



# Promoting adaptation to changing coasts

Work Package T.2.4.1: Methodology for Engagement and Involvement of End Users and Key Stakeholders in Coastal Climate Adaptation Schemes

Report 1: Documentary Analysis

Critique of engagement undertaken during the development of the projects, up to the securing of planning permission

Date: August 2022

**Published by:**

East Devon Pebblebed Heaths  
Conservation Trust, Budleigh Salterton,  
Devon, United Kingdom

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**This report should be cited as:**

Auster, R.E., Gentle, M., Woodley, E.,  
Brazier, R.E., Rougier, J-E., & Barr, S.  
2022. *PACCo Methodology for  
Engagement and Involvement of End Users  
and Key Stakeholders in Coastal Climate  
Adaptation Schemes - Report 1:  
Documentary Evaluation*. University of  
Exeter and Lisode Consultancy.

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available here:** [Promoting Adaptation to  
Changing Coasts \(pacco-interreg.com\)](https://pacco-interreg.com)

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**Acknowledgment**

The authors would like to acknowledge Dr  
E. Grand-Clement for reviewing the French  
translation.

**Keywords:**

Documentary evaluation, community, end  
users, engagement, social learning,  
stakeholders.

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# Foreword



The Promoting Adaptation to Changing Coasts (PACCo) project is cross-border initiative which is financially supported by the INTERREG VA France (Channel) England project co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund.

The broad aim of PACCo is to demonstrate that it is possible to work with stakeholders in estuarine regions to deliver a range of benefits for people and the environment by adapting pre-emptively to climate change. It has a total value of €26m, with €17.8m coming from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF).

The project focuses on two pilot sites: the lower Otter Valley, East Devon, England and the Saône Valley in Normandy, France.

**For more information see:** [Promoting Adaptation to Changing Coasts \(pacco-interreg.com\)](http://pacco-interreg.com)

## i. Report Background

The University of Exeter and Lisode Consultancy were commissioned by the EU Interreg PACCo Initiative to independently undertake a research project, to report back to the PACCo Initiative for the delivery of Work Package T.2.4.1.

The aim of the work package is to develop a methodology for the engagement of end users and key stakeholders in coastal climate adaptation projects, learning from the experiences of the PACCo projects.

To achieve this aim, the team will independently undertake the following research activities for both the Lower Otter Restoration Project and the Saône Territorial Project:

1. Evaluation of historical documentation.
2. Three workshops with community residents.
3. Interviews with project partners and stakeholders.

Ultimately, the final model for the engagement of end users and key stakeholders in future coastal adaptation projects will be developed by drawing upon the outcomes of the research exercises as a collective. Thus, this will enable the integration of perspectives from the community, project partners and stakeholders, and historical records into the work package output.

The results will be presented through two reports.

In this first report, the approach towards and outcomes of the evaluation of historical documentation are outlined.

The second report (due by December 2022) will report upon the remaining research exercises and draw together all findings into the proposed model for engagement.

## ii. Researcher's Approach

Conventional methods for understanding the ways in which publics engage with environmental issues have relied on traditional, top-down and didactic methods of consultation and communication in what is known as the 'deficit' model of behavioural change (Owens, 2000), through which expert knowledge is used to increase awareness and knowledge of publics. In recent years this has led to a widening gap between the knowledges of scientists/practitioners and wider publics (Barr, 2017). Consequently, controversies can arise when these publics disagree with the 'experts' on the evidence base for decision-making. It also creates contestations between different kinds of ecological knowledge and the privileging of some forms of expertise over others (Barr & Woodley, 2019). Hence, a challenge arises in how to address 'top-down' approaches to communication and engagement (Owens, 2000) and to recognise the different knowledges and forms of expertise that reside within communities (Barr, 2017; Lane et al., 2011). This is critical because, unless processes are trusted and enable multiple voices to be heard, outcomes are unlikely to be accepted.

In our application for this tender, we proposed to draw upon a social learning approach to develop an inclusive process for the PACCo projects in the resulting transferable methodology for engagement. Social learning takes multiple forms; here we refer to a 'stakeholder process' in which stakeholders and publics co-produce knowledge, with group leaders emerging through the process (Pahl-Wostl, 2006). It is a collaborative process in which there is 'learning-by-doing' and iterative feedback, meaning learners lead to change in the environment and the changes in turn affect learning (Berkes, 2009). As such, social learning is sometimes considered a characteristic of adaptive management and a tool in adaptation research (Barr 2017; Berkes, 2009).

Application of a social learning approach will draw on the experience of the interdisciplinary research team and support the building of an engagement methodology that is inclusive, co-productive and which incorporates new forms of environmental knowledge. We will apply this approach to our work throughout the project, ensuring that we can hear the many voices of those involved so far in the two project areas and enabling us to develop a robust methodology for engagement that aims to avoid the pitfalls of didactic approaches towards communicating and working with publics.

### iii. Documentary Evaluation Method

In this report, we outline the results of the documentary evaluation. Through this, we hope to identify successful elements of the engagement processes, and where they could be improved. To achieve this, the documents were interrogated with a series of questions as outlined in the framework on the following page.

The process was influenced by an output evaluation of participatory processes with a social learning approach, described in:

Zimmermann, T., Albert, C., Knieling, J., & von Haaren, C. (2014). *Social learning in climate change adaptation. Evaluating participatory planning*. In G. Martinez, P. Fröhle, & H. J. Meier (Eds.), *Social Dimensions of Climate Change Adaptation in Coastal Regions: Findings from Transdisciplinary Research* (pp. 159-173).

Zimmermann et al. (2014) describe an evaluation approach based around four criteria, presented in Table 1.

**Table 1. The four criteria for output evaluations described by Zimmermann et al., 2014.**

Criterion	Description
<b>Consistency</b>	Credibility and comprehensiveness of documented participatory process results.
<b>Integration</b>	Involvement of various political and administrative levels in the process.
<b>Legitimacy</b>	Inclusion of stakeholders and end users, and consideration of their interests or views.
<b>Creativity</b>	Level to which documented outcomes or plans depart from previous ways of thinking for future development.

The questions that were applied to the documents are outlined in Table 2, with the final column indicating where these relate to the evaluative criteria described by Zimmerman et al. (2014).

In the example given in Zimmermann et al. (2014), the evaluative criteria is applied to a series of participatory workshops, with the criterion Consistency applied to the documented outputs of the participatory process. In this report, the documentation we are evaluating is of a wide range of types, including documents that relate to both specific processes as well as broader activities, over a long timeframe. Thus, the criterion of Consistency was not included directly, but was instead substituted for a descriptive understanding of the documents provided and their level of comprehensiveness, which we have termed the Credibility of Records.

In this report (and for each PACCo site in turn), a summary of the evaluation outcomes is given followed by a full description of the engagement story, as identifiable from the available documentary evidence.

For the Lower Otter Restoration Project, there was an additional resource in the form of public responses to the planning application. As these were not available for the Saône Territorial Project (due to differences in the planning process between countries), they were analysed separately. Thus, an additional inductive thematic analysis was conducted on these data to investigate themes in the letters of support or objection to the project that were submitted. The results of this are also presented in this report, following the engagement story for the Lower Otter Restoration Project.



**Table 2. The documentary evaluation framework**

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Question</b>	<b>Details</b>	<b>Examples</b>	<b>Criterion</b>
<b>Document description</b>	What is the document?	Document type	Meeting minutes, correspondence, photo, workshop notes, etc.	Credibility of Records – Understanding of available documents and their level of comprehensiveness.
	Summary of relevant key points	Descriptor of the detailed event, or key points of discussion.	What the document is about, or what is being discussed (e.g. impact on access to a farm, or discussing options for relocation of the cricket pitch, etc.)	
<b>Engagement, outreach, and ability to input</b>	Who is involved or referenced?	Which people or actors are involved or referenced in the document?	LORP partner organisations, organisational representatives, local farmer, residents, etc.	Integration – Involvement of various administrative levels in the process
	Type of interaction	How are the people or actors involved? (In terms of the approach or form of discussion).	Is it a two-way discussion, or are people being told something in a didactic manner? Is there opportunity for individuals to input into design of the project?	Legitimacy – Inclusion of stakeholders and end users, and consideration of their interests/views
	Does the document detail a reaction or response to earlier events?	Is there a relationship between the document and preceding events or documents (or is it something new)?	Feelings about a previous engagement event, or complaints that concerns aren't being listened to, etc. Evidence that perspectives have influenced project design	Creativity – Level to which documented results depart from previous ways of thinking
<b>Researcher reflections</b>	Further critical thoughts	What other unique insights does this document give us about the engagement process?	Does it highlight particularly emotive issues? Is it a sign of genuine intent to engage? Does tone of language tell us how a matter has been received?	Further critical reflection
<b>Evidence</b>	Highlighted key comments, quotes, or images	Giving evidence of above matters		

## iv. Evaluative Question and Definitions

Using Zimmerman et al. (2014)'s criteria, the evaluation seeks to address the following question:

To what extent have the development of the projects in the Lower Otter and Saône valleys been subject to engagement processes that include stakeholders and local actors, following a social learning approach?

This report will seek to answer this question based on documentary evidence only, and different stakeholders' perspectives will be explored in upcoming workshops and interviews.

The following definitions are intended to clarify the proposed evaluative question.

Throughout this report, we refer to local actors who live in the area (citizens), govern (public actors), contribute to the local economy (private actors) or undertake research (researchers) as stakeholders or local actors. The two notions are used indiscriminately and refer to the people or organisations that are considered to be directly impacted by or at risk from coastal change under the effects of climate change, at the two pilot sites.

It is important to specify the typology of actors that is implicitly used in Zimmerman et al. (2014): organisations that are traditionally considered as legitimate on the one hand, and the general public on the other. In the English version of the report, the second category is referred to as the "community" or "publics". In the French version, we chose the terms « société civile », « résidents » or « citoyens », the three being used indiscriminately. In so doing, we are talking about the voices of the people who do not have any formal political role as representatives or as professionals working in an administration or any public body that is linked to the PACCo projects, nor any particular scientific expertise that is formalised by a status or a position in an organisation that is conducting research activities in relation to either project.

By engagement process, we refer to a process that consists of creating a dialogue between different actors on an equal footing, with a view to:

- Share information
- Gather perceptions and opinions on a given topic
- Co-design proposals to be implemented on which there is consensus.

These three elements are understood as three increasingly important levels of engagement.

This definition is influenced by Arnstein (1969), particularly her "ladder of citizen participation" which has gained recognition in the academic sphere, as well in Lisode's experience of more than a hundred missions to design and facilitate engagement processes in relation to natural management resources (particularly water) all around the world.

The expressions “engagement process” and “participatory process” are used interchangeably (the former being preferred to the second, which is used simply to avoid too many repetitions).

## v. Study Ethics

The research to be presented in these two reports has been approved by the University of Exeter Geography Department's Ethics Committee.

Only secondary data have been analysed for this first report. However, the following were key ethical considerations for this project:

- Prior to analysis and as part of the application for ethical approval, East Devon Pebblebed Heaths Conservation Trust, and Conservatoire du littoral confirmed via email that they were legally able to share the documentary data with us, for the purposes of this evaluation.
- Data were stored only on a secure site, hosted by the University of Exeter. Dr Auster and Prof Barr were site administrators and access was only granted to the named authors of this report.
- To enable time for publication in an academic journal - as referenced in the tender application for this project - the data will be held by the named researchers until December 2024, at which point the secure site will be deactivated. (This date can be brought forward if publication is completed sooner).
- The planning consultation responses for the Lower Otter Restoration Project are documents held in the public domain on the East Devon District Council planning portal.
- No personal data has been disclosed within this report (including names).

# 1. Lower Otter Restoration Project

## 1.1. ENGAGEMENT STORY

### 1.1.1. Project Start – The Haycock Report (2009-2010)

In 2009, Clinton Devon Estates (CDE) commissioned a report on the current drainage and flood management of the Lower Otter, which was then published in February 2010. This was a technical assessment that reported that poor drainage and flooding in the valley were leading to increasingly damaging impacts upon “the economies of the Estate and users of the landscape”. The report claimed that if the Estate did nothing, the situation would continue to deteriorate until farming the landscape becomes unviable, and the current sea defences breach with “extensive loss of terrestrial land and access to South Farm and its businesses”. It outlined a series of ten intervention options for the Estate to consider. This first scoping report was a technical assessment, so no engagement had yet taken place and the options for the landscape were based solely on the technical details and modelling. However, it was highlighted from the outset that engagement with key stakeholders would be important: “The next stage of this process is to review the options with key stakeholders and develop these with the Clinton Devon Estates to determine the way forward”.

### 1.1.2. Initial Outreach (February 2013 to May 2014)

Later, the first meeting in relation to the project took place on 1<sup>st</sup> February 2013, entitled the ‘River Otter Restoration Project Start Up Meeting’. Perhaps informed by the recommendation from the Haycock Report to engage with key stakeholders, this was between a group of representatives of organisations identified by Clinton Devon Estates. Organisations represented included the Otter Valley Association (a civic society for residents in the Otter Valley), and the Environment Agency, Devon Wildlife Trust, South West Water, and East Devon District Council. Thus, this included regional organisations, a civic society, a statutory agency, and local authority representation.

At the first meeting, technical presentation was given by the authors of the Haycock Report, and the meeting gave stakeholders an initial opportunity to raise queries about the project, including the possibility to create new saltmarsh habitat, a recognition of protecting assets (such as the car park in Budleigh Salterton and groundwater abstraction points), as well as the early consideration as to the implications of relevant policies (e.g. the Water Framework Directive). There was unanimous approval to investigate a managed realignment approach in the Lower Otter valley. From this initial meeting, it was recognised among attendees that communications and engagement would be important for the project, which highlights good intentions at the outset to proceed with community involvement and consideration of factors important to local people. Clinton Devon Estates volunteered to lead on project communications.

Later in the same year, the first direct approach was made to an identified key stakeholder interest; Budleigh Salterton Cricket Club, which had its pitch based near the mouth of the River Otter and behind the sea defences, and the pitch had experienced frequent flooding. An initial meeting was held between representatives of the Club and CDE, where a direct, two-way dialogue was established, and the potential of relocating the cricket club was discussed. In follow-up correspondence dated 7<sup>th</sup> October 2013, the club representative stated that they had started to work closely with a consultant company to consider their relocation requirements. The correspondence also highlighted that both the England and Wales Cricket Board and Sport England would need to be consulted in relation to any relocation and stated “the new facility would ideally have to be built before the old ground is vacated”. By discussing the potential options for a new site, this letter suggests that the club might be willing to move to a new site if it meets their playing requirements.

Similarly, a direct dialogue was established in a December meeting between CDE and Devon County Council’s Rights of Way Team to discuss the impacts on local footpaths and access, and a direct approach was made to the Local Nature Partnership.

### **1.1.3. Widening Initial Outreach**

In December 2013, the first wider attempt at public outreach took place. CDE released information to the Otter Valley community, through an article in the Otter Valley Association Newsletter. The article announced plans to investigate future management of the valley and for a managed realignment scheme, therefore sharing this information for the first time in the public domain in a locally relevant outlet. This is an early announcement ahead of any firm plans, with an expressed intention to engage with the community in the process, and the announcement that an Environment Agency representative has been seconded onto the project to “try and build consensus amongst all parties who either manage or use the land for recreation”. This is indicative of intent to engage with the local community, with the first communication via a civic society. (At this point, staff resource has now been committed to the project).

Until this point, however, there had not been opportunity for community involvement in the development of the project, which has been initiated in response to the technical monitoring. This is demonstrative of the project leads’ trust in the modelling undertaken, following which the Otter Valley Association newsletter article informs readers that “there is clear agreement among interested parties that maintaining the status quo is not viable as existing flood defences become increasingly vulnerable to threats such as heavy rainfall and sea level rise”. This is an interesting remark, for it assumes agreement among interested parties of these facts, in advance of the first engagement exercises with community residents (which are later discussed). As the article states, at this point “there are no firm plans on the table”, although the project partners have an idea for a scheme and have begun engaging with who they believe are key stakeholders. It is positive to see an early engagement of stakeholders, but this article is arguably suggestive that the public will not have a chance to input until

later in project development: "...extensive public consultation will take place when clearer plans begin to emerge". Whilst this article reports a positive intention to engage and for there to be some form of 'consultation', it is highlighting that this will not take place until there are plans upon which to comment, rather than during the stages of plan creation.

Nonetheless, intention to engage is again evidenced in an internal first attempt at developing a vision and objectives for the project. Once again, engagement with stakeholders and the community is recognised as key for the project, with engagement being given priority in the Vision statement: "Local landowners and communities are engaged in and supportive of management". Stakeholder engagement is also referenced twice in the project objectives.

In May 2014, a first meeting was held with a tenant farmer who uses the land in the Lower Otter valley, following a direct approach from CDE. This was a discussion about a private individuals' interests, and a request from them that they can hold discussion in a private and direct manner, given the perceived sensitivity of the subject. A preference for a direct dialogue has been expressed here by the individual who felt it would best protect their interests. In this instance, it was thus appropriate to follow this request which would be more likely to maintain relations between the Estate and farmer. Whilst there is a potential limitation in that this could limit the ability for the wider community and farmer to learn from each other, this is demonstrative that a potential openness to direct dialogue with certain stakeholders can be necessary to build relationships between parties and open discussion.

Dialogue continued with the tenant farmer after this meeting and, in May 2014, the LORP Project Manager responded to reports from the tenant farmer that they were finding investigation into the project's feasibility investigations to be stressful. This may be the first recorded demonstration of the potentially emotive nature of the project, which comes from an individual who would be among those most likely to be directly affected by physical landscape changes. As a research team, we do not have record of the concerns in the exact manner they were raised by the farmer, but the Project Manager attempted to reassure them in their response that stakeholder engagement is ongoing. The Project Manager informed the farmer that "I can only try to reassure you that one of our key objectives is to find ways of ensuring that agricultural use of the Lower Otter valley continues into the future. You can also be confident that we are keeping you fully informed about our progress – as our investigations progress we are letting you know". The Project Manager highlighted that the project was at an early stage and that they are "still trying to define at this stage what the potential costs and benefits - to all parties - of such a project would be". Whilst the intention here is perhaps to reassure the farmer by informing them that decisions were yet to be made, they then went on to say "Once we have all the facts then all of us will be in a better place to make informed decisions about what the future of the lower Otter valley should look like." It is unclear at this stage what level of opportunity to input into the decision-making may be available to the farmer.

By the time of a project update for CDE and the Environment Agency in May 2014, initial meetings had been held with several identified stakeholder organisations, and

between CDE and tenant farmers in the area. Discussions were underway about an initial vision for the project, but up until this point, only identified stakeholders have had an opportunity for input. Whilst the stakeholders included democratically elected public representatives from local councils and a civic society, limited direct public engagement had so far taken place, although there has been awareness of the need to do so since the early project stages. The documents do, however, record intent to further the engagement with the public in some form for, in this project update, a set of 'next steps' are identified which include 'public consultation' amongst this list, alongside continued stakeholder engagement.

#### **1.1.4. First Public Consultations (June – July 2014)**

Plans for a public consultation event were made, and the wider public were invited to participate via an article in the Budleigh Journal (a local newspaper) in June 2014; "Local people are being given the chance to have their say about the future of the River Otter". The article informs the public about the risks posed in the river catchment as was identified through the technical assessment, and invites the community to comment on proposals at planned consultation events, of which there were to be two in July 2014 (one in East Budleigh, the other in Budleigh Salterton). The risk was presented thus: "The lower River Otter is disconnected from its floodplain by an ageing embankment which runs through the centre of the historic estuary. This impacts adversely on the ability of the river to cope naturally with flooding. In recent years these flood events have also caused significant erosion of the embankments and associated land, and have threatened the integrity of existing rights of way [...] These events will likely become more common with the sea level rises and more intensive storms associated with current climate change predictions".



**Figure 1. Headline in Budleigh Journal, 1<sup>st</sup> June 2014**

Approximately 80 people attended the consultation events, which were billed as an opportunity for residents to "have their say". The events show concerted efforts by the project to involve local people; in the Budleigh Journal invitation, the Project Manager expressed that "...we want local people to be involved in developing



something that has real benefits for people and wildlife. Please come along to one of these events and let us know what you think."

The events provided the public with the first opportunity to hear about possible plans, which for some could have helped people to feel informed. Indeed, in one consultation response, an attendee wrote "Thank you very much for the helpful consultation events", and another shared that they felt it had been an "Excellent event". These comments indicate that some attendees had received the event well, and for some the project ideas were viewed positively (e.g. "Very imaginative and exciting project").

At the event, a project statement was available that detailed how the project had come to be, before outlining a potential scope of the project (e.g. Ways in which the project could proceed), and potential constraints and opportunities that could arise. Alongside, a map was available that presented initial thoughts for the project works, with clearly annotated arrows to highlight thoughts about different aspects of the project. Whilst the public had the opportunity to comment on these ideas at this event, the plans had so far only had input from project partners and the initial stakeholder group. As a result, it may be that event attendees perceive the ideas to be more firmly set, without yet having had the opportunity to integrate local residents' understandings and knowledges of the landscape, or of their own ideas for how risk could be managed through the proposals. Thus, the consultations that were held perhaps provided a different opportunity to that of the community actively being involved in developing the initial plans. The event invited comment on ideas that had been presented and, prior to these events, there had not yet been public opportunity to contribute to the decision-making process.

This sentiment was observed from several event attendees. In the responses there were seven comments that regarded a need for further involvement of residents. For example, one resident wrote "You need to consult with the residents of the estuary side of Granary Lane. Our properties will be directly impacted by any changes to the estuary". Through these words in conjunction with use of the word 'our', this individual suggests they are one of those residents, and that attendee did not feel as though they had yet had opportunity for meaningful involvement in the project.

#### **1.1.5. Sensitivities at South Farm Road (July 2014 – October 2014)**

There were several factors raised by consultation event attendees in their feedback forms, which they felt would need more consideration. Whilst this includes matters such as impacts on specific factors related to the Otter Valley itself (such as concern for wildlife habitat that was currently available), it is notable that there are numerous comments about the impact upon South Farm Road. In the project scope section of the project statement, it was suggested that "South Farm Road becomes subject to inundation by big tides. Raising of levels to be considered". In response, six respondents implied that tidal flooding would not be accepted by the South Farm residents and that the road would need to be raised, for example one participant wrote "Raise South Farm Road, do not allow to be tidal". This is an early indicator of

potential sensitivity surrounding the importance that South Farm residents place upon their ability to use South Farm Road for access.

