

Chair of the Deben Estuary Partnership

Introduction

The aim of this note is to be a supporting document for the recruitment for a new Chair of the Deben Estuary Partnership (DEP). It is not a formal Terms of Reference but a guide on the role. It refers to the Constitution of the DEP, the structure of the Partnership and the Steering Group Committee and identifies the Agencies and the Stakeholders that the DEP engages with. It also gives an appreciation of current activity and the vision of the future.

The Constitution

Guiding Principles:

- The purpose of the DEP shall be to safeguard, enhance and promote the special qualities of the estuary for the benefit of all.
- The DEP shall, in partnership with others, prepare and oversee an Estuary Management Plan, including a rolling programme of works to secure the furtherance of the Plan.
- The geographical area of the DEP's concern shall be the tidal estuary and its hinterland, including all Parishes that abut the estuary or have flood compartments within their Parish boundaries, together with such coastline as directly impacts upon the wellbeing of the estuary.
- The DEP shall run a partnership of equals where each partner reflects, so far as is practicable, the interests and views of those they represent.
- The DEP shall act as an independent organisation but will seek to work in partnership with the relevant Statutory Agencies and Local Authorities.
- The DEP shall recognise and seek to influence the relevant policy framework of Statutory Agencies and Local Authorities and will seek to ensure that the management policies determined in the Estuary Management Plan are afforded appropriate weight.

The Guiding Principles are an excellent handrail on what the DEP was set out to achieve and sets a great context for its activities. To 'safeguard, enhance and promote the special qualities of the estuary' is good headline statement but the context is set within the principle of a 'partnership of equals'. In essence, it provides a body of local interest and expertise that can influence and guide the Statutory Agencies, such as the Environment Agency (EA) and Natural England (NE), and Local Authorities such as East Suffolk Council (ESC).

The Role of the Chair / Structure

The Chair is selected from within the Partnership but, again, selected from within the principle of a 'partnership of equals'. The main body is the Steering Group (SG) of Partners (DE Partnership) who are voting members, but other Permitted Steering Group

Attendees, Advisors and Institutional Agency Reps, who are non-voting, may also attend.

The separate Deben Estuary Partnership Ltd (DEP Ltd), who are the trustees of the charity, is where the DEP's funds are held. DEP Ltd are the guardians of the money that the DEP may be given to deliver its activities. Whilst the Chair is not a trustee of DEPL (to ensure its independence,) the Chair does work closely with the trustees to ensure that the two bodies move forward together,

The DEP Officers are the Chair and Vice Chair, elected from the membership of Partners. The SG may also appoint a Secretary and a Treasurer.

Agencies & Stakeholders

The agencies and stakeholders that the DEP will engage with will depend on which particular issue that it is concerned with. In simple terms there are local advocacy groups, such as the River Deben Association, Essex and Suffolk Rivers Trust, Landowner groups, Parishes on the east and west banks, Woodbridge and near surrounding area, Felixstowe Ferry and near surrounding area, water recreation and business interests, youth and environmental groups; and other interested parties.

Institutional Agencies will include the EA, NE, ESC Planning Dept, Suffolk County Council, Internal Drainage Boards (IDB's), the Marine Management Organisation (MMO) and the Crown Estate. Other experts may be brought in, such water quality experts, dredging, the RSPB and the Suffolk Wildlife Trust.

The work of the Chair

The Chair's work is essentially about leading and representing the organisation from within. In simple terms there are 4 SG meetings a year, including an AGM, but in reality, it is about gently directing the Partnership's activity and a broader representational role of engaging with all the stakeholders and agencies. This is leadership with 'soft power'. Everyone involved with the river and the estuary are, without exception, deeply passionate about safeguarding the estuary for generations to come. There is a very strong sense of community and service, but it is also a very disparate community, that does need to have a sense of collaboration and cohesion. Vested interests are all very well, but the Chair must make sure that all parties in the Partnership pull together to a common aim, and that the organisation is perceived as being strong, unified, relevant and respected.

Current Activity

- 2026 River Deben Estuary Plan (successor to 2015 Estuary Plan)
 - Funding, Design and Publication (including engaging with ESC and the EA to assist with funding the publication of the Plan).
 - Delivering the Consultative Process with local communities.

