



# TAW TORRIDGE ESTUARY FORUM

Minutes of the quarterly meeting held 7.00pm Mon. 15th July 2024  
at Beechfield Centre, Fremington.

## Present:

Tony Pratt	ND Yacht Club & Chair
Jeff Needham	Tawstock P C & Vice Chair
Mark Haworth-Booth	Westcountry Rivers Trust
David Dixon	Barnstaple Gig Club
Ian Harrison	Rolle Canal Society
John Puddy	Steamship Freshspring Trust
Tristan Otten	Torrige District Council
Tony Bown	Observer
Chris Northrop	Appledore Instow Ferry
Tom Humphreys	N. D. Biosphere
Aaron Lowe	Skern Lodge
Chris Salisbury	Taw & Torridge Wild-fowling Club
Sandra Knight	Coastwise North Devon
Debbie Frazer	Devon Wildlife Trust
Helen Cooper	Save Our Sands
Andy Bell	North Devon Biosphere
Tim Jones	WEBS / Biosphere, Nature Recovery Plan
Vince Large	K.Lee's tech. support
Katy Lee	Going On Taw - speaker
Mike Teare	Bideford & R. Torridge Heritage Harbour
Adrian Bryant	Braunton P C
Ian Crawford	Secretary

**1. Welcome & Introductions:** The chair welcomed the speaker Katy Lee and Forum members. Members old and new introduced themselves

**Apologies for Absence:**, Chris Dee, Peter Hames, Ricky Knight, Chris Salisbury, Mark Cann, Andy Cox, Chris Hassall, Paul Brown

**2. Minutes of Previous Meeting, April 15th:** Agreed for adoption.

**3. Guest Speaker, Katy Lee, talking about her project 'Going On Taw'**

Katy opened her presentation with an outline of the preparation of the project, Going on Taw, over a period of three years due to the interruption of the Covid pandemic, a project which took 18 months of work to prepare. With her partner Vince Large they manage woodland at Courage Copse. Their project on the River Taw which is 70 km long started at the estuary and worked back up river to the source at Belstone on Dartmoor working with 7 community groups. Three schools, Chulmleigh Primary, Umberleigh Primary & Bishops Tawton Primary were involved with the Westcountry Rivers Trust in workshops on the river and in school,, encouraging the pupils in observation skills and using poetry spoken through a tube into the water that can be heard with no distortion. Children wrote poems on pieces of silk, placing them in the water where some float, some sink and pupils learned to accept the rivers impact on their poems.

Four Community groups, Sunrise Diversity English language students, Barnstaple Memory Cafe, Georgie's Youth Centre and Wednesday Wanderers were involved in the project, linking with people whose families had worked on the river barges, and descendants of those who lived by the river who knew the folk lore and tales.

Katy's trip on the river included swimming and in a canoe made from Devon Ash covered with a nylon skin, inscribed with some of the poetry which had been generated by the project. Access to the river often required landowner's permission and restrictions resulted in recording with video, in some of the river stretches, due to private ownership.

21 photos had been curated, 7 podcasts involving different experts on aspects of the river such as fishing, farming, and transport (barges). Whilst various organisations, such as The Arts Council England and South West Water had funded the project Katy made the point that the Taw had been forgotten by Barnstaple and now needs some champions, whereas by contrast the Torridge is being presented to the public by Bideford & River Torridge Heritage Harbour.

The chair thanked Katy Lee for her interesting presentation and took questions from members.

In view of the access restrictions prevailing due to land ownership in conflict with the right to roam prevailing in Scotland, Forum members agreed that an approach to our new MP should be made to raise this issue with our new Government. **Action Chair & Secretary**

**4. Refreshment Break** - the chair thanked the "caterers" - JN,IC &MH-B

**5. Matters arising from Minutes 15/4/24**

**a) Accounts:** TP reported that NatWest had now changed the signatures with thanks to the endeavours of IC, and all invoices are now paid. The unaccounted sum of £26.60 will hopefully be resolved by TP assisted by JN and a final position established for the October Forum meeting..... **Action TP & JN**

**b) Constitution and Status of the Forum:** With the imminent website launch it is apparent that the constitution needs updating and this will be the major item on the Planning & Consultation Committee (P&CC) agenda with a view to bringing a redraft to the October Forum for final adoption at the AGM ..... **Action P&CC**

**c) Any other Matters Arising:** None

## 6. Reports

**a) TTEF / P & C Committee:** Report had been circulated and a correction was made to item c) "Trees at the Commodore Hotel" Noted that felling had been refused by *NDC Tree Officer* (Not TDC as stated) Report detail - TTEF website

TP reported that **Anchorwood Bank**, originally designated as a nature reserve, could be the subject of affordable housing. As the land had recently been sold, it was agreed that the P&CC will investigate and report back..... **Action P&CC**

TP reported that CH had asked the Forum to look into the possible effects of a **seaweed farm West of Lundy**. Whilst it was argued that seaweed farms could benefit from agricultural nitrogen run off, as pointed out this ignores the substantial damage done by nitrogen to not only marine life but also to soil and reduces biodiversity in addition to its global warming impact. Olly Hicks was mentioned as a seaweed farmer in North Devon. After a brief discussion it was agreed to invite a speaker from the seaweed farms to address the Forum..... **Action P&CC**

The **Website** is ready for relaunch. TJ reported that CD was on holiday and it was recognised that the website would go live on his return..... **Action CD**

## b) Estuary Reports

**Bideford Harbour Master.** PB's report had been circulated

**Appledore Instow Ferry.** CN's report reported that to 31st March, 30 days of ferry operation had been lost due to bad weather. He made a call for new skippers as 2 are needed. From 2011 the number of passengers had reached 250,000 in April/ May.

