

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE SLAPTON LINE STEERING GROUP HELD
AT FOLLATON HOUSE, TOTNES, ON WEDNESDAY 13 NOVEMBER 2014**

Present:	Sue Amos (SA) Cllr J H Baverstock (JB) Chris Brook (CB) Kate Cassar (KC) Peter Chamberlain (PC) Alan Denbigh (AD) Cllr R J Foss (RF) Jon Grimes (JG) Andy Pratt (AP) Robin Toogood (RT) John Wardle (JW)	SHDC Member Services – note taker SHDC and Stokenham Ward Member SHDC Engineering Manager SHDC Head of Assets DCC – Environment Manager (by telecom) Slapton Line Partnership (SLP) Project Manager SHDC and Skerries Ward Member Natural England Field Studies Council (Slapton Ley) South Devon AONB Manager - Chair Environment Agency
Also present:	James Doxford (JD)	Strategic Planning Officer (part of the time)
Apologies:	Cllr A D Barber James Kershaw Jim Morrison Aiden Winder	SHDC Coastal Assets Task & Finish Group SHDC Environmental Health Manager DCC Highways Management DCC Coastal Officer

1. APOLOGIES

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

The Group agreed that it would like Cllr Julian Brazil to attend the Slapton Line Steering Group (SLSG) meetings as a Devon County Council representative as well as being the SHDC Saltstone Ward Member.

**Action: Alan Denbigh to liaise with Darryl White, Democratic Services Manager
Peter Chamberlain to raise the matter within Devon County Council**

2. MINUTES AND ACTION POINTS FROM THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the last meeting (circulated with the agenda) of the Group held on 23 July 2014 were confirmed as a correct record.

- Action point for Cllr Barber on page 3 of the minutes regarding the signage clutter in the Middle Car Park – this item would be forwarded to the next meeting of the SHDC Beach Management Group. – **Action Robin Toogood**
- Action point for John Wardle regarding the reinstatement of the boulders on Slapton Beach just north of Torcross. The Group noted that the issue of responsibility for these boulders remained unresolved and considered that this needed to be addressed by the Environment Agency (EA) and Devon County Council (DCC)

2. MINUTES AND ACTION POINTS FROM THE PREVIOUS MEETING (cont'd)

- KC said that she believed that the legal position was that if EA had put the boulders in place (at the time of the 1980 sea wall), they were legally responsible. CB added that they try and incorporate reinstatement of the boulders at the same time as the shingle movement.

Action: JW to liaise with EA colleagues on the above issue and let PC and RT know the outcome

- In the short term, it was noted that the planned shingle movement project would be a good opportunity to reinstate the boulders whilst contractors were on site without prejudice to the longer term issue of legal responsibility.

Action: CB to consider adding the reinstatement of the boulders to the schedule of works

3. BEACH LEVELS

- The SHDC Engineering Manager, CB, showed the Group some Lidar images from his laptop comprising of three ariel photography shots of sections of Slapton Sands taken in 2014. These three shots, which were part of the South West Regional Coastal Monitoring Programme, showed a lot of erosion at Torcross (Appendix 1) and the Middle Car Park stretch of the road and beach (Appendix 2) with accretion showing at the Strete Gate north end of the beach (Appendix 3). In some parts of the beach, the shingle was 3 metres lower than last year.
- In discussion, it was considered that the beach levels were lower than at the time of the major storm in 2001. AP said that he could check data gathered by the Field Studies students.

Subsequent to this meeting, AP sent the following data to confirm this impression:

		Beach width (m) in each year			
	Site	1982	2001	2011	2014
Strete Gate	0A			101.6	88
	1	106	99	83.3	71
	2	83	92.5	56.2	35.5
	3		71.7	60	44.5
	4	86.8	40.7	60	37.9
Memorial Car Park	6	85	69.5	52.5	50.5
	7	69		59	55
	8	69.5	76.5	54.4	49
	9			42.6	27
Torcross	10	43	47	40.6	13.6

- The Group was informed that the narrowness of the vegetation strip was additional evidence of the beach retreating. The general consensus was that the A379 was more vulnerable than at any other time in the last ten years.

3. BEACH LEVELS (cont'd)

- There was discussion about where the shingle blown onto the highway should be repositioned when it was cleared. In addition to the two dump sites highlighted on the contingency planning map, other options needed to be considered, namely the locations shown as at risk due to the storm damage.

