

Eastern Regional Committee Meeting 12 December 2009
Environmental Co-ordinator's Report
4 December 2009

As a general point CE endeavours to consult with local clubs and associations before commenting on environmental issues, however the time allowed is often very short.

1. Thames Estuary (AYC of Southend on Sea area)

1.1 CE has not yet received the minutes of the meeting of the Thames Estuary Partnership (TEP), Recreational Advisory Group (RAG) on 6 August in London.

1.2 CE attended the annual Thames Estuary Forum, entitled 'designing the Thames', in London on 21st October. Items of interest were:

- Redesigning of the River Lee's channels around the East London Olympic site, with maximum use of the water;
- The shaping of the Thames by the Ice Ages (the Thames was once a tributary of the Rhine and ran along part of what is now the Blackwater Estuary);
- Joint PLA/RSPB collaborative conservation arrangements;
- Case studies of 'Living with the River' issues such as 'floating houses (cf the Dutch), other forms of flood resilient building (stilts, etc), improved river edges (noticeably there was no mention of access to and from the water – but see below);
- Funding needed to maintain the heritage after the 2012 Olympics;
- The Commodore of Erith YC urged the need for a balance between people, recreation and the environment;
- There is a danger of forgetting that London is a major port;
- A number of questions concerned the lack of 'access to and from the water from shore'. In response to a question from CE pointing out that the Marine & Coastal Access Bill did not cover such access, and seeking assurance that in 'Designing the Thames' our access would be covered, it was agreed that this issue would be pursued by the TEP;
- In their summing up addresses, both Jill Goddard, Director TEP, and Jean Venables, Chairman TEP picked on the need for access to the water for launching, etc.

1.3 CE attended the PLA River Users Consultative Forum (Estuary) meeting at Gravesend on 20th November.

Items of interest were:

- 'The Thames Recreational Users Guide – Teddington to Sea Reach' a handy 2 sided waterproof map (cf the HHA Yachting guide) reported last time. A 2010 version is being prepared and CE suggested some editorial discussion with representatives of recreational boaters;
- Work on laying the Holland to the start of the Princes Channel of the BritNed cable, has slowed down;
- Trade in both the Thames and Medway is down some 15% but the Medway is still receiving 6 Liquid Natural Gas ships per month;
- There will be cost savings made by the PLA but the 'front end' services will not be affected;
- PLA byelaw changes are with the Department for transport (slow process);
- PLA will be seeking a Harbour Revision Order (HRO) by the end of 2009 to

amend the PLA Act in line with the requirements of Ship Safety Management and the Port Security and ISPS Codes. There will be a new body called the 'Thames Port security Authority'. (This should have minimal impact on recreational boating but CE has informed Hamble of this development);

- There were 2 incidents in the summer involving PWC's in Benfleet Creek and the PLA issued formal warnings;
- There were no incidents involving other leisure craft;
- A proposal is being prepared for a large (100m) pontoon on the Town Pier at Gravesend for the Tilbury Ferry and there is a possibility of one or two overnight recreational craft berths on the shoreward side;
- The MCA reported that they are producing a 'Safety Guide' for recreational boaters to bring together all the relevant rules, regulations and advice. They do not appear to have consulted the RYA. (CE has informed Hamble of this);
- The meeting was informed of the OWF Round 2.5 extensions (see item 10.1 below).

2 Essex Estuaries European Marine Site covering the Crouch/Roach Estuaries (CAYF area)

2.1 CE attended the Crouch Harbour Authority Advisory Group meeting at Burnham on 2nd December. The main items considered were:

