

**Arne Parish Council - Public Meeting
Tuesday 31 October 2017 to discuss
the Moors at Arne Project**

Notes from the public question and answer session

Q. There is already a very high water table in this area, and double high tides – river levels can be high for days at a time. High spring tides, rain, high tides and wind all present threats of flooding. To prevent catastrophic flooding, water has to drain away through drains and ditches out to the moors. What steps will be taken to mitigate loss of drainage when sea water floods the moors?

Environment Agency (EA). This is a fundamental question. We must understand the limitations of the current situation. We have to do modelling to understand the existing water tables. We believe wetlands can absorb this water. Interceptor drains will be placed to do this. Our modelling will look into flash floods, tidal flaps and fresh water input. Exceptionally high tides could flood this area. We are trying to understand some of the unknowns and will look at the ground water situation and the infrastructure.

If we can't ensure there will be no detriment, we will not go ahead.

Q. The proposed investigation period of 5 months is not enough to give a complete picture of the situation. In 2014 the Frome was at a high level for 3 days. The sluices were closed and the only place for water to escape was through the moors as a flood plain. Where will water go in the proposed project?

EA. We must understand this area – things must not be made worse. Tidal flaps and drains must be adequate. High water is an advantage for the project but could cause problems elsewhere. We will look into this.

Q. Can we have a full survey of Ridge? Many houses are drained by interconnected pipes running down through the village. There has been flooding in some gardens because ditches backed up resulting in backup in the interconnected pipes preventing drainage. The single bore hole proposed by the EA will not provide sufficient information about the complexity of the situation in Ridge.

EA. A more detailed map will be drawn up resulting from our engineer's visit this week.

Q. Some houses are on clay others are not. The local geology is complex.

EA. Agreed. The geology is variable and more understanding is needed.

Q. Regarding surface water, many residents have found in the past that no-one could be found to clear the ditches. Eventually Dorset Highways came and did the job. Will maintenance work carried out by the EA involve keeping our ditches clear? Funding needs to be clearly allocated to ensure this work is kept up.

EA. If necessary to the scheme EA will do this in conjunction with other relevant agencies.

Q. Why is the EA using a model based on a one in a hundred year risk of flooding when many other design engineers now use a one in fifty year risk model? Given the predictions

of climate change isn't one in fifty years a more appropriate timeframe for risk assessment?

EA. We use one in two hundred years as the best time scale.

Q. My farm and business enterprises and associated jobs are threatened by flooding from water backing up behind the wall you propose to build. Given EA's aim that no existing flood risk should be increased and the science is not yet carried out, why did the EA go public with a story on the BBC?

EA. It is the responsibility of the EA to design a passage for water that at least replicates the current situation. Landowners will be consulted on a one to one basis in order to develop solutions. The BBC story was intended to coincide with the public meeting held by the EA in Wareham. Unfortunately the BBC looked for a headline and it is regrettable that they presented the project as a done deal. This was not our intention. We want to let the broader public know what is going on. We have a commitment to inform you in line with other projects elsewhere.

Q. The transfer of land to the RSPB in 1996 was subject to the rights of drainage of water on adjacent lands. The RSPB are not allowed to interfere with drainage from Ridge Farm. How will this work?

RSPB. They will meet with the owners privately to discuss the matter.

Q. Is the EA considering an emergency pumping station to remove backed up water?

EA. We need to look at all options for evacuating water. A pumping station is unlikely, but we are considering all options.

Q. There are 100 vessels on the water at the Yacht Club. We are concerned that navigation will be impeded by increased sediment. We have many visitors every year and this is an important source of local income. Increased silting in the river will also exacerbate flooding potential. Will we have your assurance in writing that there will be no silting?

EA. In the past dredging of the marine salt marshes has released material into the system. Mud resulting from our project will go onto the land and settle to support the kind of vegetation types we are seeking to encourage. There will be interplay between the moors project and Poole Harbour. We can give 99% reassurance that adverse silting won't occur but we have to await further research and modelling.

Q. Two areas have already silted up - one near the Turner's Cove flap. What will the EA do about this?

EA. This is useful information which will be taken into account.

Q. The driver for this project is sea level rise. What information do you have about rising sea levels over the past 100 years?

EA. The project is based on scientifically based predictions projecting forward to 2030, but we acknowledge there remains a lot of uncertainty.

Q. What data are you using about past rises in sea levels in Poole Harbour?

EA. Predictions are based on models looking at Poole Harbour since the last glaciation and data about historic rises in sea levels in the past 100 years. Levels have risen 1.5mm per year but this is likely to increase. These predictions are based on 40 computer models.

Storminess and surges in the Frome are also significant future threats for this area and all low lying areas would be affected.

Q. In Stoborough houses on the end of the causeway have experienced flooding. The local authority is not interested – grass grows in the drains and sluices. Why don't the agencies clear drains, sluices and ditches regularly to facilitate drainage and prevent flooding?

EA. We are working with the Arne Parish Council Flood Warden to provide temporary barriers and flood warnings. We are also working with Dorset County Council Highways and Police to develop triggers to close the Causeway to reduce wash from traffic. We would be happy to talk with residents about pumps to reduce seepage.

