

Salcombe-Kingsbridge Estuary Conservation Forum – Statement of Purpose and Code-of -Conduct

Our local Estuary Forums & Advisory Groups (hereafter Forums) were originally established for the discussions and preparations of their individual local Estuary Management Plans – the first being the Salcombe-Kingsbridge Estuary's in the early '90s as part of the Estuaries Conservation Management Initiative led by the then national Nature Conservancy Council.

Our Forums have since assisted with the periodic formal review of their Estuary Management Plans and their bringing together as one South Devon AONB Estuaries Management Plan in 2016.

Our Forums have evolved and their biannual meetings are an opportunity for the local community to come together to share their local concerns and issues, report observations, update on progress against the management plan, and seek and discuss creative and sustainable conservation management solutions.

Our Forums are open to a representative from all local community groups, clubs, societies and organisations, regulatory and local authorities. These representatives are encouraged to liaise between their own groups' memberships and the Forums, however, as no formal checks are made on this representation with the exception of electing a Forum Chair & Vice-chair position, the Forums do not vote on items – more that the Forum members may take any issue back to their own group and choose to make representations etc. on behalf of that group.

The ethos of our Forums have been relatively informal but with an expectation that members will conduct themselves professionally and engage constructively in discussions for the common goal of conserving our estuaries for all - giving all other members, regardless of views, their full respect. The continued long-term attendance of all members is paramount to the conservation management and enhancement of our estuaries.

The advent of hybrid Forum meetings, catalysed by Covid & carbon conscious travel, has highlighted an even greater need to work positively, respectfully and constructively together, and we propose the following *draft* Code of Conduct for our future Forum meetings. ;

- 1.** Comments and contributions within forum discussions should be constructive, succinct, and stay relevant to the discussion or forum topic.
- 2.** Members are positively encouraged to have open and candid discussions and debates. Members will not be censored for expressing an opinion within the limits of these rules of conduct, however, all communications should be constructive, civil and polite. Members are expected to treat each other with respect and consideration for all points of view, and without insult, abuse or use of offensive language or behaviour.

- 3.** Members must speak only through the Chair of the meeting and not interrupt, heckle, make distracting noises or gestures.
- 4.** Our Forums and indeed the active conservation of our waters, will increasingly rely upon the joint attendance and engagement of the authorities and organisations, represented by professional individuals who should not be exposed to the frustrations against their organisations in any way that makes them feel personally uncomfortable.
- 5.** Member's own experience and views should inform but not dominate or dictate how members participate.
- 6.** Members should attempt to be clear, open and honest about whether they are expressing their own personal view, the best current, evidenced or informed science view, or knowingly representing those of their organisation.

Adopted by the SKECF membership on 18th April 2023