

MINUTES of the meeting of Iken Parish Council held on Thursday 4th January 2018 at Hardy's Barn, Iken commencing at 6pm

PRESENT

Norman Johnson (Vice Chair) presiding, Councillors Colin Chamberlain and Hugh Waterer, Clerk Lorraine Lloyd

In attendance: Jonathan Clarke, England Coastal Path

Members of the public: Annabel Chamberlain, Paul and Judy Shipman, Jonathan and Audrey Rutherford, Penny Johnson, Neville Howe

APOLOGIES

Sir Tom Hughes-Hallett, Richard Mann, John Hailes, Loulou Cooke

England Coastal Path – Jonathan Clarke

Jonathan was introduced and took the floor. He explained that there is an Act of Parliament proposing to put a coastal path in place. The England Coast Path will be the newest National Trail (others include the South West Coast Path and Hadrian's Wall Path). The idea of the coastal path is to offer benefit to people's health as well as to provide economic benefits to local businesses. There needed to be a certainty that people can walk without arriving at closed sections. When the Act was passed, the preference was for the path to be coastal. There are things that can and can't be done. Guidance is set out in the 'Scheme' which the staff use to understand the situations they might encounter. The Scheme is available on the Natural England website at:

<http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/5327964912746496?category=50007>

Jonathan is one of a team of 18 in Eastern England and he has been doing this job for five years. He said that Iken was the first parish council with which he had ever got involved at this early stage. Work is done in sections. Currently some parts of the coast path are open in Norfolk and work has now started in all of Norfolk, Suffolk and Essex. Other teams work in different parts of the country. The Government has announced that the coastal path will be open by 2020. The team has expanded because of this. They are now working from Bawdsey to Aldeburgh. Initially they are finding out what information is available e.g. from landowners, RSPB, county council etc. to decide what the best route for the coastal path is. Involved landowners are offered individual meetings so they can explain how they use their land; the opportunities and constraints.

After much discussion, a preferred route will then be published and comments can be made on it. In most cases landowners accept the route proposed, but if agreement hasn't been reached then they can make objections to the Secretary of State, which is then passed to an independent planning inspector for consideration. Objection forms are simple - on two sides of an A4 sheet. The test overall is whether the route is a fair balance between what the walker wants and what the landowner wants. The difference between England and Wales is that Welsh landowners get compensated (but not so in England). Some landowners benefit because the coastal path may go past their businesses or community centres and, as a result, they may gain financially. County Councils will put in signage and other improvements necessary but will not carry out largescale surface improvements – generally the path works with the existing surface. Bridges may be paid for, vegetation cut back etc. Once the path is open the County Council takes responsibility for it. The proposed paths must not have a significant impact on designated wildlife and this is taken into account in the discussions.

Generally it is accepted that people take responsibility for themselves while walking but the England Coastal Path legislation has power to stop access onto saltmarsh that can be unsuitable for access due to tides, mud and creeks. This would not affect existing uses like wildfowling. The letter from the Iken Parish Council mentioned various issues about local land and suggested the route used Orford Ness. Jonathan

said that he hadn't yet spoken to the National Trust but he thought it is unlikely a route would go along Orford Ness because of the many conservation designations as well as National Nature Reserve Status. The Parish Council had also suggested using roads. Jonathan said that they would be considered, but a safety assessment is required from the Suffolk County Council Highways Team for use of roads.

A part of the coast path legislation is that land seaward of the trail gains rights of access. Where the trail goes further inland then larger areas of land will gain those rights. However, people usually only want to walk from A to B, not cross the other areas of land. Jonathan reiterated that he is here to find a route, listen to what people want, weigh up the pros and cons and propose a route which is best for everyone.

Annabel Chamberlain asked whether if no agreement is reached can they enforce it? In response, Jonathan said that it is possible that the proposed route could be approved and opened, despite objections. He said it depended on the recommendation of the Planning Inspector and decision by the Secretary of State.

Jonathan Rutherford asked if landowners can restrict right of access to any areas between path and coast, for example. There followed a discussion as to whether anyone can make it inaccessible. Jonathan (Clarke) said that although rights might exist, there is no requirement to make changes to make the land accessible e.g. by adding gates etc. as fields can still be fenced, as is the current situation.

Colin Chamberlain asked about the possibility of making land excluded. Jonathan said that there are certain circumstances when access to land can be restricted.

