

Minutes E&S 20/10/2022

17:00

CR: intro

HJ: apologies and housekeeping

17:05 Izzie beaver reintroduction – slides attached

Q&A:

CR: thank you – really good presentation. new licence application – how will this work?

IT: First official consultation complete. The consultation process will continue as HIWWT goes out and continues speaking to the public like with this event tonight. There are a lot of interested parties and we view consultation as continuing even after any licence is granted as we will continue with engagement and educational events.

CR: what guidance/policy has been issued from government and what is the process to follow?

IT: government at the time was in favour of wild release as long as it complies with guidelines. Wild beavers have permission to stay. Since consultation published policy/guidance has updated. Some grants now available. Beavers now recognised as native species. Wild release licenses currently not being accepted and unsure where they will be.

CR: who are statutory consultees?

IT: number of agencies involved and IWC is represented. IWC is statutory Natural England, EA, environment agency all statutory and feeding into steering group. If/when licence app submitted natural England will speak to statutory agencies.

Caroline: NFU hat on: how do you see beavers living in low-lying, heavily drained prime agricultural land of Arreton Valley that has a lot of reservoirs? What if beavers start burrowing in banks of reservoirs and blocking waterways?

IT: Beavers are ecosystem engineers – herbivores that forage. Will eat vegetation in proximity to riverbanks which can include farmers fields – up to 100m at most from river. Some risks of dams in unwanted places and beavers do burrow – usually into riverbanks, 5-10m in length. Agricultural impacts can be problematic. Number of steps being outlined in management strategy. Fencing of agri land for crops and individual trees – grants available in some cases. For licensing period anyone not signed up to grant scheme HIWWT can manage/mitigate on their behalf. Government have discussed compensation for farmers if inundation of agri land took place. Otherwise dam management would be required. HIWWT would remove dams or install flow management devices.

SC: Calbourne– EA walked us through 5 places where fish runs etc are needed. How to cooperate with EA in terms of fish runs needed?

IT: covers flood risk and migratory species. Drawing up memorandum of understanding with EA to share information, joint monitor, if EA had concerns around flood risk asset or fish passage around a dam HIWWT would liaise and be responsible for addressing concerns.

RM:

1. It has been accepted this is an introduction of beavers (ie a new species to our Island ecosystem). Firstly, the species guidelines prohibit the introduction of new species to islands, if this is to be disregarded should we not be mindful that this could potentially open the door to other species being relocated to the Island, for example deer? Secondly, if this project is to go ahead how would the Trust manage and monitor to ensure there is no detrimental impact on the existing ecosystem and our special native species and protected populations?

2. As well as residential properties, there is a considerable amount of commercial activity in the proposed release areas, most especially productive agriculture and horticulture. Beavers are landscape engineers and are recognised to have a significant effect on the landscapes they are introduced to. Should beavers raise groundwater levels or undermine structures belonging to these businesses, for example tracks/roadways/reservoirs, firstly how responsive will management licences be to sort out problems (ie as a protected species licences will be needed) and secondly who will pick up the cost for prevention and remedy in both the 5 years of the Trusts licence period and the long term beyond that?

IT: species introduction: not encouraged, predators getting released in wrong place. Not prohibited so not without precedent but NE would require significant assessment to ensure no impact on existing species. As beavers are a native species it's unlikely there would be much negative impact and they could help protected species

Management/monitoring: ongoing monitoring on reserves for ecology/ biodiversity. Impacts on migratory fish would be rectified with dam management etc.

Cost of predation/remedy in long term licensing and beyond: beaver impact re commercial/domestic/agri: HIWWT responsible. Licensing period 5-10 years. If beavers given leave to remain they would be considered native wildlife and would fall upon landowners to manage beavers and costs

Website:

IWC new website project underway. ND has asked for any input around the existing website as some services are currently being moved to beta testing. We would like any feedback on the existing website – content, use, design, etc. This can be sent into sustainability@iow.gov.uk

CR: website to be moved over within 12 months – lots of information to move owing to number of services provided by council.

NC: I think it would be really good when you land on the site to have a mission statement from the Council. What are the Council's ambitions, what does it want to achieve alongside islanders long term? I also think that the Island's UNESCO Biosphere status should be upfront on the landing page.

Pre-submitted Q&A

"I see in your minutes you mention Solar Panels on fields. I have a concern as I have been told that we are not using all the electricity they are producing on the Island nor are we exporting the remainder to the mainland but discharging into the ground is that a true fact?"

HJ: Yes and no. There are some recent installations where we have not been given export agreements so any solar produced here must be used locally. This is due to current export constraints on the local grid. However, these solar installations have been designed to fit the buildings in question and their standard energy use so there is minimal excess electricity wasted. Colin Palmer has advised that electricity would never be discharged into the ground as this would damage the equipment.

AOB:

MS: 50m2 planning app or solar in Bembridge. Not mentioned in area development plan to guide comments. Don't want solar doing nothing – what can be done

HJ: need connection agreement as this is what determines use and export. Some projects on the island can use solar onsite but don't have connection agreement in place. Need to check planning rules to confirm what can be included in situations like Bembridge.

PF: difficult with existing policy as out of date. New policy coming forward. HJ to copy PF and MS around contact with Oli Boulter to answer query

JH: Avian flu – bad in east Anglia and affecting domestic chickens/ turkeys. Lots of geese migrating south. What should we do if we see ill/dead birds on Island?

HJ: farmers now required to keep birds inside. Cannot answer around advice but CR may be able to advise.

CR: press release prepared – will send out for info on monitoring/advice.

JH parish councillors /iwalc should be advised of actions to take ASAP.

SC: haven street end water butts – how have they dealt with drainage compared to other areas?

CR: will take away and ask

SC: had heard householders offered butts to help with water going into drainage system – SW offered butts to each resident. Community effort dealing with serious issue across island. Also if batteries were available this could help with excess energy generation.

HJ: will ask Vince Ward about bidirectional charging scheme related to batteries.

CR: we are pathfinder authority – any ideas can be fed to southern water as we have some funding

Penny: re. SC comments and next meeting- SUDS in general – ways council could encourage southern water to do more/island could encourage developers to do more?

CR: new plan and ways going forward will address issues. Ability for infrastructure to cope with future housing numbers. INF1 puts onus on developers. Ensure rainwater taken away properly. Rainwater harvesting would be great but very costly so prohibitive to developers – need balance between ecological provision vs cost.

PA: SW should have published report in august

WM: It would be good to have Southern Water come in to talk about a desalination plant on the island

HJ: not 100% sure about this but will ask someone who is more closely involved with the project. Desalination is very energy intensive but doesn't mean it can't be done sustainably. We will invite SW to speak at a future event as soon as possible.