



Thames Estuary Partnership

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**Greater Thames Fisheries Action Group
Meeting Minutes**

Friday 25th Feb 2011

12.30pm lunch for 1.00pm start – 3.00pm end

Committee Room 10

Civic Centre

Southend Borough Council

Victoria Avenue

Southend on Sea

SS2 6ER

Attending	Initial	Organisation
Cllr. John Lamb (<i>Chair</i>)	JL	Southend Borough Council IFCA member
Jill Goddard	JG	TEP, Exec Director
Rebekah Mann (<i>Minutes</i>)	RM	TEP Administration
Joss Wiggins	JW	Kent & Essex Sea Fisheries Committee
Steve Bewers	SB	Environment Agency, London Gateway Environment Committee
John Adams	JA	Sealife Adventure
Lizzie Smith	LS	Sealife Adventure
Emma Barton	EB	Environment Agency - Fisheries
Chrissie Sieben	CS	MacAllister Elliott and Partners
Mick Sharp	MS	Recreational Sea Angling IFCA member
Chris Webb	CW	London Gateway Port
Emma Deary	ED	London Gateway Port
Lisa Jenner	LJ	Natural England
Paul Gilson	PG	Kent & Essex SFC./ Leigh&Southend Fish Ass.
Darryl Godbold	DG	Leigh-on-Sea Fishing Association
Cllr Reta Cocks	RC	Leigh Town Council
Tanya Houston	TH	Port of London Authority (PLA) Environmental management, licensing
Sophie Des Clers	SDC	UCL consultant
John Gilson	JG	Cardium Shellfish
Gudrun Gilson	GUG	Cardium Shellfish
Steven Dell	SD	W.G & S.J Dell Ltd
Cllr Peter Wexham	PW	Leigh- on -Sea Ward Cllr
Ben Smith	BS	MWS Shellfish – Sea Breeze Trawlers
Matthew Smith	MS	MWS Shellfish – Sea Breeze Trawlers
Kirsty Godwin	KG	Vattenfall Windpower Ltd
Keith Wilson	KW	London Port Health Authority
Glyn Gilson	GLG	W & G Gilson Fishermen Southend
Steve Meddle	SM	S.M.S Seafoods
Andrew Rattey	AR	Kershaws Coral Island
Liam West	LW	W H Osborne Ltd
Gary Attenborough	GA	Thameside Shellfish Co Ltd
Trevor Osborne	TO	Renown Fisheries Ltd
Jonathan Keer	JK	Brown and May Marine Ltd
Leanne Smith	LS	Brown and May Marine Ltd
John Drew	JD	Fisherman
John Warren	JW	Fisherman

APOLOGIES		
Tom Cousins	TC	Environment Agency
Matt Carter	MC	Environment Agency
David Knapp	DK	Sealife Adventure
David Elliott	DE	Macallister Elliott and Partners
Peter Dolby	PD	Leigh Town Council
Reg Butcher	RB	Kingfisher Angling Club
Dick Hodges	DH	Thames Angling Preservation Society
David Curnick	DC	Zoological Society of London

