuss the issues in December. The FSG will be kept informed.

5. Current & Recently Completed Research: None reported.

6. Research Proposals

6.1. Professor John Murray of Southampton University plans to commence work on the ecology of the Fleet foraminifera (with JW) in Spring/Summer 2004.

6.2. PD reported that he has a student working on the dwarf Fleet form of the mollusc *Akera*.

7. Proposed "Hurricane" Recovery Project: A proposal had been received by the Ilchester Estate and EN from Kevin Patience of the Air Warfare Research Group to raise part of a WW2 "Hurricane" aircraft that had crashed in the Fleet near Langton Herring in 1940. This was in order to recover original components to be incorporated into a modern replica aircraft so it could be described as a "restored aircraft of 1940". EN are concerned at potential damage to the Fleet cSAC, particularly to the *Zostera* beds. GLeP had also seen the proposals and was concerned about the archaeological implications; recovery of the needed components would itself lead to damage of the remaining structure. [Following this discussion, the Estate decided to refuse permission for the recovery (GLeP)].

8. Portland Harbour Wind Farm Proposal: RW outlined Powergen's proposals and EN's concern that a wide range of aspects need to be considered, and that an environmental assessment should be made including reference to the harbour's benthos and archaeology. It was agreed that RW would write to Powergen stressing the FSG's interest and wish to be involved in consultation.

9. Dorset Biodiversity Strategy: Andrew Pollard, DWT Biodiversity Officer, gave a brief presentation introducing this and the DWT's Marine Conservation Programme, which follows from the strategy. A summary is appended (see APPENDIX 1). DRS and JW agreed to discuss this with AP in detail and agree action.

10. Channel Coast Observatory and Chesil Beach Surveys: Duncan Riches, Strategic Planning Officer of EA, gave a short presentation on coastal monitoring and a summary is appended (see APPENDIX 2).

11. Future Meetings

19th March 2004, at DWT Brooklands. The formal presentation will be by Geraint Weber (University of Plymouth), entitled "Hindcasting of nitrogen and phosphorus loads upon fleet lagoon (1866-2002), using an export coefficient approach".

16th July 2004, at West Yard, Abbotsbury. The formal presentation will be by Professor Denys Brunson on the morphology of Chesil Beach and the Fleet.

19th November 2004, at DWT Brooklands. The formal presentation will be Dr Alasdair Bruce on aspects of the Holocene evolution of the Fleet.

[The July and November speakers and their titles are subject to confirmation].

12. Any Other Business

12.1. The first meeting of the Abbotsbury Historical Environment Group will be held on 20th November 2004. GLeP will attend as FSG representative.

12.2. PD reported that he had seen a Report entitled "Site Characterisation of the South West European Marine Sites: Chesil and the Fleet cSAC, SPA", prepared for EN and EA by Messrs. Langston, Chesman, Burt, Hawkins, Readman & Worsfold (of the Plymouth Marine Science Partnership). There was concern that, although the FSG is listed as a source of information, we had not been consulted nor have yet seen the report. This was important as it is likely to be taken as a baseline for future studies of the Fleet. SW said that she would make the report available to the FSG. One of the authors could be asked to make a future presentation. [CD-ROM and hard-copy versions have now been received].

13. Election of Chairman: Dennis Seaward had been elected Chairman following the illness of Alan Carr in late 1999. He now wished to pass over the role to someone else and in his place John Whittaker was unanimously elected. DRS said that JW has been a member of the FSG for nearly 30 years and for many reasons it seemed an apt appointment to make. JW formally thanked DRS for his enthusiastic leadership of the FSG over the last five years and for maintaining excellent relationships with the Ilchester Estate, EN and all other interested parties.

14. Presentation: The formal presentation at the meeting was given by Don Moxom, entitled "DOWNTERN", and followed the varying fortunes of the Chesil Bank tern colonies. A summary will be produced by DM and distributed at the next FSG meeting.

Next Meeting: The 80th Meeting of the FSG will take place at the Dorset Wildlife Trust HQ, Brooklands Farm, Forston, Dorchester (tel. 01305 264620; www.wildlifetrust.org.uk/Dorset), on Friday 19th March 2004, at 2.30 p.m.