- The CHAAG recommendation to the Authority to grant a Works Licence to the RSPB and Crossrail to construct the berth in the Crouch off the Wallasea site for the unloading of the ships bringing the Crossrail Tunnel spoil to the site for their habitat creation project. It was noted that the original concrete structure design has been replaced with a pontoon, held in place by four 1.5m steel piles with additional piles fore and aft for the berthing of two ships of 2,500 tonnes. The overall facility will be 185m in length. Work to start on site in April 2010 with the first ship expected June/July 2010. Assurance was again sought for the ship operations to be phased so as to avoid Burnham Week and the regular racing periods at weekends in the season. The Harbour Master stated that the Developers have expressed their willingness to meet this constraint. The intention is for the structure to be removed completely on completion of the construction of the Wallasea Island project.
- Brandy Hole mooring leases are due for renewal and it is the intention of CHA to require the moorings to be moved nearer the shore and for a clause requiring any boat on these moorings to be able to swing without any part of that boat intruding into the approved water ski area.
- It was confirmed that under the recent Harbour Revision Order the number of Board Members of the Authority is to be reduced to ten.
- The meeting recommended acceptance of the principle to grant permission for additional moorings in the Roach on the mud just North of Rochford.
- The Harbour Master tabled copies of the Shoreline Management Plan for the Crouch & Roach and discussed the implications, which in the first years propose to 'hold the line' for most of the sea walls.

(See also 8.1 below)

3 Essex Estuaries European Marine Site covering the Blackwater and Colne Estuaries (BACSPA area)

3.1 CE attended the meeting of the Colne Estuary Partnership Advisory Group (CEPAG) at Wivenhoe on 3rd December. Items of interest were :-

- A presentation by the Essex and South Suffolk Project Manager on the SMP with questions and discussion. (See also 8.1 below);
- Discussion on the proposed development of a new generation Nuclear Power Station at Bradwell. (See also 13.1 below);
- An update on the Water Framework Directive possible impact on the Anglian Region. (See also 9.1 below). There was a wide discussion on water quality issues, in particular Combined Sewage Outfalls (CSO) when raw sewage is released directly into the river at times of heavy rainfall. Considerable concern expressed at the probable lack of capacity of Colchester sewage works and thus more frequent CSO events;
- A summary of the 'Balanced Seas' project. (See also 10.1 below).

3.2 CE attended an Essex Shoreline Management Plan (SMP) stakeholder meeting at Marks Tey on 6th November. This was one of three and covered the Blackwater & Colne part of the SMP. CE is waiting for copies of the maps for the other three areas (Crouch & Roach, Thames Estuary to Two Tree Island, and Stour & Orwell), before making an assessment of the proposals. (See also item 8.1 below on SMPs).

3.3 There have been 7 successful prosecutions, this summer, of PWC drivers for speeding etc in the Blackwater.

4 Hamford Water, the Stour & Orwell and Suffolk Estuaries Deben, Ore/Alde and Blyth. (HASA areas)

4.1 After consultation with W&FYC and HASA, CE has responded to the Hamford Water Trust's (HWT) plans for development of Hamford Water, particularly the area around Walton & Frinton YC and the boatyards. We have not been able to support the plan in its present form because of the unfavourable impact the scheme could have on dinghy sailing and racing from W&FYC and the depth restriction which would make the boatyards and the Club unable to handle deep keel boats. The proposal included a lock in the existing exit from the immediate area to the Club. We also could not support the Conservancy proposal because of the administrative overhead for little gain.

4.2 CE attended the AGM and meeting of the Hamford Water management Committee at W&FYC on 5th November. The AGM elected as the new Chairman David Evans of the Fairways Committee, and as Vice Chairman Julian Novorol of the Wildfowlers Association. Walton Town Hard Association and the two boatyards were admitted to membership and it was agreed to invite Hutchinson Ports also to join. Hamford Water is to provide the Forton Hall site as compensatory habitat for the Bathside Bay terminal development. The Commodore of W&FYC, David Ward, now represents the Club on the HWMC. Items of interest discussed at the main meeting were:

- The response to the HWT proposals (see above). It was agreed by a majority vote that the Committee would not support either of the proposals;
- Titchmarsh Marina now own the defunct Walton Mere and are formulating plans for its restoration;
- It was agreed that the HWT should report annually to the HWMC on its activities;

- Proposals for Priorities for the next six months will be presented at the next meeting.

4.3 CE is awaiting information on any examples of problems of access to and from the water in the Stour & Orwell, to take to the next meeting of the Stour & Orwell Estuary Management Access Group.