In response, a further consultation event was planned specifically for the residents of South Farm Road on 1<sup>st</sup> August 2014. A direct invitation letter was sent on the preceding 15<sup>th</sup> July by the project manager. Whilst the invitation makes clear the project is at an early stage, the invitation broadly presents an opportunity to “come and look at the plans, ask questions, and tell us what you think”. A week later, a follow-up letter was posted directly to South Farm residents to share a ‘Frequently Asked Questions’ document which the project partners “hope [...] will address any concerns you may have, but we will be very pleased to discuss any outstanding issues next week”. Whilst this is again a well-intentioned attempt at outreach (in this case, to a specific set of residents who have been identified as likely to be some of the most directly affected by the scheme), it is unclear from the invitation exactly what kind of opportunity for input there will be for event attendees. It could be suggested that the invitation presented residents with an opportunity to comment on plans prepared by the project partners (although still conceptual at this stage), rather than inviting residents to contribute towards their formation or discuss alternative options.

At the event a feedback form was available which asked South Farm businesses about the current impacts of flooding on their business, and what impact short duration tidal flooding could have. This shows an attempt to understand how the residents use the access afforded by South Farm Road. A summary of the residents’ responses was shared with the project partners in October 2014, which reported on the feedback from residents that “Tidal flooding of South Farm Road, even short duration periodic flooding, is unacceptable” and “Any tidal flooding of South Farm Road is likely to result in adverse impacts on businesses”.

Following the event, Clinton Devon Estates also received a letter from a couple who were residents in South Farm, and who were concerned about the scheme. In their writing, the authors indicate that they believe to be writing on behalf of South Farm residents more widely: “Everyone in our small community has been in considerable distress”. The letter indicated the respondents had felt there was not an opportunity for input into what they felt was a “single-option proposal for the world at [their] feet”, and that there had not been chance to discuss alternative options at an earlier stage in its development; “how could a scheme become so far advanced, in its shape, before investigating the basic impact on our lives and livelihood[?]”. The residents reported that they had attended the South Farm consultation event in a constructive spirit with comments to make about culverts in the area, and they recognised that other residents may bring different knowledge to the table; explicit reference is made to the “lifetime of expertise of [tenant farmer], and the practical advice [they] could offer from years working the estuary-margins”. However, despite writing that they felt those who had presented the scheme had engaged in polite dialogue, they reported leaving the event feeling that there had not been any opportunity to discuss various alternatives, and that they had perceived the event to be one in which they could only comment on proposals that had already been developed. “Was it a consultation exploring different options? Alas; not really; no. [...] by its nature, the session came

across, unfortunately, as a window for a single, shaky, option, with limited leeway". Whilst it appears the residents attempted to highlight what they felt was good intent amongst the project staff to engage (through positive comments in how discussion was conducted), this letter indicates that they had felt the dialogue had been didactic in its approach, with the project partners putting forward plans rather than cocreating them with residents, leaving those residents feeling disempowered in the process.

This said, subsequent LORP documents suggest the concerns about access via South Farm Road have been recognised by the project team, and attempts are being made to address the issue with what they hope will be a more socially acceptable solution. In the aforementioned summary of consultation responses for the project partners, it is stated that "The majority of the concerns relate to tidal flooding of South Farm Road. We are taking all the comments into account as we consider what to do next. We are investigating the technical and financial implications of raising the road." This is a message that the project partners sought to publicly convey. In a press release in October 2014, the Project Manager is quoted as saying "As a result of concerns raised at the consultations we are looking at how South Farm Road might be raised to allow unrestricted access during normal tides." This is an indicator of creativity, with ways of thinking about the future having been influenced by the concerns that were raised.

Contrary to the residents' letter, the documents suggest the project partners had viewed the consultations as successful, and that the project received broad support. The partners sought to convey this message to the wider public in a press release issued in October 2014 with the headline "Public welcome plans for restoring River Otter estuary". This release stated that "Plans to allow the River Otter to reclaim more of its natural flood plain have moved a step forward following public consultations into the proposals", and the Project Manager was quoted as saying "We would like to thank everyone who contributed to the consultation exercise. We want to make sure that the Lower Otter Restoration Project delivers what most people want and their views are helping shape it. Obviously there are some concerns and we are working to address these, but the overwhelming response has been very positive". In this article, there is a clear attempt to demonstrate that the project is taking the concerns of local residents seriously ("as a result of public consultations [...] a number of revisions to the plans are being drawn up").

However, it could be suggested from this press release that there is a signal the conversation may continue in a manner that favours the view of the project partners, as issues that were raised by residents are reported to have been discounted based on the views of the project leads: "Some people felt that simpler, less costly solutions would be better. Ideas put forward included dredging, or new sluice gates in the embankment. Unfortunately, while these may get flood water away more quickly they don't do anything to reconnect the floodplain upstream, nor would they provide other benefits such as habitat restoration or securing public access should the embankment catastrophically breach in the future. The project has a much greater chance of gaining widespread support and funding if it delivers multiple benefits in a properly integrated package". Stating the views of the project leads in such a



**Figure 2. Example of output from post-it note exercise, Granary Lane consultation event, 8<sup>th</sup> July 2015 (Photo provided by East Devon Pebblebed Heaths Conservation Trust)**

41 Granary Lane residents attended the session. In addition, a University of Exeter PhD researcher at that time (who is not an author of this report) attended at their own request. They described their role as "a researcher with a particular focus on contested knowledges and public engagement". Following the event, the researcher produced a short report on the event and their observations, which was shared back with project partners.

The observer's report first listed five snapshot observations (i.e. short descriptions of observed events and participant responses). From these observations, it is clear there was a level of tension in the room, particularly during the post-it exercises. In the second snapshot, which related to the first post-it exercise, the researcher wrote "Some are clearly unhappy at being asked to complete the exercise. [...] The mood gets tense as the exercise itself becomes the topic of debate, while some begin critiquing the 'likes' and 'dislikes' of others in the group". Then, in the fifth snapshot which relates to the second post-it exercise, the researcher reported "Tension begins to fizz around the room. This is not what many residents want; they want to use their voices." The researcher did not suggest the collaborative post-it exercise had been invaluable and described it as useful for "capturing thoughts feelings, and suggestions", but they did discuss how they as an observer felt the exercise should have been more critical, and conducted with greater awareness of the "wider power relations in which the meeting came about". They highlighted in particular that there had been limited prior engagement with the residents of Granary Lane until this event, and that this may have led to residents going to the meeting "with an existing feeling of power inequality, and as 'the powerless'. This existing sense of power imbalance became clear as the meeting proceeded, at one point becoming heated with residents commenting that they do not wish to be patronised, and that the engagement has been 'one way' with little opportunity for residents to speak back to Clinton Devon Estates". The report goes on to suggest that, besides from increased public engagement, there would need to be "sensitivity to power relations" in future engagement events, with "establishment of a group of residents as stakeholders in the project [as] a positive starting point".

In their report, the researcher made other observations about how residents viewed the estuary. On the one hand, they reported some resident 'likes' as a feeling of the Estuary was an example of "raw nature" and a "static environment to be preserved". On the other hand, they reported that the estuary was "in fact an outcome of long term human-environment practices" and therefore a "snapshot in time of an ongoing environment-as-process". The researcher highlighted how these two visions were at odds and suggested "refiguring understandings of the Estuary to foreground it as a human-environment process which we can all be a part of in a sensitive manner provides one possible way in which residents can feel more supportive of ongoing human interactions with the Lower Otter Estuary". This is an interesting suggestion, which is derived from a recognition of different knowledges of the local environment that exist among the community. This suggestion is intended as one that would lead

to actions that respond to these knowledges in an arguably more inclusive and meaningful approach – such as that which could be afforded through social learning.

After the event, the LORP Project Manager received direct correspondence from Granary Lane residents, following up on various individual concerns raised at the meeting, including risks of cliff erosion, or impacts of a new cycle path upon local bird populations. In a response in August 2015, the Project Manager sought to clarify that the project is still only in an earlier stage with no firm plans yet made (“To date we have only been exploring the issues and trying to ascertain whether or not it is worth seeking to develop a project of the kind suggested”) and asks whether the residents could suggest how best they wish to be represented in discussions moving forwards (“Perhaps you could let us know how you think such representation might work in practice for your group; obviously it should ensure a flow of information from and to all residents”). By seeking such a suggestion, this could be seen as recognition that these residents do not currently feel represented, and that there is an intention to address this in a manner that would be meaningful for this group.

### **1.1.7. Ongoing negotiation regarding the cricket club’s relocation (December 2014 – January 2016)**

At this juncture, it is important to note that discussions also continued regarding the relocation of Budleigh Salterton Cricket Club. In December 2014, the Budleigh Journal reported upon the Cricket Club’s AGM meeting, in which it is recorded that “The club is hoping to move away from its ground in Granary Lane, which has repeatedly flooded in recent years, and would be affected by proposals [...] to reintroduce tidal flooding to the Otter Estuary”. The article reports that the club members were told that they had seen a loss of £18,000 over the past year mostly as a result of flooding of the pitch, and that members were told that the club had submitted plans to CDE “for a site at the end of Copp Hill Lane”, to which they were awaiting CDE’s response. The article further reports that an East Devon District Councillor in attendance at the AGM had suggested such a move would be likely to receive a favourable response “because of government policy supporting sports grounds”. This indicates that, similarly to the evidence from their earlier meetings discussed above, the club was receptive to the potential of relocation, and they have made public their suggested relocation option.



**Figure 3. Front page headline of the Budleigh Journal on Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> December 2014**

Following this date, negotiations for a proposed new pitch continued directly between the club and CDE. An email of 26<sup>th</sup> June 2015 also highlights the ongoing discussions now included the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB), who had provided further advice on technical requirements and potential turf consultants to consider. Later, on November 27<sup>th</sup>, an internal email reports on comments from the England and Wales Cricket Board that in the event of a planning application for a new pitch, local planning authorities will need to consult Sport England on “any planning application that affects a playing field” as set out in ‘Statutory Instrument 2015/595’. The email then suggests that Sport England usually delegate to the Cricket Board for comment in such a case, and that the project partners had been told that “ECB would object unless the project included like for like replacement of what would be lost”. By 19th January 2016, it was reported in the minutes of a Stakeholder Group meeting of that date that a CDE representative “noted that Budleigh Salterton Cricket Club recognise a need to move regardless of whether the project proceeds”.

The negotiations highlight the complexity of discussions that may need to take place in landscape-scale projects. The cricket club is just one of many elements to consider, and it required intensive discussion between the users of the asset (the cricket club), the landowner (CDE), and national sporting bodies (England and Wales Cricket Board). Whilst it appears in the documentation that there is general acceptance of a potential relocation which will have eased this challenge to some degree, the discussions have required consideration into a variety of areas including possible locations, technical specifications (such as pitch quality), the involvement of additional partners, and the influence of relevant policy frameworks (e.g. ‘Statutory Instrument 2015/595’).

### **1.1.8. Extension of the Stakeholder Group to include resident representatives (January - May 2016)**

In January 2016, a stakeholder group meeting was held. Whilst the membership of this group included stakeholder parties that had been invited to participate in the initial project meetings, it is notable that new members had been invited to join an extended group. This included representative members from Budleigh Salterton Cricket Club, residents and businesses around South Farm, and residents of Granary Lane. This shows recognition among project partners of the concerns that had been raised by residents about the engagement thus far and is an attempt to engage groups more deeply in the project development process. It may also be viewed as a move consistent with the recommendation of the independent observer who was present at the Granary Lane consultation event that “establishment of a group of residents as stakeholders in the project” would be “a positive starting point”.

It appears these invitations were received positively from the representative of Granary Lane residents for a position statement was submitted which stated “We welcome the invitation to join the extended Project Stakeholder Group and the opportunity this offers of working with the Group and Project Team to develop and deliver secure and sustainable solutions for the future of the Otter Estuary, our private properties, the local communities and the local environment”. Their position statement goes on to confirm observations made by the independent researcher at the Granary Lane workshop that, until this point, they had felt there had not been a meaningful dialogue with Granary Lane residents, although they recognised the intent of project partners to have done so: “We note the Project's public commitment to openness and transparency in working with local communities but we do not feel that the Project has, so far, fulfilled this commitment by engaging us in a genuine dialogue to identify problems, to understand our concerns, to develop ideas on what options might be available, to find shared solutions and the best way of delivering them”.

The representative from South Farm also brought with them a written statement that is presented as though on behalf of the South Farm residents and businesses. This was unfavourable towards the project proposals at this time, opening with a strong statement of opposition, particularly to the potential of tidally flooding South Farm Road: “We as a community perceive the Lower Otter "Restoration" proposal as strikingly destructive and unwise: we are united in our distress and opposition to its irreversible, impassable, tidal flooding of the road that is the lifeline of our community, and a vital parish and visitor asset”. The statement goes on to express negative comments in relation to their experiences of engagement by the project. Similarly to the position statement that is reported to be on behalf of Granary Lane residents, the South Farm statement reports that they feel as though they have not experienced meaningful engagement thus far and a feeling that their concerns have been overlooked: “Our experience as key stakeholders, unfortunately, has been poor, including long exclusion from stakeholder meetings, and a tendency for the fate of this essential public road/right of way, and our community, to be downplayed in public communications”. There is indication that this has led to a lack of trust held



in the project partners as the statement calls for independent assessments of potential impacts of the scheme, including of alternative strategies that could be employed: “We therefore support calls for the project to be shelved, and for new, all-inclusive, transparent, accountable, assessments of alternative strategies by verifiably independent experts”. Example alternatives were suggested, such as the installation of one-way tide-gates, working with partners upstream to reduce run-off, upgrading and raising culverts at South Farm Road, and installing bypass drainage at White Bridge.

In parallel to this meeting, the project partners received a letter that had been forwarded to them by the local MP, originally written by a couple who are resident at South Farm, which arguably reinforces the concerns raised in the meeting. In this letter they expressed deep concern at LORP proposals, having attended the previous consultation event. They indicate that they feel project plans have been imposed upon them by saying “everyone in our South Farm community is horrified that CDE and the Environment Agency want to take such an extreme course of action when other more suitable solutions could be found”. They then go on to express that they do not feel as though they have had an opportunity to have their voice heard; “[LORP representative] doesn’t appear to be bothered by our concerns, instead wishing to railroad this through and unwilling to look at other alternatives. [...] This has caused us stress and anxiety about our future”.

In the minutes of this revised stakeholder groups’ first meeting, following both introductions and an outline of the project to date, immediate interests and concerns about the project were raised. These included potential adverse impacts of flooding on South Farm Road, footpath access, and risks of erosion to the cliffs adjacent to Granary Lane and the old municipal tip. The partners agreed to establish a ‘Concerns Log’ (later referred to as an ‘Issues Log’), which would be a live document listing all arising concerns and how they were responded to. This was a suggestion proposed and accepted from the representative from Granary Lane, and the endorsement by the stakeholder group could be seen as an open gesture of intent to work collaboratively towards overcoming problems and finding solutions, with a formal record of concerns raised among the various partners. In their statement for the following stakeholder meeting, the South Farm Community reportedly “welcome the beginnings of an issue log”.

At the time of writing, the Issues Log remains available to view on the LORP project website. This can be viewed at the following link, or by scanning the QR code.

<https://www.lowerotterrestorationproject.co.uk/issuelog.html>



The meeting also discussed the governance structure for the project. This highlighted that the stakeholder group would inform and advise the project steering group and make recommendations, although it ultimately “will not be responsible for

making decisions”. An action was recorded for participating stakeholders to comment on terms of reference, to be agreed at the following meeting. These terms were agreed later than this date, but ultimately they established the stakeholder group as a forum for exchanging information and for “open discussion of issues, with the intention of reaching consensus where possible”. This highlights how the group has been developed to respond to arising tensions and comments from new group members about not having had the opportunity to meaningfully contribute from an earlier stage in the project. This may have been reactive to the situation, yet is an attempt to overcome the tensions and is indicative of attempts to give community stakeholders more of a voice in the project’s development, something which could arguably only be achieved through a genuine will among project partners to overcome challenges and to work collaboratively.

By the time of the next stakeholder meeting in May 2016, the minutes record that a member of both East Devon District Council and Budleigh Salterton Town Council had been appointed as the chair of the stakeholder group, to chair from a point of independence as part of continued efforts to build trust and collaboration between stakeholders. Prior to the meeting, another statement was also submitted by the representative of the South Farm community. Within this, a paragraph included comments on the engagement process. “In a constructive spirit, we invite CDE and [Environment Agency] to improve **two-way communication**, and the engagement process by ensuring, for example, the planned online concerns-log is dynamic, so that responses to answers can be posted directly, openly; and also by moving towards facilitating stakeholders’ voices, rather than closing them down, in public meetings, (or in the press), as has been our experience until very recently”. This is an explicit call for the ability for their community to not just be able to comment, but to have active input in the development of the project.

It is clear in this meeting that there is intent to respond to concerns that dialogue this far had been ‘one-way’, and that there are efforts to find a mutually agreed approach for the engagement process going forward. A presentation by the project partners on ‘Shaping the Engagement Process’ was led by the project partners, and the first Powerpoint slide pronounced the question: “What does a genuine dialogue look like?”. This is again demonstrative of concerted efforts to overcome tensions and the challenges of didactic dialogue. This is a creative step that shows the project partners are willing to work with stakeholders and are thinking differently about how to do so.



**Figure 4. Slide from 'Shaping the engagement process' presentation at the Stakeholder Group Meeting, 10<sup>th</sup> May 2016 (Slide provided by East Devon Pebblebed Heaths Conservation Trust)**

Through this presentation, the engagement required for different project stages were discussed. The minutes record that the presentation noted that engagement should focus both upon potential issues arising, as well as upon potential opportunities that the project could afford: "Whilst raising concerns and problems is an important part of the process it was recognised that the stakeholder group should also be of the mind-set to embrace an opportunity to enhance the area and note that environmental tourism is an ever growing industry for the area." By the end of the agenda item, it was reported that the hope was that "All stakeholder group attendees [would be] responsible for taking the message back to their respective organisations or groups", to help extend the reach of the discussion beyond those present in the room.

Also in this meeting, it was agreed that a website would be developed. It is reported in the minutes that the website "details all information, in particular including the 'Issues Log' which records all issues brought to the Stakeholder Group". Whilst the authors of this report recognise that this source of information may only be accessible to individuals with access to digital mediums, by opening such a repository for information and for it to be regularly updated to include full records of stakeholder group meetings, the project partnership demonstrated a commitment to increasing transparency of this project.

### **1.1.9. Heritage Lottery Funding Bid: Organisation Letters of Support (November – December 2016)**

It is noted at this point that LORP partners prepared a bid for funding for the project from the Heritage Lottery Fund, a UK-based funding stream. (This was a bid prior to applying for the Interreg funding). Letters of support for the application were sought from stakeholder organisations who were favourable towards the scheme, following discussions of the plans between the partners and these groups. Letters were received from a variety of local and national organisations, for example: East Devon AONB, Devon Wildlife Trust, Devon Local Nature Partnership, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, South West Water, National Trust, and a number of local schools.

### **1.1.10. An Options Appraisal (October 2016 – July 2017)**

Public “options appraisal” events receive their first mention in the evidence provided in the minutes of a stakeholder group meeting held on 19<sup>th</sup> October 2016 (which is also where it is first referenced that INTERREG may be an appropriate source of funding for the project – at which time the UK were still EU members and so UK projects were eligible to apply). There is a suggestion that two public exhibitions should be held as an “opportunity to see initial options and ask key questions on the project” and “to feedback on any preferred options towards the end of the appraisal and outline design process”. This is indicative of a different kind of engagement exercise to those that had come before, for there is intention to hold an event in which the public are presented with the opportunity to consider alternative options, rather than to provide comments on what was perceived by South Farm and Granary Lane residents as a single option proposal at the earlier consultation events. This appears to be in response to the resident groups’ feedback regarding the earlier engagement processes and has intent to this time give local communities greater opportunity to input into the project's overall direction of travel. In the draft statement of this stakeholder group meeting, which was made available publicly on the new project website shortly afterward, it is stated that “The Lower Otter Stakeholder Group is keen for everyone to be able to make their views known to its members and [the group is] committed to strive for open, transparent and honest consultation with all concerned”. In addition, the stakeholder group members were also asked for their consent for their respective contact details to be made available on the project website, so that they would be available for community members to contact in relation to the project.

At the next stakeholder group meeting (February 2017), a long-list of potential options for the project was circulated by the project partners. It was stated in the meeting that this report “currently lists every option” including: suggestions from the Haycock report; additional suggestions made by members of the public at earlier consultation events; and the option of ‘doing nothing’.

It was intended that the stakeholder group members would review this long-list of options and evaluate them against the LORP objectives. They were then asked to

submit comments or additions (from either themselves or on behalf of who they represent), prior to a discussion at the next meeting in order to determine a short-list that could be presented to the public at the upcoming exhibition event. The statement of this meeting recorded that “A special meeting will be held [...] so the Stakeholder Group can help produce a short list of options which will then go out to public consultation”. Here the stakeholder group is being given the opportunity to consider all the possible options that have so far been put forward, including the option of doing nothing for the first time, as well as to suggest other options that could be added. This includes representatives of key stakeholder groups in an exercise that is intended to engage with the wider public community, and thus could be seen as an attempt to overcome the gap between the ‘experts’ or project partners and the wider community. Whilst the process of developing these options has not explicitly given the wider public opportunity to make further suggestions beyond those that have previously been put forward, the engagement exercise itself is intended to provide the public opportunity to feedback on a range of options and a chance to choose what they think is the most suitable option for the future of the Otter Valley.

The special meeting was then held at Seaton Wetlands Nature Reserve (thereby including a site visit to see the saltmarsh habitat in the area). The meeting opened with a reminder that it was to “recap on the project objectives, to discuss feedback that has been received about the Long List and to condense all the current options into a Short List”. Four criteria were outlined by which the options should be assessed against: 1. Technical criteria (eg. No increased flood risk to properties, and no impact on drinking water abstraction); 2. Financial/economic criteria (eg. Affordability, and landowner support); 3. Environmental criteria (eg. Habitat creation or improvement and dealing with environmental risks); 4. Social criteria (eg. Maintaining pedestrian access and satisfactory access to South Farm). For this discussion, it was recognised from the outset that “a consensus would be desirable, although perhaps not possible”.

