

## **Minutes of the Meeting of the Slapton Line Partnership Steering Group held at Follaton House, on 18<sup>th</sup> November 2015**

### **Present :**

Robin Toogood (South Devon AONB), Chair  
Julian Brazil (Devon CC Councillor for Stokenham & South Hams DC Councillor for Saltstone)  
Peter Brunt and Adam Keay (Neighbourhood Highway Team Devon CC)  
Peter Chamberlain (DCC Environment Manager)  
Chris Brook, Dan Field, Amjad Kahn (Engineers, South Hams District Council)  
Martin Davies (Environment Agency)  
Eamon Crowe (Natural England) – attending in place of Jon Grimes  
Andy Pratt (Slapton Ley Field Centre Manager, Field Studies Council)  
Alan Denbigh (Slapton Line Partnership)

**Apologies :** Cllr Richard Foss (SHDC Cllr for Stokenham) Jon Grimes (Natural England).

### **1. Minutes and Actions arising from Meeting 13<sup>th</sup> November 2014**

The minutes were agreed as a correct record.

Action point page 1 AD to invite Julian Brazil to SLP meetings: enacted.

Action point page 1 regarding carpark signage clutter was still ongoing for SHDC. Action – Robin Toogood.

Action point page 2 regarding boulders on the beach just north of Torcross: it was noted that the issue of ownership and responsibility remains unresolved. It had been agreed that SHDC would reposition them as part of the shingle movement works last February, but as they had become partly buried in shingle this would have to be postponed until a future time.

Action point page 3 regarding returning shingle washed onto the road by storms back to the beach: the DCC plan for the correct locations previously agreed with all parties had been identified and reaffirmed as being the most sensible response (namely - one location at the bottom of the slipway north of Torcross sea wall, the other, the edge of the middle car park). The plan held by DCC would be used for future occasions for relocating shingle.

Action point page 3 for SHDC to commission contractors, liaise and inform regarding shingle movement had been successfully completed.

Action point page 4 about progressing ecological studies had taken place (covered later).

Action point page 5 regarding alternative inland road routes/contingency - covered later under item 5. *Contingency Preparedness – Highways.*

Action point page 6 about planning the adaptation and policy review process has been started by RT and PC (minute items 3,4,5,6 and 7 record the progress responding to this).

Action point page 7 Alan Denbigh had contacted Sarah Wollaston MP summarising this meeting and forwarding potential requests for additional funding which had led to the meeting on 12/2/15.

## **2. Actions arising from Slapton Line Partnership Resilience Discussion with Sarah Wollaston MP 12/2/2015 at Slapton Ley Field Centre**

Action point page 1. A technical briefing document had been completed and circulated explaining the shingle movements and their purpose. No public meeting would be held until it was clear what the next steps were.

Action point page 2. Both SHDC and DCC had contributed £12,000 into Slapton Line Partnership funds. The Environment Agency would also contribute.

**Action:** Chris Brook to raise an invoice to the Environment Agency.

Action point page 2. Following this meeting a series of costed resilience measures was assembled totaling around £100,000 which was subsequently presented with the support of Sarah Wollaston to Oliver Letwin, Minister for Government Policy. Unfortunately, government funding towards the costs was not forthcoming.

## **3. Road Vulnerability Assessment**

With the failure to secure additional funding to commission resilience measures, in the meantime, some lower cost alternatives had been initiated.

Following the construction of the new relocated road section in the middle of the line in 2001, planning permission had been obtained only for the perceived next most vulnerable sections either side of this new road. There was no guarantee that the road will fail at these points. If the road fails elsewhere, there will be a lengthy lead time to re-build which would include ecological assessments and surveys before formal Environmental Impact Assessment and planning permission could be obtained. A survey of the road section-by-section could help to highlight the other vulnerable sections and pinpoint where some preparation work could take place, thus shortening the planning processes.