JG said that if the shingle was to be placed on the beach head, care should be taken not to damage the vegetation.

It was reported that the shingle piled beside the road in February 2014 was constantly being blown onto the road and it was felt that this shingle should be placed back on the beach.

Action: Jim Morrison to review the working practice of shingle removal from the Slapton Line in discussion with CB, PC, JG and AP (ideally the shingle should be moved as soon as possible and placed where most needed)

4. BASTIONS

- CB referred to the ariel shot of the north end of the beach (Appendix 3) where shingle levels were higher and which could be used to move shingle back to Torcross and to rebuild the bastions. CB informed that he had spoken to the land owners and they had agreed to this work in principle. DCC representatives also said that they were in favour of the work but that the Slapton Line would have lots of heavy vehicles on it causing some disruption during the shingle replacement. It was suggested that their trucks could run along the beach rather than the road but CB said that it was a decision for the contractor to make. CB was talking to one contractor.
- The Environment Agency was (potentially) funding the works with £250,000 allocated for this project from the government emergency flood funding but it was the view that these works could cost more. It was confirmed that SHDC would supervise the work.
- The Group was informed that it was hoped that the works would start before February 2015 with the Contractor being engaged before Christmas. However, this timing was entirely dependent on finalising the formal landowner agreements, on obtaining the necessary formal consents from Natural England, and the appointed contractors having the capacity to move ahead within the timescale.
- It was noted that the trucking of shingle along the road would cause significant traffic disruption at the time and that good communications with local residents would be essential. Cllr Baverstock said he would produce a Christmas Newsletter and would liaise with CB for information.

Action: Chris Brook to inform the local Ward Members when the work will start

Action: Chris Brook to liaise with Andy Pratt in addition with other landowners and Natural England over permissions

5. MIDDLE CAR PARK

- Following storm damage to the Middle Car Park in early 2014, SHDC had given consideration to constructing a new coast defence to protect its seaward edge. CB informed that the Middle Car Park was cost neutral and there was no business case to defend it unless the current lease arrangements were to be reviewed. It was concluded that the car park was not economically feasible and therefore it would be left undefended and be allowed to erode naturally. Although the capacity of the main car park had been reduced, the continued use of the adjacent seasonal overspill area had provided a manageable solution.
- There was an 18 inch drop of material in some areas of the Middle Car Park which had left an untidy edge and concern had been expressed over the safety and appearance of the car park and it was confirmed that maintenance work would continue to be undertaken to ensure safe public access, including the use of the localised shingle movement as required.

6. HIGHWAY ISSUES AND INLAND ROUTES

- Reference was made to a recent meeting between members of the SLP and Dr Sarah Wollaton MP on 1 August 2014 at which various highway issues had been discussed (Notes attached as Appendix 4).
- PC reported that financial constraints were preventing work being carried out by DCC on the inland alternative routes off the Slapton Line.
- A recent traffic accident on the A379 had caused the minor inland roads to become jammed and that the signage was too far away from the site of the incident to be effective. It was agreed that a review of signage would be undertaken by DCC.
- PC said that DCC had no plans or funds to seek planning permission on additional stretches of the road diversion though it could consider two pinch points where there was vulnerability. At this time, there were no resources to advance the planning permission, however, there was scope to work with Natural England and the Field Studies Centre on possible ecological studies and mitigation measures in order to reduce the lead time for undertaking future road realignments.

Action: Peter Chamberlain to discuss with Andy Pratt and John Grimes regarding ecological studies

- Cllr Baverstock said that at the meeting with Dr Sarah Wollaston MP, it was mentioned that there was a grant available for additional measures. However, AD understood that at the flood fund operational level, SHDC had been told that the funds available were only for protection of housing (which was how the shingle movements were being funded – being a combined scheme to protect the sea defence at Torcross as well as to provide shingle alongside the road).
- Cllr Foss had recently met with Oliver Letwin MP and Dr Sarah Wollaston MP who were very supportive with regard to the preservation of the Slapton Line road. Cllr Foss said that the SLP now had senior national political recognition of its importance and the Group needed to act swiftly to take advantage of this. There was political will at the moment and action was needed before the purdah period which will begin during the middle of March 2015.

6. HIGHWAY ISSUES AND INLAND ROUTES (cont'd)

- It was agreed that AD should get these costs together in order to have another go at getting additional funding for some of the measures discussed at the meeting with Dr Sarah Wollaston MP.

