



Welcome! Interim Chair Thomas Yeung

A lot has happened at the DEP over the past few months: We have a new exec team (Colin and Dee and I have a lot to learn and many people to meet), a new logo (thank you Simon and Chris), a new website (www.debenestuarypartnership.org), and new challenges (including updating the 2015 Estuary Plan) to address. But not everything is new – we still have an [excellent group of partners](#), strong support from the Environment Agency and other institutional agencies and councils, and a beautiful estuary to enjoy and protect.

While our first Estuary Plan demonstrated the importance of integrated planning across the entire estuary, the new Plan will focus on **‘Change – climate, community, and culture’**. Beyond the obvious challenges of dealing with climate change (increased risk of floods and droughts), more people now live in and visit the area and what they want from and how they use the river are different. And local land ownership has changed, with less land devoted to agriculture and more to leisure/nature. We have drafted a proposed outline for the revised Plan, and (based upon the interests, experience and expertise of our members) we will be asking many of you to help develop and refine the updated Plan.

We will have our first General Meeting in September, at which we will: regularise the DEP’s constitutional position and the exec leadership; discuss the proposed Plan and propose individuals/teams to lead/contribute on each chapter; agree a potential timetable for delivery (which includes formal review by relevant agencies/authorities as necessary), and set out our proposed communication channels, which includes the website, regular newsletters, quarterly Steering Group meetings, and ongoing meetings with stakeholders, some of which will be open to the public, and others more selective.

I look forward to seeing you in September, if not before!

A Partnership of Equals - Interim Vice Chair Colin Nicholson

The Deben Estuary Partnership is currently being rebooted, particularly with respect to its Steering Group and focus on the representation of its partners.

In our precious Deben Estuary community, no single organisation can have the right to hold sway over another. But it is important for organisations and groups to unite around the common purpose of the DEP which is to **"Safeguard, Enhance and Promote** the special qualities of the estuary for the benefit of all." Thus the ideal of a **"Partnership of Equals"** was born.

The original Deben Estuary Partnership Constitution dates from 2008, fifteen years ago, taking much of its wording from the River Deben Association Constitution, a founder partner, (on which see more just below). The RDA has largely weathered the test of time, although many of the organisations mentioned in the original DEP Constitution and institutions around the estuary have evolved over that period, requiring a re-examination of that Constitution for the present day. It is imperative to ensure that the DEP Constitution remains equitable and that representatives on the new DEP Steering Group can have laser clarity on their role and who they represent, being sure that decision-making is not based on personal views.

An example would be the 13 parishes that border the estuary. It would be inefficient and nigh-on impossible for every parish to have a representative at the Steering Group table, but the 2023 Constitution allows for two elected Councillors, one from each of the East and West banks of the estuary, who have the responsibility of bringing the views of all 13 to the table.

A Partnership of Equals Cont'd

Taking account of the size of their populations, Woodbridge's Town Council and Melton's Parish Council may have their own representative.

In another innovation, a Youth Representative is to be given a voting seat on the Steering Group, representing the young people around the Estuary and put forward by one of the local secondary schools. The Deben Estuary Plan's effects will be over the longer term and the next, affected, generation need to be heard.

Some may question the difference in activities of The River Deben Association and the Deben Estuary Partnership and even think they might be in conflict/overlap with one-another. However, The RDA is a membership association of around 860 individuals. The RDA initiates and supports developments that will safeguard the river (*from the source, not just the Estuary*) and its valley, and takes steps to resist or ameliorate those that are likely to have a detrimental effect. Where possible, the RDA seeks to reconcile conflicting interests and to be a voice for all river users. The RDA works in partnership with statutory and voluntary organisations at local and national level. With this and the RDA being a membership organisation based around advocacy for the River Deben, it is a vital partner in the broader stakeholder partnership which is the Deben Estuary Partnership.

The DEP was set up with the support of the Environment Agency to bring together local interests on the subject of Estuarine matters and flood risk management. i.e. to safeguard the Deben Estuary from degradation by creating management partnerships of all the interested parties, particularly local communities, working together so that future generations may continue to benefit.

DEP Research - Trustee Simon Read

It is not only an indicator of the special qualities of the Deben Estuary landscape but also how much the reputation of the DEP has spread, that it has attracted and continues to attract the interest of the academic community. We are fortunate in having the distinguished coastal scientist and professor of physical geography at UCL as a member of our steering group. As a leading authority on coastal sedimentary movement, Helene has a long-term interest in the cyclic behaviour of the shingle knolls at the entrance to our estuary and through this has responded to the wishes of the local community to gain an insight into the forces that drive sedimentary accretion and loss.

Working with Christine Block our previous chair and enthusiast for the empowering effect of citizen science activities for a community, Helene secured a grant from the Environment Agency's 3c's programme (Celebrating Coastal Coordination) which enabled setting up the Deben Marine Centre in the old ferry waiting room on Bawdsey Quay as a facility to bring the data collection activities by community members to public attention as a forum for debate upon the implications of coastal change. This a facility for disseminating activities such as recording fluctuating beach levels across the Bawdsey frontage and presenting evidence collected from the photo posts located between Felixstowe Ferry to East Lane.

By providing this community project with an authoritative scientific framework, Helene has created an asset that allows us to feel closer to an understanding of our estuary system a strategy she expects to extend to include the entire estuary.

Since 2020, Helene and I have been working on a science/art initiative, Deben Soundings: initially funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council Landscape Decisions Programme to explore through interdisciplinary collaboration, how a broader understanding of the estuary may be fostered towards greater public engagement in the landscape decision making process.

These two projects have encouraged us to consider how targeted research activity conducted with full community participation will be a means to ensure the success of the upcoming revision of the 2015 Deben Estuary Management Plan.