

**Minutes of the Meeting of the Slapton Line Partnership Steering Group
Follaton House, on 11th October 2016**

Present :

Chris Brook (Assets Lead at South Hams and West Devon Councils)
Peter Chamberlain (Devon County Council Environment Manager),
Lesley Crocker (Communications, South Hams District Council)
Martin Davies (Environment Agency)
Alan Denbigh (Chair, Slapton Line Partnership)
Dan Field, (Engineer, South Hams District Council)
John Fewings and Alan Martin (Neighbourhood Highway Team, Devon County Council)
Kate Gill (Chair, Strete Parish Council)
Cllr Richard Foss (South Hams District Council Councillor for Allington and Strete)
Jon Grimes (Natural England)
Val Mercer (Slapton Parish Council)
Andy Pratt (Head of Slapton Ley, Field Studies Council)
Piers Spence (Chair, Stokenham Parish Council)

Apologies:

Julian Brazil (Devon CC Cllr for Kingsbridge & Stokenham & South Hams DC Cllr for Stokenham)

1. Minutes of Previous Meeting and Matters Arising.

It was agreed that Alan Denbigh would chair following Robin Toogood's recent retirement.

The minutes for 2nd March 2016 were agreed as a correct record.

1.1 Matters arising from minutes for 2nd March 2016 :

Point 2.a. DCC Highways to pass details of new routes to Parish Councils

The signage as a result of road closure consists of two main elements:

- Signage to guide approaching traffic around the area, in part using fold down signs, has been replaced by a more flexible system of 'A' boards which allow for the road closing at different points along the A379 Slapton line road. The signage should be clear that Torcross is still accessible and businesses open.
- For the local diversion routes (using circles and diamonds on signs) within the area. This was originally intended for locals rather than passing traffic but it was agreed the main point is to let people know about these routes and these should be communicated through the website, parish magazines and other media.

Action: John Fewings to circulate the signage details.

Lesley Crocker to communicate contingency routes.

Point - 3.a Alan Denbigh to contact LEP re potential funding

Alan has contacted the LEP but had been advised that this would be more appropriate once the Beach Management Plan was complete and a clearer view of funding requirements was available.

1.2 from minutes of meeting 18th Nov 2015

Point - 6 Re stranding of cars in Feb 2014 - DCC to investigate safety measures to ensure simultaneous closure road at three points during storms.

John Fewings had consulted colleagues and been advised that the intention is to close all access points as quickly as possible and that a problem has been people ignoring warnings.

Action : John Fewings to circulate the updated contingency plan.

4. Repair of Sea Wall at Torcross by the Environment Agency

a. Update on planned activities

Martin Davies advised that the sheet piles for the new section to sit in front of the existing sea wall will start to arrive in Torcross from 17 October 2016 ready for the wall repair. The plan is to start construction mid-November but this is dependent on planning approval from South Hams District Council and a licence from the Marine Management Organisation. Construction time is estimated at 3-4 months. Access to the tank and toilets would be maintained though the car park would be closed. Temporary traffic lights would be used to aid movement of the sheet piles. No further movements had been detected in the sea wall. A piling rig would be placed on a shingle bank that would be constructed for the purpose adjacent to the sea wall. Martin Davies confirmed that reducing vibrations as part of the wave impact was part of the design brief. The cost of the repairs was £2.9 m with construction costs £2m of this.

Actions:

- 1. Bearing in mind previous experience of work at Torcross, Martin Davies to liaise with and request that EA comms provide sufficient detail to explain what is happening (eg bring piling rig into place)**
- 2. Lesley Crocker to review SHDC communications and liaise with Environment Agency in relation to this, including using email alerts.**
- 3. Dan Field to ensure that formal permission obtained from WWCT and FSC for closure of the car park.**
- 4. Alan Denbigh to forward Parish Council reps' & Andy Pratt's email addresses to EA comms so that they get the updates on work taking place.**

b. Possible extension of sheet piling in front of the old Sea Wall, north of Torcross

The idea of using the construction period to extend the sheet piling completed in early 2016 had been discussed between DCC and SHDC. The benefits include some savings (estimated at £5k by Chris Brook) as the construction kit would already be in place, preventing future disruption and the saved cost of potential future damage to the road. The conclusion so far has been that there is a lack of funds in the local authorities as the estimated costs are £180k, similar to that spent before. It may be possible that the EA would contribute 1/3 as before, but a request would have to be made. This section of the road had been highlighted in the vulnerability assessment. It was noted that the obstacles to progressing this include the short time scale, resources for planning and funds and not ecological constraints.

Action: SHDC (Dan Field, Chris Brook) and DCC (John Fewings, Alan Martin, Peter Chamberlain) were requested to re-consider their decision by the SLP, including consideration of any scope to minimise the cost of the works.

c. Resilience Planning/Advice for Torcross Residents

The question was raised of what advice is available to owners of property adjacent to the sea wall in Torcross where wave overtopping is likely irrespective of any improvements to the wall. This could include advice about what product specifications would provide maximum resilience such as window shutters, door flood protection barriers, systems to protect roof tiles.

Action: Piers Spence to pursue with the Devon Community Resilience forum.

