



CCATCH – Royal Victoria Country Park

Community Workshop 1:

13 June 2013 19:00 – 21:00

Workshop report

1. Introduction

The first workshop in a series of three was held at the Empire Rooms, Royal Victoria Country Park and attended by 12 members of the local community and stakeholders from organisations who have a role in the Park or in flood prevention.

This report aims to capture the essence of the discussion and is not meant to be a formal minute of the meeting.

1.1 Welcome & Introductions

Henrietta Hopkins (Resources for Change) welcomed people to the meeting and set the scene in the following way:

What is this meeting about? To:

- Understand the context in which the CCATCH project in the Royal Victoria Country Park is operating
- Explain the reasons for the degradation of the sea wall and limitations on maintaining access
- Explore together the history and value of the coastal frontage at the Royal Victoria Country Park

What we intended to cover?

- An introduction to the CCATCH project in the Royal Victoria Country Park
- Small group work *Stories of Change*
- Risk management for the coastal frontage at the Park

Henrietta stressed that this workshop is the beginning of a process with two subsequent workshops to follow:

1. 12 September - to explore the issues raised in this workshop; begin work on a community vision for the future and articulate the key elements of an adaptation plan
2. 24 October - to consider and review a draft adaptation plan; devise a final version together and confirm community involvement in its delivery.

Participants were asked to encourage other community members to come to these workshops and make a contribution to the development of the adaptation plan.



2. Update from the CCATCH project

Rachael Gallagher, Coastal Planning Delivery Project Manager at Hampshire County Council gave a presentation on the overall CCATCH project and the aims and objectives for the CCATCH project in the Royal Victoria Country Park.

2.1 Information required - 1

Participants were asked what information they needed to fully understand the issues described in the presentation. The following suggestions were made:

- Display boards in the Empire Rooms / cafe / shop are not seen by residents as those are not places that they go, other options suggested were:
 - Weather proofed and in an external site in the Park
 - Outside in the village
 - A smaller version or a poster in the Parish Office, perhaps in the window
 - In the library
- It was also recommended that information should be put in The Scene, the next copy date being 5 July

The following questions were asked:

- What is the bottom line (£) to repair the sea wall including reinstating access
- How this fits with the Shoreline Management Plan?

Participants were informed that these two questions would be covered in the next presentation within the session.

3. Stories of Change

In two small groups of five, participants were asked to work with a facilitator to discuss their memories of the Park; significant events in the Park's history and how they value the Park currently. The following summarises those discussions.

3.1 Memories and Significant Events

Participants in each group populated a timeline with their memories of the Park and significant events they either remember or know from its history. Images of the two timelines are provided at Appendix A from which it is interesting to note some differences between the group's memories of the Park. Group A populated their timeline with memories and public events prior to the Park opening after its purchase by the Council in the 1970s. Group B focused on the Park post-1970 when public access was not restricted by the military.

Group A

Overarching point - the Park is about families and the local community

Memories:

- My wedding in the Empire Rooms in 1998
- Pumpkins Festivals x 2
- Walking the sea wall
- Train ride with my granddaughter
- Crabbing

1800-1850s

- People would have walked along the front
- The western shore would have been gravel and gorse



- Discussion - when does the inlet turn in to a road? In the 1836 tithe map it is still shown as an inlet; it must have been with the building of the hospital
- There were woods before the hospital was built, it must have been very beautiful

1863

- The military hospital opened its doors to its first patients
- It needs to be clear that the pier opened nine years after the foundation stone was laid by Queen Victoria, so she did not come to the pier to lay the stone
- Queen Victoria walked through the Park from the Hard - Queen's steps
- She visited the Park 23 times

1864

- Military cemetery opened
- It is important to remember that many people died of disease as well as injury
- Local families are in the cemetery too
- It includes people from around the world

1930s

- Netley families did come in to the Park
- There were villager sports days
- One participant sang in the chapel choir in 36/37 - the balcony was full
- The Scottish Regiment came every year and marched along Station Road to the hospital
- During the 30s there was a bank going down to the foreshore, but pilings were also driven in

1940s

- There were wooden / metal stops going up to the houses (which are all eroding / gone now_
- The Americans put the concrete in to make the sea wall

1970s

- The war memorial for doctors and nurses of the Crimean War was scrapped
- Hampshire County Council purchased the site for the Park