1	Introductions	
	Round room introductions were made, as listed for the above attendance	
2	Declarations of interest	
	<p>Minutes from the February 2010 meeting were accepted. Actions and matters arising (if not an item at the present meeting):</p> <p>JG (p.2): Water Framework Directive – difficult to see where opportunities to assist from the outside of Environment agency are possible at present and how these could be implemented on the estuary and other water bodies. Howard Davidson (EA Thames and Southern area Director) will be visiting EA Area offices and JG will keep the group informed on the process. SB noted the EA are working on the localism agenda and trying hard to understand what it means and will be producing a news update about this soon. JG also affirmed that the Thames Estuary Partnership is working with EA and other partners toward the localism and Big Society agenda.</p> <p>JG (p.2): Big Lottery grant for Thames Learning Group ‘Click on Thames” Map – the project is nearly complete with a launch of the map on March 10th 2011. The Thames Estuary Partnership will also be applying for funding for a 3 year education post to develop the Thames Learning Group and help use the real stories of estuary life in education.</p> <p>JG (p2): Marine Management Organisation – TEP circulated a map of the MMOs Marine Plan Areas (also available www.thamesweb.com) noting the first announced areas for planning are 3 and 4 (East inshore and East offshore). JG has been working with the MMO and east coast partners and held a workshop in November 2010. This preparation work will help ensure Area 5 (South East Inshore / The Thames Estuary) is better prepared when it is our turn to be consulted on planning the mixed use of the sea.</p> <p>PGilson – Asked if the MMO were invited to this meeting. JG fed back that they are always informed of TEP Action Group Meetings but has been told that they have so few officers that they cannot attend due to resource constraints. JG is trying to find out at a senior level when this situation will change. (Action JG to feedback) JLamb suggested the new TEP Chair (Peter Bye) should write to Defra outlining these meetings are an opportunity for MMO to listen to concerns rather than be ‘shot at’ as the meetings are neutral and would enable them to hear first hand issues that they could then feed back on. (Action JG to arrange with Peter Bye)</p> <p>Cllr P.Wexham and Cllr J Lamb updated the group about silting issues Leigh Creek – the issue has not been dropped but they are ensuring scientific studies are complete before putting in funding applications. The issue of using dredging material as ‘flood defence’ material is being considered.</p>	JG JG&PB
3	IFCA	
	JLamb noted that many attendees to the meeting are on the shadow board of <i>Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authorities (IFCA)</i> . This role is not the same as Sea Fisheries Committee’s roles as they have a more reaching and conservational approach. The IFCA board have been selected by Defra and the MMO with many thinking the panel does not represent commercial fishing very thoroughly (e.g. with weighting to Oystermen but lacking in representation of other fisheries. JW also noted the district has been extended further into the Thames, Medway, Colne, Stour and Dungeness with a more defined purpose of engaging with stakeholders. The ‘marine fisheries resources’ approach has an emphasis	

	<p>not just on fish/shellfish species but also the wider ecosystem – e.g. plants and baits. The IFCA vision statement: “IFCAs will lead, champion and manage a sustainable marine environment and inshore fisheries, by successfully securing the right balance between social, environmental and economic benefits to ensure healthy seas, sustainable fisheries and a viable industry.”</p> <p>Questions: Gudron Gilson – raised the issue of poor representation on the IFCA board of different fisheries. It was noted that although Defra are responsible for appointments onto the panel the board members may have the power to ‘co-opt’ people onto the panel. Andrew Ratley informed the group that he had sent a letter to the minister about Cockle representation on the IFCA board. The response agreed that the issue had not been handled as well as it could have been and that the possible development of a ‘review’ sub-group may be an option.</p> <p>Glyn Gilson – noted the recent bye-law put in place on 19th Feb re: herring fishing. He noted that bye-laws are often based on in-accurate sampling not representative of everyday accounts by fishermen – he asked how fast bye-laws can be changed or removed. He stressed how difficult such bye-laws are to specific fishermen’s livelihoods and that it makes doing the job of fishing in the Estuary near impossible (also supported by PG and others). JL noted it was a K&E SFC bye law ratified by the committee rather than any individual. If reports of changes in circumstances are properly documented and reported (evidence) then the bye-laws can be altered in response. JW noted that the bye law implements closure on herring fishing in the inner estuary once a quota has been reached. He noted that bye laws are not made lightly and are based on scientific surveys. However, it was agreed that it was good for fishermen to raise the issues (especially where many IFCA panel members were present) over survey concern and they should feed back with documented evidence using their records from on board equipment to prove fish locations and numbers with dated printouts / digital photos with date and time on them of catches, etc. (ACTION FISHERMEN)</p> <p>John Gilson – noted the need for flexibility and attitude change – he believes that the boards of decision makers (such as IFCA) need to listen and trust the fishermen, as without this, the support of the fishermen will be lost. He was also concerned about where the information they provide decision makers goes as he also felt the decision makers are not made up of the right people.</p> <p>P Wexham enquired whether any regulations were changing if Oystermen will require a licence such as the Cocklers do? JW noted that at present there was no proposal for any change.</p>	<p>FISHER MEN</p>
<p>4</p>	<p>Kentish Flats Offshore Wind farm Extension – Kirsty Godwin</p>	
	<p>KG introduced herself as an Environmental Officer working for Vattenfall Ltd on the community consultation report for the Kentish flats wind farm extension. Vattenfall have sent 400 letters and more than 200 emails to people in the Whitstable and Herne Bay area about the proposed 17 additional wind turbines proposed to extend the existing wind farm. The consultation continues until 4th March 2011.</p> <p>Approximately half of the attendees at the meeting indicated they knew of the proposed extension, with many of them not knowing any details about the project. Please see attached non-technical summary ‘Preliminary Environmental Information’ report attached with minutes. Additional information is available from http://www.vattenfall.co.uk/en/kentish-flats-extension.htm</p> <p>J Lamb welcomed the group to make comments that can then be fed back to Vattenfall through the minutes.</p> <p>John Gilson – believes the consultation process is only for Vattenfall to ‘look good’ – considering The Crown Estate offered the opportunity to Vattenfall to extend the Kentish Flats wind farm – he believes the decision has already been made. In addition, John Gilson enquired as to whether there were any surveys undertaken on the effect of the (existing) wind farm on fisheries (for example, pre-existing cockle patches that existed previously were stated to no longer exist since wind farm development, and an area of starfish around the development now suffocate the oyster beds underneath. Kirsty Godwin noted that she is able to send/share survey reports to show there has been little/no disturbance (Action KG/Vattenfall) to TEP to circulate.</p>	<p>KG/ Vattenf all</p>