**c) ND Biosphere.** Ab reported as follows:

- Critter Project; working with 4 landowners. Exploring c50 ha habitat enhancement for freshwater and grazing marsh habitats.
- Clean Maritime Network; established by TDC in support of the development of an economy based on the clean marine centre and development of green technologies in the marine environment. They have just approved a new vision for the network at TDC.
- Shared Outcomes funded project with CEFAS; developing a catchment monitoring model using a mix of all the continuous sensors in the Taw Torridge catchment including the Biosphere owned ones. The purpose is to explore the monitoring of a range of stressors on the marine environment.

- Marine working group/forum has had 2 meetings; the latest to develop the marine plan road map to set out the projects for the next 5 years and a basis for funding applications
- Sand Issues; Instow dunes and beach will have the benefit of a beach management plan to ensure that it is clear about the projects and how they will be maintained.
- Sand extraction: sand had been removed from a high point in the main channel by the shipyard to allow deeper draft vessels to pass from Bideford. However local are concerned that more than the prescribed amount was removed by the contractor who also appears to be operating from the Instow oil jetty without the benefit of planning consent. MMO and the district council have been informed.
- Allis shad has been identified on the Taw as far upstream as the Mole river. It is a protected and rare migratory fish therefore there will be some conservation actions developed to ensure critical habitats for the fish are maintained and enhanced.

AB(Braunton P C) was concerned about the Whitecross cable access 'carving' up Several SSSIs - AB (ND Biosphere) responded that the partnership had put in an objection. HC (Save Our Sands) pointed out that the video presentation by Whitecross was made before the completion of research and took no account of the negative impact on biodiversity. ~~She also mentioned the impact of the turbines.~~ AB reminded the meeting that a new planning application is being presented.

TJ reported that Natural England submitted an enquiry last November which still has not been answered. The Forum will continue to scrutinise any further applications re Whitecross wind farm.

**Biosphere Communities:**TH reported that Biosphere Communities is a freshly-launched project by the North Devon UNESCO Biosphere, set to empower groups and individuals to champion nature's recovery in their local area and sustainably deliver thoughtful solutions to the shared environmental and social challenges faced across our communities in North Devon and Torridge. Funded by the Climate Action Fund (CAF) for four years, Biosphere Communities will see a team of four 'Community Animators' coproduce programmes with the communities of Bideford, Appledore, South Molton, Ashreigney and Chumleigh, with plans to identify and work with four further communities after a successful first year. Community-led tasks are expected to involve habitat creation and wildlife conservation along both the Taw and Torridge rivers catchments, with a particular focus on developing the skills and knowledge of young people and engaging some of the 'quieter voices' in our communities. For more information or to see how you can get involved please keep an eye on the North Devon UNESCO Biosphere Facebook page and website, or contact the Biosphere Communities project lead directly on [tom.humphreys@devon.gov.uk](mailto:tom.humphreys@devon.gov.uk) or message on LinkedIn.

**d) N D Coast National Landscape:** No report

**e) Natural England** No report

**f) Devon Wildlife Trust.** DF's report was circulated at the meeting. See Reports Page on TTEF website for more detail AB (Braunton P C) raised a question about DWT propagation of beavers

**g) Bideford & River Torridge Heritage Harbour:** MT emphasised that BARTH was not just a 'blue placard' organisation and had produced a leaflet on the story of Bideford and the River Torridge, which was available at tonight's meeting

**h) Other Reports. None**

**7. Matters brought forward by the Chair. None**

RK reported that the SWW public meeting held by the District Council had been constructive.

TP reported that the Middle Dock had been cleared, buildings recorded, and materials saved. Detailed plans are awaited including a new quay wall.

**8. Agenda Items for Next Meeting.**

1) Forum constitution 2) Speaker.....**Action P&CC**

**9 AOB.**

- DD announced the Barnstaple Regatta, Saturday 21st September will run from Ashford to Barnstaple Old Bridge.
- TH reported that [Rural England Prosperity Fund \(REPF\) - Grant Programme | North Devon+ \(northdevonplus.co.uk\)](#) Live now, applications open until November, could be handy for landowners in the river catchments
- [Funding Applications | Apply for Canoe Foundation funding](#) Closed now but will likely reopen in the winter. We missed it as a forum last year but would be good to have something 'oven ready' to bring forward, focusing on improving access.

**10. Future Meetings.**

**Mon. 21st October and January 20th 2025**