Q. Who will clear the ditches?

EA. Dorset County Council and Highways to deal with this.

Q. What is the potential for increased traffic as a result of this project? Spring and Autumnwatch and the opening of the RSPB cafe have caused the RSPB carpark to fill up and overflow on a regular basis. Arne Road now carries an increasing volume of cars, cyclists, organised cycle groups and walkers and larger agricultural machinery and large plant from the oil farm. Road verges are being damaged. When there is an accident on the A351 to Swanage, Police redirect traffic along Soldiers Road and onto Arne Road and down to Nutcrack Lane which is a single track road at the end. Traffic banks up as vehicles cannot pass each other and it is all unsupervised. Do the partner agencies see the project as a visitor attraction, resulting in even more traffic? Will they be addressing the existing road traffic issues?

RSPB. The RSPB has two missions - to protect nature and get people to care for and support it. We are looking at access to Arne. Road issues are a challenge. There are no plans at present for a visitor centre but this is to be explored further. It would be great for people to access the new site but not at the expense of the environment. We take visitor pressure very seriously.

Q. Could new cycling routes/footpaths be introduced, for example along any new banks?

RSPB. Opportunities are there, but we are not committing to anything specific yet. The RSPB owns continuous land next to the Arne Road, so there could be scope for new pedestrian/cyclist access taking some of the pressure off Arne Road.

Q. Given our concern about the high water table will you guarantee a proper survey of surface water in Ridge?

EA. We would like to work with residents on what would constitute a proper survey. In our contract we have provided for one bore hole in Ridge. We anticipate considerable work on the site. The key thing is to include the whole catchment in terms of hydrology. We need to have an understanding of the geology of the terrain, drains, sumps, excavations in

gardens, surface water etc - where does all this water go and get down to the Harbour? We give an absolute undertaking that we will investigate more thoroughly in Ridge and share the results. Our project should not increase flood risk.

Q. Where are the other key agencies tonight – Highways, Wessex Water, Dorset County Council? What other projects are there further upstream on the Frome which may impact on Ridge?

EA. We will be involving other relevant agencies and individual landowners and will try to come up with solutions. We must consider the cumulative impact of projects and this will be part of an environmental impact statement.

Q. What is the predictive value of your planning process? Do you review and evaluate the effectiveness of your models and predictions?

EA. We use well established models which take all key aspects into account in understanding a landscape. We review our predictions.

Q. With respect to Steart Marshes (Somerset), how accurate was your prediction?

EA. Remarkably accurate and we are doing well so far over the long run..

Q. There was a blocked culvert on Arne Road for 18 months but no agency would take responsibility. Some people have had to clear out ditches themselves to prevent flooding in their gardens and houses.

EA. Serious mapping of drainage in Ridge is needed.

Q. We are informed that your proposed construction work will take 2 years. Will all the materials be coming in and taken away by road?

EA. We are investigating the quality of material needed and the means to bring it on site. It is too early to say how much we will need, the vehicles needed and the timing. We have not categorically ruled out delivery by barge.

Q. Could material be delivered using Soldiers Road to avoid increased heavy traffic through Ridge and Stoborough?

EA. We will look into this.

Q. Who signs the building contract and so could be sued in the event things go wrong?

EA. The EA is the lead agency in collaboration with other agencies. The EA has liability.

Q. What are the implications for house insurance?

EA. Technically we would be bringing water closer as a result of building embankments, but it could be argued that this reduces flood risk. The EA would provide a letter of evidence to this effect that could be used with insurers.

Q. A question was asked about a report that residents at Medmerry (West Sussex) were paid compensation by the EA after a project resulted in flooding following a storm. (This to

be investigated further). The proposed projects 1A and 1B would create a wall 472 yards from Sunnyside. Can we be reassured that this will contain the risk of flooding, especially during storm equinox tides?

Q. There is no sign of a ditch on your maps for run off rain water. In water meadows at East Stoke flooding of causeways is very frequent. Water will back up if it has nowhere to go.

Q. How will the project benefit people living in Ridge?

RSPB. House prices rise near to RSPB sites and residents have the benefit of proximity to nature.

Q. Is the real reason for this project to protect property in Poole?

EA. We are committed to maintaining flood defences around Poole Harbour. This will result in loss of habitat. In law we are required to maintain habitat or compensate for lost habitat.

Q. Why hasn't the EA gone ahead with the earlier scheme which proposed flooding a much smaller area?

EA. We think we have chosen the best option. We will seek your views in 2018 to ensure the scheme meets your requirements. There isn't a firm decision yet but we must create a bare minimum of 44 hectares of inter-tidal habitat.

Q. Is it possible to have the EA's power point presentation sent to the Parish Council.

EA. Yes, if it's capable of being uploaded.

Q. What ecological surveys or impact assessments have been done on land that will be flooded in relation to protected species and biodiversity? What mitigation will be undertaken?

EA. Some initial survey work has been done. More investigation is required regarding water voles. More detailed surveys will happen later.

Q. High numbers of mosquitoes have been reported in the area. Might restriction of water flows encourage increased breeding of mosquitoes and other insects?

EA. We will consult with Public Health England on this.

The meeting closed at 10:15PM