

DRAFT PRESS STATEMENT

DART ESTUARY ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT (DEEM)

The Estuary Partnership that has led many environmental projects on the River Dart has reluctantly agreed to end its current working arrangements on 31st August 2007.

This situation has been brought about by a series of cuts in budget that have particularly effected public sector organisations such as the Environment Agency and English Nature – now part of Natural England.

Over the past ten years, DEEM has helped deliver a wide range projects with partners like the Sharpham Estate and The National Trust at Greenway. These projects have included improving landing quays and encouraging use of the river in sustainable ways, water quality improvements and shell fisheries development. The recent seal study and conservation work, the `Hole in the Wall' study and tidal power proposal, plus the recent EU supported Cycleau programme of initiatives.

The Dart Harbour Authority and District Council are both founding partners of DEEM and remain committed to working closely in partnership. Simon Ellyatt Chairman of DHNA said “the river has benefited from the knowledge and skills of Ray Humphreys as its Estuary Officer and we must ensure that the legacy of this work is not lost”. The County Council, who are also funding partners have been in discussions with District Council officers to consider what options now exist to continue elements of the work that benefit the Estuary, which is a key feature of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). District Councillor Rosemary Rowe said “we are very disappointed that we cannot continue and are keen to examine an alternative approach with DHNA and other partners, to protect this part of the AONB”.

The Dart Estuary Conservation Forum which has meetings twice a year will meet again in the autumn to consider its future. Ken Carter, Head of Landscape and Leisure (SHDC) pointed out that the Forum had been a vital way of engaging all users in environmental matters, such as Climate Change and coastal issues outlined in the emerging Marine Bill and Water Framework Directive. “We shall be working with exciting and potential new partners in establishing a new approach for the Dart and other Estuaries along the South Hams coast”