

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE SLAPTON LINE STEERING GROUP HELD  
AT FOLLATON HOUSE, TOTNES, ON WEDNESDAY 5 MARCH 2014**

<b>Present:</b>	Cllr J H Baverstock Chris Brook Kate Cassar Alan Denbigh Jon Grimes James Kershaw Jim Morrison Andy Pratt Robin Toogood John Wardle	SHDC and Stokenham Ward Member SHDC Engineering Manager SHDC Head of Assets Slapton Line Partnership (SLP) Project Manager Natural England SHDC Environmental Health Officer DCC Area Engineer Field Studies Council (Slapton Ley) SHDC AONB Manager – Chairman Environment Agency
	Sue Amos	SHDC Member Services – note taker
<b>Apologies:</b>	Cllr R Foss	SHDC

**1. APOLOGIES**

The Chairman, Robin Toogood, acknowledged the apologies forwarded to the Forum.

**2. OVERVIEW OF THE SLAPTON LINE STEERING GROUP**

The Chairman gave a brief overview of the Slapton Line Partnership (SLP) with the following points:

- The SLP was established in 2001 following major storms that damaged and closed the A379, otherwise known as the Slapton Line.
- The Slapton Line Steering Group (SLSG) was formed to gather together the various interested parties and to set up partnership structures.
- From 2006 – 2012 the SLP's work was funded almost entirely by DEFRA and the South Devon Coastal Local Action Group.
- The SLSG had not met since 5 March 2012 due to no major events occurring to the Slapton Line and with the SLP Project Manager's employment contract finishing.
- The policy had been to maintain the A379 as long as it was practically possible with an understanding that when a complete breach to the road was to occur at some point in the future, it would not be repaired.

**3. MINUTES AND ACTION POINTS FROM THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

The minutes of the last meeting (circulated with the agenda) of the Group held on 5 March 2012 were confirmed as a correct record.

#### 4. RESPONSE TO RECENT STORM DAMAGE

Following are the points made during discussion of the recent storm damage to the Slapton Line and Torcross:

- The two most recent storms in February 2014 caused damage to the middle car park as well as properties at Torcross and moved a lot of shingle onto the A379.
- Twenty properties at Torcross were damaged with three properties being flooded when the sea went over the sea defence wall. In addition, several properties suffered shattered windows.
- The Environmental Health Officer requested a report on individual damaged properties and the Environment Agency representative agreed to provide one.

**Action: John Wardle to provide James Kershaw with a report on individual damaged properties at Torcross**

**POST MEETING NOTE: John has subsequently confirmed that the figure of 20 properties came from DCC but the EA does not have the postal addresses**

- With regard to the middle car park:
  - The Engineering Manager confirmed that the car park was now open and safe but was undefended and therefore vulnerable to more storm damage.
  - Most of the damaged concrete block defences had been removed from the beach but some fabric was still embedded in the shingle.
  - Revetment blocks had been reused to mark a new seaward edge of the car park but reconfiguration still needed to be done with new white lines.
  - The Engineering Manager had requested from the Car Parks team a business case for restoring the car park and to provide figures of the loss of parking revenue.
  - The Engineering Manager estimated that the loss of parking capacity had been approximately 40 parking spaces.
  - The policy for managing the front edge of the middle car park was to work with the new beach head as it now was. A policy framework was in place for managed retreat.
  - In answer to a query as to the solution to defend the middle car park, the Group was informed that revetment blocks did defend against normal storm damage and could be reinstated but there were question marks over how this could be funded.
  - The Engineering Manager informed that there were engineering solutions available if a decision was made to defend the car park. A written agreement would have to be sought from the landowners and Natural England. The Natural England representative said that he would be reluctant to see hard engineering solutions (gabions or rock revetment) put in place as hard engineering in one location can accelerate erosion of adjoining sites. The Field Studies Council representative said that he was in favour of soft engineering (shingle bastions) and held no strong views as to whether the car park should be defended or not.

#### 4. RESPONSE TO RECENT STORM DAMAGE (cont'd)

- With regard to the middle car park (cont'd):
  - The Environmental Health Officer stated that the Shoreline Management Plan advocated managed retreat ie active intervention.  
**Action: Chris Brook to provide a report to Natural England and the Field Studies Council setting out proposals for managing the car park frontage**
  - By reinstating the single bastions it would show goodwill to the local residents but if they were washed away again, other taxpayers could complain about the waste of public money.
  - It was suggested that as the middle car park capacity reduces it would be important to re-examine options for increasing car park capacity at Torcross and Strete Gate at either end of the beach. A comparison would need to be made of the revenue from the middle car park and the Torcross and Strete Gate car parks.
- A suggestion was made to make more frequent use the grass overspill car park adjoining the main middle car park, but as there was no ticket machine there it was questioned whether a 'pay and display' sign could be erected with directions to the nearest machine.
- Cllr Baverstock said that local residents were concerned about the loss of shingle on the beach (which had ended up at Blackpool Sands) and what defences were intended to protect the A379. The Group was informed that rough boulder defences were in place at the southern end of the beach but to construct boulder defences all along the beach would be too costly.
- The DCC Highways Engineer said that he would like to see the shingle bastions reinstated and maintained, however, it was said that reinstating the bastions would be expensive and, in any event, would not be practical at the moment whilst beach shingle levels were so low. This issue would need to be revisited later in the year when the beach levels should hopefully have naturally returned.
- The Environmental Health Officer informed that the damage at Beesands had been looked at by COBRA and that if Slapton Line had been washed away, central Government would have taken over the situation so therefore doing nothing to defend the road would not be an option. The Highways Engineer also said that central Government had looked at Hallsands but that funding would not come from DCC and would have to be found from central Government departments.
- The Group was informed that a bomb had been found and disposed of at Strete Gate. This led to a discussion on metal detecting and the fact that there were no byelaws or prohibition for this practice on the beach. The Environmental Health Officer recommended that a notice should be placed at a suitable spot to warn metal detectors of the potentially hazardous items that might be found on Slapton Beach.