1980s onwards

- Canberra leaving for the Falklands - beaches full of people
- All the people that came to see the Oriana on its maiden voyage
- Lancaster, Spitfire, 7 P&O ships - people congregate for all of these events
- In 1987 - we lost a lot of trees in the wind
- Flooding - we used to take a rowing boat from the Prince Consort Pub to the Hard
- In the last 20 years erosion seems to be happening faster
- There has been monitoring of the sea wall at the Hard since 1988
- We used to walk along the sea wall which is now closed
- The wall appears to be eroding more rapidly

Group B

- 1863 Opening of the hospital
- 1950s as a lad riding through the Park on bikes when it was a army hospital - avoiding the guard post at the entrance
- 1963 closure of the hospital

1970s

- Carnival
- Bringing children to the village carnival held in the Park



- Mini Hampshire Show
- Playing cricket on cricket field with permission of the army

1990s

- Park has become a lot more formalised in the last 18 years
- 1994 - came for an interview at the Park and was impressed by the chapel building but confused by its isolation (I now know!)
- Barbecue opened 15 years ago (now got 8)
- Caravans arrived in the early 90s (not locally popular)
- Watching the cruise ships with my family when my mother-in-law sailed out to Norway
- With my previous role with HCC coming down to have a look at the issues with the sea wall

2000s

- 2007 closure of access along wall
- 2008 Friends of the Park set up
- 2011 No funding for CPs - have to be self-financing
- I started voluntary work here in 2011
- Park has become more popular with 400,000 visits per year
- Ongoing pleasure of using the Park to run / job over the past 18 years
- Enjoying just being in the Park with the beach plus the tress and open spaces

3.2 Postcard to the future

Participants were asked to write a postcard to a community member using the Park in 20 years time. This is what they said:



Group A

Value the Park as a place of peace. Enjoy the seafront before it erodes away. We walk in the Park, on the beach - it isn't the museum. Climbing trees with my granddaughter.

- Must see the view at night from the shore. Fawley locks lovely with all the colourful lights reflecting on the water.
- It's lovely to pop down on a summer evening and watch the cricket and enjoy the peace and quiet and people having fun.



I like walking on the shingle - noise of the shingle! Collecting shells, watching boats and birds. Then, walking towards the other side among the trees, watching the change of seasons and enjoying different bird / squirrel activity etc.

To the Family Please join me to celebrate my 90th birthday at RVCP. I am looking forward to 4 generations of our family joining me for a B-B-Q in the Park. There are plenty of activities to keep the children entertained and with luck we may be able to see some large cruise ships sailing past.

Beach walking. The complete overall scene:

- Relaxed walking
- Leisure
- Beauty

A country way of life: community meetings / splendid events
Changing.

Have watched history happen - Taskforce leaving for the Falklands; final journeys of QE1 & 2, Queen Mary and the like. Large container ships bringing goods. Good, clean, free, family fun. Playing in the woods with my children and grandchildren, crabbing off the sea wall. Valued the simple pleasures! Wild weather - Heathcliff country

Group B

Such a lovely park nestled in the middle of Netley right by the sea. Glorious views of the Solent with so many green areas to enjoy. Playing sport, having a picnic or just walking around. Surrounded not just by peaceful greenery but years of history. Who knew somewhere so nice could be so close to Southampton. Rhian (EA)

Hi, I'm sitting on the grass terrace outside the chapel building here at Royal Victoria Country Park eating ice-cream. Five cruise ships have just left Southampton five minutes apart. I've been up the 166 steps of the tower, what a magnificent view of Southampton water and the Isle of Wight. Weather sunny. Phil Halliwell

Great views of cruise ships going past. Nice quiet beach with pleasant views. Beach a bit stony, but water good. Weather now lovely. Clive Herring.

Hi Mum, Miss you. Staying in the Country Park for a few days. This view across Southampton Water is great. We are looking out towards Fawley Refinery and the water is great for a swim and it's warm too! L.O.L. Ian.



We have been to the Royal Victoria Park today. You can see the beach, watch cruise liners pass by and relax, yet enjoy the beautiful trees and park land. Lovely flowers, especially bluebells. Maureen Herring.

This is a wonderful green space near Southampton. On a sunny day like this you can walk the 280 acres of Park and woodland or sit by the sea watching the sailing boats. Trevor.

4. Risk management

Rachael Gallagher gave a presentation on the main issues in relation to the sea wall in at the Royal Victoria Country Park. Including the physical deterioration and steps taken by Hampshire County Council over time to carry out repairs to the wall. Rachael presented the flood risk map for the area, discussed access issues affected by any scheme proposal and raised a number of options for the future management of the site for discussion. This was put in the context of the Shoreline Management Plan and initial costings for the major options.