KEY

Baseline
  Current management
  Restoration
  Large-scale restoration

Option	Description
	Purple – added by project team since January long list sent round Blue – suggested by members of the Stakeholder Group
DN	<b>Do Nothing (No active intervention)</b> - no further intervention including clearing culverts or repairing breaches to embankments. <b>Required as a baseline for appraisal.</b>
DM	<b>Do Minimum</b> – continue with current maintenance regime, for example, clearing culverts, maintain embankments, repairing breaches when it is safe and financially viable to do so.
1	Creation of a <b>freshwater reservoir</b> in embanked area in floodplain of southern Big Marsh, changing to lower and upper salt marsh in a few decades. (Haycock report Option E)
2	<b>Floodplain restoration across southern Big Marsh (Managed realignment)</b> - breach south of the tip would create intertidal (lower saltmarsh and mudflat) habitat. Tidal barrier at South Farm Road – flap valves to exclude tidal flooding upstream into northern Big Marsh.
3	<b>Floodplain restoration across Big and Little Marshes (Managed realignment)</b> - breaches in embankment along River Otter. Breach north of South Farm Road would create freshwater habitat, and breach south of the tip would create intertidal (lower saltmarsh and mudflat) habitat (LORP website – Lower Otter Public Consultation Map)
4	<b>Partial realignment of the Little or Big Banks (Managed realignment)</b> to achieve some floodplain restoration
5	<b>Large-scale restoration of the River Otter (Managed realignment)</b> - returning channel to a more historic form and alignment, partially or completely removing embankments, landfill area and outfalls
6	<b>Raising and strengthening existing embankments (Holding the line).</b> Embankment to west of river and/or Big Bank and/or Little Bank and/or Granary Lane defences.
7	<b>Assisted natural recovery</b> - removing features that prevent the River Otter and its floodplain from responding naturally to river and tidal flows, potentially including rock armour, embankments, culverts
8	<b>Improved Do Minimum</b> - including improvements to outfalls to beach and/or estuary; improved maintenance of drains; spillway in Big Bank

Figure 5. The long-list of options presented to Stakeholder Group members (15<sup>th</sup> March 2017). (Figure provided by East Devon Pebblebed Heaths Conservation Trust)

The various group members were given opportunities to comment. For example, the representative for East Devon District Council reported that there would be strong objection to any removal of footpaths; the Granary Lane resident representative reported feedback that residents would not wish the view from their properties to change and that a slow transition would be preferred; and a representative of South Farm highlighted that vehicular access through South Farm Road would be important. However, no further suggestions of options to be considered were added to the list.

Ultimately, all members were encouraged to comment, until it was agreed that options 1, 5, 6, and 8 be removed; the shortlist at the end of this meeting therefore comprised of the options of doing nothing, doing the minimum, or options 2, 3, 5 or 7.

The next available documents result from the subsequent stakeholder group meeting of 10<sup>th</sup> May 2017. The short-listed options were discussed as an agenda item, opening with a representative of the Environment Agency confirming that the Project Board has “agreed to give further considerations to a short list of four options”. It is notable here that those steering the project have listened to the recommendations of the stakeholder group and agreed to put four options out to the public to consider, but these do not include the options of ‘Do Nothing’ or ‘Do Minimum’. The representative later is reported to have “confirmed that it was normal practice to use Do Nothing as a baseline when appraising options. However, in the case of this project, the Environment Agency’s view is that the Do Nothing and Do Minimum options are not viable as they fall outside of the organisation’s scope to deliver, and thus will not be considered further”. The representative of Granary Lane is reported to have “agreed it was not worth spending time and money investigating non-viable options. Residents would like to see a sustainable environment”.

This was reflected in the statement of the meeting: “The stakeholder group has noted that there are four potential options for the Lower Otter Restoration Project, which will now be investigated further. These four options, which meet the essential criteria for both partners in the project, the Environment Agency and Clinton Devon Estates, will be explained and illustrated at a public consultation event”. Thus, the project partners have determined that action will be taken, and the public will be given a choice between four possible courses of action. The minutes also record that the residents in South Farm had been offered further opportunity to discuss the options but, according to the representative of South Farm, “no South Farm residents currently wished to accept [LORP Project Officer’s] offer to meet and discuss the options”.

**Table 3. The four options presented at the options appraisal, adapted from the descriptions that were presented to the public on display boards at the event.**

Option	Title	Description
1	Full Scale Restoration	“This option involves realigning the main river along a more meandering route through its floodplain by digging new river channels. All manmade obstructions in the floodplain are removed, including the old municipal tip and embankments. South Farm Road is raised on a bridge, the South West Coast Path diverted, and the cricket field moved off site”.
2	Assisted Natural Recovery	“This option is similar to Option 1, but does not involve creating a new meandering channel for the River Otter. Instead, it removes obstructions, such as the embankments and part of the old municipal tip. South Farm Road is raised, the South West Coast Path diverted, and the cricket field moved off site”.
3	Big and Little Marsh Floodplain Restoration	“This option is similar to Option 2, but keeps most of the embankments where they are. Breaches in Little Bank, Big Bank and the River Otter embankment allow water to flow through the line of the embankments. South Farm Road is raised and the cricket field moved off site”.
4	Southern Big Marsh Floodplain Restoration	“This option involves no work to the north of South Farm Road. It stops the flow of salty water under South Farm Road towards the north using one-way valves. South Farm Road is raised and the cricket field moved off site”.

Discussion that followed placed emphasis upon needing to recognise wider public opinion when determining the course of action. A representative of Clinton Devon Estates is reported to have said “it is important that we know what public opinion is which should come from the Public Exhibition”, and the Granary Lane representative commented that it would be important to “ensure people are listened to and not “told””. This highlights that the options appraisal exhibition is now viewed by the stakeholder group members as the primary method of assessing public opinion towards the project and their opportunity to input into its direction. The representative of South Farm queried how the information obtained from the public event will be captured, with the response being that all attendees would be invited to give feedback via a form. As an additional note, the Environment Agency representative “confirmed the consultation will be available online for those who are unable to attend in person”.

There are then records related to the various aspects of planning for this event. Display boards were developed between project partners, which outlined the project vision and the various shortlisted options (all of which also promoted the website URL). In the event plan, it is referenced that these boards will “show how we’ve taken into account concerns we’ve already heard from stakeholders”. One of the boards was specifically about how the list of options was developed, which referenced options were identified from previous studies (i.e. the Haycock Report)



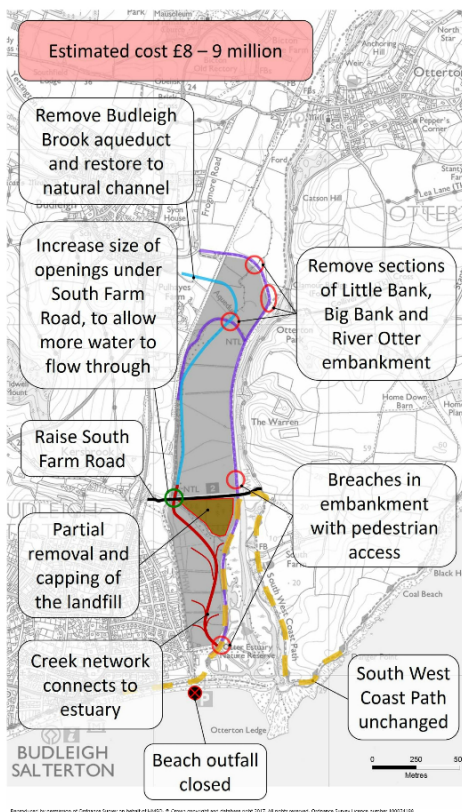
and that the project had “consulted with representatives on the Stakeholder Group to ensure we have not missed any **alternative, innovative solutions**”. For transparency, this board also listed some of the discarded options, which it stated were “ruled out if they did not meet all of the key objectives, legal requirements or Environment Agency funding requirements”.

The final boards include one for each of the four consultation options. These included a brief description of the option, a map of the area with annotations of the key features, and a description of the key features. As an annotated map, this is a clear depiction of locations of the various proposed actions that form part of the option.

## Lower Otter Restoration Project

### Option 3 – Big and Little Marsh Floodplain Restoration

This option is similar to Option 2, but keeps most of the embankments where they are. Breaches in Little Bank, Big Bank and the River Otter embankment allow water to flow through the line of the embankments. South Farm Road is raised and the cricket field moved off site.



#### Pros:

- Enables sustainable functioning of the lower Otter valley in the long term.
- Enhances intertidal and freshwater habitats.
- Maintains current route of South West Coast Path.
- Reduces risk of flooding to South Farm Road.

#### Cons:

- Less naturally functioning than Options 1 and 2.
- Restricts access along lowered sections of Little and Big Bank by flooding.

#### Risks:

- Erosion of landfill leading to contamination.
- Impact on drinking water supplies from groundwater.



**Figure 6. Example design for a display board, in this case the display board for option 3. (Image provided by East Devon Pebblebed Heaths Conservation Trust)**

As is the standard approach at Environment Agency events, a staff briefing note was developed for those who would work the event, which included matters of logistics as well as instructions as to what to do in certain scenarios. In the first instance this can be seen to ensure there is consistency in the approach taken among staff, but there are also indications in this of intent for transparency at the event. For example, the document states that, if the press or media turn up, then staff should “Allow them in”. There are also indications of wishing for attendee voices to be heard. For example, under the same question it is indicated that staff should not prevent journalists interviewing event attendees, and if other groups arrive who wished to erect their own displays, staff were informed they should “Invite them in. Explain to them we would like to hear their views. Find a corner of the room for them to set up”. Another document lists a set of FAQs that perhaps anticipates some of the queries that could arise and would mean consistent communications are made by working staff.

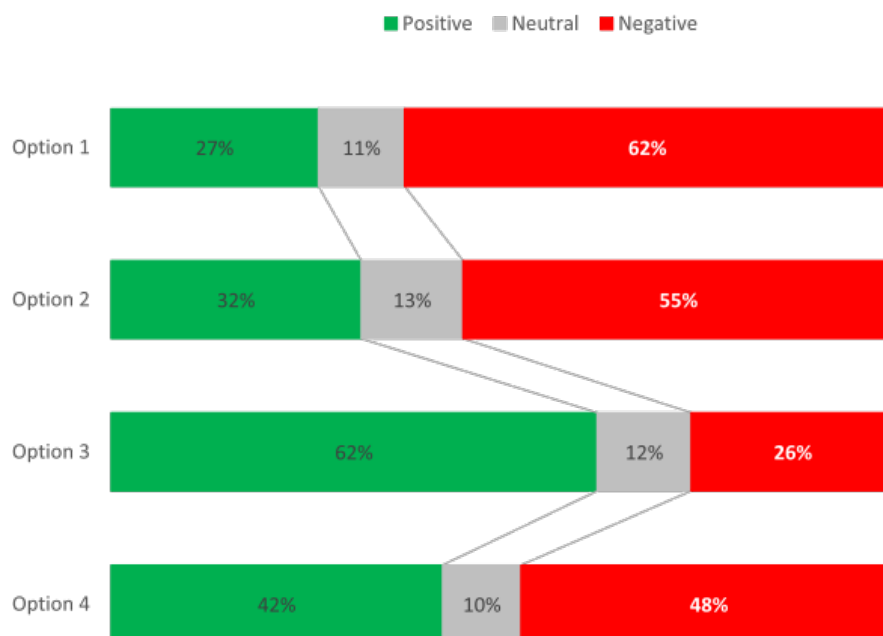
The advertisements attempt to convey that opinions from the community will be listened to by the project partners. For example, a letter for local residents states “We will ask for your feedback on the shortlisted design options at the event. This will help us to understand which of the shortlisted options you prefer before we do any further investigations and develop a preferred option. The project team will decide on a preferred option based on technical, environmental and economic criteria, as well as local preference”. The inclusion of the words ‘as well as local preference’ is indicative that the project partners are seeking a solution that would garner support in the local community. The feedback form was prepared by project partners and included a summary of the aims of the project, and then asked a range of questions. Firstly, respondents were asked whether they had heard about the project before the event, how well they understood the project aims, and how supportive they may be of those aims. They were then asked to indicate their level of support for each of the four options in turn, with the five options in a scale ranging from ‘Very supportive’, through ‘Neither supportive nor unsupportive’, to ‘Very unsupportive’. Finally, attendees were asked to provide any comments to help understand their ratings.

Invitations were circulated in a range of ways to advertise the exhibition. This included: a direct letter drop through the doors of Granary Lane residents; a visit from CDE to their tenant farmers; laminated posters to be displayed on local footpaths and venues (including any suggestions from the stakeholder group); advertisement in the local press; requests for local parish magazines and websites to advertise in their outlets; and direct letters to councillors, the local MP, and organisations who have sent letters of support. This includes direct approaches to key groups as well as attempts for broader outreach, including advertisement online through local websites and through posters and press, which are accessible to non-digital users. There is not in the first instance evidence of intent to utilise social media for advertisement, but in a thank you email to LORP partners from a member of the Environment Agency following the event, there is reference to the information having been shared on Facebook (where there are several local resident and community groups). Collectively this could be seen to represent a significant effort to encourage attendance to the event, with the invitation extended to both digital and non-digital users.

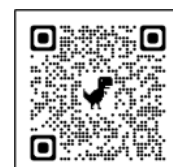
For those who could not attend, alternative plans had been put in place. Whilst the final plans for the alternative event appear to have deviated from the original confirmation that there would be an online event held (as there appears to be no record of such an event in the documentation), there is record of an alternative online method of engagement as the project published the materials from the event on the project website the day after the exhibition. In the letter to Granary Lane residents, this is referred towards: “Don’t worry if you are unable to attend the event. A copy of the display boards from the event and a feedback form will be available at [website link] from 6 July 2017. All feedback forms must be returned to [email address] by 20 July 2017”. There is evidence provision for an alternative way to participate, but in terms of advertisement, it is unclear whether this online opportunity had been advertised through social media. The authors do however note in principal that social media may afford an opportunity to publicise such things in a way which would be visible to digital users.

### 1.1.11. Reaction to the Options Appraisal (July 2017-May 2018)

On 5<sup>th</sup> July 2017, 144 individuals were recorded to have attended the public exhibition. In the feedback from the exhibition available on the project website [Accessed 4<sup>th</sup> January 2022], it states that 102 feedback forms were received, and that an overall 81 individuals provided comments. (It is also noted that not all individuals responded to every question). The option that is reported to have been most highly favoured by attendees was option 3, with 62% of those who fed back indicating they held positive views of the proposal.



**Figure 7. Overall proportions of positive and negative views reported by exhibition attendees towards each of the four options. Figure sourced from: <http://www.lowerotterrestorationproject.co.uk/events.html> (Accessed 4<sup>th</sup> January 2022).**



The event received a lot of local press coverage in the immediate aftermath. The options were reported in the Budleigh Journal, Devon Live, Express & Echo, and in a segment for BBC South West Spotlight. In a record of the press coverage for the project partners, figures for the number of people reached are reported, and the sum total of this coverage suggest a potential total reach of 2,312,800 people (although it is not possible to ascertain how many of these people are double-counted, locally based, or from further afield). In the press articles, much attention has been paid to the potential cost of the most expensive of the four options as a headline (£40million), but the articles themselves outline how four options were being considered. Quotations from LORP project partners were included, and most of the newspaper articles refer to the ability of readers to see the options and respond through the LORP project website.

Following the exhibition, the documentary evidence suggests that project partners and members of the Stakeholder Group viewed the exhibition as a positive and successful event. Firstly, the LORP project partners received an email from an engagement representative at the Environment Agency to thank the team for their contributions to the event, and to say it was the “most well attended and professionally staffed public event I’ve been involved with”. Then, at the next Stakeholder Group meeting held on 2<sup>nd</sup> August 2017, the Chairman (representative of East Devon District Council and Budleigh Salterton Town Council) was recorded to have felt the event had been “very informative” and “well publicised”, and the Environment Agency was reported to have been “pleased with the attendance which was broadly similar to that at exhibitions into flood defence schemes in the area”. The minutes also note reference to the intention for a further public event when the project proposals have developed further: “On the basis of the event and information from technical investigations there will be another event. The group hopes more people will attend when there are firmer proposals”.

The Granary Lane representative was also recorded to have attended the exhibition and had said that “people would find it hard to say they had not been consulted, and that discontent around the process had disappeared”, and the Otter Valley Association representative suggested the exhibition “helped the project understand the views of the general public”. At the subsequent Stakeholder Group meeting (9<sup>th</sup> May 2018), the Granary Lane representative further reported that the exhibition had been “well received, has helped residents understand what the project intends to achieve and has answered a lot of the concerns”.

At this point, it appears as though the investment in extending the stakeholder group and undertaking an event in which resident could consider alternative options (rather than a single option proposal) had been positively received by stakeholder representatives and overcome some of the tensions that had arisen from the processes undertaken at the earlier engagement events. At this point however, it remains to be seen whether this is reflective of the feelings held among the wider community, and whether they feel they have been appropriately consulted. In the first instance, the South Farm representative was recorded in the August 2017 meeting to have been disappointed that they hadn’t been able to comment on the feedback forms prior to the event, which they suggested could have meant a

breakdown of feedback responses would have been possible to understand the views of the various groups, whereas the event feedback can only be presented collectively. Also, the Stakeholder Group Chair added that “while it was no criticism of the organisers he noted that around 2.5 percent of the population of Budleigh Salterton had attended. He would encourage more people to attend the next exhibition about the preferred option”. This is demonstrative of a challenge to public engagement widely; how can the project leads maximise project awareness and compel community members to engage? It may be the case that this event has been viewed positively by the project partners and key stakeholder representatives in a ‘top-down’ manner, but is this also how this is viewed amongst the community, or would alternative engagement approaches have been preferred? If so, how do community members feel the engagement should take place? In this report we continue to review the documentary evidence, which may shed some light upon these questions, but these are questions that will require further investigation with community members. The independent researchers who are authoring this report have the intention to hold a series of workshops with residents in the area throughout 2022 in which such questions are likely to be explored.

### **1.1.12. Leading up to the planning application (May 2018-September 2020)**

The 9<sup>th</sup> May 2018 stakeholder group meeting began with an update on project progress, which included recognition that ‘Option 3’ was the preferred option, although technical considerations are ongoing – particularly regarding impacts on South West Water infrastructure and drinking water. The minutes record that modelling has taken place, suggesting that Option 3 “would not increase flooding risk to properties but might increase water speeds at the mouth of the estuary”, although further modelling is continuing and the increased speeds were considered to reduce again later as the “estuary mouth may deepen and/or widen the channel”, and the statement of the meeting reports that “Analysis of the contents of the old tip raised no areas of concern in respect of potential leachates”. The remaining options were recorded to have been too expensive (Option 1), too risky (Option 2), or to have too few benefits (Option 4). Funding sources are still under consideration at this time, but the Environment Agency is reported as “still committed to the project and a follow up Public Consultation will be planned for later in the year”. This consultation is reported in the statement of the meeting to be likely held in late autumn 2018.

However, following a longer interlude than usual, there is no reference to another consultation event having taken place prior to the time of the subsequent stakeholder group on 24<sup>th</sup> September 2019. There are many updates given at this meeting however, which suggests this event may not yet have taken place as effort was allocated towards a multitude of technical assessments and securing funding (the Interreg funding bid – partnered with the Sâne Valley project – was about to be resubmitted, which included further letters of support from other organisations), and the more detailed planning designs and environmental statement for a planning application were being drawn up. It is clear at this point that, having decided upon

Option 3, consideration has been intensified upon the technical and physical aspects of the project. This does not however seem to suggest this additional consultation event has been cancelled altogether, rather that it has been 'postponed' until later. In the statement of the meeting, it is reported that there will be a "Small engagement strategy meeting to be held prior to the submission of planning" (which according to the minutes would include consideration into how to manage communications in the press), and that a "Public information session to be held prior to planning application submission". This shows that there is continued consideration of public engagement in this process, however its focus has now shifted from the opportunity to input into the development of plans for the Otter Valley (as was the intended focus of the Options Appraisal). Now that there was a deadline to meet that was imposed by the EU Interreg funding criteria, plans were now more firmly being developed ready for submission for planning approval. The events are now seemingly intended to be more informational. Indeed, the minutes refer to this session as a "combined information session" which will "form part of the planning application". It is further noted in the minutes that "objections at this stage must go through the planning portal", indicating that objections are now matters to be considered by the local council when reviewing the planning application and public responses to that, rather than something that will be directly addressed or integrated into the project plans at this stage. This said, the stakeholder group continued to meet, and the issues log remained open, with issues that have been raised by public and stakeholders throughout the process being reviewed and responded to, and the minutes recording that "consideration [would] need to be given to new residents who may not be aware of previous public engagement".

The final stakeholder group meeting (prior to the planning application being made) took place in September 2020. The information session that had been planned did not take place, reported within the minutes of this meeting to have resulted from the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and associated national restrictions. Instead, the project update records that the project partners "are now intending to hold a 'virtual exhibition' in tandem with the planning application". In these unusual pandemic circumstances which were rapidly changing, public engagement was likely to have become trickier and an online medium is most likely to have reached more people, particularly when the government restrictions required people to stay at home. However, it should be noted this information may not have been as available to non-digital users who could not access online mediums or lacked the knowledge on how to do so.

### **1.1.13. Continued direct negotiation regarding relocation of the Cricket Club (October 2016 – September 2020)**

Since the extension of the Stakeholder Group, direct negotiations continued with the Cricket Club. In the minutes of October 2016's stakeholder group meeting, it is recorded that the Cricket Club conditionally supported the project; the club "are happy to relocate if a suitable alternative is found and that the relocation paid for". In the statement of the later stakeholder group meeting of 1<sup>st</sup> February 2017, it is

reported that “The project was continuing to investigate sources of funding for the relocation”, which the Environment Agency were recorded as highlighting in the meeting as of importance; “without relocating [the club] the project options are limited and if no change is made future flooding cannot be ruled out”. Then, on 28<sup>th</sup> February 2017, a direct meeting was held between LORP and the Cricket Club, with representation from the England and Wales Cricket Board and local council at which potential avenues of obtaining funding were discussed in detail. This continues to highlight that particular issues may require more intensive levels of discussion, negotiation and investment if a project is to be able to take place. This is a very specific yet costly challenge. If the funds had remained unavailable, this could have resulted in a preventative barrier to the wider project. Ultimately however, in September 2020 it is reported in the Stakeholder Group minutes that a “Cricket pitch solution has been agreed to allow both projects to progress”. Planning had been granted to start work on the pitch, which was able to be funded as part of the LORP project.