4.4 CE attended the AGM of the Ore/Alde Estuary Planning Partnership at Sudborne on 20th November. We were also given a stimulating talk by a farmer who developed a persuasive argument, with costings, of the penalties that could arise for the community if agricultural land is sacrificed to Managed Realignment. Contrary to the accepted wisdom the farmers would not suffer the most as they could still run smaller but profitable businesses with less land, but using less labour and less local resources and support businesses such as Tractor & Equipment Maintenance.

4.5 CE attended a meeting of the Deben Estuary Partnership (DEP) at Waldringfield on 28th November. Items of interest were:

- The DEP is following the example of the Blyth such that landowners and users are very much involved in collaborative efforts with the Environment Agency (EA) in deciding strategy and repairing sea walls;
- The Deben has 20km of sea wall, which in the past have not been maintained and so have become vulnerable to sea level rise and storm driven high tides. The intention is to rectify this wherever possible by the collaborative effort. During 2008/9 there has been a complete 'walk the walls' survey which has detected five weak points, which must be tackled first, and work has started on this;
- They have set up a 'Saltmarsh Working Group' that is looking at and taking action to improve/replace poor quality saltmarsh using beneficial dredgings when they are available. The Deben has 40% of Suffolk's saltmarsh and much of it has deteriorated. Poor saltmarsh will not act as a protective barrier absorbing tidal energy before it reaches the sea walls; good saltmarsh does this very effectively. Good saltmarsh also traps sediment thus reducing the amount that will silt up boatyards/marinas. It also traps pollutants and carbon (10 times as effective as mudflats);
- It was also asserted that deliberate breaches in sea walls under 'Managed Realignment' (MR) could increase the flow of water (the tidal prism) with in the case of the Deben, serious problems at the narrow entrance at Felixstowe Ferry and perhaps stop the tide ever reaching the Tidal Mill (marina) at Woodbridge;
- They have also set up a 'Data Group' to gather, assess and share all the data available for the estuary and river. This group includes the EA, landowners, users and Natural England (NE);
- Nick Collinson the Suffolk Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Manager, gave a very forceful and thoughtful presentation on the social and economic value of 'landscape' to the area and community. He made a clear distinction between 'habitat' which exists on its own and 'landscape' which includes habitat, other land features and the work and perception of people. Tourism and recreation are very important to the economic value of the area and arise from the use and enjoyment by people of what the landscape offers;
- There is a 'Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group' (FWAG), which involves the farmers and landowners in fostering wildlife and sponsors the benefits that this

can bring to the community and the farmers. There are some 3,300 hectares acres of good agricultural land that is only productive with irrigation requiring some 2,000 million litres of water abstracted from within the 5metre contour. Flooding will reduce the amount of fresh water available and thus the economic viability of the land; Finally there was a presentation on the need to plan for increasing numbers of visitors both because of the outstanding attractiveness of the area and because of Government targets for more housing. Altogether a heartening meeting with enormous strides in public and private cooperation and finance to preserve the estuary/river and its unique features for residents and users of the water.

5 Lowestoft and Great Yarmouth (N&SBA areas)

5.1 CE understands that the development of Lake Lothing is to proceed and we are awaiting details of the form of the new bridge (opening or air height greater than 22m).

5.2 We are awaiting further information on the Suffolk SMP (Lowestoft to Languard Point) and on the Norfolk & Suffolk SMP (Kelling Hard to Lowestoft).

6 Wash, Ouse, Nene and North Norfolk Coast (Great Ouse BA, A of Nene River Clubs & NW Norfolk SA)

6.1 CE has responded to the consultation on the North Norfolk SMP (NNSMP), noting that if the proposed Managed Realignment to improve the Tidal Prism, at Wells and Blakeney do not go ahead then both harbours could silt up. CE also attended a meeting with the Environment Agency to resolve some of the details of the NNSMP.

6.2 An individual Wells sailor is protesting about the dredging and construction of a berm in Wells Harbour, stating that the berm is currently much higher than the 1m agreed in the consent for the work. He has received a response from the Maritime Fisheries Agency, responsible for part of the consent, stating that the control of the dredging and associated works is the responsibility of the Statutory Authority, the Harbour Commissioners, who are requiring the work to be done. CE is looking in to this and is contacting the sailor concerned who is a member of Wells Sailing Club.

