

 <p>River Deben Association</p>		<p>2024 Deben Forum</p>
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## Minutes from the Deben Forum

held on Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> July 2024 at the Woodbridge Quay Church

*Convened by the River Deben Association*

Attendees: Organisations (Total represented 24) Representatives (Total 27)

*Appendixes contain list of issues raised and representatives*

### **Format:**

Representatives gathered between 6:15 and 6:30pm with a chance to mix over tea/coffee. In the meeting, led by Colin Nicholson (RDA Co-Chair) and Matt Lis (RDA Business Interests) representatives went round the room introducing themselves, their organisation and items of interest/seen as issues. Issues were captured on a whiteboard (unfortunately an improvised formica table as planned whiteboard did not materialise) with a strike added for each repeat, leading to a ranking for the subjects of most interest.

A general discussion ensued, facilitated by Matt Lis and Colin Nicholson

Kay Yule (East Suffolk Council) had reviewed the minutes of the 2019 Deben Forum, reporting that achievements included the Model Boat Pond drainage being resolved and the Town Steps refurbished.

### **Speed of Boats**

A frustration that The River Deben has no (marine) police, no one with ability to levy fines, little/no signage about the byelaw, no one to keep logs of offenders. Any existing signage, is permanent (at ends of the delimited area, Waldringfield take up their "Slow" buoys out of season) as the byelaw is applicable between May 1st and September 30<sup>th</sup>.

The impact of speed is (a) danger, e.g. to swimmers who cannot be seen by large boats, (b) wash, leading to degradation of Saltmarshes and impact on other river users (c) noise

Kay Yule had offered the possibility of making East Suffolk Council (ESC) funding available if there could be agreement on what speed/regulations. An ESC Officer has been to John White to discuss the matter. At the Forum, it was not thought necessary to form a working group to draft changes, (e.g. bring the Deben into line with the 6 knot Orwell speed limit) to the byelaw which would then need to go out for further consultation. Rather, there was consensus that wash was the fundamental issue, rather than different speeds for different boat types (sailing dinghies can reach speeds in excess of 10 knots). Therefore, focusing on the wash aspect, it was resolved after just a short discussion to request further buoyage, similar to that existing at Waldringfield, and thus

already trialled in action, with “Slow,” the international “No Wash” sign and the ESC logo (to indicate the authority). Robert Brinkley offered representatives who were interested to view documentation in his possession that sheds light on the origin of the byelaw’s creation

**Way forward:** RDA and DEP to circulate detailed designs to invitees and take forward with Kay Yule

### **Jetski Use on the Deben**

Just prior to the Forum, there had been an East Anglian Daily Times article about the arrival of Suffolk Jetski Ltd on the Deben. The RDA invited representation to the Forum and Daniel and Hanna Mayhew, Directors of Suffolk Jetski Ltd, kindly attended despite the short notice. The Ramsholt Harbourmaster reported that they had visited Ramsholt the previous Saturday and had a positive discussion about their plans. Many within the Forum were hostile to an introduction of regular jet skis on the estuary as currently limited, ad hoc, use tends to be from Felixstowe Ferry and then along the open coast.

The Mayhews took the opportunity of the Forum to explain their plans (starting on The Deben, but expanding the business to The Orwell and North Norfolk in due course). They said “Suffolk Jetski Ltd instructors are RYA certificated and are not allowed to exceed the speed limits or create excessive wash and must respect nature and other river users.”

The further issue of noise was raised in relation to jet skis and it was explained that there are different types of jet ski and they don’t necessarily have to be noisy.

There are no legal constraints on commercial use of the Deben. Whether for commercial or non-commercial use, it was felt that the promotion of RYA courses for personal watercraft would be of benefit.

Post Meeting Note: On 12<sup>th</sup> August another modern innovation was seen on The Deben - a hovercraft moving across the silt opposite the Deben Yacht Club, undertaking water quality monitoring for the Environment Agency.

### **Considerate Behaviour/Safe Use of River**

Attendees expressed concerns that wild swimmers in the estuary are in danger if they stray into the channel as larger boats or fast-moving jet skis cannot see them. With an increase in inexperienced users of the river, the danger of collisions rises, along with the need to understand the dangers of a tidal estuary. There is a lot of safety/river usage knowledge and information on the Deben Paddlers Facebook site which has 2.8k signed-up Facebook members. Access is via administrator permission, after answering a few questions. There are now multiple places to obtain similar information which may reach to the majority of river users: for example, the Deben Bluetits never have any issues, swimming responsibly. These are new ways of learning (via internet, rather than traditional teaching/induction at club) for new river users. For example, Lidl are currently selling blow-up paddleboards to the wider population. Emma Jennings of Woodbridge Quay kindly offered the use of a noticeboard for river code information at the new Woodbridge Quay Café.

