

Salcombe-Kingsbridge Estuary Conservation Forum

Notes of the 18th April 2023 meeting

HYBRID meeting held at Kingsbridge Community College and remotely on Zoom



1. Introductions and apologies for absence

Roger English, Manager of SD AONB unit, standing in for SKECF Chair, Ken Carter, welcomed everyone to the Forum and opened the meeting.

Present:

Name	Representing	Name	Representing
Lauren Parkhouse LPa	D&S IFCA	Emma Reece ER	NT
Emma McGee EM	EA	Malcolm Wood MW	RYA
Andrew Northrop AN	East Allington PC / SSH	Dave Curno DC	RYA
Rosemary Speed RS	KEBC	Roger English RE	SD AONB
Fiona van Es FvE	Local ecologist (Minutes)	Nigel Mortimer NM	SD AONB Estuaries Officer
Richard Gatehouse RG	Local farmer / NT	Philip Goodhead PG	SHA (Asst Harbour Master)
Leslie Pengelly LPe	Local farmer / SHS	Liz Green LG	West Alvington PC

Initials (in bold) are used to attribute contributions to the meeting.

Acronyms used in these notes:

AONB	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
BW	Bathing Water
CEMP	Construction Environmental Management Plan
CS	Countryside Stewardship
CSF	Catchment Sensitive Farming
DEFRA	Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
D&S IFCA	Devon & Severn Inshore Fisheries & Conservation Authority
EA	Environment Agency
EDM	Event Duration Monitoring
FOI	Freedom of Information
IMO	International Maritime Organization
KEBC	Kingsbridge Estuary Boat Club
NE	Natural England
NT	National Trust
OPRC	Oil Pollution Preparedness, Response and Co-operation
PC	Parish Council
PO	Pacific Oyster
RYA	Royal Yachting Association
SDCP	South Devon Catchments Partnership
SHA	Salcombe Harbour Authority
SHB	Salcombe Harbour Board
SHS	South Hams Society
SHDC	South Hams District Council
S-K	Salcombe-Kingsbridge
SKE	Salcombe-Kingsbridge Estuary
SKECF	Salcombe-Kingsbridge Estuary Conservation Forum
SSH	Sustainable South Hams
SWW	South West Water
UoP	University of Plymouth

Apologies: Cameron Sims-Stirling (Salcombe Harbour Master), Chis Klee (Kingsbridge & District Natural History Society), Graham Price (Kingsbridge Town Council/ Kingsbridge in Bloom), Douglas Herdson (Marine Fish Information).

2. **Approval of the notes of the 18th October '22 SKECF meeting notes:** approved; no amendments.

3. Matters arising

ACTION 1: (EM) Put Hettie Brown (UoP) in touch with Natural England re. seagrass ID drawings
Action carried out by **NM**.

ACTION 2: (All) Return any recovered UoP marked Go-Pro cameras to NM.
None reported to have been found.

ACTION 3: (JP/ BH/ HB) Collaborate re. seagrass research for presentations at CSF events.
NM has spoken to Jasmine Pearson and expressed willingness to highlight impacts of runoff etc. on estuaries at any forthcoming CSF events.

ACTION 4: (CK) Share Low Tide Bird Counts information with Louis Hogan (UoP)
NM has received confirmation from Chris Klee that this has been done.

ACTION 5: (EM) Check if there is a live flood defence project in Kingsbridge catchment.
EM confirmed that there were none.

ACTION 6: (EM) Check if SWW investigated any of 3 S-K BWs and if so, send report to NM.
EM explained that these reports are not in the public domain and is not aware of any FOI requests to obtain them. There is currently a FOI request in progress for disclosure of similar reports for the Erme estuary. Reports will exist for SKE but are only attainable through the FOI process.

ACTION 7: (All) SKECF/ SHB water quality sampling project – specific proposals to NM.
NM announced a meeting to discuss this on 15th May in Kingsbridge.

4. Discussion of SKECF Code of Conduct

NM: The ethos behind the SKECF Code of Conduct is to encourage a questioning but cooperative camaraderie of Forum members to move forward as a team, raising and discussing relevant issues, seeking positive conservation actions and outcomes. Through hybrid meetings, we aim to conduct them in such a way as to attract more and a wider range of attendees and also in the process to reduce our carbon footprint, whilst recognising that hybrid meetings can need a bit more patience and especially during excited discussion, clarity of speech.

RE: Moved to adopt – AGREED.