4.1 Information required - 2

Participants were asked what information they needed to fully understand the issues described in the presentation. The following points were raised:

- Flood map shows an under-funded situation
- If the sea wall was stabilised would the access be reopened?
- Tests and monitoring would be required to ensure that it is structurally safe - there are no guarantees of that
- The residents want the sea wall re-opened so the question is - how do we achieve it? Anything is possible
- The wall has been closed since 2006 and the [deterioration] situation has just got worse, costs are growing
- Are there options for partnership funding?
- The wall is not defending houses so the contributions have to be higher
- There is an interesting challenge between not scaring people, and not generating interest
- We cannot take parts of the coast in isolation. One are effects another, this needs careful monitoring.
- Where does 'hold the line' start?

4.2 Risk management discussion

Participants were asked to discuss the risks as they understand them in:

- Doing nothing
- Replacing all / part of the sea wall
- Continuing to maintain the current sea wall
- Beach replenishment
- Removal of the sea wall and return it to a natural coast



- A combination of the above

Group A raised the following points:

- Doing nothing is dangerous
- It is not safe
- Walking in front of the wall is dangerous despite the signs in front of it people still do it
- People still break in through the wire fence
- Everything else costs money
- After time there are too many holes in the wall and too many voids underneath
- Q: What funding is available? A: Not lottery
- It's a Gordian knot - seemingly insoluble
- Removal of the sea wall would be cheaper if there was somewhere locally to put the debris
 - We could use it to pile up and create a bike / skateboard park in the Park!
- It would require planning permission and consultation with those organisations who give the Park various designations including Natural England and Marine Conservation
- Southern Water would need to be brought in because of the sewerage pipe
- Planning applications take time
- There is degeneration to the sea wall over time but Hampshire County Council are maintaining it at the moment - but the costs will outweigh the benefits if this continues
- There is a strong community in favour of having a sea wall to walk on
- A natural coastline means it could flood more
- Storm surge - not just spring tides

Group B raised the following points:

- Doing nothing is not an option
- The sewer behind the wall is a big problem but could produce some financial contribution
- Loss of vehicle access, could put a toll bridge on
- Sea level rise - 100 years rise by a metre
- Soft rock cliff, take the wall away and the erosion happens quickly
- Should we be spending large sums of money on stopping flooding that happens infrequently
- Failure of sea wall could fracture sewer
- Health & safety issues grow if you do nothing
- Recharge beach - putting material onto SSSI
- Sports fields would be affected by degrading of coast
- Maintaining sea wall - loss of habitat
- People no longer know the access exists

5. Closing plenary session

The group's views were briefly summarised by the Facilitators. The group was encouraged to attend the subsequent workshops on 12 September and 24 October and to encourage others within the community to attend. Where requests for further information had been made at this workshop it was agreed that as far as possible these would be addressed in presentations at the next workshop. A reminder of what would take place was given as follows:



Workshop 2 - Informing the plan (12 September 2013)

This workshop will develop issues from the first workshop and consider peoples aspirations or vision for the Country Park.

- The workshop will share information on what is currently happening and why
- It will help people understand the natural and human (policy/ management) processes at work as well as the implications to them and their use of the site.
- Agree a draft vision for the adaptation plan

Workshop 3 - Developing the plan (24 October 2013)

This workshop will produce actions to achieve the vision

- What do you think are the future options for the site to achieve the vision?
- What might the implications be?
- How would they like to be involved in the future?

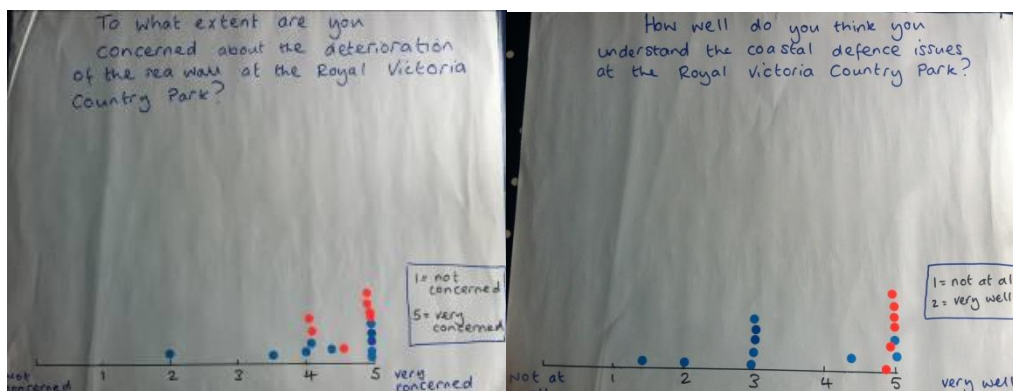
6. Evaluation

The CCATCH project is keen to collect data on participant reactions to the issues raised in these workshops. As participants entered the session they were asked to answer three questions by sticking a blue dot on a sheet. The questions were:

