

# **MANAGEMENT BOARD FOR THE ELING EXPERIENCE CENTRE**

**MINUTES OF MEETING  
10th April 2025 @ 2.30 p.m.**

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## **PRESENT**

Councillor J. Heron (New Forest District Council)  
S. Cook (New Forest District Council)  
J. Cooper (New Forest District Council, deputising for Alan Bethune)  
Councillor L. Harris (Totton & Eling Town Council)  
Councillor S. Shepherd (Chairman of Policy & Resources Committee Totton & Eling Town Council)  
Susan Cutler, Town Clerk, Totton & Eling Town Council  
Alison Foster, Eling Tide Mill Experience Manager  
Personal Assistant to Senior Leadership team

## **1. APOLOGIES**

Apologies received from A. Bethune (New Forest District Council)  
A. Mills (New Forest District Council)

## **2. REVIEW OF ACTIONS AND AGREE MINUTES FROM MEETING HELD 7.11.24**

Actions from previous meetings were discussed under individual agenda items below. The minutes were agreed as a true record.

## **3. REVIEW OF ELING EXPERIENCE BUDGETS/FUNDING AND PROVISION**

Budget information circulated prior to the meeting was referred to. It was noted that the bridge toll income for February was £8k against the annual budget of £60k. It was felt that these income increases were partially due to closures of or incidents on the A326.

## **4. UPDATE ON MACHINERY REPAIRS AND SCHEDULE OF WORKS**

Representatives from the New Forest District Council had visited the site and reviewed the surveys which had been commissioned over the last few years. It was stated that they would be working with a specialist architect to prioritise the initial works required, and this would be reported back to T&ETC. However, T&ETC stated that they should be involved in and have input to these conversations. It was stated that an extraordinary Board Meeting would be convened to discuss the works and

timescales once further information was received from the architects. It was agreed that the initial budget sum of money from NFDC was for interim work to repair the wall, the sluice gates and the wooden beams, to get the mill working for demonstration purposes. It was reported that some of the repair work which had been reported as being done, had not in fact been done.

It was agreed that one of the challenges regarding the surveys which had been completed, was that the estimates given were provisional figures and could vary considerably in reality and are likely to be increasing over time. It was stated that the architect had not yet provided timescales for the initial work, but that the list of priorities will be produced and will be time based, eg to avoid winter frost etc.

It was stated that further funding of the £750k-£800k required for medium- and long-term remedial work was still to be sourced, and it was felt that the ETME would be a more viable proposition if visitor numbers increased once the Mill was working.

The ETME Manager stated that no application had been made yet to the Heritage Lottery Fund, and that any application would have to come from NFDC. A meeting to discuss this would be held with the Town Clerk and the contact from St Barbe's Museum in Lymington.

It was reported from the NFDC that the future reorganisation may complicate funding and that resources were stretched as priorities for senior officers had changed. However, it was confirmed that things like the Tide Mill were very important, and Councillor Heron stated that he was keen to get resolution and confirmation as soon as possible. The ETME Manager thanked the NFDC officers for their continued support, enthusiasm and commitment.

5. UPDATE ON 3 YEAR BUSINESS PLAN AND 2024/2025 OPERATION PLAN PROGRESSION

It was reported that both Plans had been completed and signed off after consideration by all parties.

6. TOLL BRIDGE REPAIRS AND WEIGHT RESTRICTIONS ASSISTANCE

It was reported that the eel pass was in place and the only outstanding item was to put the camera in to record the eel movement.

Regarding the sea gate automation, it was reported that the outcome from a recent meeting with Exxon Mobile, was an informal agreement that they would fund the design and works, which will be done by Fishtek. The agreement was still to be drafted and signed and costings made available for servicing before engaging Fishtek.

A supplier has been sourced for repair work to the bridge and quayside and this would start 22/4/25. The programme of work was estimated to take 7 weeks, during which time the bridge would be kept open.

It was stated that continued pressure should be put on HCC to put things in place to help enforce the weight restriction, such as hatch markings and stop signs. In the meantime, the toll keepers had been given wording to use with drivers of vehicles which they are over the weight limit. Sat Nav systems now show the bridge as a toll bridge which is progress, but it was not known whether Google Maps had been updated.

7. LEASE AND MANAGEMENT PLAN

It was stated that a Maintenance Plan would need to be produced, in order that the Lease and the Management Plan documents could be reviewed, discussed and clarified, to ensure they are in alignment, and contain clear definitions of what is day to day maintenance and what is not.

8. TOLL BRIDGE FEES AND EXEMPTIONS

The ETME Manager reported that they had received feedback from some toll bridge users who now preferred to avoid the toll bridge rather than pay the increased toll fare.

In addition, it was noted that the change in charging hours so that the bridge toll would now apply over the lunch hour had been put in place.

9. QUESTIONS

It was stated that a meeting should be held asap to try to progress repairs and get works started before the winter season. It was confirmed that the budget agreed for the initial works would still be available if the works were not started before next budget year.

The meeting closed at 3.20pm.