Action: AD to liaise with PC and JM to obtain an approximate costing to improve the traffic flow in the minor contingency roads and to fund additional planning preparation work.

7. COASTAL CHANGE MANAGEMENT AREA POLICY

- At this point, James Doxford (Strategic Planning Officer) attended the meeting and gave a briefing to the Group on Coastal Change Management Area (CCMA) policy. The new local plan was in preparation and was encompassed within an overriding document called 'Our Plan'. This was the first local plan prepared since the introduction of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The NPPF included a requirement to define CCMA's in instances where the coastline was vulnerable to change. The foundation for defining these areas was the Shoreline Management Plan. The nub of the policy was to prevent inappropriate development along the South Hams coastline in vulnerable areas. The draft policy was expected to be published in 2015.
- Concern was expressed from the local Ward Member over coastline predictions for the next 20 years which very worrying for property owners in that their properties might be devalued due to vulnerability.
- It was queried as to whether the policy would prevent all developments, or for example, be flexible enough to allow planning car parking extensions or road realignment and it was confirmed that there were elements within the policy to allow for this.

Action: JD to send to SA a copy of the draft policy to include with the minutes for internal distribution only and not for the SLP website

JD then left the meeting as this stage.

Post meeting note: James Doxford forwarded the draft policy to SA (Appendix 5) with the following proviso that he was happy for the draft policy to go to the Steering Group and would welcome any comments by 12 December. At present the policy was an officer draft and needed to be treated confidentially. He was aware that there were a couple of other areas that needed to be built into the policy, such as explicit reference to scale and use of the proposals and allowing for the creation and maintenance of coastal access.

8. REVIEW OF MANAGEMENT POLICY

- The Group reviewed a letter from Simon Tonge, Executive Director of the Whitley Wildlife Conservation Trust (WWCT) that urged the Slapton Line Partnership (SLP) to not lose focus and to carry on with its work. The letter specifically asked the SLP to address strengthening the leadership and coordination within the Partnership, to review and update the Adaptation Plan as well as other existing policies. The letter also stated that the WWCT felt that the “role of the SLP was more critical now than at any time since 2001.”
- It was agreed that the ten year old Management Policy was in need of a review to ensure that it remained relevant and retained the support of the Partnership members.
- The Group was informed that by the end of this financial year, there would not be any funding left to pay for a SLP officer in the Slapton Line Partnership account. PC said that the SLP was going through a critical period of activity and was required even more. He advised that the Group needed to go back to the Scott Wilson report and look at the individual issues, ie advance measures on realignment, minor roads, future of the bastions, and shingle replenishment, etc. An urgent review was required and a modest amount of funding could be made available by DCC for this.
- Cllrs Baverstock and Foss said that there needed to be a resource available for the SLP to progress as it was an important channel of feedback and communication to their local constituents. They agreed to investigate whether SHDC could match the funding indicted by DCC.

Action: Robin Toogood to meet with Peter Chamberlain to come up with a project plan for updating the adaptation plan and reviewing the management policy

- AD said that the SLP had hit a point of crisis and there was an urgent requirement to review the Scott Wilson Report to ascertain whether it was fit for purpose for 2014 issues.
- It was observed that the SLSG information did not reach the wider public although there was information on the SLP website. The Slapton Line Advisory Forum (SLAF) was mentioned and the fact that it had not met for a couple of years was acknowledged. The SLAF was a good vehicle for disseminating the latest information to the local Slapton Line residents. Cllrs Baverstock and Foss said they would pass on information through their local parish council meetings until a SLAF meeting was held. Publishing a press release with regard to the status of the shingle was also suggested.

(Following the meeting AD drafted a press release to cover the single movements and circulated this).

- AD commented that communications and the frequency of meetings were a reflection on the decision at an earlier meeting to put the SLP into ‘tick over’ status. This was not intended as a criticism but that funding restrictions had necessitated this.

Action: It was agreed that a meeting of the SLAF should be reconvened for spring of 2015 and approximately one month after a SLSG meeting

8. REVIEW OF MANAGEMENT POLICY (cont'd)

- Peter Chamberlain left the meeting (by telecom) at this stage.
- It was agreed that communications should be added to the list of issues for review and that the Adaptation Plan was in need of re-energising. AP felt that relationships were much more developed and everyone was beginning to talk the same language and that it might be useful to have parish council representatives at the SLSG meetings as well as local MPs.
- It was noted that the Contingency Plan was last updated in 2010 and was it time to look at it again. It was agreed that if the plan was accurate and sound but might need a bit of revision.