	<p>Daryl Godbold – has been speaking to Brown and May Consultants (that are undertaking fish survey work on behalf of Vattenfall) as he is concerned about the disturbance from layering of cables with the London Array cables that are already in place. Can more information be fed back about this? (Action Vattenfall to TEP to circulate.)</p> <p>Steve Dell – is concerned about whether there will be any exclusion zones to the important Cockle grounds around The Spaniard and Middle Bank. Leanne James noted that the Middle Bank Cockle Fishery has been highlighted as important and will be fed into the full Environmental Impact Assessment (for which Brown and May contribute the Fishery aspect). Draft copies of the EIA will be ready by the end of February 2011 but feedback from consultation will also continue to be fed into the drafts after this. Once the EIA becomes a public domain document there will be a chance to feedback. It was suggested TEP and IFCA may be useful to disseminate drafts in order to gather feedback – this remains as an open offer (Action Vattenfall to TEP to circulate)</p> <p>Matthew Smith – raised concern about the recovery time from previous wind farm developments to previous states. He noted that there has not been a full recovery since the last development. Leanne James noted that ‘natural fisheries survey’ work is currently being undertaken in comparing changes pre-development to post-development. (Action: Vattenfall / Brown and May to feedback on this)</p> <p>Paul Gilson – linked the issue of the recent herring fishing restriction and possible negative effects of the wind farm extension. He noted that Herring are sensitive to the vibration and noise from construction of such developments and have been shown to ‘blow up/explode’ from the connection between the swim bladder and part of brain used for hearing. PG therefore noted the conflict in issues and whether this can be addressed. Leanne James agreed that Herring swim bladders were affected by vibration and this would be part of the EIA work. Joss Wiggins noted that hammering of pylons during construction may be an issue but that he was not aware the turbine noise caused Herring a problem. (Action IFCA/Vattenfall to liaise then feedback)</p> <p>John Gilson – enquired about the proposed increase in turbine size and whether there would be knock on impacts in vibration (up to 50% increase) as a result of the larger turbines.</p> <p>More information about Vattenfall’s proposed extension and public opinion survey (that can be sent directly to Vattenfall) is attached to the minutes.</p>	<p>Vattenf. / TEP</p> <p>Vattenf. / TEP</p> <p>Vattenf. / Brown & May</p> <p>IFCA / Vattenf.</p>
5	<p>Balanced Seas – Marine Conservation Zones – Update by Lisa Jenner (Natural England)</p>	
	<p>LJ provided a brief overview of the Balanced Seas/Marine Conservation Zone project http://www.balancedseas.org/ highlighting it as a stakeholder led process to identify and recommend Marine Conservation Zones for the inshore and off-shore waters of south-east England. An update on the progress of the project was circulated to the group (attached to these minutes) – with LJ providing these details to the group at the meeting. It was highlighted that the 3rd progress report is being sent to the Scientific Advisory Panel on Monday 28th February (TEP will provide an update on this ASAP, it is not available yet), following the earlier reports from June and October 2010. At present there are 9 suggested Broad Areas of Interest (BAIs) that are sites requiring further detailed discussion, and 16 draft Marine Conservation Zones (MCZs) that are areas that have been more highly discussed as to important species and habitats with discussed boundaries. At present none of these are definitive but currently within the area there are 2 proposed BAIs: (Blackwater, Crouch, Roach & Colne Estuaries (BAI 13) and Thames Estuary (BAI 5), and 2 proposed MCZs: Medway Estuary (draft MCZ 6) and The Swale Estuary (draft MCZ 10).</p> <p>Questions/discussion:</p> <p>Gudron Gilson – enquired whether Balanced Seas are obliged to suggest a fixed number of designated areas for MCZs as part of the project (with reference to Margate and Longsands). It was clarified that there was some confusion with Balanced Seas and Natura 2000 / EU Marine Protection Areas MPAs) that covers this area and has no obligation of consultation of fishermen which is completely separate from the Balanced Seas project. As SDC notes, it can be confusing for fishermen with many different on-going conservation projects.</p> <p>Steve Dell – noted that Cockle fishermen had been asked questions at interview as part of Balanced Seas that did not relate easily to the nature of their work. It therefore may have seemed that Cocklers</p>	<p>TEP / Bal Seas</p>