A road vulnerability assessment had therefore been undertaken by the SHDC engineering team, examining the rate of beach erosion at different points along Slapton Line, the width of the beach-head buffer on the seaward side of the road, and the availability of space to move the road further back from the sea. Using these criteria, a picture of the relative vulnerabilities of the road to erosion was emerging.

It was agreed that this study was an extremely useful step forward and the SHDC engineers were thanked for taking on this piece of work.

The meeting suggested a number of refinements which could be included in the final version of the report, depending on the amount of time that can be committed to it:

- Review whether the assessment extends far enough along the road or if it has missed out some vulnerable sections at the northern end.
- The assessment needs to be clearer where it starts at the southern end and take notice of the extent of the sheet piling protection (present for the first approx. 100m).
- An additional column reflecting the amount of fill required to build a road level of sufficient height above sea level should be added (this information is on the plans of the relocated road sections but not the table).
- Each section could include a conclusion for that stretch and an overall conclusions section added.
- The report should be presented as an engineering feasibility study showing areas of greatest vulnerability, and a short section about its limitations could usefully be added (ie clarifying that it does not address environmental or economic issues or permissions and consents).

It was hoped that this revision could progress relatively quickly (next few weeks) in order for potential ecology surveys to then be planned and undertaken.

(MD commented that the recent Network Rail Study might be useful as a model format)

**Action:** SHDC Engineers to complete the road vulnerability assessment.

**Action:** Based on the vulnerability assessment, Devon County Council to progress any ecological surveys needed on land which may potentially be affected by future road realignments.

**Action:** Natural England to provide any relevant ecology data to Devon County Council.

**Action:** Andy Pratt to report on progress to the forthcoming Slapton Nature Reserve Committee meeting in order to update them.

#### **4. Economic Value Report**

It was reported that JBA consultants had produced a draft economic assessment for the value of the road. The annual value of tourism that the road contributes to the area is £9.28 million. This translates to £4.11 million GVA. The calculation adds a further £435k representing the costs to residents and businesses caused by a diversion per annum.

**Action:** Alan Denbigh to ask JBA for comparative figures and to liaise with them on completion of the final version.

#### **5. Beach Management Plan (BMP)**

It was explained that producing a beach management plan would be a key document in unlocking any further government flood defence funding. The proposal for a Slapton beach management plan was in the six year flood defence programme which will need to be

considered by the Regional Flood Defence Committee in March 2016. It was expected that the cost to benefit ratio would only qualify Slapton for a modest level of public sector funding, and there would need to be a contribution from the local authorities either towards funding the plan production or towards implementing the measures adopted, though funding would also be available from the EA. It was up to the local partners to define the scope of the beach management measures to be considered and because of the existing knowledge of the management of the beach this could mean that it may need to be a relatively modest document with a lower cost. The SHDC road vulnerability assessment and engineers' coastal engineering expertise would help facilitate the information flow into the BMP.

**Action:** Chris Brook to liaise with Martin Hutchins on the Regional Flood and Coastal Committee about bringing forward the timing of the Slapton Beach Management Plan and report back.

## **6. Contingency Preparedness - Highways**

As part of the resilience measures work, the alternative inland road routes had been surveyed for potential passing place improvements (and sign replacements), with a conclusion that, owing to the land owner legal agreements likely to be required for many of the improvements, the cost was extremely high. But DCC agreed to review what was feasible to schedule into their ongoing maintenance works and report back.

**Action:** Devon County Council highway staff to review the plan for improvements.

The 2014 storms resulted in two cars being stranded on the road and the potential danger had been noted and that a more effective way of closing the road at all three access points simultaneously was the ideal solution. The coastguard had been contacted for discussion.

**Action:** Devon County Council highway staff to investigate possible safety measures.

## **7. Managing Communications**

It was suggested that a summary of current progress should be produced for circulation to councillors and parish councils and the press office.

**Action:** Alan Denbigh to produce a news update for circulation.

## **8. Partnership Structure**

This discussion was postponed 'til next time.

### **Date of next meeting**

It was agreed that the next meeting would be held in February or March 2016