6.3 CE was unable to attend the meeting of the North Norfolk Advisory Group (NNAG) under the Wash & North Norfolk European Marine Site (WNNEMS) on 28th October. Key points from the minutes were:

- Progress with the Wells Harbour Deepening project (see above 6.2);
- A report on a study which showed a negative correlation between human activity and bird disturbance on the North Norfolk coast.

6.3 With assistance from Adrian Tebbutt, CE has responded to the consultation on the Wash SMP. There are potentially serious problems for Snettisham Beach SC depending on the EA's choice of action and possibly on Hunstanton SC depending how siltation builds.

7 Cambridgeshire (B&CAA area) 7.1 Nothing to report.

8 General Flood Management

8.1 Work on Flood Management is currently subsumed into the active work on Shoreline Management Plans

(SMPs). For the Region as a whole we have the following plans:

- Wash
- North Norfolk (Old Hunstanton to Salthouse/Kelling Hard)
- Norfolk and Suffolk (Salthouse to Lowestoft)
- Suffolk (Lowestoft to Languard Point)
- Essex and South Suffolk (Languard to Two Tree Island on the Thames Estuary)
- The remainder of the Thames Estuary is covered by the TE2100 Project.

The coast for each plan is divided into individual Policy Development Zones for each of which Estuary or Coastal Management and Flood Management Strategies are devised to make up the whole plan using the now standard options of:

- NAI (No Active Intervention) let nature take its course overtopping or breaching seawalls and widening estuary mouths. (Do nothing!)
- HTL (Hold the Line) by maintaining, and if necessary raising and strengthening existing sea walls to meet the expected rise in sea levels from global warming.
- MR (Managed Realignment) by maintaining some walls in vital areas but allowing others to decay or be breached so allowing flooding to relieve pressure on other defences.
- ATL (Advance the Line) by reclaiming more land and extending sea walls. The plans are then put out to stakeholder consultation where local knowledge can be input, and we have been and are still involved in these consultations.

8.2 The Floods & Water Bill failed to pass through Parliament before the end of the session, but was reintroduced in the Queen's speech for the final session before the General Election. We may have to repeat the consultation work.

9 Water Framework Directive (WFD)

9.1 As reported last time we await the final version of the draft River Basin Management Plans (expected in December), but understand that there have been considerable changes to the consultation draft following receipt of the consultation responses.

10 Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) - Marine Conservation Zones (MCZs)

10.1 Around the coasts of England and Wales there are already a range of Marine Protected Areas covering, SSSIs, SPAs (Special Protection Areas for birds), MSACs (Marine Special Areas of Conservation for habitats such as saltmarsh) and protected sites designated under the Ramsar convention. Under the Marine & Coastal Access Act which has passed into law (see item 14.3 below), there is provision for the setting up a network of Marine Conservation Zones alongside the Marine Protected Areas around England and Wales. Excluding Scotland, where provision will be covered by the Scottish Marine Bill, there will be four areas of zones of which the one of

immediate concern to us is the 'Balanced Seas' project, which runs round the South East from Felixstowe to the Hampshire/Dorset Border.

CE attended a 'Balanced Seas' stakeholder preliminary project meeting in Chelmsford on 25th November. Items of concern are:

- Serious concerns of Fishermen that the process will produce more 'no take zones' and that for them to be adequately represented in consultation will mean loss of earnings;
- Intention is to set up a Regional Stakeholder Steering Group with representatives of the main sectors of interest. The problem is that to keep this group to a manageable size, interests will have to be grouped together under one representative. As with the Water Framework Directive it will be difficult to find interests that are common. (For example Recreational Anglers have very little in common with Recreational Boaters, but equally they are often have a conflict of interest with Commercial Fishermen.);
- The timescale is extremely, and indeed unreasonably, tight with the intention to put formal agreed proposals for all four areas, to Ministers in October 2011;
- The Project intend to act as facilitators and enablers with the assessment of data and the creation of recommendations made by the Regional Stakeholder Groups;
- There was much discussion on the need for Sub-regional Groups perhaps made on a County Council basis. CE proposed that the breakdown should be on the basis of at least three different water bodies, Felixstowe to Dover (dominated by sand banks, strong tides, shipping channels and fish types for sandy bottoms), Dover to say Langstone Harbour (chalk cliffs, shipping traffic separation, fish types for deeper water and chalk/rocky bottoms) and the Solent (double tides, mixed coast and bottom). This view was supported by others, including the Brightlingsea Harbourmaster. A breakdown by County Council is entirely inappropriate for the marine environment;
- The representatives at Regional and Sub-regional level will need to have sufficient time and knowledge to devote to a major process of data assessment and policy proposals;
- The Scientific and Policy Guidance to inform this process is not yet available.