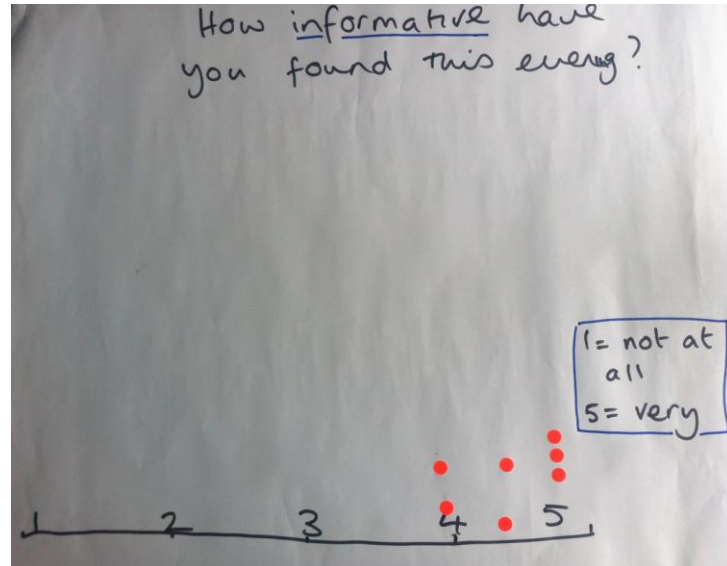
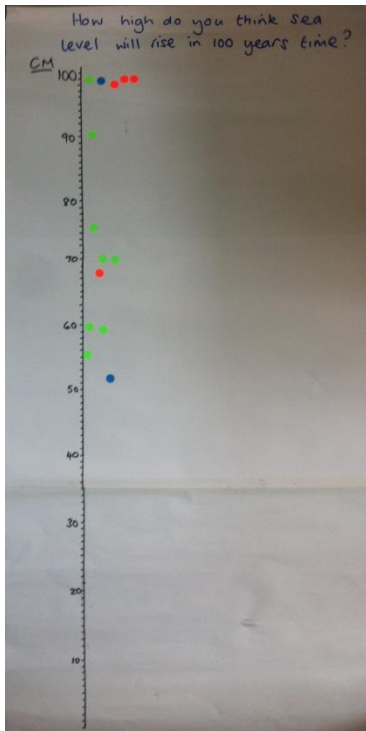
- *To what extent are you concerned about the deterioration of the sea wall at the Royal Victoria Country Park?*
- *How well do you think you understand the coastal defence issues in the Royal Victoria Country Park?*
- *How high do you think the sea level will rise in 100 years time?*

As people left they were asked to complete the evaluation sheets again and this time also answer the question: *How informative have you found this evening?*

The following images show the results:



By the end of the evening, more people were somewhat more concerned about the deterioration of the sea wall. All participants by the end of the session said that they think they understood the coastal defence issues at the Royal Victoria Country Park very well, whereas the majority gave their answer a '3' for the mid-point between not understanding well and understanding very well on their arrival at the session.



All participants felt that sea level would rise in the next 100 years to 0.5m or more with 5 participants placing their dot at the 1m mark.

All participants said that they found the session informative scoring it a 4 or a 5 on the chart.

In addition participants were asked to complete an evaluation form. 100% of those who completed the form rated the session useful or very useful. All those who attended made a commitment to attending the next set of workshops where they were not otherwise committed on those dates.

Comments made on the form were as follows:

- We need to understand how we can generate more interest within the village
- Useful workshop, helped focus the issues
- Could not always hear the speaker (some loss of hearing)
- May be hound local history society could be approached formally (number is in The Scene) to encourage involvement there
- An excellent and useful evening. Lovely refreshments. Thank you
- Good information. Possible options and costs may be useful for next time - mainly for local people to understand. People (locals) seem very passionate about this issue.

Resources for Change 18 June 2013



Appendix A - Group Timelines