	<p>were giving a minimal response as based on the questions asked they could not detail properly their specific methods, fluctuating locations, etc. LJ suggested that there may be an opportunity to review this by a talking/phone interview. (Action Balanced Seas to follow up, LJ to feedback to Balanced Seas Manager).</p> <p>Cllr P Wexham – enquired whether the size of the units used to discuss sites has changed. Originally the 5 x 5 mile grid was being used, although it was confirmed this was just to begin discussion on areas. Now sites are discussed in much finer resolution as required which was a concern for fishermen due to the narrow and long shape of the estuary.</p> <p>LJ assured everyone that final sites chosen would use sensible physical landmarks in any agreed areas.</p> <p>Paul Gilson wished to note on behalf of the fishing industry that he is thankful for the recognition that the Balanced Seas project has given to fishermen and the stakeholder led process. Mick Sharp noted that discussion about the Thames area has still been lacking compared to discussions covering the Isle of Wight and Solent. However, as the Thames region meetings are up-coming this matter is being addressed. MS noted it important not to let this important region fall off the radar and encouraged support from local fishermen. SDC also noted that the IFCA will be in charge of managing the MCZs once designated and so it is important to get the right information and best decisions made – in terms of ensuring the best sustainable management and planning for the Estuary in the future.</p>	<p>LJ & Bal Seas</p>
<p>6</p>	<p>Greater Thames Developments – London Gateway Port</p>	
	<p>Chris Webb and Emma Deary represented London Gateway Port at the meeting. CW gave a presentation on the background, environmental setting, ecology and marine monitoring progress since March 2010 (commencement of dredge) of the port development. The power point presentation is a large file and can be sent on request by TEP using a free website link (rather than circulating big files by email). CW noted that the regulators have all provided positive feedback to date. The relocation programme of 237, 783 protected wildlife species from the site was completed by 22nd November 2010.</p> <p>CW also noted that the Shell Jetties are now being moved east and serviced by a new pipeline and they are beginning new quay wall works. The phase 2 development will follow on from phase 1 with no delay in which the sub-surface works will be completed with the remaining surface structures to be developed 'subject to demand'. CW noted that they are just ahead of target on the expected timescale of the project.</p> <p>The set up, locations and example plots from Red-Line monitoring and sensitive receiver monitoring were outlined as well as turbidity plots from the dredger "Rubens".</p> <p>CW noted that Cockle surveys were undertaken pre-dredge in 2008 and comparable biomass has been recorded by the monitoring for Cockles during 2010 (during dredge). Concern was raised by many fishermen (e.g. GA and SD) that the ground truth showed a different trend with reduced biomass down to a 13% yield in 2010. This is comparable to a decrease of approx 40%. It was stressed that even a small change in the biomass (1-2 grams) has a large influence on the overall volume of a boat load of cockles. It is the reduction in the weight of meat overall that is being noticed and therefore affects income.</p> <p>CW noted that they have followed the agreed process and undertaken 9 Cockle Liaison consultations for their monitoring and suggested that if other data exists that can be compared to the monitoring data CW/London Gateway Port then perhaps this should be undertaken (Action Cocklers and DP World to liaise). JW noted that the K&E SFC surveys measured total weight and not biomass so could not be compared.</p> <p>John Gilson asked why there is still compensation if they are protecting the marine environment adequately? CW noted they had invited fishermen (e.g. JW) to review the process they were undertaking (both on the water/dredger and assessing the monitoring data. JL noted that if fishermen provide evidence and data then it is their opportunity to have it examined. It was noted that this would</p>	<p>Cockle/ DP World</p>