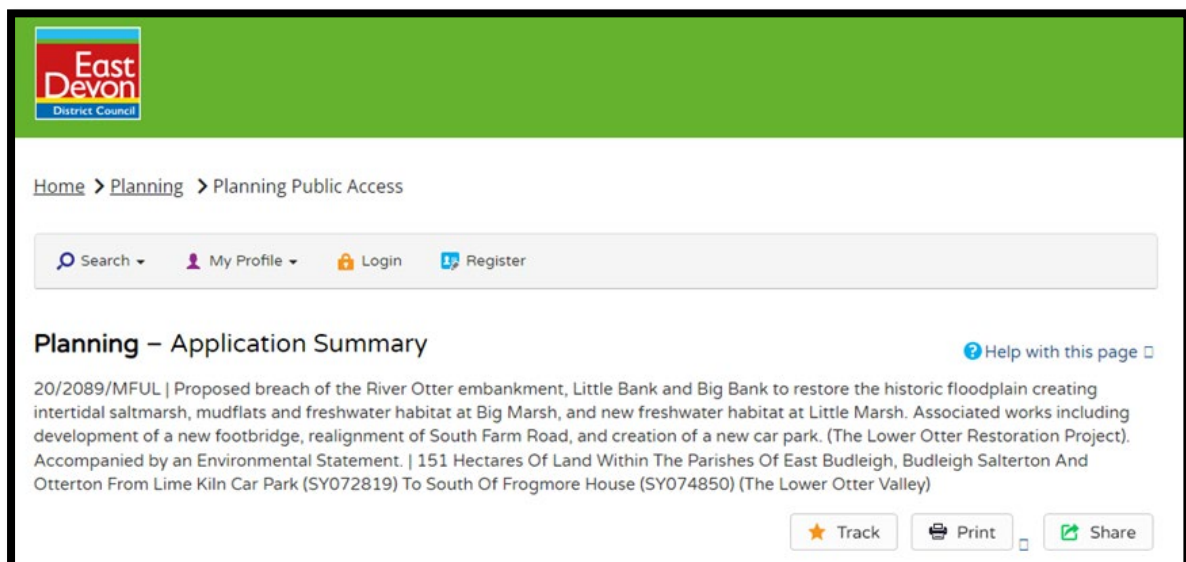
#### **1.1.14. The Engagement ‘Lesson Learned’ (September 2019)**

Interestingly, the minutes of the September 2019 Stakeholder Group meeting also record a “lesson learned” about the process of engagement. It is not recorded who made the observation or whether any comments were made by the wider group, however the lesson learned is recorded as “The importance of not engaging too early when not enough detail is available was noted”. Contrary to this lesson, as independent researchers and upon our review of the documents, we respectfully disagree with this point. There is evidence from the outset that the project partners were aware of the importance of public engagement in this venture, and there is evidence of efforts having been made to do so. However, in this evaluation, we identified that concerns raised by residents’ groups (e.g. South Farm Road and Granary Lane) referred to a sense of disempowerment; representatives of these publics expressed feeling they had not had opportunity to input into the plans during their development, with the early consultation events being perceived as a ‘single-option’ plan for comment. Therefore, rather than the tensions arising from engagement taking place ‘too early’, it is perhaps the case that it is more the *type* of engagement that took place that could be revisited. Perhaps there may have been a lower level of tension if the earlier engagement had had a focus on co-creating plans with residents from the outset. If there had been this opportunity for stakeholders and publics to learn from one another and co-create plans (perhaps then with further wider public consultation events held later), the potential feeling of plans being imposed may have been reduced. As an example, the ‘Ryedale Flood Research Group’ brought together scientists (modellers) and community residents. The scientists adapted their flood risk models to incorporate local knowledges, and to answer the questions of other group members. Thus, this led to an integration of the knowledges of scientists and local communities, helping to overcome controversies and “[enable] science to become relevant to local matters of concern”.

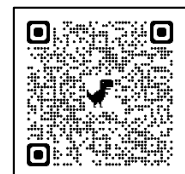
This said, the extensions of the stakeholder group and the options appraisal event are evidence of clear attempts to respond to the concerns raised and to involve people at a later stage, with a changed way of thinking about the engagement process with input from engagement specialists at the Environment Agency. Although there is evidence that engagement can become more challenging later in the process, these efforts to overcome challenges may be demonstrative that it is 'not too late' to engage more effectively in the later stages of project development, and that there are ways in which such challenges could be overcome if there is creativity, and a genuine and honest will to do so.

### 1.1.15. Planning Application Lodged (September 2020)

On the 28<sup>th</sup> September 2020, the planning application was finally validated with East Devon District Council, meaning that it was then open for responses. These could be submitted through the Council's online planning portal, or directly by post or email to the Council Planning team. The consultation followed standard Council procedure, accompanied with advertisement in the local press.



**Figure 8. The application summary as presented on the opening page of listing on East Devon District Council Planning Portal: <https://planning.eastdevon.gov.uk/online-applications/application/Details.do?activeTab=summary&keyVal=QHES3QGH09100> (Accessed 5<sup>th</sup> January 2022)**



The application was open for responses until 16<sup>th</sup> December 2020. During this time, a campaign group was formed by a group of residents in the area. The group was called 'Stop the Otter Swamp' and were quoted in the Western Morning News on 11<sup>th</sup> November 2020 as saying "Residents were taken by surprise when a planning application was lodged at the end of September quite unlike previous proposals [...]. Few people were informed about it, and most are still completely unaware of a



proposal which is of widespread significance.” It is unclear how widely this opinion is felt in the community, but the spokesperson for the campaign group here indicates its members may not have been aware of engagement processes that had so far taken place and they claim that ‘most’ community members are still unaware of the proposals. The group campaigned for people to object to the planning proposals, including on community Facebook pages, postal leaflets, and the establishment of a website called stoptheotterswamp.org (which was no longer available to access at the time of writing).

In the documentation, an email from one of the LORP’s communications team reports that there is a “lively” discussion on Facebook, following an individual writing a post to say they had received a Stop the Swamp leaflet and were upset at the proposals. They go on to say that “Perhaps not coincidentally, over the last couple of days, but particularly today, we have had an increase in the number of people signing up to the website database to be kept informed about the project’s progress”. The developments are a reminder of the emotive nature of this discussion, with the Stop the Swamp campaign coordinators indicating a strong sense of attachment to the Lower Otter valley in its current state; the press coverage reports them as further saying “If approved, it will destroy the Otter Valley as we know it forever”, indicating they feel the proposals would lead to a sense of loss of the landscape as it has been until that time.

The planning application received 566 responses, including 295 letters of support, 240 letters of objection, and 31 neutral letters. Following the closure of the consultation, the planning committee met on 6<sup>th</sup> January 2021 to review the proposals. The project was granted planning approval by a unanimous vote, thus permitting the works to start later in the same year.

## 1.2. Evaluation

### 1.2.1. Credibility of Records

A comprehensive record of 147 documents and historical records was provided for the researchers. These included: minutes of all stakeholder group meetings; internal project updates; correspondence from and to members of the public and organisations; the Haycock report; press articles; event plans; and display boards. This provided a thorough record that enabled a detailed account of the engagement process to be constructed.

The documents were compiled by East Devon Pebblebed Heaths Conservation Trust, but all stakeholder group minutes were approved by the respective group members and the record included documents written by both project partners and non-project partners.

**We conclude that the documentary record provides a credible and transparent account of engagement undertaken by the project, up until the point of planning approval.**

### 1.2.2. Integration

The project stakeholder group included representation from different political and administrative levels, from the national to local level. This included representation from: national-scale statutory agencies (Environment Agency and Natural England); district-level local authorities (East Devon District Council and East Devon Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty); the four relevant local town and parish councils (Budleigh Salterton, East Budleigh and Bicton, Otterton, and Colaton Raleigh Town Councils); and a local civic society (Otter Valley Association).

**We conclude that the project had a high level of integration, with involvement of local level authorities, statutory agencies, and national bodies.**

### 1.2.3. Legitimacy

The early stages of the process (prior to 2016) primarily involved organisational representatives and identified key stakeholders (e.g. South West Water and the local cricket club). Whilst it is recognised there was representation from a civic society (and local councils), there was limited opportunity at this stage for meaningful input from end users in the community.

The importance of wider engagement was recognised early on by project partners, and there is evidence of honest intentions to engage. Early community engagement events were held to discuss proposals. Plans were not firm at this stage, but the response from attendees indicated these were perceived to be a presentation of a single-option proposal, without yet having had opportunity for input during its development.

In 2016 the stakeholder group was extended to include representatives of resident groups (e.g. Granary Lane and South Farm), with an independent group chair from the local authority. The extended group opened with a discussion about what a “genuine dialogue” would look like, and an “Options Appraisal” event was later held. This event was developed between stakeholder group members, and it offered the wider public chance to consider four alternative options for the Lower Otter valley (informed by previous technical assessment and other suggestions). These moves show attempts to improve communication and involve the community more deeply in the direction of the project. The event was publicised online and in the local press, and 144 people were recorded as having attended.

Also in 2016, a project website was developed. This was regularly updated and included an ‘issues log’, in which concerns raised were recorded, with details given as to how the project had responded. Putting this information in the public domain demonstrates commitment to transparency.

Support was gathered from other stakeholder organisations, with example in letters of support provided for the Interreg funding proposal. These included letters from South West Water, Devon Wildlife Trust, and the Local Nature Partnership.

**We conclude that the legitimacy of engagement in project development was limited in the early stages, but that legitimacy increased from 2016 onward in response to feedback and with greater specialist resource, through efforts to involve publics in the extended stakeholder group and options appraisal event.**

#### **1.2.4. Creativity**

Concerns were raised that engagement had been focused on a single-option proposal, and there had not been consideration of alternative options. In response, an ‘Options Appraisal’ event was developed between the stakeholder group members, for the public to consider different options. This was based on previous options from the initial technical report and suggestions from previous public events, then refined to a short-list by the extended stakeholder group. This is a deviation from the previous approach to plan development, as here the intent was to allow wider public to input on the overall project direction through choice from a set of options.

There was a pre-existing access road to several properties at South Farm. At early engagement events, one suggestion involved the concept of tidal flooding of the road. However, response from South Farm residents indicated this would not be socially acceptable as it would restrict access at high tides, which was seen as incompatible with how they used the road throughout the day and in emergencies. Thinking then focused on raising the road to avoid tidal flooding, with a technical assessment commissioned. This proposal was ultimately included in the project plans.

**We conclude that whilst these are examples of creativity that demonstrate changed ways of thinking about future developments in response to different perspectives, the final plans remained largely consistent with early visions for the project.**

### **1.2.5. Further critical reflection**

We make three further notes in response to our evaluation:

1. Some tension was observed following initial outreach and early engagement events, due to the perception of pursuit of a single-option proposal. This may have meant the engagement of stakeholders and end users became more challenging later. Yet the increase in project legitimacy mid-way through the development of the Lower Otter Restoration Project (LORP) shows that constructive dialogue can still be opened; it may not be 'too late' to improve opportunities for knowledge sharing and meaningful input during project development stages. This was observed to be from a receptiveness to feedback among the project partners, and an openness to include different voices (e.g. demonstrated by the extension of the stakeholder group to include members of previously unrepresented groups).
2. We noted there was intention to hold a further in-person public event at the time of the formal planning application, but this was cancelled due to national COVID-19 pandemic restrictions that were in place at the time. The planning application was lodged on the East Devon District Council online planning portal, and LORP partners made further details available on the LORP website. Pandemic restrictions limited the ability for in-person outreach, but in the absence of such an event there may have been opportunity to increase the digital outreach during that time with further active use of social media (although we recognise that non-digital methods continue to be key for the accessibility of non-digital users).

This is a landscape-scale project, and landscape change can be emotive for individuals, depending upon their relationship to the landscape in its current form. This may be exhibited through passionate support for or opposition to a project. As per examples observed in this documentation, stress was reported by a tenant farmer in the early stages of feasibility assessment, and later at the planning application stage, a campaign group formed to oppose changes to a landscape that they valued. (Examples of passionate support and opposition were also observed in the high number planning application responses, which are reported on in section 1.3). We highlight this here simply as a point to remember, to encourage sensitive and compassionate discussions during the development stages of coastal adaptation schemes.

## 1.3. Additional thematic analysis of planning consultation responses

As mentioned, the Lower Otter Restoration Project was subjected to planning approval by the local authority (East Devon District Council) in line with planning regulations in the United Kingdom. This includes an eight-week window in which plans are open for the public to submit responses in support of, in objection to, or with a neutral view of a project. These can be submitted as written letters, or through online comments.

The plans for LORP received a high number of responses for a planning consultation, all of which remain available as documents in the public domain. As a result, this provides an additional resource which we have been able to analyse for the PACCo project site in England. For this report, we have conducted a thematic analysis of the planning responses received from members of the public to identify key features in their responses.

In this report, we have focused on the responses specifically from members of the public. In the second report, we will report on a series of interviews with stakeholders involved with the project, which will include organisational stakeholder representatives. As such, the organisational responses may be reported upon in the second report, with the interview findings.

For this analysis, we have employed an inductive coding technique. Initial codes were generated from the dataset. These were then reviewed and rearranged in context with one another to generate themes (in an approach as described in Castleberry and Nolen, 2018). This is a data-driven analytical technique, meaning that resulting themes are strongly linked to the data.

We analysed the responses in groups depending upon whether they were letters of support, objection, or neutral towards the project to explore themes related to each position. Here we present these findings.

In this section, we shall first present the themes we identified in the letters of support, letters of objection, and the neutral responses. We will then highlight areas where these indicate potential areas of controversy may arise between members of the local community.

**Please note, in this section we are presenting real comments from and perceptions of local community members. These may or may not be based in scientific evidence, and the reader may agree or disagree with the views of these people. The authors here make no judgement on what is the “right” answer, for this is not their role. The researchers instead seek to present views that exist within the community, which they believe to be informative for the PACCo initiative.**

### 1.3.1. Letters of Support

Whilst some of the letters of support provided only a general comment in favour of the project (for example, “This is a fantastic opportunity for many reasons. I hope this will be given the seal of approval”), the majority contained an explanation of their reasoning as to why they were supportive of the project. From the detailed reasoning, we identified five key themes in the data which we will present in this section. These include:

- Sense of gain and opportunity
- Future risk management
- Sense of good planning and trust
- A challenge of project objections
- Outstanding concerns and objections

#### 1.3.1.1. Sense of gain and opportunity

In many of the letters of support, it was clear that there was a sense of gain that the LORP could provide, or opportunities that may be available.

A summary of the potential gains or opportunities that were referenced are provided in Table 4.

**Table 4. Summary of perceived gains or opportunities cited in letters of support.**

Gain or Opportunity	Description	Further reasons given	Example quotes
<b>Benefits to wildlife and habitat</b>	Eco-centric view that project would be beneficial for natural environment, including reference to the creation of new habitats or habitat complexity, and benefits for wildlife	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-At a time of biodiversity crisis</li> <li>-Creation of specific habitat types (eg. saltmarsh, wetland)</li> <li>-Mitigation for habitats being lost elsewhere (broadly, or with specific reference to the Exe)</li> <li>-Supportive of principle of ‘ecological restoration’ and undoing human impacts on the landscape.</li> <li>-Supportive of ‘rewilding’ and perception that LORP is a rewilding project.</li> </ul>	“The proposal delivers a net gain for wildlife, creating a habitat of far greater value than the one it replaces”.

Gain or Opportunity	Description	Further reasons given	Example quotes
<b>Restoration of natural landscape function</b>	Opportunity to enable natural functioning in the landscape, with associated benefits for wildlife and/or for people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Provide ecosystem services</li> <li>- Reduced erosion damage.</li> <li>-Improved water quality.</li> <li>-Increased carbon capture (in saltmarsh)</li> <li>-Reduction in flood risk, such as by reconnecting river to floodplain, or water storage in the landscape. (See 'Managing Future Risk')</li> </ul>	“Restoring a historic flood plain should make a positive contribution to managing potential environmental damage [from] flooding in the future.”
<b>Tourism benefits</b>	Visitors would be encouraged to come to the area to see the new habitats and wildlife, which may benefit local community and businesses.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-References to 'ecotourism'</li> <li>-Bird-related tourism will benefit communities outside peak season.</li> <li>-Benefits for local business</li> <li>-Influenced by recent experience from COVID-19 pandemic, with greater appreciation for local nature gained when 'staying at home'.</li> <li>-Recent experience of tourism to see reintroduced beavers on the river, given as an example.</li> </ul>	“[It will] help make East Devon even more of a wildfowl and wader haven, and thus a birding tourism attraction, largely outside the traditional holiday times.”
<b>Better access</b>	Access to the landscape improved, with particular emphasis on improvements to well-used footpaths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Upgrades will help disabled people to access landscape</li> <li>-Leading to greater engagement with nature (including engagement of young people)</li> <li>-Contribute towards improved physical or mental health.</li> </ul>	“I am also pleased to support the upgrading of the western footpath which has the potential to provide greater access to more people to this area of outstanding natural beauty.”

Gain or Opportunity	Description	Further reasons given	Example quotes
<b>Improved visual aesthetic</b>	Project will enhance aesthetic value of the landscape	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-New habitats seen as more visually appealing than present landscape.</li> <li>-Will benefit from removal of unsightly infrastructure (e.g. aqueduct).</li> </ul>	“Beauty is in the eye of the beholder and I, for my part, favour the prettiness of an extensive area of diverse, naturally inundated wetland over that of a bland, uniform, bright green landscape whose original character has been pillaged by two hundred years of increasingly intensive agriculture.”
<b>New or improved infrastructure</b>	Improvements will be made to local infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Better access to South Farm (including reference to lower likelihood of road flooding).</li> <li>-Reduced risk of flooding to cricket pitch.</li> <li>-New parking provision.</li> <li>-Landfill site sealed.</li> </ul>	“A moved cricket pitch beats a submerged one every time.”
<b>Raised profile of local area</b>	The profile of the local area will be raised nationally	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Flagship project</li> <li>-Enhance progressive reputation of the local area</li> <li>-Raised profile within scientific community</li> <li>-Good for local authority reputation</li> </ul>	“This sounds a really brilliant idea to put the Otter estuary on the map as a superb nature reserve famed throughout the country”

### 1.3.1.2. Future Risk Management

The management of potential future risks to the landscape was identified as the second theme. Whilst it could be argued that this exhibits a sense of gain in form of a reduction of risk, we have presented this as a separate theme due to its prevalence in the data, and because it is underpinned by a sense that there is a risk of worsening impacts on the local community if no action is taken, rather than as a sense of gain alone.

Here, respondents highlighted their view that there are risks to the area and their community associated with climate change, and several referenced that this is a time of climate and ecological crisis. Risk was predominantly perceived to relate to an



increase in potential for flooding, which was most often linked to a potential rise in sea levels.

“Climate change with associated sea level rise and increased severe storm and rainfall events will eventually impact the lower Otter and this proposal builds much needed futureproofing for the area, its residents, amenities, habitats and associated species.”

Where this was cited, it was common for respondents to indicate that they viewed the project as a potential way to address the issue and increase the resilience of their local area in a managed approach. Some participants reported that doing nothing was not an option, for example:

“Doing nothing is absolutely not an option here.”

This project was seen among these respondents as an opportunity to be proactive, with a forward-thinking solution that would help the area to adapt to the environmental risks. Proactivity was viewed favourably, and as a preference over reactive approaches to future storm events. Among some responses that exhibited this view, further comments were made that this would likely be more cost-effective, with a managed and preventative solution to potential issues being cheaper than the potential costs of future damage if no action was taken.

Whilst these comments focused primarily upon this being a proactive approach to future risks, for some respondents this was further supported due to it being an approach that worked with nature. This principle was one that they viewed more favourably than other engineered approaches that may “work against” nature. For example, one participant indicated that they felt a natural solution was likely to be more effective and sustainable than human-engineered solutions:

“The big walls and big engineering like gabions don't work in the long term, they always get damaged aggressively and they need regular expensive repairs, plus they look awful! Working with nature to protect people's property works far better and this project will achieve that.”

### **1.3.1.3. Sense of good planning and trust**

Whilst the previous themes have been more focused upon the outcomes and aims of the project itself, this theme relates toward views of the project as a process. In this case, there were comments made that were supportive of the process through which the project had come to be, with a view that this had been well-planned. In particular, there were remarks made that indicated a perception that the project was well evidenced or researched, or that the application had been thorough.

This favourable view of the process indicates respondents' trust that the decisions that have been taken are well informed, with value placed on the assessments that were made for the project. This indicates trust in the project developers, and support for the project may also be informed by levels of trust more widely in authorities and

'experts'; one participant said they had trust in the planning procedure at East Devon District Council, whereas another stated:

"It's so important we put our trust in these experts right now, so that wildlife and people can benefit as soon as possible!"

#### 1.3.1.4. A challenge to project objections

In several of the responses, challenges were made in direct response to some of the objections to the project from other community members. We observed this to manifest in one of five ways. An overview of each of these is presented in Table 5.

**Table 5. Summary of the challenges made of letters of objection in the letters of support.**

Challenge	Details	Example quotes
<b>Reasons for objection are a misunderstanding</b>	<p>Misunderstandings in objections include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Perception of increase in flood risk</li> <li>-View that the spit/pebble bar would be eroded away</li> <li>-Worry that beavers or otters would be negatively affected.</li> </ul> <p>It was suggested twice that this could be a result of the engagement process.</p>	<p>"Many people seem to have commented objecting to this application but I don't think they understand this application properly. Perhaps this has happened due to a lack of publicity and awareness about the many benefits of this scheme?"</p>
<b>Negative characterisation of the tone of objections</b>		<p>"Objections to the project seem extremely narrow minded."</p>
<b>Negative impacts could be mitigated</b>	<p>Suggestion that reasons for objection are manageable and not a reason to reject the application.</p>	<p>"No doubt any objections (I can't think what) can be sensitively catered for within reason."</p>
<b>Negative view of the 'Stop the Otter Swamp' campaign which may have influenced objections</b>	<p>Suggestion there are issues with the campaign group tactics or its messaging, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-spreading misinformation</li> <li>-the campaign is emotive</li> <li>-there is a lack of transparency as to who is behind the project</li> </ul>	<p>"Just want to say fully support this application, and want to express my disgust at the campaign where an anonymous person/s or group are putting out views with absolutely no supporting evidence, that their opinion is correct and that of the planning bodies</p>

Challenge	Details	Example quotes
		is wrong. This looks to me like hidden agendas combined with false scare tactics, with no information as to who the objectors are, therefore making their credibility very doubtful.”
<b>Addressing suggestion that supporters are not local</b>	Response to suggestions in letters of objection that people who support the project may not live in the area (see letters of objection).	“Understandably, some residents are suspicious of 'outsiders' flooding the debate, and of course proportionate weight must be given to the opinions of those who live around the Lower Otter Valley. However, the environmental ambition of LORP elevates its importance to a regional and national level. When it comes to tackling climate change and biodiversity loss we are all stakeholders, and all opinions count.”

### 1.3.1.5. Outstanding concerns and suggestions

Whilst these respondents were providing letters of support for the project, some included references to some concerns they held about the project or respondents used the opportunity to make suggestions for areas requiring further assessment. Whilst these were not widespread in the responses, they did echo some of the concerns raised in the letters of objection when they occurred (an overview of which will shortly be presented). As an example, parking provision was one of the issues that was raised as an outstanding concern, for example:

“I consider enhanced provision needs to be made for car and bike parking given likely increased visitors to a new 'honeypot' site.”

Specifically, a handful of responses reported concerns about the engagement process that had taken place, indicating that they felt that better engagement could have prevented misunderstandings or emotive opposition from developing. For example:

“It is unfortunate that a wider consultation did not seem to fully engage the local community. I am certain that such an approach would have enabled many of the concerns and misconceptions raised in the comments to have been answered before this application was submitted.”