ACTION 1: NM: circulate formally adopted SKECF Purpose & Code of Conduct.
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- *Attached as annex to these notes*

5. Estuaries Officer's update - Nigel Mortimer, South Devon AONB Estuaries Partnership

- **Construction Environmental Management Plan Production Guide:** very close to completion but not yet published.
- **Salcombe Harbour Authority oil pollution exercise day:** attended – very positive.
 - **PG:** Part of OPRC compliance. Day's exercise simulated fire aboard a vessel - SHA deployed kit then external training team deployed theirs and simulated a range of scenarios. Some SHA staff swapped roles to ensure different team members knew different responses. Attracted some new team members.
- **Washerbrook stream:** held meeting but no further progress.
 - **EM:** There are ongoing issues around the development at Locks Hill with new regulatory action taken against developer. Currently, silt trap efficacy likely to be compromised due to the volumes of silt coming down from the site works. Caution advised at the moment.
- **SHS Rivers Assembly event:** attended and gave presentations – lots of interest.
- **Salcombe Harbour Guide:** updated 2023 pages (also Dart and Yealm).
- **Brittons Field interpretation panel:** damaged; now under repair. Will be reinstalled at minimal cost.
- **Seagrass information panels:** waiting for manufacture of panels and will then be reinstalled at East Portlemouth.

- **Advanced mooring system for Salcombe:** most of the advances have been for larger vessels in deeper waters; it has been harder to find something that works in drying or more shallow waters for smaller boats. Keen to push for development of a suitable system.
- **Dwarf seagrass:** We have a new UoP MSc student based on SKE, looking at birds supported by the estuary's dwarf seagrass meadows – both at low tide & high tides. He will be invited to give a presentation at the autumn SKECF meeting
- **Pacific oysters at mouth of Collapit Creek:** some access gained to this area but now require NE permit and to organise trial of efficacy of managing POs by pushing them down into the mud.
- **Water quality testing:** asked by SHA if it's possible to get more water quality testing done within SKE. Arguing that further monitoring would need to be useful to the management of SKE to justify it, e.g. nutrients; in particular, nitrates and phosphate thought to exacerbate algal mats and red tides. Would like to look at where they come from, how they are dispersed, how long they persist and what can be done to control their input. At the meeting on 15th May, we will consider how to progress this project.
- **Anglers on the Saltstone:** growth in the number of anglers visiting the Saltstone has been reported and we would like D&S IFCA to put a bylaw in place. Saltstone is a small rock island located about halfway up the SKE which supports a rare and a very unusual biotope (suggested as unique in UK).
 - **LP:** not in enforcement team but can pass on request. **NM & LP** to coordinate.
- **Limekiln interpretation panel at Frogmore:** old sign (1996) faded and in poor condition. **FvE** has worked with Frogmore Village Community Association to produce a new, illustrated sign which will be installed within the next few weeks.
- **SDCP meeting:** Next meeting will be on 17th May at 9am in the Repton Room, Follaton House, Totnes. Details will be circulated.

Questions to NM

- **LG:** Are slipper limpets still an issue in the troughs within The Bag?
 - **NM:** Yes, quite invisible from the surface, there is little we can do about them currently.
- **DC:** There has been a new advance in shallow water mooring systems at Studland Bay so have emailed **NM** with Phil Horton's contact details to discuss.

ACTION 2: NM / LP - liaise over Saltstone bylaw request getting to D&S IFCA enforcement team.

ACTION 3: NM – contact Phil Horton re. shallow water mooring system developments.

Update: IFCA reply, Currently D&S IFCA does not have any bylaw or management measures to manage recreational anglers or hand gatherers and unfortunately our commitments and lack of resources probably mean that we will not be considering introducing management of these activities for some years.

Could the Harbour Authority not introduce a Byelaw so that they could enforce this? Do the Harbour Authority issue Notices regarding this or have something in their handbook [Harbour Guide]?

6. Catchment updates – Emma Magee, Catchment Officer, EA.

Recap: (See 'EDM data presentation 2022' slide presentation) Looking at EDM data (sewage discharge times for 2022) for SKE:

S-K Water Body is rated as **Moderate Ecological Status**. Access online [[Event Duration Monitoring - Storm Overflows - Annual Returns - 2022 \(data.gov.uk\)](#)]

The reasons SKE water quality is not ranked as 'Good' is due to results for invertebrates, macro-algae, dissolved inorganic nitrogen, mercury and PBDE (Poly Brominated Diphenyl Ethers). The impact of this last pollutant is as yet unknown but believed to be ubiquitous across all waterbodies worldwide from a wide range of sources [[Revealed: scale of 'forever chemical' pollution across UK and Europe | PFAS | The Guardian](#)]*. Mercury and PBDE are new chemicals now included in WQ monitoring. Currently, actions can only be taken to improve water quality status regarding invertebrates, macro-algae and dissolved inorganic nitrogen; not for mercury or PBDE. * *The Guardian* have done a whole series - more on the 'forever chemical' category. *Guardian* is focussed on PFAS but the EA chemical status for rivers now includes a wider range : The four groups of global pollutants (uPBTs) that cause the significant change in chemical classification are: polybrominated diphenyl ethers (PBDEs - a group of brominated flame retardants); Mercury; certain Polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs) and Perfluorooctane sulfonate (PFOS) a group of per-and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) which is being assessed for the first time.

