

QUESTION & ANSWER SESSION WITH Dr SAM BRIDGEWATER CONCERNING PRROPOSALS TO FLOOD THE LOWER OTTER VALLEY.

The Chairman, Cllr Bennett, stated the views of the public.

1. The access to and from South Farm will be problematic at times if South Farm Road (SFR) is flooded during high tides and heavy rainfall.
2. Risk of pollution from the former Municipal Tip that closed in 1977.
3. Possible infestation from mosquitoes in the created marsh land.

The Chairman then asked those present to put relevant questions to Clinton Devon Estates' Dr Bridgewater, whose answers are listed below:

- The work under discussion with this proposal is not an instant fix. We are looking 50, 100 years down the line. Sooner or later, this will become an insurmountable problem. Therefore the reasoning behind the proposal is to control it, rather than having it control future generations.
- In the face of predicted climate changes over the coming decades, 80% of high tides will cause varying degrees of flooding on SFR. The use of an alternative route is not viable. E.g. Park Lane is only single carriageway and has been reduced by land slips and would not be able take lorries or cars. The only option, then, is to modify SFR: which ever method is chosen would demand large capital outlay and an enormous amount of construction in terms of traffic and material.
- This is not the only estuary with this problem. Since it became apparent, there has been a close relationship developing with the Environment Agency (EA). One of their staff has been appointed to help Clinton Devon Estates (CDE) with the project.
- Any environmental work at Dawlish Warren will not affect Ottermouth adversely. The work there in fact makes our work more important. Natural England is required by European Law to ensure that any natural habitat lost through flood defence work is compensated for nearby. Thus the Otter is a natural choice.
- The Municipal Tip which closed in 1977 had objects and liquids thrown into it in the 1940s and 50s that today would not be allowed. If the flooding of the lower valley is not controlled, a serious pollution problem could arise. If breaches were to occur naturally. The answer is to investigate the area, remove the large shallow rooted trees that are unstable in high winds and allow natural scrub to form. Additionally, it may be necessary to seal the tip in some way as yet not decided. Once that has occurred, controlled breaches could be made.
- The beavers on the Otter could be a boon. It has been shown that colonies over time produce a controlling affect on fluvial flow. In times of high water levels, they build higher dams. When water levels fall, they relax and flooding is not a problem. That would have a beneficial effect for Otterton.
- Public health experts do not see there being a problem with mosquitoes if the area formed is a salt marsh.
- The pollution affecting Budleigh Beach is currently bovine related. Therefore, removing cattle from the flood plain would remove the problem.