Whilst there are overall few letters of support raising issues in this way, this is indicative that concerns can remain among project supporters and that suggestions

could still be raised by community members about aspects of a project at the point when plans are formally put forward. In projects such as this that take place on the landscape-scale, the projects interact with multiple factors. The complexity this could entail may mean it is likely that concerns about specific aspects may still be raised, even among those who are favourable to the project. However, some participants suggest here that some of these issues could be addressed with what they view as ‘better’ engagement practice, and the early involvement of local communities.

### 1.3.2. Letters of Objection

Several of the letters of objection contained general comments such as “This is a terrible project. One word Object.”. However, similarly to the letters of support, the majority of letters of objection included further justification of their reasoning. From those that did, we identified six key themes in the data which we will present in this section. These include:

- Sense of loss
- Risk Avoidance: Risk of Detrimental impacts
- Distrust and power dynamics
- Criticism of the engagement process
- Alternative options not considered
- Issues with letters of support

#### 1.3.2.1. Sense of loss

In many of the letters of objection, it was clear that there was a sense of loss, with those losses associated with perceptions of the LORP’s impact on the lower Otter valley. These were reflective of factors that respondents valued and demonstrated a sense of attachment to within the landscape (or how they engaged with it), in its pre-LORP state. A summary of the potential losses described is given in Table 6.

**Table 6. Summary of perceived losses cited in the letters of objection.**

Loss	Description	Further reasons given	Example quotes
<b>Loss of wildlife and habitats</b>	Value was placed on the habitats and wildlife that already existed in the landscape, and LORP seen as a project that would lead to	-It is a time of crisis for biodiversity. -The value of the SSSI, AONB, and/or nature reserve would decrease. -Losses would be irreversible. -Would be a net loss, with new habitats perceived as of lesser value.	“Extensive and widespread destruction of existing grazing marsh, grassland, trees and hedgerows will result in the LORP creating significant biodiversity losses for the River Otter and its estuary [...] reducing the

Loss	Description	Further reasons given	Example quotes
	loss of these habitats and wildlife, or a replacement with new habitats and wildlife seen as of lesser value.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-New species or habitats shouldn't be at the expense of existing species.</li> <li>-Lose specific habitat types (e.g. hedgerows, marshland).</li> <li>-Lose particular species or groups of species (e.g. beavers, mature trees)</li> <li>-Nature has evolved a sense of balance in the current landscape.</li> <li>-Landscapes influenced by human activity also of value.</li> <li>-Opposition to concepts of 'restoration' or 'rewilding'.</li> </ul>	area to comparatively barren mudflats."
<b>Loss of visual amenity</b>	Lower Otter valley valued as a beautiful place, with LORP leading to a loss of visual aesthetic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Value placed on current green fields</li> <li>-Mudflats/saltmarsh seen as less attractive than the existing landscape</li> <li>-Lose attractiveness to visitors</li> <li>-New infrastructure would distract from natural landscape</li> <li>-Suggested to be in contravention of Local Neighbourhood Plans.</li> </ul>	"The Otter Valley is beautiful as it is. LORP's proposals would seriously detract from this beauty. Mudflats and reedbeds could only be unattractive in comparison."
<b>Loss of access to the valley</b>	Perceived loss of recreational access to the landscape.	Primarily a view that footpath access will be lost, but also potential losses for other activities such as water-sports. References also made to access to a pre-LORP landscape that is viewed as 'peaceful' or provides 'tranquillity'.	"Despite claiming to improve public access, the LORP will actually reduce it. The footpaths along the river which are used by many every day, will be inaccessible."

Loss	Description	Further reasons given	Example quotes
<b>Loss of human heritage</b>	Perceived loss of landscape character or features that are culturally valued.	-Lose human-built historical features in the landscape (including traditional farming). -Suggested this contravenes Local Neighbourhood Plans.	“I have been associated with this area for 54 years and do not want to see the ruination of what has developed over centuries, through natural and man made events- including traditional farming . It is as it stands part of our natural history and identity. We must not let it be Irrevocably changed in such a wide scale, costly and potentially ruinous way.”

Through these themes, it can be inferred that the respondents that raised these issues were attached to these factors as they exist in the current landscape: current wildlife and habitats; current visual amenity; current access to the landscape; and the human heritage.

Among these respondents, these could be defined as features of the landscape to which they are personally attached, and these are often features that may contribute towards their sense of local identity. These letters cite these as features that could be lost through landscape-scale change to a different and unfamiliar landscape, seen as of lesser value. For these respondents, it was wished that the project would not go ahead, with no desire for change in the landscape with a view to preserving what is viewed as a valuable landscape already. Thus, these perceived losses may feel very personal and as a permanent loss of identity. For example:

“I am a young Budleigh resident under 30 and my family have been here since 1966. I hope to live my life here and to safeguard it for future generations but not with this dreadful scheme. Take the Otter like this and you take away a huge part of my town.”

A small number of letters also referenced recent COVID-19 circumstances as a potential contributor towards their local attachment. This may have heightened the sense of loss for those individuals:

“I live in Budleigh Salterton and am a regular walker along the [River Otter]. During 'lockdown', this walk has been a saving grace especially for those of us who needed this beautiful environment to help with our general health!”

### 1.3.2.2. Risk Avoidance: Risk of Detrimental Impacts

Respondents also highlighted a range of detrimental impacts that could be introduced or exacerbated by the project implementation. These were subtly different from those described above that relate to a sense of loss, for these are specifically related towards a risk of introducing or exacerbating negative impacts in the lower Otter valley, as opposed to losing something that participants are emotionally attached to or identify with. Table 7 provides an overview of these potential risks.

**Table 7. Summary of the risks of detrimental impacts cited in the letters of objection.**

<b>Impact</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Further reasons given</b>	<b>Example quotes</b>
<b>Increase in traffic</b>	Risk of increased traffic leading to negative impacts, often cited as from increasing visitor numbers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Noise increase</li> <li>-Pollution</li> <li>-Safety risk</li> <li>-Congestion</li> <li>-Parking pressure (see next row)</li> </ul>	“Increased visitor numbers would inevitably lead to more traffic, causing congestion, pollution and parking problems.”
<b>Pressure on parking</b>	Risk of exacerbating existing local parking issues, including from increased traffic (see above) and other contributing factors.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-From increase in visitor traffic (see previous row)</li> <li>-Resulting from loss of parking elsewhere</li> <li>-Not enough new parking provision included</li> <li>-Already local parking issues</li> <li>-Worsening situation with roadside parking will obstruct roads for emergency vehicle access</li> </ul>	“Otterton is already a popular destination with tourists and the wider East Devon community, and the diminished parking at Lime Kiln car park, and White Bridge will impact on more vehicles parking on the roads in Otterton. I would like serious consideration be given to a public car park on the Western side of the village to lessen the impact on road parking”
<b>Pollution from landfill</b>	Risk of exposing the old landfill site, or perception that this risk is being ignored	Resulting from the construction for South Farm Road, or from seawater/erosion over time.	“The Scheme introduces risks of eroding the historic landfill exposing debris to contaminate the flood waters and cause harm to footpath users coming into contact with

Impact	Description	Further reasons given	Example quotes
<b>Economic impact on farmers</b>	Risk of losing farmland and resulting economic impact on the farmers	Loss of quality agricultural land	or inhaling contaminants.” “The Government is committed to supporting farming, particularly in the postBrexit world. Removing farmers' grazing land does the direct opposite.”
<b>Increased erosion</b>	Risk that erosion issues will worsen	-Erosion to beach or the natural spit, from increased tidal flow at river mouth. -Exacerbated erosion of cliffs near Granary Lane, with increased tidal flows at their base, and associated risks for local property.	“The Otter Head and pebble spit are one of my most favourite places in Budleigh Salterton. This project will see the pebble spit eroded by increased volumes of sea water. Surely we should be protecting this as a SSSI?”
<b>Increase in flood risk</b>	Risk that the project would increase risk of flooding for people and property	-Spit erosion leads to increased flood risk upstream -Project reliant on FAB Link (another project) to improve footpath 12, without which there will be no protection for Granary Lane. -Reduction in floodplain area -Reduced ability for drainage of fluvial and surface water, leading to flooding [often related to Frogmore Road or Granary Lane]. -Resulting from loss of trees. -Risk posed if fluvial flooding occurs at the same time as tidal surge.	"As for the flooding, over the 26 years we have lived in our house we have been able to observe the pattern of flooding. There are two kinds, all resulting from heavy precipitation up-river. The first kind is when the river is in spate and meets a high tide. The banks overflow and the floodwaters seep gently across the fields. The other is when the river upstream simply cannot cope with the amount of water, in which case the flood is more violent and surges across the road at Otterton, cutting off access. On several occasions cars have



Impact	Description	Further reasons given	Example quotes
			<p>been caught in Frogmore Road by this rapid inundation. [...] If the freshwater is not able to escape owing to tidewater reaching far up the valley there will be flooding.”</p>
<b>Contribution to climate change</b>	<p>Risk that project would contribute to greenhouse gas emissions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Increased vehicular pollution</li> <li>-Loss of trees</li> <li>-Mudflats emit greenhouse gases</li> </ul>	<p>“There is a high risk that the destruction of existing habitats will result in the significant loss of trees and other plants which currently work naturally to capture greenhouse gases and release oxygen into the atmosphere, to be replaced with mudflats which emit gases.”</p>
<b>Health risk</b>	<p>Risk of detrimental impacts on human physical health.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-From increase in mosquitos</li> <li>-From vehicle pollution</li> <li>-From contaminants exposed from landfill</li> <li>-From gases emitted in saltmarsh habitats</li> </ul>	<p>“The planning proposal raises other serious public health issues: there is the potential for the landfill site to leach poisonous contaminants, and for a significant increase in disease-bearing insects, especially the species of mosquito that thrive in salt marsh.”</p>
<b>Works Impacts</b>	<p>Series of negative impacts associated with perception of works during implementation stages</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Health (e.g. noise, stress, dust)</li> <li>-Reduction in access</li> <li>-Works traffic and impact on roads</li> <li>-Visual impact</li> <li>-Damage to field (compound site)</li> <li>-Visitor deterrent and loss of local revenue</li> </ul>	<p>“Two proposed years [...] of large plant works and vehicular disturbance on historically ill-maintained roads. Two years plus of stress, noise and pollution await the people of Budleigh.”</p>

Impact	Description	Further reasons given	Example quotes
		-Prolonged impact if works delayed	

Thus, the impacts described here relate to views of potential risks the project could pose. Often, these are underpinned by a sense of uncertainty as to the project outcome, with some perceiving there to be a lack of assessment undertaken, or a lack of evidence provided. For example, factors cited as requiring further assessment included impacts on traffic, parking, the landfill site, mosquitos, drainage, flooding, erosion, and impacts upon the spit.

There were many comments regarding a perceived lack of evidence or assessment on flood risk. Modelling exercises were undertaken by the LORP partners, but respondents often did not trust these assessments based on either their own understanding of how local flooding occurs, or the perception that certain factors had not been accounted for within modelling exercises. For example:

“We understand that the predicted impacts to the groundwater have been discussed with other [Environment Agency] specialist teams as the modelling and [Frogmore Road Association] have developed but cannot see evidence of the predicted groundwater level increases have been incorporated into the surface model forcings. We therefore would expect the predicted flooding (both tidal and fluvial) to be falsely reduced, owing to an even greater case for mitigation set out for surface water flooding above.”

For some, this uncertainty was related with what was perceived as a lack of clarity on what mitigation or ongoing maintenance would be included in the future, or a lack of clarification as to who would be liable if there were detrimental impacts for people and property. This could be linked to a sense of imposition, with an expectation that somebody should be responsible for issues that could arise.

“there is no mention of any support to properties affected by this work - how will it affect our insurance? What if we can't get insurance as a result of the works? What if we are at increased risk of flooding? We cannot see any mention of a contingency plan that if the plans are wrong and our properties or gardens are damaged, who will we go to for compensation and support to ensure our properties are insurable in future?”

Other uncertainties raised included a risk that the project would not be able to complete if funding was pulled, or that this project was too experimental, with no guarantee that potential benefits would be realised.

“Promoting Adaptation to Changing Coasts (PACCo) is using Otter Estuary as a pilot site along with another in France and if successful this idea will be replicated in other areas. How can we be sure it will work?”

Thus, for the respondents who highlighted these potential issues, the project was perceived as a contributor to risk and uncertainties in their local area. These

objections were being made in an attempt to prevent such risks being taken, or in an attempt to ensure there would be somebody who could be held responsible for any negative impacts. To these respondents, maintaining the valley in the present form that they know was seen as a preferred approach, and one that they felt would provide greater certainty for future outcomes in the landscape that they know.

### 1.3.2.3. Distrust and power dynamics

Whilst the preceding themes have related to the future impacts of the project and landscape change, power dynamics between residents and the project partnership were observed as a further influence on letters of objection. This included dynamics between the community and project partners or the landowner, with the partners and landowner perceived to hold a greater level of influence in the valley. Those members of the local community may perceive themselves to hold less power than those they view as more powerful actors in the landscape, and there is an attempt among these respondents to have their voices heard through their objections to this proposal. Often, this related to expressions of distrust of the ‘powerful actors’ and their motivations, perhaps influencing the sense that this project has been imposed upon them. Expressions of distrust were observed in several different ways, which are detailed in Table 8.

**Table 8. Summary of ways in which distrust was observed in the letters of objection.**

Description of distrust	Further reasons given	Example quotes
<b>Lack of trust in information provided</b>	-Suggestive there is wrong information in the documents, so question what else might be wrong.	“What other errors are contained in these plans and applications, upon which important decisions are being taken?”
<b>Based on perception that the landowner or partners are undertaking project for financial gain</b>	-Suspicious that improving South Farm access or use of green fields for project works could lead to new development -Perceived intention to commercialise the valley	“I oppose the whole idea and I think this application should be rejected. It is obviously an attempt to flood an already rich environmental area into a large watersports facility including future holiday accommodation and various commercial businesses associated with watersports and tourism.”
<b>Distrust in ability of landowner to deliver project based upon the perception they have</b>		“In the case of the lower reaches of the River Otter, whilst the Applicant is aware of the presence

Description of distrust	Further reasons given	Example quotes
<b>not correctly maintained the landscape in its current form</b>		of dead trees and vegetation impeding the free flow of water, this situation has remained unattended for a number of years. If therefore this is an example of the Applicant's understanding and interpretation of the EA's Directive ['Riparian Rights and Responsibilities'], how can we have confidence that the proposed floodplain will be any better managed?"
<b>Resulting from perception that the project is not in the interests of local people</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-View that primary motivation is to meet Environment Agency need to compensate habitat loss elsewhere.</li> <li>-Seen as a vanity project.</li> </ul>	<p>“The Environment Agency's involvement in the project stems from a need to provide compensatory habitat for losses identified in the Exe Estuary Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Strategy. [...] The Environment Agency have tried to introduce a version of this scheme in Topsham but were defeated by local residents and as such are looking to 'dump' their statutory responsibility onto the much-loved Otter Valley.”</p>
<b>Perception there has been a lack of independent oversight</b>	-Suggestions of vested interests in the project	“The lack of independent oversight should prompt an independent and fully inclusive review before any planning application is considered.”

#### 1.3.2.4. Criticism of the engagement process

There were numerous comments that related to the engagement process that had been undertaken in the development of the project, with respondents feeling that this

had been insufficient, thereby influencing their decision to submit letters of objection. We identified three main ways in which this was reported by respondents.

#### **1.3.2.4.1. Community disempowerment – lack of opportunity for meaningful input**

The most prominent of criticisms of the engagement process was that, in the view of the critical respondents, there had been no consultation with members of the public (“there is no public consultation”) or there had been limited opportunity to have meaningful input into the project design, despite what they often cited was a prominent need to hear from local people.

“Like many others I had no prior notice of this application which considering it’s size and potential impact on local residents is absolutely amazing. There have been no consultations or discussions held”.

Some suggested that the planning application had come as a surprise, and that the majority of local people were unaware of the proposals until notified by other local people, or through leaflets from the Stop the Otter Swamp Campaign. Others meanwhile were aware of previous LORP engagement events, but suggested these had been limited in their outreach. This includes suggestions that: event advertisement in the local newspaper would have only reached a limited readership; that only even-numbered houses on Granary Lane received planning application notices; that the project had not contacted everyone in the community; that the Stakeholder Group hadn’t represented all community groups; or that attendees to the previous events were not representative of the wider community. There were further suggestions that, in the planning application, there was little attention given to the accessibility of documentation as alternative formats weren’t available (such as hard copies for those who do not have internet access).

Comments such as these indicate a sense among these respondents that they had not been able to ‘have their voice heard’, or to meaningfully input into the project. Some respondents were unaware of attempts to engage and others felt the attempts made were insufficient. In either case, among these letters there was a sense of disempowerment in the decision-making process.

Interestingly, this sense that there had been a lack of consultation extended to the consultation for the planning process itself; there were some calls to postpone the application process until further consultation had taken place. For example:

“I believe this project should be delayed until such time as the residents of the area can be allowed the opportunity of a Public Consultation.”

In the planning process, the opportunity to submit letters of support or objection is described by local authorities as a consultation process, and the documentary evaluation above indicated that (in the late stages) the project partners saw the planning consultation as an opportunity for residents to have a say. However, this is a different view to how this planning process had been received by those who suggested that the consultation be delayed to allow for ‘public consultation’. There is

similarity in the language used, but a distinction is drawn in that the objectors do not view the planning consultation process as a chance to input into the plan, rather as a case of permitting or preventing the plans that have been made from going ahead. 'Consultation' as referred to here in these letters of objection appears instead to be referring to engagement in which residents would feel empowered, with opportunity to input into the decision-making and development of the proposal. The sense of disempowerment in these letters however is demonstrative that they hadn't felt this to have been the case and was used to underline their concern for and/or opposition to the project.

#### **1.3.2.4.2. Unanswered questions**

Further to the ability to input into project development as discussed above, other comments suggested that issues which had been raised over the duration of project design either had not been addressed, or questions remained unanswered.

“Many of the questions put to LORP over the life time of public consultation have never been adequately addressed. One would have hoped that before committing this project to planning all the concerns raised would have been resolved with those affected. This planning application still does little to alleviate the legitimate worries of those who live in and around the Otter Valley and in that LORP has failed.”

This is different to there being a lack of opportunity for meaningful input for it suggests recognition that there has been some opportunity to raise issues, but is a perception that the project has then been unable to address them in a satisfactory way.

#### **1.3.2.4.3. Planning Application Timing, and COVID-19**

Many of the comments that were critical of the engagement undertaken took issue with the timing of the planning application. There were two elements related to timing that were referenced: the duration of time available to consider the planning application, and the timing of lodging the application during ongoing COVID-19 pandemic restrictions.

Where comments were raised in the case of the former, those respondents felt they did not have long enough to consider the plans put forward for the project, often with reference to a high number or detail of documents to consider:

“With a fast approaching deadline and over 170 documents to study in detail, this feels like a fait accompli.”

More often however, the comments related to the timing of the application during ongoing COVID-19 restrictions. This timing was viewed negatively, with three main identifiable themes in the reasons given why, which are summarised in Table 9. Where these comments were raised, it was often stated that the respondents

believed the application should be delayed until restrictions eased and further consultation events could take place.

**Table 9. Summary of criticism related to the timing of the planning application during ongoing COVID-19 restrictions.**

Issue	Further details	Example Quotes
<b>Question ethics of application timing</b>	<p>-Public priorities currently focused on the immediate pandemic circumstances.</p> <p>-A few referenced a suspicion that the plans were being pushed through at this time to avoid public scrutiny, or to meet the funding deadline.</p>	<p>“2020 &amp; the country is dealing with Covid 19. People's efforts are focusing on their own daily lives &amp; not a rewilding project for the future. Therefore, in this unprecedented time, feel this application should at least be suspended until such time in 2021 when hopefully, we will see a type of normality returning.”</p>
<b>Inability to hold a public event in pandemic restrictions</b>	<p>-Usually there is a public event for projects of this scale, which could not take place at this time.</p>	<p>“The inability due to Covid-19 restrictions to hold a second public consultation and exhibition for which the LORP website does not satisfactorily compensate.”</p>
<b>Inaccessibility of project plans to non-digital users</b>	<p>-Pandemic restrictions has meant engagement has been online-only. Documents were hosted on the website but are not accessible to those without internet.</p>	<p>“We should not assume the local community to all be actively using the internet to analyse important documents pertaining to the biggest transformation of the landscape where they live. It is important that the people who live here are able to access adequate representation, since the local residents will be the ones to live with the outcome (consequence...or opportunity) of the decisions.”</p>

Whilst many of these comments relate to what are arguably unique circumstances associated with the pandemic crisis, underlying points about accessibility are transferable to other situations. Comments about ensuring plans or documents would be available in both online and in hard copy formats, or the provision of opportunities for in-person engagement events, are indicative of a need for a range of approaches through which plans can be made available, to make them accessible to different subsets of communities.

#### 1.3.2.4.4. Alternative options not considered

It was common for letters of objection to contain references to other options that they felt would be preferred to the proposals put forward by the LORP, sometimes with the suggestion that the project team had not considered such alternatives. Examples of alternative suggestions given included: strengthening the existing sea defences; restoring habitats on a smaller scale; dredging; allowing the tide in but with a slower-pace change; or ‘properly maintaining’ the river in a way perceived not to have been taking place in recent time.

Often, these comments were linked with the perception that the LORP proposals were expensive (sometimes reported as a ‘poor’ or ‘unnecessary’ use of taxpayer funding). Alternative options were considered to be more cost-effective, or it was viewed that cheaper options may be available.

#### 1.3.2.4.5. Issues with letters of support

In several letters of objection, issues were raised in direct response to letters of support. We identified issues to manifest in three main ways, as described in Table 10.

**Table 10. Summary of issues raised regarding the letters of support, in the letters of objection.**

Challenge	Details	Example quotes
<b>Suggestion made that supporters are not local</b>	-Seen by those making the suggestion that decision-makers should pay more attention to local people. -Suggest non-local supporters overlook impacts on local community	I am also disappointed regarding the number of non local people who have supported this application with little or no thought to the risks attached, and the very valid concerns of local residents.”
<b>Negative view of social media</b>	Whilst related to the suggestions many	“It’s been very sad reading the comments in the past two days



Challenge	Details	Example quotes
<b>campaign in support of the project</b>	supporters are not local, this is more specific to a negative view of the impact of social media campaigning on the planning process.	which appear to be the result of a social media campaign from certain focus groups. This has clearly undermined the planning application process, seriously damaging its credibility and distorting the genuine views of the local population to whom the proposed project directly effects.”

### **1.3.3. Neutral Letters**

The few neutral letters mostly contained elements already observed through the letters of support, or letters of objection. Some of the letters indicated that they had no objections in principle, while others reported on perceived positive and negative impacts of the project. This sometimes was presented as generally a positive view of the project, but with outstanding concerns or questions.