Monitoring enables targeted funding for specific actions most likely to bring about change at pollution source, e.g. within:

- agricultural and rural land management (soil, nutrients, runoff, management, etc.)
- water industry (sewage discharges, etc.)
- towns and general public (runoff, roads, domestic, etc.)

For the agricultural sector, a range of farming grants (>>£168m nationally from DEFRA) is available and locally, CSF support is available through Jasmine Pearson (NE)



Catchment Sensitive Farming Update- Spring 2023

- **Jasmine Pearson (South Hams CSFA)** has been working across South Devon to provide free, confidential advice for farmers.
- **Vicky Herbert** is the **new CSFA** for the **Teign and the upper Dart**. Jasmine will still lead on all cases for the next 6 months.
- Key priorities this year:
 - Excluding stock from watercourses due to Faecal Indicator Organism pollution pressure across South Devon.
 - Supporting upgrades to yard infrastructure to stop runoff and support better air quality.
 - Supporting with better nutrient management and storage of slurry in particular with new 'Slurry Investment Grant' available.
- **Will be very busy from March-August supporting with Countryside Stewardship Mid-Tier.**



Catchment Sensitive Farming (CSF) is led by Natural England, in partnership with Defra and the Environment Agency.



csf.devoncornwall@naturalengland.org.uk also, Landscape Recovery Fund (large scale with long term financial commitments, possibly involving multiple landowners). Currently there are examples in East Devon.

See 'CSF Spring update 2023' slides annexed to these notes

SWW was ranked among the worst for sewage discharges last year by OFWAT.

South Devon (Teign, Dart, SKE, Avon and Erme), represents 18% of the EDM of the number of sites of outfalls and 18% of the number of spills, i.e. South Devon is representative of SWW performance as a whole.

In 2022, in South Devon, there was 52,700 hours duration of spills.

See 'EDM data presentation 2022' slides annexed to these notes.

Across SWW as a whole, of the top 10% discharging sites, 46 sites in South Devon are the worst and the Salcombe-Kingsbridge Water Body has 2 (Sherford and East Charleton), both of which are hydrologically linked to the SKE shellfish waters. Overall in 2022, of the 20 sites within the Salcombe-Kingsbridge Water Body, there were 16 which spilt for 105 days in total.

- **RE:** Presentation was extremely useful and provides context – grateful to **EM**. At the October forum, this information can be translated into actions to take forward.

7. Estuary Forum progress and proposals for the next six months –

- **LG:** Nothing to report but I do report back to PC from SKECF.
- **AN:** 1) In East Allington there has been a change of land ownership and the field is now being grazed with sheep and not fertilised. The brook, which runs through the village, seems cleaner. Hoping trout and damselflies will return.
2) Re. SKE, are there any plans for limiting 2-stroke engines?
 - **PG:** no plans at present. They are not as common as they were and generally can't buy 2-strokes as a new product now.
 - **DC:** Agree, not manufactured any more. Even second hand, the ratio is c.100:1 now. Some reservoirs ban them. Electric engines are becoming more popular.
- **LP (for EM):** 1) Are business supposed to self-report if they spill diesel in estuary?
 - **EM:** Business owners have a duty of responsibility so would hopefully report to EA / SHA.
 - **PG:** If spill is from boat, owner should report to SHA. Office may receive reports of spillages but not of the source info.