If no agreement is reached then England Coastal Path can propose the route they think best.

Existing footpaths may be used if they fulfil the objectives of the coastal path. Broadly speaking the route from Snape to various parts of Iken are already established. A small sum of money is available to create and maintain some routes - not huge amounts.

It was pointed out that at our last meeting two routes were suggested. In the path report (when the route is published) they have to give reasons why and why not certain route options are chosen. It was asked if walkers will walk on the revamped river walls or below it? There was on-going discussions about whether walking on top of banks might cause disturbance and it depended on the local area. Colin Chamberlain asked about using roads. Jonathan replied that they needed to consider the risk and implications of using routes e.g. if someone is walking along some of the roads, what is the likelihood of something happening to them, e.g. injury? They need to look at these possibilities and seek the advice of the County Council highways team. Colin Chamberlain asked if the widening of the verge would help? Could they do some highways maintenance work to enable walking on the roads? Jonathan said that maybe they need to look at this. The old ferry had been mentioned to the team. Using estuaries – there is a discretion to do so.

Annabel Chamberlain asked how long from agreement to up and running? Jonathan said that after the discussions, the formal consultation period is eight weeks. If there are no objections then that cuts out six months of the total period to implementation. There is then six to nine months for County Council to put in the work before it gets approved by Parliament - therefore it could take two years.

Also discussed were some parts of the existing path between Snape and Iken that get covered in sea water. It was asked if a path can be approved if it runs through sea water. Jonathan said that the route should be available most of the time and so this would be taken into consideration.

Thanks were given to Jonathan. We will get a copy of the route through the post and it will be available on their website and in libraries. Natural England keeps a database of people to contact and so if anyone

wants to be added then please email jonathan.clarke@naturalengland.org.uk. Also email him with any queries you might have.

COUNCILLORS DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

River defences, sea walls, coastal paths

MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

Approved and signed by the Vice Chairman

MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

- 1 Potholes and road defects. There are more potholes. A resurfacing roadworks sign appeared at High Street, showing some work will be carried out over the next eight weeks. There was a discussion about the state of the road near Decoy Cottage. Norman Johnson to write to Andrew Reid. Lorraine and Colin to carry out another survey and lodge results with Highways again (to be included in letter to Andrew Reid).
- 2 River Defences – Colin explained that we don't know what the position is about mud flats. AOEP wishes there to be a meeting of all Ikenites. It may come up as a public meeting. It was understood that SCDC had a different opinion to AOEP. All proposals are being considered and nothing is yet decided.
- 3 River Defence funding - So far the funding appeal has raised about £130,000. It was acknowledged at the last meeting that Colin was sending a personal letter to all Iken residents. There followed a discussion on the matter. Enabling development is on hold for the moment. Colin explained that if this was not possible then the public would have to raise £6.5M rather than £2.5M. The issue is where the houses would go. It was asked if AOEP produce a monthly newsletter? They do not but they report each month in *The Link* and on their website.
- 4 Iken Village Hall registration of title is not yet done. Colin has agreed to have it done by the August meeting.
- 5 Broadband. Norman had been in discussion. He, Rob Anderson and Will Gibson will be meeting the following day. A single mast to be explored.
- 6 Change to watercourse. An email distributed to Councillors was discussed. Bologney River. Agreed we don't need to respond.
- 7 A planning application for change of use of land and for the construction of a stable block and paddock at White Cottage, Sandy Lane, Iken had been distributed on 6th December 2017. All councillors had responded with no objection/support therefore Lorraine had responded accordingly to the Planning Department within the given timescale.
- 8 Lorraine pointed out that a planning application for a single storey extension and associated work to existing bungalow and conversion of existing garage to domestic use at Woodlands, Sandy Lane, Iken had also been dealt with last July but left out of the Minutes of the last meeting.

PUBLIC FORUM

Potholes were again discussed. It was asked if the big lorries were damaging the road works as they are done. It was thought they were. Soakaways are continually blocked.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

It was agreed that we should formally remember Alan Coombes, as he had been a former Iken resident and member of the Parish Council. Everyone agreed. Norman to write to Mrs Coombes.

The next meeting is Friday 18th May which is a public meeting so should start at 6pm. Dates for the next year should then be set.

FINISH TIME - 7.20pm