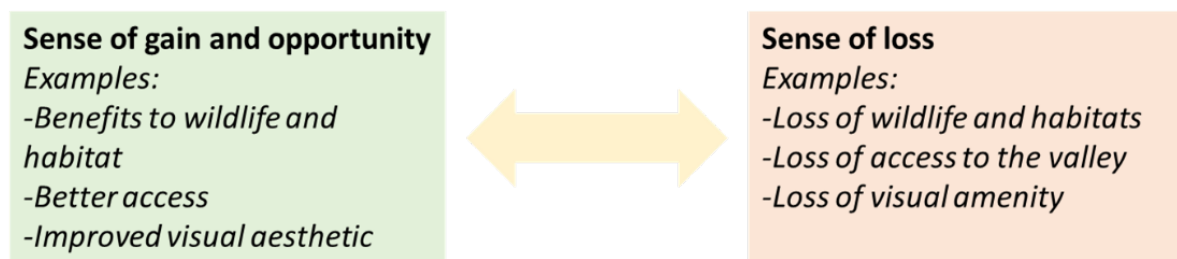
Matters referenced among the neutral letters that were viewed positively included, for example: improvements for biodiversity; improvements for South Farm Road; upgraded footpaths improving access for people with disabilities; and potential benefits from tourism.

Outstanding concerns or questions related to, for example: traffic; parking; erosion; flood risk; works impacts; or the visual impact. A few other comments also reflected concerns raised among letters of objection about the engagement process, particularly related to a perceived need for more time for consultation, a need for more awareness raising of the proposals, or a comment that suggests some comments are from non-local people which they see as valid, but with the suggestion that local views should be given greater levels of consideration.

### 1.3.4. Potential controversies

The Lower Otter Restoration Project is landscape scale. It is multi-faceted and interacts with various publics, locally and further afield. In the planning responses these features are reflected, with responses from various community groups, with multi-faceted and various reasons given as to why participants favoured or opposed a project. Through the scale and complexity of landscape-scale adaptation, it is likely that controversies may arise between different knowledges and views of and about the existing landscape.

Through this overview of themes in the planning responses, we have identified several areas in which there are contrasting views and understandings about the Lower Otter and LORP, which may contribute towards potential controversies arising. In some cases, there was polarity in these views. For example, some of the supporters perceived reduced flood risk as a gain or opportunity afforded by the project, but among some objectors the project was perceived as a contributor to an increase in flood risk for people and property. Similarly, there were polarised views between some of the specific factors that were perceived as opportunities or losses, as visualised in Figure 9.



**Figure 9. Examples of polarity between perceived senses of opportunity and loss.**

Where there is potential for polarity, there is potential for controversy between groups. Indeed, some controversy was observed directly between respondents within the planning response process itself, with some letters of support challenging letters of objection, and vice versa.

This indicates that issues may be emotive or value-laden. Further, projects will need to consider how to overcome potential divides in a collaborative approach to engagement. This was even highlighted by one participant in their letter of response:

“Dichotomy between campaign groups: The tit-for-tat dichotomy of "activist outsiders" versus "narrow-minded locals" is not helpful. Projects like LORP do not succeed without the collaboration of all parties, and depend upon with the goodwill, understanding and contribution of local communities.”

#### **1.3.4.1. Researchers' Remark**

Ideally, project development will involve the chance for respectful engagement and discussion between groups, and for a community to learn from each other and recognise different viewpoints, such as the kinds observed in these letters. We believe the findings from this thematic analysis continue to be supportive of a social learning approach to the development of coastal adaptation projects. Social learning facilitates the sharing of different knowledges and the integration of those knowledges into adaptation plans. This could help to overcome knowledge gaps or divides and, whilst the output solutions may not garner full consensus, we believe this approach is likely to lead to decisions that respond to social as well as environmental factors in an inclusive manner, thus empowering local people in the process.

## 2. SAÂNE TERRITORIAL PROJECT

### 2.0. A note on the scope of the documentary evaluation and timeline

This documentary study focuses on the engagement process undertaken during the development of actions being implemented within the framework of the PACCo project, as part of the Saâne Territorial Project (PTS).

The Saâne Territorial Project (PTS) is linked and related to other projects at different geographical scales in different sectors (urban planning, water management, tourism development, etc.) that partially overlap with its geographical boundaries.

Documents and related events will only be considered in this study in relation to the PTS, whose development process is being evaluated in this report. The process ran from 2012 to 2019. From this date onwards the project entered its implementation phase.

Due to the contextual complexity of overlapping projects, an additional timeline is here provided to provide clarity on the sequence of events that are described in the Engagement Story (section 2.1):

PHASE	DATES	Key Points
<b>PHASE 0 – 2003-2010: Re-estuarisation project</b>		Following a technical assessment, a proposal called ‘re-estuarisation’ with a hydrological focus was made to respond to flood risk and improve drainage. This was prior to the Living with a Changing Coast (LiCCo) and Saâne Territorial Project (PTS) projects. The re-estuarisation project did not take place because most local institutional stakeholders were reluctant to follow that plan.
<b>PHASE 1 – 2012-2014: Takeover and new start under Conservatoire du littoral and the LiCCo Project</b>	2012	LiCCo project takes over in the Saâne Valley, under the impetus of Conservatoire du littoral.
	December 2012	12 stakeholders (representing 14 bodies) gather for first LiCCo workshop led by Conservatoire du littoral. This included elected officials, representatives of user groups, and organisations with a water-related remit. It was an expressed intention for the project to make decisions with local actors. Tourism highlighted as a matter of key importance in the area, in particular the local campsite.
	March 2013	Copil (Steering Committee) and Cotech (Technical Committee) are set up.

PHASE	DATES	Key Points
	March 2013	<p>First Cotech is held with representatives of organisations, local authorities and the state. Participants called for project to include socioeconomic factors (unlike the re-estuarisation project which had a purely hydrological focus).</p> <p>Partners confirmed that the project will include assessment of the tourism situation (including the campsite).</p> <p>An initial 'roadmap' is developed with an extended timeframe for design, in response to stakeholder requests for a longer design period.</p>
	March 2013	<p>First Copil is held with 21 people, representing 12 organisations. Among them were actors from different levels including local authorities, decentralised state services, and the Water Agency. Socioeconomics were again raised as of significant concern (beyond taking a solely hydrologically focused project).</p>
	November 2013	<p>Second LiCCo workshop held with presentation of documentary research showing historical change in the valley.</p> <p>The regulatory context of the project was outlined; relevant new policies had recently been implemented and another was upcoming. Three scenarios for adaptation in the valley were introduced for discussion. It is difficult to determine the level of input participants could have into the scenarios.</p>
	June 2014	<p>Discussion on the scenarios continues in a LiCCo workshop. This alternates between discussion on potential climate change impacts and debate about the approach that actors would like to take. Different approaches include a radical approach to changing the landscape, a more moderate change, and no change at all.</p>
<b>PHASE 2 - 2015-2017: Transitioning into the Saône Territorial Project</b>	March 2015	<p>Interview with the President of Estuaire Saône Plus indicates their user association was created to gain access and receive information on the project, as this had not been available prior.</p>
	March 2015	<p>Interview with President of the Association of Bungalows of the Allee des Crevettes reveals their association was also created in response to a lack of ability to access information. They had distrust of those who led the re-estuarisation project and hoped for the PTS to keep them better informed and integrated into the project.</p>

PHASE	DATES	Key Points
	March 2015	Conservatoire du littoral attempt to better communicate project objectives with the local community by letter.
	June 2015	<p>Number of cotech participants increases to include consultants.</p> <p>There is some concern from representatives about project proposals. One of the three local mayors claimed that the proposals 'scare' elected officials, and another questions whether experts could be wrong about change in the valley. They ask if smaller scale proposals had been considered.</p> <p>Although there is disagreement, several attendees indicate they welcomed the multidimensional approach to the project which now includes local socioeconomic factors (e.g. relocation of the campsite).</p>
	June 2015	<p>A public meeting is held at Quiberville Youth Centre with over 100 attendees. There were questions from the community and uncertainties expressed.</p> <p>Local press reported that the decision to change approach away from that of the re-estuarisation project was welcomed.</p>
	June 2015	<p>A full day workshop is held with local authorities and a 'study group' commissioned to explore project feasibility. It begins without 'ready-made' solutions, and a post-it note exercise for attendees to outline their main expectations and fears for the project. A landscape walk is included for actors to share their thoughts and ask questions. In the afternoon, risks associated with the existing flood defence structures are discussed.</p> <p>Key concerns included: concern that the project would not be completed - influenced by experiences of the re-estuarisation project; the potential cost and source of financial resources; the impacts on the local bungalows; and future management of the dyke-road.</p>
	September and November 2015	Further cotechs and copils are held, with increased attendance and round-table discussion. These reflect a positive reception to the full-day workshop.
	December 2015	Conservatoire du littoral send a letter that includes words from the three local mayors. This includes a quotation indicating that efforts to improve communication around the projects was

PHASE	DATES	Key Points
		welcomed and demonstrated “that the projects are built in connection with the municipalities”. A mayor is quoted as saying that conclusions from the workshop “have been taken up and evaluated” and are ready to be translated into structural elements in the scenarios.
	March 2016	Second workshop held with representatives of 26 organisations (including five local user associations). The primary revised scenario was presented to the group with a further opportunity for them to comment.
	2018	<p>Cotech and Copils are held to discuss points raised in the workshop. There has been an increase in the number of organisational representatives.</p> <p>There is now a consensus behind the scenario to be implemented, and discussion increasingly turns to more specific aspects.</p>
<b>PHASE 3 – 2018-2019: Becoming PACCo</b>	December 2018	Funding source has been identified through PACCo initiative. This is viewed by the project as an opportunity to complete and implement a project that draws on the collective engagement of the LiCCo and PTS projects.



## 2.1. ENGAGEMENT STORY

### 2.1.1. PHASE 0: 2003-2010 Re-Estuarisation Project

Before tracing the history of the Saône Territorial Project (PTS), it is necessary to understand the context in which it emerges. The PTS, supported by the Conservatoire du Littoral, follows on from another project called "re-estuarisation", which can be dated approximately between 2003 and 2010. A study of the management of the lower Saône valley was commissioned by the Syndicat de Bassin Versant Saône, Vienne et Scie (SBVSVS) between 2003 and 2005, in reaction to multiple flooding events that occurred during the last decade. It had "evaluated the risks and concluded..." that a number of hydrological measures were necessary. The major risks were of river and sea flooding.

In this technical document, six scenarios were drawn and three were kept for further environmental analysis, because they were deemed economically and environmentally acceptable. Whatever scenarios were selected, these actions were presented as essential:

- The opening of the dyke
- Realignment of the Saône in the lower valley

Below is an extract from a study published in 2014 within the framework of the preparation of the STP (Etude globale pour la mise en place du projet territorial de la basse vallée de la Saône, Phase 1 : analyse de l'existant)

#### "Diagnosis provided by the study

The study's evaluation shows that the situation in the lower Saône valley is problematic on two main points:

- The management of the risk of fluvial flooding: in periods of flooding, the culvert does not allow sufficient evacuation of water to the sea. This situation is reinforced during high spring tides when the sea level is higher than the level of the Saône, which leads to flooding. Also, the layout of the earthen embankments in the lower valley creates traps which also increase the time needed to empty.
- The environmental situation of the lower valley is also problematic: the intrusion of sea water is very problematic: the intrusion of marine water is very limited by the presence of the one-way valve, which has the consequence of depriving the valley of the rich estuarine ecosystems that should theoretically be found as far as Ouveille. In addition, the valve prevents the movement of migratory marine species."

The document identifies the opposition between two approaches: hazard management (through the dyke) and vulnerability management (which calls for a transformation of the hydrological functioning of the territory), the latter being preferred.

In the event of inaction, the document points to the risk of rupture of the road dyke as well as the maintenance costs it generates, just like the culvert.

Extra-environmental issues are identified (such as land management in the area of intervention, or social acceptability of these fundamental changes) without being the subject of an in-depth study.

In the report from this study, the need for a re-estuarisation of the area is noted. The questions concern its magnitude (widening the culvert at 30m or completely) and its practicalities (e.g. timescale, or the future of installations affected by these landscape changes). The idea of re-estuarisation itself is not challenged.

The important point to note is that the main purpose of the study is to "respond to the risk of river flooding" and to "improve the drainage capacities of river water at the outlet of the Saône". The seafront dyke is highlighted as a second risk that increases the vulnerability of the site.

This document was commissioned and written a few years after several floods that affected the Saône Valley in January 1995, December 1999 and May 2000. A number of additional studies were commissioned between 2006 and 2010. As these do not fall within the scope of the evaluation, they will not be identified and commented on in detail here, but the history that pre-existed the development of the PTS must be remembered. The re-estuarisation project, with its grid of analysis aiming to understand the territory focussing mostly on its physical and hydrological features/characteristics, generated some tensions that minutes of the meeting account for and refer to on several occasions.

The re-estuarisation project that the study recommended was never implemented. The re-estuarisation project that the study recommended was never implemented **because most local institutional stakeholders were reluctant to follow that plan**. The LiCCo project (2011-2014) was then launched following the failed attempt of the re-estuarisation project.

## **2.1.2. PHASE 1: 2012-2014 Takeover and new start under the impetus of the Conservatoire du littoral in parallel with the LiCCo project**

### **2.1.2.1. Definition of the framework for designing the PTS**

The first challenge was to move away from the purely hydrological approach, to gather stakeholders and to earn their trust, after having been frightened by the re-estuarisation project.

The first workshop under the LiCCo project took place in December 2012. LiCCo is a European project bringing together a significant number of coastal sites in France and England that are subject to major risks in the face of climate change. This is a separate project from the PTS. Nevertheless, the two are closely intertwined as their respective objectives and timelines partially overlap. It appears from reading the documents that the workshops that took place within the framework of LiCCo served

as a "springboard" for the workshops that took place subsequently within the framework of the PTS, with the latter explicitly referring to the former. For this reason, the choice was made for this study to begin the evaluation from the LiCCo workshops.

The first workshop brought together 12 people from 14 different organizations, including elected officials from the three most relevant cities: Quiberville, Sainte-Marguerite-sur-Mer and Longueil as well as the Dieppe agglomeration. Representatives of some user groups were also present, such as hunters (The Federation of Hunters of Seine-Maritime, based not far from Belleville en Caux), as well as the ANCG (National Association of Big Game Hunters). Finally, stakeholders with a more operational role in managing and/or financing water-related works on the territory were also around the table. Stakeholders in the field of environmental management complete the picture with the National Botanical Conservatory of Bailleul.

The list of participants as well as the record of their respective interventions is an indicator of the good representation/involvement of political and administrative actors of different scales. This corresponds with the intention of the Conservatoire du Littoral expressed during the meeting:

"The objective of the LiCCo project, led by the Conservatoire du Littoral, in organising these workshops is to make decisions with local actors [underlined in the report] in the face of flooding and sea level rise phenomena."

If we focus on the type of interactions, the report clearly shows an open exchange where negative or critical feelings and perceptions can also be expressed. Elected officials were invited to express their perceptions and interests, which they did. They were able to share their perspective during the meeting and invited other participants to ask questions that were relevant to themselves.

"[The mayor] is worried about the decisions to come. As mayor, he is responsible for ongoing and planned works and developments. If the campsite that generates a significant income for the municipality were to disappear, or if facilities were submerged, the lack of funding or the "waste" for defence works not sustainable in time, would be blamed.

However, it must make decisions in relation to the campsite, a creator of employment and source of activity for the municipality. There is a similar question in relation to the dyke road: the destruction of the dyke road would make Sainte Marguerite at the bottom of a cul-de-sac, unattractive for tourists. If it is necessary to make choices they must be thought out on the right scale and an alternative solution must be integrated, especially for daily and summer trips. These choices the mayor cannot assume alone. They must be done in consultation with the services of the State.

"The elected officials are not against the fact that the Saône is experimenting with these adaptations to climate change and the evolution of the coastal zone but they do not want the Saône to be an experimental site. [The representative] of the Seine-

Normandy Water Agency had not funded the re-estuarisation study for experimental purposes."

From 2013, cotech and copil were set up to be held regularly. The first cotech took place on March 14, 2013, three months after the first LiCCo workshop. It had eight people representing eight organizations, including local authorities and decentralized services of the State.

A framework for the development of the Saâne project was proposed to them by the Conservatoire du Littoral at the beginning of the meeting, which was the subject of certain modifications at the end of it. The views of the participants were therefore well taken into account. The lengthening of the duration of certain stages of the process is a telling example; the participants asked that the deadline for carrying out the design work be extended (request to "rework the specifications in a less ambitious way and to provide for a reasonable execution time of between 12 and 18 months, specifying the times for proofreading and exchange."). The tender specifications were amended accordingly.

The participants of this first cotech define a fundamental aspect in the development of the PTS: that the hydrological studies (of which there were already many) had limited focus on the socio-economic dimension of the project.

"It is proposed by the members not to launch any additional technical studies, and to build the technical components of the scenarios only upon the existing one (studies carried out by the SBVSVS between 2000 and 2010). If we follow that idea, consultants should be given more time to analyse the current state of the situation and interviews with members of the local community should be planned.

"The realization of new studies will focus mainly on the socio-economic analysis and the legal study of the scenarios and the project. It will include, among other things, an analysis and a prospective study of the local tourist situation, and in particular on the future of the Quiberville campsite. All the socio-economic aspects were judged by all the members as a major element in the construction of the project, an element that was absent from the "re-estuarisation" project.

During this cotech, the various actors developed a first elementary roadmap (objectives, articulation with other projects in the territory, governance body, etc.) which will serve as a basis for the rest of the process.

#### **2.1.2.2. Stakeholders and type of interaction described at project start**

The first copil had a larger number of actors, as shown by the list of participants.

- Sous-préfète de l'arrondissement de Dieppe
- Conseiller régional
- Conseiller général du canton d'Offranville
- Président de la Communauté d'agglomération de la région dieppoise Dieppe-Maritime
- Président de la Communauté de communes Saâne et Vienne et maire de

- Quiberville
- Maire de Longueil
- Mairie de Longueil
- Maire de Sainte-Marguerite-sur-Mer
- Président du Syndicat des Bassins Versants Saône Vienne et Scie
- SBV Saône Vienne et Scie
- Département de Seine-Maritime
- Région de Haute-Normandie
- Directeur territorial et maritime Seine-Aval de l'Agence de l'eau Seine-Normandie
- Seine-Normandie water Agency
- Direction départementale des territoires et de la mer (DDTM)
- Direction régionale de l'environnement de l'aménagement et du logement de Haute-Normandie (DREAL)
- DREAL Haute-Normandie
- Délégué régional du Conservatoire du littoral
- Conservatoire du littoral
- Conservatoire du littoral
- Chef du bureau des affaires économiques et sociales – sous-préfecture de Dieppe

21 people speaking on behalf of 12 organizations were present. Among them, there were actors from different territorial levels: municipalities, department, region, State. This included: local authorities, decentralized services of the State and the Water Agency which is a key player on the subject. We can therefore determine that there is a high level of involvement and representation of political and administrative entities of different levels, suggesting a high level of integration.

The suggestions that the participants shared with the cotech were taken into account at the copil:

- on the naming of the scenarios
- as well as the names (their neutrality) and the number of (two rather than three) scenarios as a starting point for reflection.

"The three components that make up the project are: uses, the environment and natural risks."

"It is proposed that the relevance of a spatial re-composition of the lower Saône valley is studied

- Strategic Option A "Maintain the coastline"
- Strategic Option B "Prepare and implement the relocation of activities and assets"

In terms of types of interaction, participants had the opportunity to express their concerns: "discrepancy between the schedule of the territorial project (contracting envisaged in 2015) and that of the "contrat de Pays" and "contrat d'Agglomération, reluctance as to the "break of the road between Sainte-Marguerite-sur-Mer and Quiberville"...

They also do not hesitate to assert their interests: the need to "have guarantees (economic, social, tourist ...) in the face of the territorial project."

The possibility for the participants to criticize or to contest what is proposed is a constant of all the seven copils that have been analysed. They also had opportunity to make concrete additions and changes. The dynamics of co-construction are obvious. When necessary, documents are sent upstream, as is the case in the cotech of June 13, 2013.

"The analysis (...) was sent to all participants a week before to collect their comments in the session. Some comments have emerged on this part of the assessment:

- Figure 2 "Evolution of the population between the years 1975 and 2009": it would be interesting to complete the comparison with other similar coastal municipalities;
- It would be appropriate to integrate material concerning the Territorial Coherence Scheme (SCOT) to provide elements of comparison and to establish a link with the territory of the SCOT and its approach;
- The term "decline" of agriculture is not appropriate. It is preferable to use the term "transformation";
- The Syndicat Intercommunal d'Adduction en Eau Potable et d'Assainissement (SIAEPA) of Varengeville no longer exists;"

### **2.1.2.3. Designing scenarios within the framework of the LiCCo project**

The second LiCCo workshop took place in November 2013. It presented historical and documentary research, aimed at shedding light on the evolution of the landscape over the centuries. It then returned to the national strategy and the regulatory context to which the territory is subject. Part of the meeting was dedicated to feedback on philosophy and modes of action on the other side of the Channel to address problems similar to those of the Normandy coast. This workshop included a "debate" section, the content of which, as recorded in the report, is more a time for "questions and answers" in relation to the national framework and the English approach. The final part of the workshop focused on the prospective approach, with a presentation of hypothetical scenarios to be discussed at the following workshop." These were similar to possibilities for the evolution of the territory.

It is difficult to distinguish whether the scenarios sought to encourage a debate between several options that are actually possible and/or whether they took a didactic approach, aimed at raising awareness of the dangers of certain scenarios in the future. "The Conservatoire du Littoral insists on the perpetual modification of the profile of the coast, the culture of adaptation is necessary, and it is the objective of LiCCo to inform so as to sensitise local actors to the changes to come." ": reading this sentence, the approach seems to be of a didactic manner and of popularization of science. But in other places, a forward-looking approach is claimed to allow actors to decide together on their future.

The positioning of the LiCCo project seems to be halfway between information and participation. It appears necessary to inform about the characteristics of hydrological functioning in the valley. The scientific approach does not make it possible to predict the future, but it makes it possible to draw the broad lines with a high probability. It is therefore logical and desirable that the experts' work on the past and future of the valley be shared with local stakeholders. Nevertheless, the action to be taken in the face of a described situation went beyond the scope of scientific analysis and was a collective choice. The scenarios to help make this choice are not described in a completely neutral way. This can be considered as a necessary didactic approach but also as a prescriptive approach.

Reported below are the three scenarios as they were initially proposed for the impending workshop.

"Scenario 1: "Resist": the Conservatoire is forced to defend the coastline when human issues are exposed. A fixist approach to the coastline dominates, the population refuses to adapt to the effects of climate change."

Scenario 2: "Suffer": Climate change, by its magnitude, imposes itself on everyone without sufficient preparation. It requires a profound redefinition of the principles of coastal land management, sometimes in an authoritarian manner.