- Outreach to local landowners to re-connect and restore the reputation of the DEP.
- Overwatch of the repairs to the FC1 (Ramsholt to Bawdsey section) sea walls and overwatch of the provision of public (CIL) monies by DEPL that are tied to those repairs.
- Supporting the RDA with East Suffolk Council Byelaw amendments.
- Supporting efforts to restore the breach at Ufford Pools/Hawkeswade Bridge and other points of erosion along the estuary

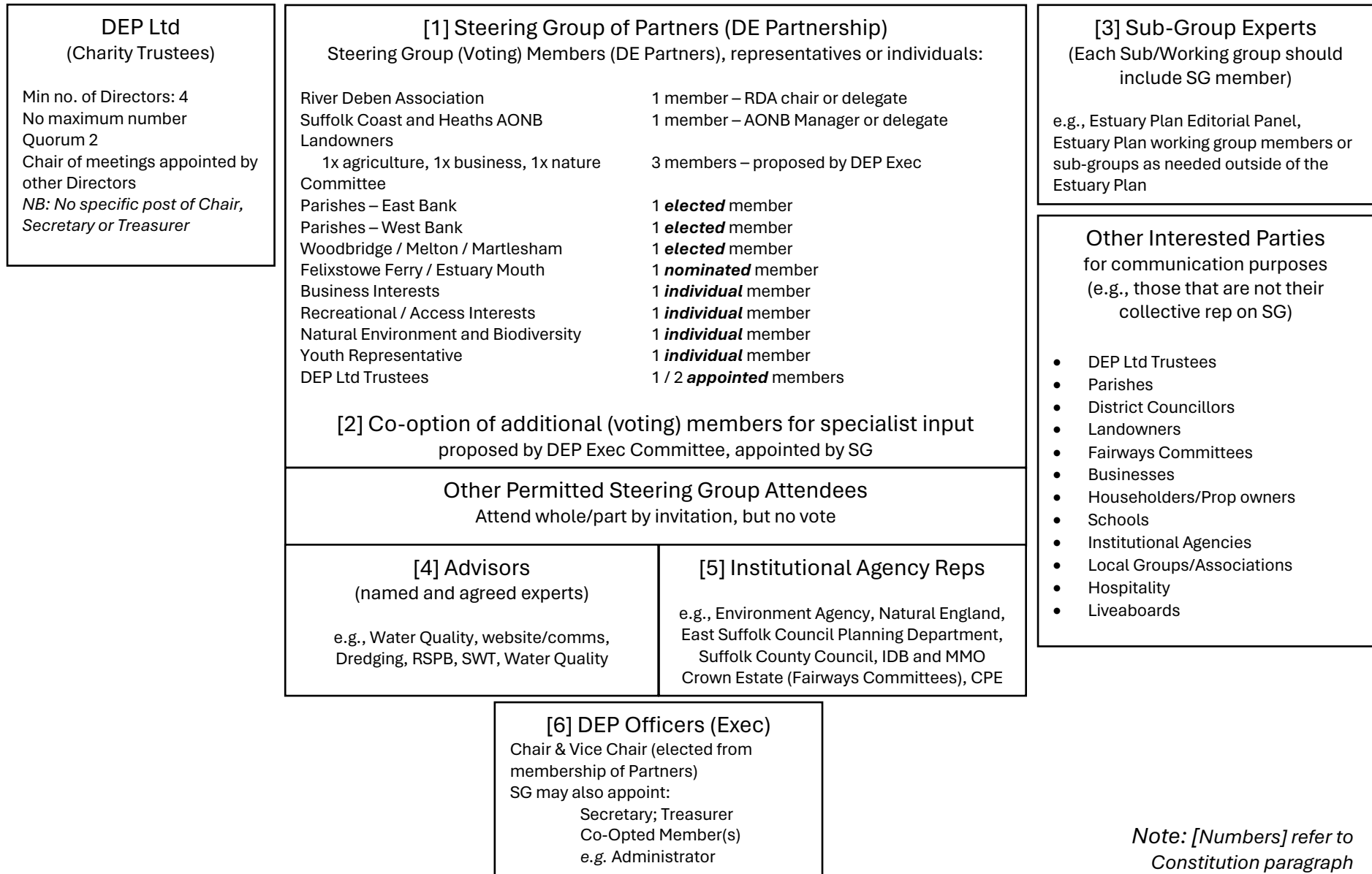
Vision of the Future

The role of the Chair of the DEP is immensely rewarding because it provides the opportunity to work with so many committed persons who are all motivated to the same ends. The community is diverse and there are many vested interests, but they are unified by a common goal. Strong people skills are essential, but the Chair must also have a strategic vision and have the time to reach out to be a key part of the River Deben community. It can be a lot of fun!

Vision - for the DEP to have the reputation of being the focal point for all matters that impact the River Deben estuary and to use its collaborative power to influence decision making bodies. It is about the harnessing the power of the voice of the partnership, to best effect, to safeguard, enhance and promote the special qualities of the estuary for the benefit of all.

/- Organisation Chart

MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS - “A partnership of equals”



Note: [Numbers] refer to Constitution paragraph