Action: Robin Toogood to meet with Peter Chamberlain to create a task sheet

9. FUTURE OF MEMBERSHIP AND LEADERSHIP OF THE SLSG

- The AONB Manager observed that the Partnership had gradually lost momentum in its leadership and activity and needed to consider how best to organise itself in future. He expressed his concern that, as local authorities were becoming more stretched, the AONB Unit would be drawn into running the SLP. However, there would be no financial resource after March 2015 and the question of future resourcing needed input from the Group. Consideration was also required with regard to the levels of representation and chairmanship of the SLSG. This issue would need to be raised at the next meeting.
- Cllr Baverstock said that he had spoken with Dr Sarah Wollaston MP and that she was very supportive of the preservation of the Slapton road and was keen to see the progress of the SLSG. Cllr Baverstock said that Dr Wollaston had made it clear that there was a pot of money available but the Group was unclear about which actions would be eligible for this funding.

It was felt that political pressure was needed to open up some funding avenues. There was also a requirement to pin down further projects and to give Dr Wollaston MP some costings.

- It was suggested to send Dr Wollaston MP a copy of the minutes of this meeting with a covering letter drafted by AD.

Action: AD to draft a covering letter to the minutes to be sent to Dr Wollaston and copied to Alan Robinson

10. FUTURE MEETINGS

SLAPTON LINE STEERING GROUP:

- (date to be arranged early 2015)

SLAPTON LINE ADVISORY FORUM:

- (date to be arranged early 2015)

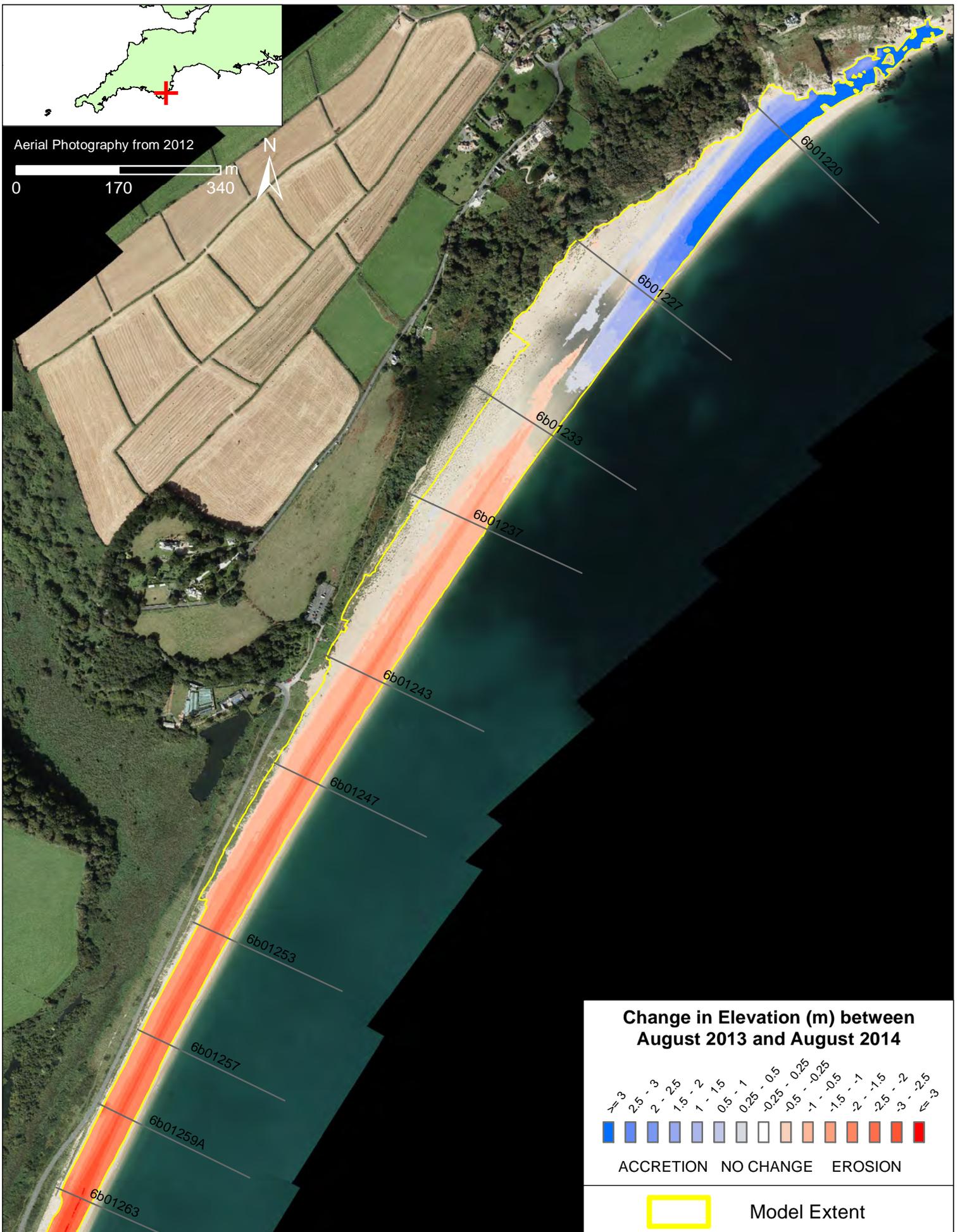
(Meeting commenced at 10.00 am and concluded at 12.30 pm)