## **Water Quality / Environmental Pollution**

This is an extensive, highly-charged topic but there was little time for discussion. The tidal and non-tidal sections of the Deben have become part of the national conversation about how Britain should regulate and treat its effluent. More people are using the nation's waterways, (and closer to the water, (e.g. wild swimming, SUPs, kayaks) and what was previously acceptable or unknown, with limited monitoring, is now considered unacceptable.

For the Estuary specifically, the Bathing Water Designation of Waldringfield in 2023 has required the Environment Agency (EA) to test weekly from May to September (available online [Link](#)). 17 out of 20 of 2023 results were good/excellent. But, coinciding with the September Astronomical High Tide, results were poor to the extent that Waldringfield averages to a "Poor" BWD area overall. EA microbial analysis of September's "three samples taken in 2023 showed clear evidence of faecal pollution from seabirds; human signals possibly from non-faecal waste sources e.g., misconnections from washing machines, showers, hand basins and faecal waste sources; possible signal from pigs and clear evidence of dog DNA"

Kay Yule informed the meeting that the number and location of dog-poo bins comes about through requests from local bodies such as Woodbridge Town Council, but locations are dependent on being accessible for emptying.

The Deben Estuary Partnership raised the issue of microplastics within effluent which should also be addressed.

**Way forward:** Colin Nicholson said he would follow-up with the local bodies and the meeting put forward the name of Steve Kench, the new ESC Access Officer as another good place to start.

## **Silt**

The Forum heard about Woodbridge & Waldringfield Boatyards' offer to other impacted businesses, to share, proportionately, the costs of an MMO licence for dredging. No-one took up the offer whether for timing or other reasons. The issue of silt will be referenced in the Deben Estuary Plan, currently being updated.

Essex and Suffolk Rivers Trust suggested liaison with the Blackwater Estuary which has similar silting issues with a possibility of re-using their strategy. The National Trust drew attention to their 30yr contract at Northey Island for depositing silt and discussions on making best use of the silt from Melton Boatyard. Suffolk Wildlife Trust (unfortunately unable to attend) may have an interest in slowing degradation of saltmarsh.

Silt prevents access/rafting-up for visiting sailors at the Town Quay. The recent visit by Blue Mermaid shows the level of interest within Woodbridge in the sea with approx. 800 visitors on just Regatta Day during the Thames Barge's stopover. In previous years the Heritage Boats and Shuck Shellfish Festivals (2017 and 2018) have proved popular. However, the current 1 1/2hrs tidal window is too limiting for routine use and desilting might open the window up to 3hrs +/- HW.

Renewed discussion with Woodbridge Town Council (WTC) should be undertaken to ascertain their current interest in being a coastal destination with the extra dimension to "Choose Woodbridge" that that would bring.

**Way Forward:** RDA to liaise with WTC re: feelings about importance of being coastal destination and DEP will investigate single dredging licence for estuary and convene interested parties

### **Landing places**

One of the reasons that Waldringfield is so popular is that it has easy access to the river and elsewhere on the estuary, public access is limited. It was volunteered that technically, there is no public launching at Ramsholt. Dinghies on the foreshore at Ramsholt pay an annual licence to the Adeane Estate. Slipways useable for a fee are at Felixstowe Ferry and Robertsons.

### **Boat Numbers**

The overall numbers of boats moored on the Estuary are down. Ramsholt (200 moorings) no longer has a waiting list. However, the average size is getting bigger and there are limited moorings for the larger boats. Numbers spiked (lots of smaller boats e.g. Dorys,) directly after Covid 2021/22, but have since reduced significantly. Thoughts were that this is possibly related to the economy or a trend toward personal watercraft by younger users, as indicated by the level of interest in Deben Paddlers Facebook page.

Notwithstanding the lowering in moored numbers, the cost of boating on the Deben is low. The idea was raised that there is an opportunity to raise funds with a small usage levy which could be spent on improving the Deben Estuary.