Scenario 3: "Adapt": the Conservatoire actively supports the territories in their adaptation strategy. Public policies are marked by a spirit of consultation."

The question of neutrality in the presentation of scenarios remains to be explored during the interviews and workshops that will be conducted by the authors of this report, will be reported on in the second report in December. It seems important to emphasise however that the morphology of the territory but also (and above all) the regulatory context ruled out certain scenarios. Some options are technically impossible and/or incompatible with the regulations. Without presenting them in negatively connoted terms, it is necessary to be clear about the parameters that hinder their implementation.

#### **2.1.2.4. Discussion about how the PTS is related to other projects and regulatory frameworks currently in development**

The development of a territorial project such as that of the Saône must have strong involvement of local actors, but they also do not have carte blanche. They have a responsibility to jointly design a solution to vulnerability problems that is acceptable to all, but they are not completely free in their choice as the solution they arrive at must meet the requirements of the State in environmental matters. At the time the PTS was being developed, new regulations had just come into effect and others were being developed that would soon be enforced. The following was recorded in the minutes of LiCCo Workshop 2:

"Point to remember: The articulation and the multiplication of initiatives: stakeholders are left with the impression of layers of legal frameworks and plans, yet the image of a "funnel" rather than a "millefeuilles" best illustrates the situation. The objective is to

cover a vast territory, which is done to the detriment of the accuracy of the procedures. In some territories where the stakes are higher or the phenomena more marked, more specific approaches are put in place; similarly, over time, the approaches take on a more strategic and less regulatory dimension. Coastal management is built in blocks, of which LiCCo is currently a pioneer on a local scale.”

The proliferation and regulatory vagueness represent a barrier to creativity that should be kept in mind when evaluating the TSP development process.

In March 2014, five months after the second LiCCo workshop, the first technical committee took place with the project team recruited as part of the PTS. The level of involvement/representation of the actors remains the same. In addition to the actors who have already been involved, there are three consultants.

The style of interactions observed does not significantly change: the dialogue remains open and the speech is distributed in a fairly balanced way, with the exception of the Conservatoire du Littoral which generally opens the meeting and presents the elements that must necessarily be brought to the attention of the participants.

"The Deputy Delegate of the Conservatoire du Littoral - Normandy delegation presents the various projects carried out by the Conservatoire du littoral that are in progress or upcoming:

- Supra-site management plan (Scie, Ailly, Saône): in the coming weeks, the Conservatoire du littoral will begin to write the supra-sites management plan that will cover a territory ranging from the lower Scie valley to the lower Saône valley via Cap d'Ailly. The document will present strategic direction for 10 years and an operational action plan (development and management actions) planned for a period of three years. In case of strong lack of support on the Saône (through the territorial project), the management plan will serve as a framework document for the strategy of the Conservatoire du littoral,
- The INTERREG LiCCo (Coastlines and Coastal Changes) project: the fourth workshop scheduled for 16 June (modification of the initial date scheduled for 26 June) will invite local actors to draw up the prospective scenarios for 2025 and 2050 in their territory. The debates around these scenarios should feed into the construction of the territorial project. In September, a final workshop will make it possible to present all the work of the project as well as the scenarios that will have been built collectively.”

#### **2.1.2.5. Extension of the stakeholders involved and themes to be discussed**

Regarding the degree of creativity, the last criterion that structures this critical reading, we must answer the following question: "To what extent do the documents resulting from the approach detach themselves from previous approaches (previous ways of thinking)"?

It is clear from the first copils and cotech that followed one another in 2013 and 2014 that several actors, from local authorities and decentralized services of the State,



wish to depart from the approach adopted in the re-estuarisation project. It was considered to be too focused on the hydrological dimension and several people expressed the desire to take the opposite of this approach, which seems to have had a "repulsive" effect on several of them.

"X of the Water and Aquatic Environments office, Resources Department, of the Regional Directorate of the Environment, Development and Housing (DREAL): concerning local political portage, at our level, the prefectural discourse is not sufficiently clear, and does not seem to have really moved for two years. The latest project may have frightened some actors, prompting greater vigilance today."

" X (Syndicat des bassins versants Saône, Vienne et Scie): the study must not be systematically swallowed up by the facts of the past. The territorial project does not only concern hydrology. It is necessary to go beyond hydrological constraints, to take into account the sustainable development of the territory. Care must be taken not to highlight only the hydrological side of the project (PPR, reconnection, etc.) but to bring other cross-cutting elements of the problem (economy, tourism, development, landscape, environment, etc.)."

The report shows a clear desire not to limit itself to technical and hydrological considerations resulting from studies produced by specialists, but to also give equal importance to the socio-economic dimensions that concern the actors of the territory, starting with elected officials.

It could be added that, in terms of stakeholder involvement/representation, the process is not limited to having all stakeholders around the table, but also to ensuring that the media on which information and deliberation are based are accessible to everyone. It is this that emerges from the following cotech a few months later.

The fact that the Water Agency requires all documents to have the same grid of analysis, which all people can understand and easily relate to, is an illustration of this.

"It is necessary to have a structuring with the same type of reading grid regardless of the type of analysis and not to multiply the repositories according to the themes. It is necessary to keep this coherence in the reading tools so that the actors are helped in the integration."

"Readability is one of the essential elements of dissemination."

#### **2.1.2.6. Uncertainty regarding the objectives of LiCCo workshops and regulatory framework**

In June 2014 the fourth LiCCo workshop took place. The project was presented to the participants as follows:

"The project "Coastlines and Coastal Changes" - LiCCo (2011-2014) is a cross-Channel Interreg project that supports coastal populations to understand, prepare and adapt to the effects of climate change. LiCCo is a pedagogical approach that

has made it possible to change the views of stakeholders on issues of adaptation to climate change."

The work on the scenarios seems to alternate between raising awareness of climate change (as presented above) and debating the trajectory on which the actors wish to embark.

"The LiCCo's pedagogical approach has made it possible to imagine prospective adaptation scenarios and to consider them with actors outside periods of crisis, in a context of anticipation, to converge collectively towards avenues of reflection and work on these issues of adaptation to climate change."

The naming of the scenarios has been revised, as required by the actors at the previous cotech. The first remained slightly negatively framed.

"The three scenarios were presented in the form of "ideotype maps", with the following titles:

- Many small steps to find an apparent serenity;
- Targeted action of the outlet;
- A turn for new shores."

In the next cotech, one of the participants suggested that there would be a lack of fairness in the treatment of the different scenarios.

"(The Syndicat des bassins versants) questions the exploitation of feedback. In fact, he recalls that this feedback should theoretically feed into the debate on the territorial project, but the examples presented are systematically linked to the optimal vision presented in the slideshow. To feed into the debate it would have been interesting to present it in connection with the minimalist vision 1 (examples: developments on the Durdent, the Yères or the Scie, Ault: displacement and relocation of tourist activities), in order to fuel the debate.

A presentation of examples oriented towards a re-estuarisation suggests that the choice is already made, while a priori, it is not."

"The principle is to receive the data and see what exists. If we want to be objective in the analysis we must analyse these two visions and allow them to coexist."

This comment seems to reveal a certain approximation as to the objective of the exercise based on scenarios: educational support or support for discussion (during the first copil it was asked that: "The discussions around these scenarios should feed into the construction of the territorial project.") The discussions with the actors in view of the second report for this work package will make it possible to know whether there was indeed a vagueness around the objective that could have possibly posed a problem for the actors. At this stage, we note the conclusions of the report Global study for the implementation of the territorial project of the lower Saône Valley Phase 1: analysis of the existing - Non-technical synthesis published by the Conservatoire du Littoral, the Water Agency and the Region in 2015:

"Overall, the territorial project will have to be part of the continuation of the work undertaken by the LiCCo program, more specifically on the results of the last workshop which led local actors to position themselves incompletely on different approaches to managing the coastline and adapting to climate change. The continuation of the territorial project will also be between foresight and greater consideration of local issues."

Two points already revealed by the analysis of the minutes of the meetings held to date, which are formally set out here, were also formalized.

- The difficult context in which the PTS emerges, following the project of re-estuarisation "aware of the difficulties encountered by the previous project of re-estuarisation of the Saône, based on technical solutions (in particular hydrological) not taking enough into account the local socio-economic context or the expectations of local actors, the Conservatoire du littoral and its partners wish that the project be built from a shared and prospective vision of the lower valley, in consultation with local actors and outside the context of crisis."
- The reduced room for manoeuvre due to the regulatory context "The transposition of foreign examples is complicated by the French regulatory context."

### **2.1.3. PHASE 2: 2015-2017 A critical moment in the consultation process**

#### **2.1.3.1. The importance of local representatives in the process**

2015 and 2016 are in a way at the heart of the STP. During these two years, a significant amount of engagement was carried out to build a vision based on the perceptions of all the actors, and to arrive at solutions that are compatible with the interests of all. The consultation is centred on institutional actors. Users without status within the framework of an association are not very present in deliberative bodies (copil and cotech). Nevertheless, they are the target of a number of events and materials in order to report in the most transparent and readable way possible on the process of developing the STP. The importance of informing all stakeholders, especially "ordinary users", in real time was stressed at the cotech in September 2014, following the fourth and final LiCCo workshop.

"Regarding communication, (...) this component should not begin at the end of the territorial project development process. Its integration into the process is important."

The simple and unambiguous record of the points of disagreement for the Phase 1 meetings reflects an open exchange, where conflict and differences of opinion are welcomed, and it is recognised where the participants' remarks have an impact on the outlines and content of the project. If we took as an indicator the involvement of "simple users" in the major co-construction spaces of the project that are cotech and copil, we would conclude that there is scope to increase the legitimacy of the project.

At this stage, and on the sole basis of the documents, the small proportion of simple citizens is not immediately to be interpreted as a flaw, for two reasons.

First, the number of institutional actors present far exceeds the number of citizens usually received in a public participation process workshop (from Lisode's experience). The institutional consultation in itself can therefore be considered to be a large-scale work, which is to be welcomed. The large number of institutional actors to be brought together is explained by the organization of public action in France. It is neither characteristic of the territory studied (Saône Valley), nor specific to the problem addressed (coastal development).

Secondly, we have no a priori evidence to say that this low degree of inclusion of ordinary users has in fact undermined the perceived legitimacy of the project by the inhabitants. The role of spokesperson provided by the elected officials of Quiberville, Longueil and Sainte-Marguerite-sur-mer may or may not be considered sufficient. Indeed, it should be noted that a large part of their speeches in the minutes of the various meetings in phase 1 as in phase 2 consist in asserting the perception and interests of the inhabitants in the face of regulations coming "from above" and the word of experts. Interviews and workshops in the field will make it possible to know whether the inhabitants felt sufficiently involved through their elected representatives or not. As a matter of prudence, we will not pronounce on this point on the basis of the documents alone. In the second report for this work package, findings from workshops with members of the local community will be presented which may help us to explore this further.

### **2.1.3.2. Citizens' strong demand for more information**

On the other hand, reading the interviews carried out with the user associations that were formed in response to the re-estuarisation project, one can conclude that there is a strong demand for information on ongoing projects.

In the interview granted to him in March 2015, the president of the Estuaire Saône Plus association explains:

"The association was created at the time of the redesign of the project in order to have information about this project. We had no information, the only way to be informed was to create an association and contact the press."

This interview appears as an attempt to appease and create bonds of trust with users, as revealed by the introduction from the consultant who led them.

"We are currently starting the 2nd phase of the study, which consists of the concerted development of adaptation scenarios. For this, we would like to have an exchange with you in order to better understand the problem of floods and collect data on past events."

Beyond this declaration of intent, the grid of questions used indicates that the person was considered as a potential source of information (and not only as a subject to be

informed), and that they also sought to understand his perceptions and aspirations about the future of the territory.

- Have you experienced any flooding?
- Do you have any documents on past floods and marine submersion since the 1977 floods? Photos, press clippings, damage data, ...?
- How do you see the lower valley evolving in 10 years, if we don't change anything?
- If we develop tourism and tourist activity on the territory, do you think that it would be a good thing for the territory (economic dev, source of jobs, diversification of the offer for them or on the contrary a bad thing (affluence, passage among the residents, pollution ...)?
- What are your expectations?
- Do you have any fears/worries? interests/hopes?

The president explains that fewer people had been active in the association lately. This decrease could correspond over time to the abandonment of the re-estuarisation project and Conservatoire du Littoral taking control of the problem of vulnerability of the territory through the PTS. "In the beginning there were 50 to 60 members, today we are much less numerous."

The same interview was conducted with the President of the Association of Bungalows of the Allée des Crevettes a few days later, also undertaken in response to a lack of information on the former re-estuarisation project.

The person fears that the project will modify or remove activities that they consider constitutive of the landscape. Their answers reflect a fear of losing what they have and the landscape as they have always known it. In response to the question "How do you see the lower valley evolving in 10 years, if we don't change anything? (Consequences of maintaining the current situation: in 2025 for example, how do you imagine your territory)" their answer is clear: "It must not change. The lower valley is fine as it is. We don't want a pharaonic project."

Beyond their apprehension about possible changes, the following point must be emphasized. Asked about their expectations, they first cited the modalities of development of the territorial project (to be respected, to have the information), then the results (to avoid expropriation without compensation): "We want to be respected. During the re-estuarisation project we were lied to. We had to fend for ourselves to get the information. They want to expropriate us without anything in return. We want to stay by the sea and not in Longueil."

In a second step, when asked what are their "fears/worries? interests/hopes?", they talk about the alternative solutions that they would like to be able to propose.

"I would like the project not to be like the previous one with disproportionate, extreme proposals. To manage the flood problem, the association proposes that a double or

triple culvert be made. It would cost less than what had been proposed in previous studies, but we are not being listened to.”

The interview ends with these words: "We want to be informed and integrated into the project and not to repeat the mistakes of the past where we felt betrayed. Information is paramount. You have to inform people, otherwise afterwards it goes wrong.”

### **2.1.3.3. Efforts to make the relationship between different public policies understandable for the general public**

At the same time as these interviews are conducted, the first letter from the Saâne is sent. It set out the steps, purpose, methods and timetable for the work of the PTS. It also clarifies its relationship with other projects and documents that frame public action in connection with regional planning. A pyramid-shaped diagram summarizes the role and interweaving of the different bodies (copil, cotech, etc.).

The letter sought to articulate the relationship with the other frameworks of action on the territory.

"Consistency with other approaches and projects

The search for coherence guides the development of the territorial project, and its project implementation will ensure a good relationship between all the approaches and scales of intervention:

- the Territorial Coherence Scheme (SCoT) of the Pays Dieppois Terroir de Caux already integrates the first reflections from the territorial project in its analysis ([www.paysdieppois-terroirdecaux.fr/](http://www.paysdieppois-terroirdecaux.fr/));
- the Saâne and Vienne Flood Risk Prevention Plan currently being written is being followed by the Conservatoire du Littoral ([www.seine-maritime.equipement.gouv.fr/](http://www.seine-maritime.equipement.gouv.fr/));
- the expertise and scenarios resulting from the Interreg LiCCo project feed into the territorial project which, for its part, represents an opportunity to pursue prospective reflection ([www.LiCCo.eu](http://www.LiCCo.eu));
- the supra-site management plan (Saâne, Ailly, Scie), established by the Conservatoire du littoral, will integrate the main direction of the Saâne Territorial Project.”

In this regard, the message of the letter is aligned with that carried by the Conservatoire du Littoral to cotech which takes place in May 2015.

"[Representative of Conservatoire du littoral] recalls and underlines the fact that the territorial project is not an approach from nowhere, that it is related with current or past approaches, with which it will have to find coherence:

- the SCOT Pays Dieppois Terroir de Caux;
- the LiCCo approach, which made it possible to define a prospective vision and possible trajectories;

- the management plan of the Conservatoire du littoral: this is a reference document for the action of the Conservatoire. It is currently being written, in parallel with the development of the territorial project. Its objective responds to a different timescale from that of the territorial project: the management plan responds to immediacy, while the territorial project corresponds to a longer timeframe. Both documents benefit from LiCCo exchanges, but also from other works and data produced (by the Botanical Conservatory of Bailleul, for example).

The Conservatoire ensures consistency between these documents.”

#### **2.1.3.4. Differences of perspectives between local representatives and state services but a shared satisfaction about how the exchange was conducted and framed (holistic approach)**

In terms of involvement/representation of stakeholders during this cotech, there is an increase in the number of participants which is explained by the presence of consultants. Ten of the fourteen participants took the floor to express their views (of the four people who did not speak, three are consultants.). These moments were therefore maintained as spaces for open discussion where words were exchanged.

The members of the cotech were able to question the geographical perimeter chosen for the study as well as the estimation of the economic damage/impacts in the event of flooding. Thus, the participants are not required to assimilate and take note of the analysis presented to them, the meeting is indeed the opportunity for them to participate and to question the points that do not echo their experiences and perceptions, as actors of the territory. One of the participants highlighted in particular the importance of taking into account certain aspects (here economic) which, although they cannot be measured scientifically, are of significant importance for the analysis on which decision-making will be based.

"The Seine-Normandy Water Agency (AESN): The likely impact of a flood on the decline in tourism activity must also be mentioned, even if it is not quantifiable, as this point may constitute a blocking point for the territorial project.) (X is surprised to see mention of "little impact on tourism activity" in the assessment of the prospects for the evolution of the scenario 'over the water'.)"

The cotech took place in June 2015. The report reflects the richness of the exchanges and the differences of opinion which the PTS will have to deal with.

The meeting is both an opportunity to inform about the experts' forecasts and to present scenarios for adaptation to the changes and risks to which the valley will (according to studies) be exposed in the future. Given the forecasts of experts, regulatory frameworks and methods of financing the territorial project, which requires financial support and therefore the validation of State actors ("The State will finance or help to finance, but only for a result deemed sustainable of the public money

invested"), the room for manoeuvre is relatively narrow and some changes seem inevitable: the relocation of the campsite on the one hand, and a form of reconnection to the sea on the other.

"[Mayor of Quiberville]: considers the presentation a little pessimistic and wonders about the future it draws for its municipality. Quiberville, without its campsite, is no longer Quiberville. Such a situation would weaken the finances of the municipality."

The elected representative of Longueil is also worried and distrustful of the studies and scenarios presented "[Mayor of Longueil] has a clear message to convey: Longueil is not in favour of the intrusion of the sea into its territory. The municipality wants to fight against floods, protect property and people, the environment... the scenarios that seem to emerge in this presentation scare elected officials."

The mayor appears caught between their role as spokesperson for the vision of citizens and the imperatives arising from the analysis of experts and regulations imposed by the State. In principle, it must at the same time reflect the position of its citizens and respond to the regulatory issues imposed by the State (which depend in particular on the analysis of experts on the evolution of the territory). These two responsibilities do not lead here to convergent actions.

Faced with their reluctance to consider the proposed scenarios, the representatives of the State put forward the fact that the study of the scenarios is necessary, since the scientific forecasts on which they are based are in their opinion indisputable.

"[Sub-Prefecture of Dieppe]: Ecology and sustainable development are a principle of realism, not a political option. There are physical laws: the sea rises. It cannot be prevented. With certain precautions it can be prevented from getting worse. The porter-à-knowledge (PAC) are not there to scare people, but to prevent. It is everyone's right to be a climate sceptic, but today the experts all agree.

[DDTM76] adds that the English Channel has increased by 20 cm in a century. In the coming years, sea level rise will take place, stormy phenomena will be more commonplace, and the territory will be more exposed to risks."

This meeting highlights tensions between taking into account the expert's view as required by the State (on which it relies to regulate) on the one hand and the role of spokesperson of the local populations of elected officials on the other hand. The prevalence of one over the other is questioned: "[Major of Longueil] specifies that experts can be wrong. On the other hand, they recall that elected officials represent their territory."

Also, this highlights a difficulty for the population to accept large-scale solutions to meet future challenges, to which it is not familiar, while it demands smaller solutions to meet present issues, which have not been considered ("The municipality of Longueil is concerned by very significant runoff from the hillsides. What is being done today for this?").



The representatives of the State do not answer the questions of the local elected representatives on social acceptability and what the populations want for their territories. They recall that public actors (representatives of the State and local elected officials) are guarantors of the general interest, which requires action to be taken in the course of adaptation and risks to which the coast is subject.

« (...) The actors now gathered have a special responsibility to take charge of the public interest. It is a question of providing territories in which citizens can live and work safely. They will change heavily, and if nothing is done we will be faced with a frightening scenario: which will then no longer be a scenario but an observation.»

Despite the differences in position on the substance, the copil ended on a positive note, with several actors welcoming the multi-dimensional approach that prevails in the development of the PTS.

"[Conseil Régional Haute-Normandie]: observation of satisfaction on the part of the Region with regard to this new approach, the transfer of skills, and the integration of themes other than hydrology. This approach has made it possible to bring together the actors, which is a source of great satisfaction.

[Seine-Maritime Chamber of Agriculture] stresses that what is satisfactory in the presentation made is that the objective is to protect people: it is no longer a hydrological project. According to him, a good territorial project must integrate three dimensions: the social (human, protection of men, employment), the economy, with agriculture in particular, and the environmental component. At a previous meeting (with the Conservatoire du littoral in the autumn) the presentation was based mainly on this last pillar, [Seine-Maritime Chamber of Agriculture] is satisfied to see the development of the project since that date."

### **2.1.3.5. Informing the public on the Saône Territorial Project and the re-esturisation project**

The year 2015 was particularly busy in terms of consultation and communication.

Three major highlights take place in June, in the weeks following the copil:

- the intervention of the Conservatoire du Littoral during the inauguration of the Saône festival (June 12, 2015) is cited in several meetings (we do not have a dedicated report);
- the public meeting (at the youth centre - Quiberville) for which we have the presentation material (ppt) and press coverage (no report);
- Workshop number 1, Construction of the scenarios for adaptation in the lower Saône valley of which we have the Powerpoint and a very complete report.

An excerpt from the local press informs us about the participation and content of the exchanges during the public meeting.

Wednesday 24 June 2015 - Paris Normandie

Quiberville. The Conservatoire du Littoral will coordinate the reflection on the future of the lower Saône valley.

Going beyond anxieties

"More than a hundred people came to listen, last Thursday, to the delegates of the Conservatoire du Littoral who came to discuss the Saône Territorial Project. Long supported by the Syndicat des bassins versants, this project required many expensive studies, which the conservatory will use to implement new solutions, according to the exchange that followed the presentation of Jean-Philippe Lacoste, delegate of the conservatory.

The mayors of the municipalities concerned, X for Quiberville, X for Sainte-Marguerite and X for Longueuil, were present, surrounded by very many residents worried about what awaits them and their properties. The questions rocketed, almost always in search of certainties that the conservatory could not really give them.