APPENDICES:

1. Topographic Difference Model – Torcross area
2. Topographic Difference Model – Middle Car Park Area
3. Topographic Difference Model – North Slapton Beach and Strete Gate
4. Notes of the meeting with the SLP and Dr Sarah Wollaton MP – 1 August 2014
5. Draft Coastal Change Management Policy







Note of meeting between Sarah Wollaston MP and the SLP on 1/8/14 at Sarah's Constituency Office, Totnes

Present : Jon Grimes Natural England, James Kershaw SHDC. Kate Cassar SHDC, Andy Pratt FSC, Cllr Tony Barber, Cllr John Baverstock, Jeremy Pine NE, Alan Denbigh SLP.

A constructive meeting in which we had an opportunity to bring Sarah Wollaston up to speed and in which we then focussed on activities which could potentially ensure a better outcome should storms again damage the line in the near future.

There were a number of measures which were touched on which Sarah offered her support; on us taking forward an application to the EA flood prevention funds (as mentioned by Paul Taper and Jon Grimes in previous emails) in order to fund a number of measures. It was felt that some of these might be stretching the parameters of the fund but this was where Sarah's help and support could be valuable:

1. **Extending the current planning permissions** (without going for a blanket planning permission as previously discussed with DCC). It was felt that the current northerly planned realignment stretch intersects the road at a point where the beach head is now very close to the road. Could the permissions be extended to re-route this section in order to go further north? Also discussed and discounted during the main meeting (though Sarah raised this again with Jon Grimes and Jeremy Pine from Natural England), was the potential to do pre-emptive biodiversity surveying so that, should the line fail at an unpredicted point, then there wouldn't have to be a delay of many months before an application could even be started (because of ecological surveys).
2. **Shingle bastion rebuilding** – anticipating that we may have to move shingle from Strete Gate (subject to land-owner permissions) then costs are likely to be much higher than previous years.
3. **Improving inland routes** – Sarah was particularly concerned that the current alternative routes are perceived to be a major problem and that some investment should be made in improving these with more passing places. This has been discussed previously with DCC, but further progress has been held back by lack of funds.
4. **Boulders north of Torcross** – replacing these in their original position and some supplementing.
5. **Support to maintain the Partnership** – some funds to support co-ordination and communications.

The proposal was that SHDC as coastal authority should lead the bid and this would be co-ordinated by Kate Cassar's team.

I hope this covers the main points and is a fair summary of the discussion.

Alan Denbigh, Slapton Line Partnership, 07891 927 128

Coastal Change Management Policy

Inappropriate development, or any development that could add to the impacts of physical change to the coast, will not be permitted in the Coastal Change Management Area.

Where development and infrastructure needs to be relocated away from the Coastal Change Management Areas it will be permitted subject to the following criteria:

- The new development is located in an area at less risk of coastal erosion;
- The replacement property is located close to the community from which it is displaced and has an acceptable relationship with it in terms of character, setting, or local amenity;
- The existing site is cleared and restored; and
- If it is a replacement proposal, the gross volume of the replacement dwelling is no larger than the one it is to replace.

Any development that includes any form of sea defence will require the submission of a vulnerability assessment, showing how the sea defence will not be to the detriment of adjacent or any other sections of coastline.

The Coastal Change Management Area is designated on the proposals map.