11 Offshore Renewables (Wind Farms etc)

11.1 CE has also provided advice to prospective developers on the RYA's response to any bids for extensions to existing Round 1 & 2 sites under Round 2.5 as it is now referred to.

11.2 Construction work continues on site for the Gunfleet 1 & 2 project and some 20 generator towers are now producing electricity to the grid. Installation of the remaining towers is proceeding apace with 40 installed and more in progress. Regular progress reports are placed on our web site www.ryaeast.org.

11.3 Construction is progressing on the Greater Gabbard OWF and as at 16th October they have installed one sub-station base and five monopiles on the Inner Gabbard part of the site. Cable laying is due to start at the end of October/early November. We understand they have been experiencing some quality issues with the

delivered monopiles. The developer, Airtricity, issues NTMs for fishermen now copied to us and on our website under 'Pilotage' and 'Greater Gabbard'.

11.4 CE attended a very useful meeting at Old Hunstanton on 29th October with a member of Brancaster Staithe S C (BSSC) and representatives of Centrica. It was confirmed that the RYA's requirements and comments on the Dudgeon, Docking Shoal and Race Bank OWFs in the Greater Wash Area were known and understood. We then discussed communications during the construction phases and CE set out the process used for the Gunfleet OWF as an example of good practice and provided a template and distribution list, which included the local sailing clubs, the NWNSA as well as CE and the RYA East Website. The BSSC sailor expressed himself satisfied if Centrica adopted a similar system. Centrica's representatives agreed to recommend this to their Project Teams.

12 Presentations

12.1 CE has a booking for a revised version of the Environmental Presentation, to the Deben YC on 28th January 2010.

13 Nuclear Power Stations

13.1 Both Bradwell and Sizewell are on the Government's list as sites for the next generation of Nuclear Power Stations. These will probably be versions of Pressurised Water Reactor (PWR) as used extensively in France and in Submarines. We will expect to be involved as stakeholders in any consultation, which will be using the new Infrastructure Planning Commission (IPC) fast track procedures.

- Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) and Marine Conservation Zones (MCZs);
- Progress with the Water Framework Directive and River Basin Management Plans;
- Planning advice for Clubs. There is some concern that the new free Planning Helpline (on the RYA Website) is not being used very much. It should be the first port of call for Clubs on planning issues together with the online Planning and Environmental Handbook;
- Work on the provision of environmental information on charts;

14.2 CE attended (as CPEC) the very successful Green Blue Conference in London on 4th November. For this year's conference the target audience were Senior Management of Marine Businesses of which some 50 attended.

14.3 As Chairman of PEC, CE attended the Cruising & Government Affairs Committee (CGAC) on 11th November in London. The environmental items reported were some of those set out in 8, 9, 10 and 11 above. It was reported that six of the RYA's eight amendments to the Marine & Coastal Access Bill had either been accepted or assurances had been received to resolve the RYA's concerns. The Marine & Coastal Act received the Royal Assent on 12th November. (Terry Corner will cover the Cruising items in his report).

15 Local Planning

As requested last meeting, CE is awaiting information from all Local Association Reps on the Local Authorities (District and Town) that cover the Clubs in their areas.

CE needs this for locating Local Development Frameworks (LDFs) so we can see if Recreational Boating facilities are included or not.

16 Assistance for Regional Environmental Co-ordinator

CE has successfully recruited an Assistant and hopes he can attend the ERC meeting on 12th to meet the Committee.