- **EM:** Pollution hotline 0800 807060 - Anyone can report a spill.
- 2) Runoff - does the EA check on housing developments during construction?
 - **EM:** Enforcement of planning conditions falls to the local planning authority. If a pollution incident occurs (or is ongoing) anyone can report - EA normally won't know unless it is informed. If there is non-compliance with planning conditions and it is reported to the EA, action can be taken as a regulatory enforcement authority.
 - **LP:** suggested that SHDC don't monitor developments so they wouldn't report - developments are often out of sight and away from public land.
 - **EM:** suggested that SHDC *have* reported environmental incidents to EA, and all developments, to some extent, occur on private land.
- **PG (SHA):** 1) Advances in mooring systems – hoping to trial new designs. Currently having talks about reducing/adding buoyage.
 - **NM:** In main channel up to Kingsbridge, if there were more starboard markers as well as port markers, it might encourage larger boats to stick to it, avoiding short cuts over the mud and seagrass. Just the propellor wash may be enough to disturb the bed when there is insufficient water below.
 - **PG:** Julian Brazil has raised this as a means of environmental protection at Widegates. Lighting the channel has been suggested, also, marking channels that haven't been marked before, e.g. South Pool, to promote better navigation and maintain natural lines of transit (and depth).
[NM – any lighting would need to be carefully considered as many marine organisms time their reproductive cycle with the lunar cycle which artificial light spill can significantly interfere with]
 - **DC:** It is normal for upper parts of estuaries to have just one marker, not two. People should always navigate with chart.
 - **PG:** With expansion and sensitivity of seagrass in upper reaches, some people may need more navigation guidance.
- 2) SHA is still supporting Tom Stamp's bass tagging. He has new data and has widened the tagging and monitoring areas (a potential presentation for SKECF?); also logging of temperature and salinity for a couple of university applications for extended extracurricular work (aimed at individuals who want to undertake studies to bolster their applications to university).
- 3) Accident management and training for permanent members of staff (covered under item 5).
- **RS (KEBC):** 1) Speeding boats at Kingsbridge end of SKE, causing disturbance to wildlife. Policing?
2) Boat owner unhappy about seagull fouling, which is particularly bad at town end of pontoon, asking for SHA/SHDC to do more to deal with this health hazard.
 - **PG:** Have looked at environmentally- friendly ways of moving gulls on but this could result in moving the problem elsewhere.
 - **RS:** Could the gulls have permanent decoy platform?
 - **PG:** SHA debated this. Potentially, could try to find a suitable platform but also need to consider the possible implications (misuse).
We have restructured staffing and security in order to employ an extra member of staff (an extra SHA person on the water in a patrol boat) to hopefully dissuade speeding at peak times, etc. Many positive aspects to having an additional presence on the water, including education.

Reporting Suspected Illegal Fishing?

Devon and Severn IFCA operates an **OUT OF HOURS** phone number where fishing activity can be reported. Any personal data that you provide will be held securely and not shared. To contact an enforcement officer, phone or text: **07740 175479** alternatively email: intel@devonandsevernifca.gov.uk

During Office Hours -

Tel (office): 01803 854648

Email: office@devonandsevernifca.gov.uk

Website: www.devonandsevernifca.gov.uk

LP (D&S IFCA): 1) Enforcement Team information sheet re. signage (included in SKECF email from **NM**) - aiming to get IFCA information into more estuaries so that people where and how to report illegal fishing activity – see below. Let **LP** know if you have a suitable location for signage – this will be passed onto the Enforcement Team.

2) Bass tagging project in the SKE (IFCA in collaboration with Tom Stamp) looking at survivability from netting, is currently being written up. Once available, it will be circulated. 84 bass were tagged in total. Tags last for 2 years and many bass have returned to the SKE. Results will feed into Defra's fisheries management plan work. The tagged bass are also being used as part of a wider UoP project (working with other EU organisations) with acoustic devices monitoring their movements all over the Channel and down into France.

- **AN:** As part of National Coastwatch, we report illegal fishing to the Coastguard. Is that the route you go through or are there other routes?
- **LP:** Report to IFCA if within 6 nautical miles, including the estuaries.

- **ER (NT):** Working on large scale nature recovery projects, including one based over 3 farms between Salcombe and Hope Cove. Southdown Farm (started 4 years ago) involved wetland creation, reverting arable to pasture, species-rich grassland restoration, tree planting plus monitoring. Currently in the process of producing a CS application at East Soar Farm (working with the tenants). It has already had some good management over the last 10 years. In terms of the effects on the SKE, we are moving away from intensive grass management (slurrying, silage cut) to low-intensity grazing / hay cuts – better for soil health and reducing runoff. Mostly species-rich grassland creation but will also do some wetland creation work. We are also working with the tenants on the Bolt Tail side to carry out similar work.

We recently worked with the AONB team to install interpretation panels highlighting the importance of the fort at Bolt Tail which includes a reconstruction of how the site was used. Also working with Historic England and AONB to research other Scheduled Ancient Monuments in that area so as to better manage and protect them. Archaeological digs have raised a good deal of interest with worked flints and other finds recorded. Aim to gather more information and feed them into the conservation plans. Species recovery work (mainly cirl buntings and skylarks) - this year, 186 overwintering cirl buntings were recorded – a new record. Important to keep mixed farming systems as well managed arable amongst the grassland means that birds can feed in stubble fields over winter.