Nevertheless, it remains true that natural hazards now require precautions. The facilities located in the red zone will have to disappear, starting with the Quiberville campsites and six bungalows built near the river, in Sainte-Marguerite sur Mer. But the scope of adjustment must be adjusted, particularly in Longueuil.

Another certainty, the project of "re-estuarisation", qualified as "illusory" by the Conservatory, will probably be abandoned, to the great relief of [representative of Longueuil]: "it is out of the question that the sea goes up to Longueuil".

Described as "the delirium of a hydrological engineer by [Conservatoire du Littoral], the re-estuarisation will not take place, nor the installation of an additional culvert, since the threat is double between the risks of flooding and the risks of marine submersion.

"The future of the Basse Saône will be woven by consultations between the conservatory, the residents, the municipalities, the ASA of the river and the various associations that have been set up over the years. But consultation will not erase compliance with the rules, a necessity from which it will not be possible to escape. "Whatever happens, regulatory adjustments will have to be taken into account. We are here to find solutions to build together the future of the lower valley. If we do not do this, the regulations will apply anyway because in case of problems, the mayors of the municipalities would be responsible." note the officials of the conservatory.

Any questions

(...)

Questions remain unanswered: what about the road between Sainte-Marguerite and Quiberville? What about camping? What about the relocation of bungalow

owners? Some assurances however, things will go slowly, taking into account the imperatives, tourism among others, with a global approach to the issue. The idea is to come up with scenarios for adaptation by 2020-2050, by looking for funders.

### **2.1.3.6. Organization of workshops as part of the development of the Saône Territorial Project**

The first full-day workshop brings together local authorities, starting with the three municipalities most directly concerned by the future transformations of the valley, user associations, decentralised State services (DDTM, DREAL, etc.) as well as the actors who make up the "study group" commissioned to objectify what is feasible from a legal point of view (hydrology, etc.) and make informed decisions.

The workshop opens with the need to anticipate the future together, not on the proposal of ready-made solutions. The presentation material of the meeting insists on this point.

"Observation: territory exposed to risks, changing: no answer to these questions, but need to anticipate the future outside the context of crisis."

The workshop was organized as follows:

- presentation of the current state of the valley and the risks involved if no specific action is put in place. This scenario A has been called "over the water"
- presentation of scenarios B and C each corresponding to a global vision of a change in the valley, without constituting action plans referring to concrete measures or a specific timetable. They were developed as part of the LiCCo approach.

During the morning, after the presentation phase, time was dedicated to sharing the participants' feelings and questions.

"Participants were then asked to complete two post-it notes: one outlining their main expectation; the other their main fear. The setting and organization of the afternoon made it possible to close the morning." In total, 52 post-it notes classified into five themes were collected. The number of post-it notes is much higher than the number of participants, which suggests that each person was able to write at least one post-it.

The "Landscape Walk" should be praised for its approach and the importance given to collecting the voice of the actors. It avoided the pitfall of an educational walk, where the landscape was "explained" to the actors. In the report, the perception of the group on different elements of the landscape is synthesized effectively, without being homogenized. The points of divergence are noted when there are any: for

example, on the bungalows of Sainte-Marguerite-sur-Mer ("For some, they are the reflection of a popular architectural era, and they should be classified to preserve them. For others, this "bazaar" should be improved a little, to bring some vegetation...")

Running the workshops in the afternoon seems to have made it possible to disseminate information on the risks and capacities of existing structures ("Some thought that the developments carried out upstream, to curb and retain water, significantly reduced the exposure to the issue. It was useful to recall that these developments would be transparent for a major event, their capacity being low compared to volumes in the event of flooding.") without ostensibly orienting towards the solutions promoted by the experts - especially in the re-estuarisation project). Indeed, faced with the state of existing structures, their radical transformation is not presented as the only possible option: "the risk of dam failure is expected in the event of a high tide, which would make it possible to anticipate in part a disaster and evacuate the premises in case of risk, with the need to improve information and alert systems." (Excerpt from the thematic workshop "Living near a coastal river")

In essence, the workshop brought out the following points.

The fears expressed on the post-it notes at the end of the presentation of the different scenarios reflecting a certain apprehension show that the PTS comes in a context where many projects and studies have been at work for several years.

- "That all these studies will lead nowhere and do not lead to any work",
- "Let nothing be done in view of the procrastination of all kinds that we hear in all meetings",
- "Status quo, non-management of future risks",
- "An unfinished project".

The PTS emerges in a delicate context: studies and reports dating from before 2013 reflect the fact that time and energy have been devoted by some actors to this issue of vulnerability of the territory to climate change, but without result to date.

The issue of governance and financing, in a context of budget cuts and redefinition of certain regulations at the national level impacting upon the management of coastal territories at the local level, stands out as one of stakeholders' main concerns. The post-its transcribed below highlight this.

- "That financing does not follow in these periods of budgetary scarcity"
- "The future of the bungalows in the red zone: relocation? Near the sea is this possible? Or compensation? Who pays and how much without possession of the land?"
- "Cost? Supported by local authorities?"

This question was also present in the afternoon in workshop 2: "Regarding (the dike-road), the actors raised questions about its future management, its state, and the

means that will be made available for maintenance of the structure after transfer of GEMAPI skills (GEstion of Aquatic Environments and Flood Prevention)."

According to the report, the exchanges were of a high quality. One can simply regret the lack of time dedicated to self-assessment of the day, allowing participants to give feedback or make suggestions on program and facilitation choices for the next one. It is indicated that some actors continued the exchanges beyond the time frame of this day, which can be interpreted as a positive sign, in the absence of a time for formal self-evaluation (round table).

The holding of this first workshop specific to the PTS, building on the work carried out within the framework of the LiCCo project, seems to have had a positive effect on the collective dynamic. Indeed, there was an increase in the number of participants in the next cotech in September 2015, and a continuation of the level of interaction in exchanges. There are 14 participants whose speeches are recorded in the report, out of the 21 that attended the meeting (including three consultants). The Conservatoire du Littoral is delighted with the involvement of the participants: "beyond the complexity of the project we appreciate the dynamics and responsiveness of each person."

Another restricted cotech was held three months later, in November 2015. Here too, care is taken to give everyone a voice: a round table is carried out with all the members so that everyone can express their opinion on more concrete and precise scenarios.

### **2.1.3.7. In search of a balance between the regulatory framework and aspirations of local actors**

A second letter from the Saône appeared in December 2015.

The words of the elected representatives in the letter show once again that the Conservatoire du Littoral has taken charge of the Saône Territorial Project in an uncomfortable context. To the question "What do you expect from the expertise carried out on the territory (territorial project management, PPRI, SCOT etc.?)" the mayor of Longueuil begins his answer as follows: "One should note that efforts were made to better communicate on the projects in the making, which has left minds at ease. This more accessible approach has made it possible to demonstrate that the projects are built in connection with the municipalities and that there will be no forced decision."

In this second letter, the regulation and changes in local public policy frameworks are presented as a "challenge":

"In recent years, the lower Saône Valley has faced challenges (recurrent flood episodes, more risk regulation, territorial reforms)"

It is worth noting that the complexity and ongoing evolution of regulatory frameworks is not presented as an obstacle to meeting the "main" challenge of the territory's vulnerability to climate change, but as a challenge in itself. It will be interesting to investigate this further during upcoming interviews with stakeholders to find out if this representation in the document reveals a more or less strong and shared feeling on the issue.

"The year 2014 allowed the census and analysis of all the studies carried out on the territory over the last ten years. Covering all the themes, they make it possible to have a base of knowledge technically always relevant and to feed the reflections. However, as the social, economic and legal context has evolved in recent years, we cannot transpose these expertise as they are."

Care was taken through the three newsletters to give the floor to the three mayors of the primary municipalities concerned: Longueil, Sainte-Marguerite-sur-Mer and Quiberville. The highlighting of the figure of the mayor is an important point for the legitimacy of the project.

The letter seeks to show that the conclusions of the workshops are well taken into account: "These exchanges have been taken up and evaluated by the study group in order to translate them into a set of concrete and coherent proposals constituting the structural elements of scenario sketches".

"These sketches will be presented to local actors, particularly in the context of workshop number 2, in order to develop them and specify their methods of implementation. Elected officials will thus be able to make the decision to retain (or not) a scenario with full knowledge of the facts."

The document shows a sincere desire to report in a clear and intelligible way on all the projects at work in the territory. It seeks to bring to light the main projects in progress, their purpose as well as to reassure on the complementary and coherent nature that they form, despite the impression of overlap that emerges at first glance.

"The trajectories built as part of the Franco-English LiCCo project (Coastlines and Coastal Changes) are the result of consultation with local actors (see [www.licco.eu](http://www.licco.eu)). LiCCo is a project that aimed to support coastal populations to understand, prepare and adapt to the effects of climate change. The territorial project is not the implementation of one of these trajectories, but it relies on their characteristics to specify the wishes of the actors"

This communication measure is to be welcomed and appears necessary, insofar as, without this pedagogical effort, the PTS could appear as a "screen" project dedicated to giving the illusion of a consultation of actors in the field and users while the "real decisions" would be taken elsewhere. The Conservatoire du Littoral and its partners seem to have avoided the pitfall of the previous re-estuarisation project where limited

communication had left people in a state of uncertainty, which led to inhabitants worrying about the future of their territory.

This is particularly what emerges from an article in dieppe information (From 22 to 24/10/13) entitled "The Saâne re-estuarisation project put back on track"

"The project to re-estuarise the lower Saâne valley is now entrusted to the Conservatoire du Littoral, which will be responsible for carrying out the studies over the next two years.

"A project that is not without raising real concerns on the side of the residents of Longueil: will the estuary be 30m or 300m away? Will it go as far as Longueil? We find it difficult to project ourselves into the future with such uncertainty!"

The letter conveys a clear message, which is as follows:

- the experts present the field of possibilities, taking into account the regulatory, hydrological and (although the latter elements are less easily modelled) economic constraints
- elected officials choose
- users are informed

On the three letters are the contact details of reference persons. We have no information at this stage to detail the requests and exchanges with these referents. The interviews and workshops phase may help to shed light upon this point.

This is followed by another cotech before the second flagship workshop as part of the development of the PTS, the co-construction workshop number 2 : Presentation of the scenario sketch and collection of opinions. It involved 26 organizations including five associations that represented users of the landscape. The volume of notes dedicated to each part in the report also seems to indicate a fair balance between information (according to the work of the experts) and expression of local actors (7 pages of report on the debate following the presentation). Among the points of vigilance and interest identified by the actors, it is necessary to highlight the following: "Points of interest identified: Turning the amount of constraints into a development project".

#### **2.1.3.8. Discussion on how desired measures to be implemented fit with upcoming legal framework**

The following cotech is an opportunity to return to some points of the workshop, and to once again express the uncertainties surrounding the regulatory and institutional context "the institutional context is not stabilized (recent regional elections, Notre law, GEMAPI competence);".

In 2017, the increase in the number of participants continues (increase in the number of organizations and the number of people per organization) while maintaining the level of interaction and the equal opportunity to speak. PTS stakeholders appeared

to have reached a consensus on the overall trajectory and discussions were now focused on increasingly specific aspects.

As the discussion focuses on aspects that are increasingly oriented towards the operational aspects of the vision to which the actors are working, the question of its administrative and financial support occupies an increasingly central place in the exchanges. At the cotech of December 2018, the question of the relationship with other action plans with which the PTS must integrate on the one hand, and the regulations to which it must submit on the other hand, is at the heart of the discussion.

Several passages of the report illustrate the work on relationships with the action plans and regulations at different scales, on different sectors (urbanism, environment, etc.): Risk Prevention Plan (PPR), Local Urban Plan (PLU), coastal PPRN, GEMAPI.

"The municipality of Quiberville also planned to maintain some bungalows on the plot of the old campsite; which is not possible for regulatory reasons related to the Risk Prevention Plan (PPR)."

"The hydrological development of the minor bed of the Saâne on the downstream part will generate a large volume of materials to be managed and evacuated, a section could be upgraded on these two hectares. (Overall, the balance will be largely in surplus in terms of excavated material). The State services are asked to see if this development is possible with regard to the regulations on flood risk (PPR)."

"Mention is made of the creation of a site developed for direct sale by fishermen, as well as reflections on the future of the former oyster farm. Concerning this, the negotiations with the owners and the design of the project are not sufficiently advanced to integrate it into the revision of the PLU (whose approval is expected in 2019). In this case, the municipality (supported by the appropriate experts) continues its reflection and local consultation on this subject. It will always be possible to integrated into the project during a revision of the urban planning document.

"The wish of the municipality of Quiberville to keep the upper strip of the current campsite to make it a non-permanent load shedding parking space must be integrated into the AVP study. This question will have to be raised with the sub-prefect before the Copil of 13 December.

Reminder: the coastal PPRN will soon be passed. That will have to be taken into account.

"Mention should be made of the difficulty associated with the designation of the contracting authority. Today, we do not know them. The SBVSVS is the contracting authority for the studies. The contractor will be the political/administrative entity that



will be in charge of the “Gemapi” regulation that will be the main contractor for the realisation part.

The involvement of new actors is welcomed, evident in the extracts of the Powerpoint (ppt) presentation above, is welcomed: "The importance of the partnership dimension of the territorial project is underlined and the fact that it has been further strengthened thanks to the involvement of new actors as well. It must continue in its implementation. [Conservatoire du Littoral] insists on the communication aspect, in particular with the site (population and its elected representatives)." Including more actors is demonstrative of increasing levels of integration.

#### **2.1.4. PHASE 3 - 2018-2019 Enlargement of the group of stakeholders involved in the process and convergence of views and perspectives, and the search for funding**

The territorial project also includes the upgrading of the wastewater treatment plant in Longueil. In the minutes of the copil (steering committee) that took place on 11/09/2019, it is presented as follows:

"(Communauté de communes Terroir de Caux) presents the water sanitation project in the communes of Longueil, Ouveille la rivière and Saint-Denis d'Aclon (slides 49 to 57). Communauté de communes Terroir de Caux (CCTC) will take over responsibility on 1 January 2020, and will therefore be the project manager for this operation. The aim is to increase the capacity of the treatment plant, relocate it outside the flood zone, and connect the homes of Longueil, Saint-Denis d'Aclon and Ouveille- la-rivière. This will reduce the sources of pollution of the coastal river and the beaches of Quiberville and Sainte-Marguerite."

The relevance or need to improve the water and waste water services has not been in the object of fierce debate during the process of definition of the Saâne Territorial Project. Once the practical questions (who would be responsible and who would pay for it?) were answered, there was no discussion about whether it should be done.

At the same time that some questions on the regulatory level finally seem to be resolved (for example: "it is now certain that the SBVSVS will have the Flood Protection of GEMAPI skills on the terrestrial part."), a solution to the pressing question of financing was found through the PACCo project.

This was presented at the copal of December 2018. It was essentially seen as an opportunity to complete the collective work carried out on the Saâne Territorial Project since 2013 by the Conservatoire du Littoral. Formally it is a "new project". But in terms of dynamics on the ground, this is rather the last step in a process that has been underway for a long time. The LiCCo project, the PTS and, finally, the PACCo project are part of a single approach: to respond to the environmental, economic and

regulatory challenges related to the vulnerability of the territory to climate change. Thanks to the involvement of stakeholders, coordinated by the Conservatoire du Littoral, a convergence of analysis and vision has emerged over the years. The funding for the various works on which a consensus was beginning to be built was nevertheless pending: the PACCo project appeared as an opportunity to respond to it in order to allow the finalisation and completion of all the concerted work accomplished so far.

This solution seems ideal, but the methods and response times were of concern to the actors.

A first application is submitted and receives a negative response in April 2019. A second application is submitted in the autumn.

"This PACCo project would finance three of the operations of the Saône territorial project: the Quiberville tourism tool, part of the Longueuil sanitation and the coordination of the territorial project (slides 6 and 7). The deadline for applications is October 11, 2019, for a response on January 28, 2020. As the PACCo project is limited to three years, the operations financed at 69% by Interreg funds end on 31 March 2023 with an end of the project on 30 June 2023."

Despite the difficulties in responding, the partners were mobilised and, after two successive submissions of files, a favourable response was finally obtained. Following this process of engagement in the project design, PACCo opened the door to implementation of a plan that resulted from this collective effort.

## 2.2. EVALUATION

### 2.2.1. Credibility of Records

This documentary evaluation is based on a set of 135 documents:

- Reports and presentation materials of stakeholder meetings known as comités de pilotage (copil – steering committee) and comités techniques (cotech – technical committee)
- Studies and reports produced as part of the Saône Territorial Project (PTS) and the projects directly related to it (starting with LiCCo project)
- Interview reports
- Communication and informational documents aimed at citizens
- Press articles

These documents were compiled and shared with Lisode by the Conservatoire du Littoral.

Some events have not been reported but are mentioned several times (e.g. Saône festival). These are referred to in a coherent and consistent manner in other documents.

**We conclude that the documents provided accurately and transparently reflect the engagement process in the development of the Saône Territorial Project (PTS).**

### 2.2.2. Integration

The approach taken by the Conservatoire du Littoral includes a wide variety of actors: local authorities and administrations, decentralized State services, and community associations. We will not name them all. The list of most frequent participants who were regularly present at the consultation events between 2013 and 2019 included representatives from local authorities known as “collectivités locales” (Commune of Longueil, Commune of Sainte Marguerite-sur-Mer, Commune of Quiberville-sur-Mer, Syndicat Mixte des Bassins Versants Saône Vienne Scie, Departmental Council of Seine-Maritime, Normandy Regional Council, Agglomération Dieppe-Maritime, Dieppe Pays Normand, Communauté de communes Terroir de Caux); local public agencies and institutions (Seine-Maritime Attractivité, Etablissement Public Foncier de Normandie or EPFN, Conseil Architecture Urbanisme et Environnement or CAUE); decentralised services and State agencies (Direction Départementale des Territoires et de la Mer 76 / Service Territorial de Dieppe ou DDTM76, Préfecture de région or SGAR, Sous-Préfecture de Dieppe, Agence de l’eau Seine-Normandie or AESN, Direction régionale de l’environnement de l’aménagement et du logement de Haute-Normandie or DREAL, Office Nationale de l’Eau et des Milieux Aquatiques or ONEMA); and several user associations (Association syndicale autorisée de la Saône – ASA Saône, Fédération Départementale des Chasseurs 76 – FDC76, Association Agréée pour la Pêche et la

Protection du Milieu, Aquatique – AAPPMA, Association des bungalows de l'allée des crevettes, Association pour la Défense de la Saône).

**We conclude that the project had a high level of integration, with involvement of local level authorities and agencies, decentralised agencies, and community associations.**

### **2.2.3 Legitimacy**

Support for the Saône Territorial Project from the Conservatoire du Littoral was announced in 2013. At that time, several other projects were already underway. Prior to this a reestuarisation project had been proposed that would involve opening the dike and realigning the river channel, to address hydrological objectives. What makes the PTS different is its timeframe (being a long-term project), its holistic approach (previous projects were very much focused on a single dimension - the hydrological aspect), and the way in which it aimed to involve all political and administrative levels in the process and make sure that all interests are represented.

The list below presents major actions undertaken to allow the voices of community association representatives, as well as people from the area, to be heard:

- Hiring of a project manager dedicated to the project on site from the beginning of the project in 2013
- Interviews in 2015 with community associations representatives
- Dissemination of communication elements (panels, Saône newsletters available on the Conservatoire du Littoral website)
- Public meetings and presentations at several public events ("Fête de la Saône" i.e., Saane Festival) in 2015
- Inclusion of community associations in the copils from 2013, with an increase in the number of actors from 2016

The community was informed about the project through many public events. Representatives of users' associations were able to take part in the discussion and decision-making stages through copil/ steering committee.

Zimmerman et al. define legitimacy as "Inclusion of stakeholders and end users, and consideration of their interests/views". In a conventional western (i.e. representative) democratic approach, one could suggest that the role of elected representatives is precisely to voice the interests and views of the people whom they represent. From this standpoint, the inclusion of elected representatives (such as mayors) would already ensure a level of legitimacy (if minutes account that they actually voiced the interests and concerns of citizens). Within the framework of this evaluation, which follows a social learning approach, we are looking at direct inclusion of local people from the community (not just elected ones) and to what extent opportunity is given to them to voice their concerns themselves.

**We conclude that the organisation of public events from 2015 onwards and involvement of community associations (which increased in number from 2016) contributed towards the legitimacy of the project, but there may be opportunities to increase this with further involvement of local citizens. This will be explored further in the interviews with stakeholders and workshops with community members, which will be reported on in the second report.**

## **2.2.4 Creativity**

Considering the legal framework in France for coastal areas (which must be complied with), the scenarios that stakeholders worked on during workshops led by Conservatoire du Littoral between 2013 and 2019 as part of the engagement process were relatively open. The process avoided the pitfall of a purely technical approach that puts hydrological parameters at its heart, drawing conclusions and setting up a plan based on the work of a small number of actors (an approach which had led the previous re-estuarisation project to be rejected by most stakeholders). We suggest the following factors can explain how and why this was avoided: studies that were launched during the process focused on socio-economic considerations; and the process was framed as a collective effort to design a comprehensive and holistic project for the territory and the community as a whole, rather than as a search for a “solution” to a physical phenomenon which represented a “problem” for the territory/community. Efforts were made to gradually co-produce a solution, step by step, through a process comprised of many meetings where each participant could contribute.

It is important to note, however, that the French policy context restricted the range of possibilities. It is also worth highlighting the complexity of developing the project from both a legal and hydrological point of view, rather than from a situation where the actors would have free range to imagine a project borne solely from their exchanges and aspirations.

Rather than seeing the gradual emergence of a project built on a shared analysis and brainstorming process, this project is born through a back-and-forth communication between technical experts and political monitoring by local elected representatives in the copils/steering committees. This is made clear through the analysis of documents provided.

From this constrained framework a territorial project emerged that was different from the previous re-estuarisation project: more progressive, more consensual and above all more comprehensive, taking socioeconomic factors into account (e.g. the importance of local tourism) alongside the hydrological issues. . This does not completely break with the approach of the previous re-estuarisation project insofar as it involves a more natural functioning in the valley and a Land-Sea reconnection. Nevertheless, this approach appears to be a necessity both from an environmental and regulatory point of view.

**We conclude that there is evidence of creativity in the development of the project, considering the limited room for manoeuvre due to legal constraints**

**and responsibilities weighing on some of the actors involved. Indeed, there was a shift away from the original re-estuarisation proposal upon which the Conservatoire du Littoral had to build a new project, with a different mindset and broader objectives in response to stakeholder feedback.**

## List of Abbreviations

CDE – Clinton Devon Estates

Copil – Comités de pilotage (steering committees)

Cotech – Comités techniques (technical committees)

EA – Environment Agency

LiCCo – Living with a Changing Coast Project

LORP – Lower Otter Restoration Project

PACCo – Promoting Adaptation to Changing Coasts

PTS/STP – Projet territorial de la Saône/Saône Territorial Project

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