#### 4. RESPONSE TO RECENT STORM DAMAGE (cont'd)

- The main signage board had completely gone in the storm which needed to be reinstated.  
**Action: Kate Cassar and Ian Gibson to look into reinstating the main signage board**
- The Field Studies Council representative said that he would like to see signage and interpretation boards coordinated.  
**Action: Robin Toogood to ask Ian Gibson to draft some text for signage boards**
- The Group was informed that DCC had gained funding for Beesands for temporary measures but that also the local residents at North Hallsands had generated funding to reinstate the boulders along the shoreline. Cllr Baverstock said that the Torcross residents were not happy that most of the storm damage funding had gone to Beesands.
- The DCC Highways Engineer said that there was no national funding to protect the A379 and that DCC's solution was to wait for storm damage to happen and then react to it.
- It was discussed whether it would be cost effective to move the scattered boulders back in place at the Torcross end of the beach. It was unclear who had actually put the boulders there in the first place – whether it was the Environment Agency or DCC or both. However, it was agreed that it was necessary to tidy the boulders back in place in liaison with NE and DCC.  
**Action: John Wardle to investigate who is responsible for the boulder reinstatement**  
**POST MEETING NOTE: John has subsequently confirmed that the Torcross Flood Scheme, built in the 1980s, is the asset of the Environment Agency**
- In summarising, the Chairman said that it would be too expensive to reinstate the six bastions now as there had been such a loss of shingle from the beach. The beach would be inspected at the end of the summer to see if a natural build up of shingle had occurred.

Referring to the middle car park, it would be reconfigured and the SHDC Engineering Manager would organise a business case for more defences to be implemented.

- The Environmental Health Officer said that if anything happened to the A379, then central government would investigate but it was unclear as to whether they would fund the repairs therefore the local authorities could only manage the road in the interim. It was suggested that the part of the road that needed protecting the most was at either end of the section of new road constructed in 2001. The EH Officer also said that there needed to be a point of contact if the road was damaged or under threat and it was decided that the contacts should be Paul Taper, SHDC Senior Engineer and the SHDC Car Parks team.

#### **4. RESPONSE TO RECENT STORM DAMAGE (cont'd)**

- It was suggested that a review of the contingency planning arrangements should be made. The fact that two cars had driven into the shingle on the Slapton Line and had become stuck was mentioned and that it would have been helpful if notices either end of the Line had been erected earlier to shut the road. DCC Highways said that they had initially been unaware of the shingle on the A379 and that improved liaison with the Coastguard was needed. The EH Officer said that he would talk to the coastguard over this issue.

DCC Highways Engineer said it would be a huge expense to cover all potential false alarms but that they do send a team down to the Slapton Line when high tide levels were expected.

The Group was informed that Beesands residents had organised some flood wardens and that Torcross could be encouraged to do the same. It was also said that local communities should not expect immediate help in emergencies and that they needed to organise self help groups. Local authorities could help to train self help group especially parish councils. The DC Highways Engineer said that DCC would be happy to supply signs if the local residents would erect them when needed in emergencies.

**Action: Alan Denbigh and James Kershaw to liaise to define combination of contingency triggers and community contacts**

#### **5. CAR PARK MANAGEMENT (including catering concessions)**

- The Group was informed that a local businessman had put forward a proposal to open a permanent café in the middle car park but that the proposal had not been supported due to potential erosion issues.
- The Head of Assets informed the Group that the ice cream concession tenders were now out for the coming season.

#### **6. SLAPTON LINE AS A POTENTIAL 'COASTAL CHANGE MANAGEMENT AREA' IN THE FORTHCOMING LOCAL PLAN**

The Chairman proposed that consideration of this item be deferred to the next meeting. However, Cllr Baverstock enquired as to whether it would be a long time for the creation of a management plan for Slapton Line. The Chairman said that the Local Plan could take a fresh look at Slapton Line, however, local residents had been made aware for years about the management policy for Slapton Line.

## **8. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

The Chairman informed the Group that the SLP ringfenced budget was almost spent and the question was whether the Partnership should disband or seek further funding. In Cllr Baverstock's view, he felt that the Partnership should continue especially so there would be a group who could be convened and react quickly in an emergency. Further, although SHDC could not fund the Partnership, it could pick up a grant or be absorbed into partner organisations. The SLP Project Manager said that he could actively investigate obtaining some funding to keep the Partnership running.

It was considered whether the SLP should produce another newsletter for local residents in the summer. It was queried to whether the newsletter should reach further afield to include Beesands for example or maybe be incorporated into the South Hams Connect magazine. The Field Studies Council representative said that he was about to publish a Nature Reserve Newsletter which was circulated to Slapton and Stokenham and he was willing to include any SLP news within it.

## **8. FUTURE MEETINGS**

If the SHDC Engineering Manager was to bring forward a defence proposal that required planning permission, then it was better to have the next SLP meeting at the end of summer if there were no emergencies in between. With regard to holding a Slapton Line Advisory Forum meeting, it was decided to implement repairs before arranging a meeting.

### **SLAPTON LINE STEERING GROUP:**

- **Wednesday 23 July 2014** (provisional date)

### **SLAPTON LINE ADVISORY FORUM:**

- (date to be arranged)

(Meeting commenced at 2.00 pm and concluded at 4.05 pm)