8	Current issues for fishermen	
	<p>Matthew Smith – stressed his concern about the amount of deterioration and destruction in the estuary as a result of the developments such as London Gateway Port. He reported a very large silt plume as a result of dredge activity around Sea Reach 2, approx 1am on 25th Feb. He noted he had reported this to VTS at the time, and it is noted here as a report for K&E SFC in case it needs following up.</p> <p>Daryl Godbold & Gudrun Gilson – both raised concern about the poor planning and simultaneous developments in the estuary (e.g. London Gateway Port, Wind farm extensions) and the combined impacts these may have. Similarly, the concern that simultaneous developments result in difficulty of proving who caused a deterioration/change was raised. It was requested that TEP and K&E SFC put forward this voice to ministers (Action TEP and K&E SFC to take forward). JL affirmed that by fishermen reporting and providing evidence it adds weight to any arguments they may wish to resolve.</p>	TEP & KE SFC
9	AOB	
	<p>The group were asked whether ‘one item meetings’ such as for discussions about Balanced Seas/Marine Conservation Zones would be preferable than the set up this meeting (lots of different items). Nobody voted for a change in the meeting setup.</p> <p>Since circulation of the ‘Balanced Seas’ update at the meeting, please note a date change from 30th March to 12th April for the 4th Meeting of the Essex/Thames and North Kent Local Group. Please note this is for reference and is by invite only because of managing numbers.</p> <p>JG is aware of the number of meetings Fishermen are being asked to attend and so rather than set a date for the next meeting in the near future, she encouraged all to keep in contact with Thames Estuary Partnership when you feel there are topics and issues that would benefit from the hosting of a meeting. TEP will then respond accordingly.</p>	ALL

JOIN THE THAMES ESTUARY PARTNERSHIP

....the very essence of our work is partnership - bringing together as diverse a mix of people as it's possible to find - yet all share a concern for our estuary

The Thames Estuary Partnership (TEP) provides a neutral forum for local authorities, national agencies, industry, voluntary bodies and local communities to work together for the good of the Thames Estuary.

The Partnership:

- Is a charity providing a framework for the management of the estuary
- Co-ordinates a programme of projects
- Facilitates new projects and forums for joint working
- Holds regular events and workshops
- Seeks to further the interests of local communities, local economy and the environment.

The Thames Estuary is a valuable resource for all who live, work and play in the area. It is home to 12 million people and supports a diverse range of habitats and wildlife. It is a rich historical and cultural resource and is a major focus for industry, commerce, transport, agriculture and recreation. Thus it is a highly complex area in a constant state of change. It is this complexity and flux which can lead to conflict, but it can also lead to new ways of working and innovative projects.

Join us!

Your support increases our work and helps us to more to help your voice be heard. If you are not a member and wish to be, or you would like to make a donation, or want to find out more then please phone (0207 679 0540) or email us (tep@thamesweb.com). The annual subscription fee has three pricing levels:

£25 per annum for individuals/non affiliated

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Membership entitles you to several benefits including a reduced priced entry to our Annual Forum , free members event in the summer and a chance to meet key decision makers in an informal setting, extra free copies of Talk of the Thames, monthly email updates on estuary news and cheap advertising for your business.

You can ring us for help on how to join, join and pay via our website and it is simple and straightforward, you can pay by BACS, just ask for our bank details, post us a cheque or you can ask us to send you an invoice.

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