

MPAPP Minutes – 18th February 2025

In attendance: Fiona Toms (FT), Cllr Andy Hadley (AH), Zara Aitken (ZA), Maureen Smith (MS), Ray Tew (RT)

Apologies: Paul Matcham (PM), Cllr Craig Palmer (CP), Ben Parker (BP), Ben Jewell (BJ), Cllr Marcus Kravis (MK)

Guests: Steve Pickard, Chris Binnie (From 11:30)

1. Minutes Of Last Meeting/Matters Arising/Action Log Review

Minutes of last meeting agreed.

Actions log update:

Retail Mentoring – FT & BJ met to discuss this. BJ does not want to accept any funds from Minehead Chamber of Commerce which have been offered to pay for the retail mentoring. FT has encouraged BJ to think about this further.

Action: Action to be carried forward.

Somerset Council Economic Development Team – FT is liaising with Lara Bell regarding inviting her to the MPAPP meetings.

2. Individual Updates

i. Cllr Andy Hadley, Somerset Council

AH shared that major redundancies need be made at Somerset Council - up to 400 people in the next few months potentially.

No news or updates on the Post Office.

Somerset Council will be putting up car parking fees and proposing to charge for parking on Sundays and all night in car parks and on-street parking.

Burnt caravan has been moved.

ii. Maureen Smith, West Somerset Green Forum (WSGF)

WSGF will be meeting within the next month to determine the way forward.

Carhampton Climate Group organised a tour of the local water treatment works. Discussion ensued around the issues of storm overflow and water pollution.

West Somerset Community Land Trust group is being discontinued due to lack of capacity and funding.

Beach Fish commission turned down by Minehead Town Council. Have written to Watchet to gauge interest. If Watchet are not interest, the funding from Wessex Water will need to be given back.

iii. Ray Tew, Minehead and Coast Development Trust

RT reported that the Centre currently sited in a shared space at The Beach Hotel is unlikely to re-open for the foreseeable future. Despite the generous support of the YMCA and others over a period of more than 10 years, funding of the Centre has become problematic, and it is unable to continue functioning in the manner that people have come to expect.

Discussions continue to consider the important legacy of this long established facility and find a solution using other resources and partners, who could offer residents and visitors to Minehead essential and useful information services going forward.

Action: AH to help identify the responsible officer at SC regarding the remaining HTAP service level agreement.

RT provided an update on the Understory project which means Minehead has been selected as a pilot project to progress the mapping of social capital and community action.

3. **Zara Aitken, Somerset Council Economic Development Strategy Meeting**

ZA gave update on Somerset Council's Economic Strategy stakeholder meeting in Taunton. Slides to be shared with group. It was noted that tourism is the second highest employment sector in Somerset, but tourism did not feature in the strategy.

4. **AOB**

Maureen Smith, West Somerset Green Forum

MS enquired about an update on the Seahorse Centre. AH hasn't heard any news other than the Police have gone into the building.

Action: AH to see what he can find out

Zara Aitken, MCDT

Update on the SASP Partnership funding for Somerset Coastal Strip. Selected as Sport England Place Partnership which means the potential of £2 million funding in the next 3 years for the coastal strip from Porlock to Burnham. ZA invited to stakeholder meeting in March.

5. **Presentation from Steve Pickard and Chris Binnie, West Somerset Tidal Lagoon**

SP and CB gave presentation about the proposed Tidal Lagoon. Slides to be shared with group.

AH queried whether the generation of electricity happens when the water flows in or flows out. CB advised it would be both. AH also queried what the water range would be. CB advised Minehead Beach would be very similar to what it is now. CB advised you'd hardly see the wall as it would be 7km out to sea. AH raised that it would be a significant size as there would be a service road.

RT questioned how the silt would be dealt with. WSTL have taken advice and believe it would be a small problem. Samples of silt would be taken, and examples of models would be based on this.

RT queried how the ecosystem inside the lagoon will change based on the knowledge that the silt/mud is an important part of the Severn Estuary ecosystem.

CB advised that, on the advice they've received so far, it would not be a serious problem. CB admitted that there may be silt build-up on the 'north-side' of North Hill but there is very little access there anyway.

CB advised that all necessary studies, including impacts on fish and birds, would be done before proceeding with a Development Consent Order.

MS mentioned that the previous project failed due to the energy cost. CB reassured that the scale of the project would negate this issue and advised that the project also failed due to other factors.

MS raised the current problem of poor public transport network, which could be made worse by an increase in tourists coming to the area for this new attraction. CB advised that the impacts of construction would be mitigated by offshore platforms, but they would also look to include in the cost enhancements to the A39.

FT questioned where funding would be sourced for a £10+ billion project. CB advised it could come from private sector but would need greater government support which they are trying to generate currently. Other options include Great British Energy or the Crown Estate.

FT questioned what WSTL require from MPAPP as a group. CB requested feedback from the group re anything they have missed or not included. They would like to know if there are any further benefits they could include in the plans that they have yet thought about. The final request was what support MpaPP can provide.

AH questioned the impacts on the current harbours at Minehead and Watchet with regards sewage outfalls, silt etc. CB spoke to the sediment consultant at Watchet 2 years ago and was advised this project would improve and reduce the sediment in Watchet.

RT raised potential impacts on local fishing industry and queried whether any consultation with these individuals would be sought.

FT questioned whether they had identified any groups or organisations that may be negatively affected by this. These organisations and groups should be engaged with early to bring them onboard to understand challenges and solutions.

MS questioned how the WSTL would address flood risks. CB advised the water level in the lagoon would be controlled.

Action: SP will share the presentation with the group.

Action: FT proposed the group continue the conversation at the next meeting to answer the questions posed.