- **EM (updates from SWW):** Extension to hosepipe ban for this area from 25/04/23 (includes Roadford and Colliford supplies). SWW has their Water Resources Management Plan out for consultation (*closed 29/05/23*). May run an event online – check SWW website. [Water restrictions - update on the hosepipe ban \(Temporary Use Ban\) \(southwestwater.co.uk\)](https://www.southwestwater.co.uk/water-restrictions-update-on-the-hosepipe-ban)

8. Items for Salcombe Harbour Board

- **FvE:** What is the current wait for pontoon moorings in Kingsbridge?
 - **PG:** Currently allocating to those who applied c.8 years ago; many more have applied since Covid. For swinging moorings: 3 years.
- **LG:** Re. visiting boats emptying holding tanks – how often is the pump-out facility in Salcombe used?
 - **PG:** Usage is recorded. We now have a fixed pump-out facility on quayside at Batson. Access is tidal and SHA facilitate its use by arrangement at high tide. If it became a more widely used facility we may have to rethink. Currently building a new workshop on the quay and, in the future, plan to include several service bays with these facilities where staff will be on hand to operate.
 - **EM:** Is it illegal for a boat to discharge sewage into the estuary if it can't get to the pump-out facilities?
 - **PG:** Don't think in written law but we provide guidance.
 - **EM:** Please confirm where the lines are drawn - it would be helpful for boat owners to know. It is an offence to discharge in Torbay. It would be useful to clarify if Torbay uses a bylaw to prohibit discharging and explore if such a bylaw exists for SKE and if not, what is the justification for not having such a bylaw?
 - **DC:** Most visiting boats will discharge on passage, 3 miles offshore. Usually have capacity for 1-2 days. Don't think there is any legislation but all new boats have to have holding tanks built in. RYA recommendation is compliance with IMO regulations for commercial craft (discharge 3 miles offshore). I will confirm legal position with RYA.
 - **EM:** It is very clear in Torbay that it is an illegal activity and the beaches and resorts team have been informing water-based leisure groups and encouraging reporting of illegal discharges. This implies that they have a mechanism for enforcement.
 - **DC:** Most pleasure crafts don't discharge in this environment.
 - **EM:** Agreed – it is a minority.

ACTION 4: PG – seek clarification on legal grounds for objecting to boats discharging in SKE.

ACTION 5: DC – clarify legal position re. discharging from boats with RYA.

9. Any other business

- **LG:** Is there an update on Avian influenza? What do we do with any dead seabirds now?
 - **PG:** Not logged any for a while. Hopefully situation has improved.
 - **NM:** Domestic poultry are now allowed out again but wise to remain cautious, especially if there are a number of dead birds. *[as of 8Aug'23 – last gov.uk update was 13Dec'22]*
- **LG:** Quality of BWs? [Swimfo](#) versus [Waterfit Live](#) interactive map? Where do we go for information?
 - **EM:** Different datasets are used for each. BW information is displayed beachside and based on predictive modelling as much as outfalls. Waterfit data is based on a yes/no; is the discharge pipe operational/non-operational? Surfers Against Sewage map is based on a combination of publically-available data sets, possibly with their own data analysis. Waterfit map may also be used to show where SWW plans to invest in future.
Rule of thumb – if it has rained recently, water quality may be lower.
- **AN:** Is there one BW water sampling point on SKE?
 - **EM:** Three: Mill Bay, Salcombe (North) and Salcombe (South). Each has its own monitoring point.
- **RS:** Swimming at Bowcombe, kids jumping from bridge – is there any monitoring there?
 - **NM:** As a BW, no.
- **RE:** Ken Carter has indicated his wish to step down as Chair. Please send expressions of interest to **NM** by at least a week before next SKECF. Details of nominations can be circulated with the agenda and a decision made at the next meeting.
 - **NM:** We will circulate terms of reference *[see annexed with these notes]* asking for nominations for both Chair and Vice Chair for SKECF.

ACTION 6: All – nominations*/expressions of interest for SKECF Chair & Vice Chair to NM Please

** must be made in agreement of the person being nominated please*

10. Date of next meeting: Tuesday 3rd October, 2023 at KCC library.

Autumn meeting confirmed as 6pm on Tuesday 3rd October 2023 within the Kingsbridge Community College Library

Further meeting joining details will be sent nearer the time – to be held as a hybrid meeting and doors opening at 5:30pm for setting up and informal networking.