### **Riverside paths /Access**

There was a brief discussion about the King Charles III National Coastal Path and the likely route it would take around the Estuary. The Forum was updated that on 5<sup>th</sup> May 2024, the Secretary of State approved the outline route from Felixstowe Ferry – Bawdsey, (apart from one section). Further information such as the date for the implementation of the route and exactly how it will be implemented on the ground is yet to be announced. The Deben Estuary Partnership has a post on its website containing what is known at this point. (See [Link](#))

### **Additional Information**

Charlotte Lewis (MMO) asked for the following information to be circulated to attendees:

*“The MMO are now in the next stage of their East Marine Plan development, following their first stage which was the development of and consultation on the [East Marine Plan Statement of Public Participation](#), - this was published in April 2024.*

*This next stage of the plan development involves identifying issues and gathering evidence which will be an opportunity for stakeholders, such as the Forum and individuals, to provide views through in-person and online events.*

*This stage will be where you can raise the silting queries you have – along with evidence - so I highly encourage a representative from the Forum to attend one of our upcoming events to highlight your issues.*

*We’re still waiting on confirmation of exact dates for these in-person and online events – but please sign up to our **Marine Planning Updates and Newsletter sign-up link** [here](#)– which will keep you in the loop once these dates are announced and info on how to join.*

Regarding your queries on licensing some useful information is below:

- [Self Service 'Do I need a Marine License' tool](#)
- *If a Standard license is required, you will receive a case number and case officer who will be your point of contact*
- *The marine licensing contact email for any further questions:*  
[marine.consents@marinemanagement.org.uk](mailto:marine.consents@marinemanagement.org.uk)

### **Closing**

Colin Nicholson thanked everyone for attending and for their contributions, with thanks also to the Woodbridge Quay Church for hosting the event. Draft minutes of the meeting, will be distributed to all Representatives for amends before being re-circulated and posted on the RDA website.

Colin Nicholson          Matt Lis

### **Post Meeting Survey Feedback (2x emailed returns) – Meeting Arrangements**

- Whilst the Quay Church is a suitable venue, it would be helpful to participants to cater to hearing impairments, making use of the built-in mic and loop system,
- The capturing of issues and comments during the meeting was hindered by the lack of a formal "White Board," something that could be overcome with the use of the built-in Quay Church projector, with laptop
- Suggestions for frequency for future meetings (currently should be 24mthly) varied between minimum of 6 monthly to 12 monthly from the choices of 6mth; 12mth; 24mth; when an issue; other

### **Issues List:**

Strikes/ Prioritisation	Issue
6	Speed of boats/jet ski introduction to Deben
6	Water Quality / Environmental Pollution
5	Silt
2	Abandoned Dinghies (and clear up Quay beach area) Abandoned Yachts
2	Considerate Behaviour/Safe Use of River
2	Riverside paths /Access
2	Saltmarsh degradation
2	No Harbour Authority/Police
1	Bodies, e.g. RDA/Fairways Committees without powers/resource
1	Environment Protection
1	Landing places
1	Fewer, but bigger boats

## Attendees:

### Organisations (Total represented 24)

Bawdsey Haven Yacht Club  
Bawdsey Haven Yacht Club  
Deben Canoe Club  
Deben Estuary Partnership  
Deben Estuary Partnership  
Deben Paddlers  
Deben Rowing Club  
East Suffolk Council  
East Suffolk Wakeboard and Water Ski Club  
Essex & Suffolk Rivers Trust  
Felixstowe Ferry Fore Shore Trust  
Marine Management Organisation  
National Trust  
Ramsholt Fairways Committee  
Ramsholt Harbour Master  
River Deben Association  
River Deben Association  
Suffolk JetSki Ltd  
Tide Mill  
Waldringfield Fairways Committee  
Waldringfield Harbour Master  
Woodbridge and Waldringfield Boatyard/RDA/Deben Cruises  
Woodbridge Cruising Club  
Woodbridge Museum  
Woodbridge Quay/Ferry Dock  
Woodbridge Riverside Trust

### Representatives (Total 27)

Nick Rose  
Jim Wyllie  
John Elwell  
Thomas Yeung  
Simon Read  
Neil Boast  
John Anderson  
Kay Yule  
Richard Klein  
Andy Went  
Robert Brinkley  
Charlotte Lewis  
Russell Clement  
Mary Owles  
Ian Moore  
Colin Nicholson  
Anna-Marie Sellon  
Daniel and Hanna Mayhew  
John Carrington  
Peter Greatrex  
Tony Lyon  
Matt Lis  
Mark Richardson  
Caroline Peeke  
Emma Jennings  
Bryan Knibbs for Pat Clark