It was suggested that the Land Registry information should be reviewed to include more specific information about the limited (50 year) lifespan for property relating to people planning to move into the area. Torcross should also be included in the Coastal Change Management Area Policy for development of places with a 100 year lifespan. EA have been involved in projects with many good examples of similar work in East Anglia, East Yorkshire and North Wales.

Action: Alan Denbigh to access the information and bring suggestions to the next meeting

Action: Coastal Change Management Area Policy – Lesley Crocker to investigate contents of this relevant to Slapton.

Action: Lesley Crocker to investigate case studies in East Anglia, East Yorkshire and North Wales.

5. Rebuilding Bastions

Small local shingle movements adjacent to vulnerable points along the road and car park were part of the management policy recommended by the Scott Wilson review and adopted by the Partnership and these had been maintained on an intermittent basis. However modelling evidence from Plymouth University has suggested that moving material from the lower beach locally and building it up in front of the beachhead increases its steepness (already quite steep under current conditions) which might increase the rate of erosion. In contrast, constructing the bastions with material imported from areas with a surplus can offer localised benefits. However, the beach is now much lower than when this small scale, short term management was established and a much larger scale, long term approach is now needed. It was concluded that rebuilding bastions is now less effective and agreed that it should not be carried out this winter, but would be assessed in the Beach Management Plan. This does not represent a change in the overarching aims of the SLP and these remain consistent with the website statement.

The erosion of the middle car park where a steep edge is created particularly during the winter months was discussed. Chris Brooks explained that the policy is for managed retreat and to ensure that there is no tarmac overhang this is removed as required (in addition to maintaining wooden barriers in place to prevent people parking on the edge). Andy Pratt requested that a shingle ramp be created for access which Chris agreed to restore in spring after the main erosion problems.

6. Beach Management Plan (BMP)

Dan Field explained that the BMP spec and tender documents had been circulated via the Environment Agency website with 4 expressions of interest so far. He said that plans for stakeholder engagement is one of the assessment criteria and that a 50/50 cost/quality criterion had been placed on the evaluation. He expected developing the plan would take 6-9 months and that a target completion date was 16th June 2017. He anticipated that there would be monthly meetings with a sub-group from the SLP. Stages would include:

1. Desktop data review including a baseline workshop
2. Key stakeholder engagement
3. Funding discussion
4. Options development database - considering future options including those where future changes in funding regimes may make viable
5. Community engagement
6. Communications

Lesley Crocker said that Vicky Croughan from Communications would be assigned to work with the BMP process to ensure that it was communicated at all stages. Martin Davies advised that there were a number of good examples where lessons of developing a BMP could be shared such as Sidmouth. Whether to include Beesands and Hallsands in the plan was raised. Dan Field said this would be taken up with the tenderers once we had the quotes in to find out the additional cost of doing so. Martin Davies also commented that the BMP was the first step and that subsequently a business case and programme would have to be developed from its recommendations and this could take 5 years until work actually started.

Andy Pratt offered the meeting's thanks for Dan's work on preparing the tender documents. Peter Chamberlain indicated that a member of the DCC Flood & Coastal Risk Management Team could assist in the selection of the preferred contractor and, thereafter, in the sub-group.

7. Ecological Studies (as part of vulnerability planning)

This work followed from the road vulnerability assessment completed by the SHDC survey which identified sections of the road most at risk and where road realignment could theoretically take place. As this would require work in a protected area, hence an ecology survey was necessary as a precursor to any planning processes.

Peter Chamberlain reported this process had, with the help of the FSC, collated existing data and commissioned an invertebrate survey to complete the range of data needed. He reported that there were no major issues for first section north of Torcross (Location 1 in attachment), but would require a mitigation strategy for reptiles. If there was storm damage here, works alongside the highway would only be delayed in the event of a requirement for a formal Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), which would have the effect of removing the permitted development rights and require consideration of a planning application. The need for an EIA would be determined through a screening process, involving consultation with Natural England. Jon Grimes suggested that the possibility of advance screening be explored in discussion with Natural England.

Action : Peter Chamberlain to discuss with Natural England.

At Location 2, the road is not at immediate risk as it protected by the car park; this is fortunate, as there would be ecological constraints to the realignment of the road here. The two areas labelled Location 3 are covered by existing planning permission for the realignment of the road and have existing ongoing mitigation measures to avoid constraints associated with protected species. Andy Pratt raised the issue of the high risk section of road north of the northern Location 3 which currently has very little protection and which was omitted from the road vulnerability assessment.

Action : Peter Chamberlain to investigate whether the existing data can be extrapolated for this section.

The conclusion was that we are close to having a completed vulnerability assessment for the most vulnerable sections of the road, thus helping to reduce planning lead times and which can be fed into the BMP process.

Martin Davies mentioned a contract that the EA has in place to support local authorities and this could be drawn on to support development (but not deliver) the BMP.

Alan Denbigh thanked Peter for seeing this piece of work through.

8. Communications

Lesley Crocker said that there were now a number of means to communicate about the road to Parish Councils and the local communities including e-alerts and social media. This should now focus on Torcross property as well as the road. A Communications Plan should be re-established for the Partnership.

Action : Lesley and Alan to meet to review and look at website.

Andy Pratt extended an invitation to members of the SLP to the Slapton Ley Research Seminar, Alan Denbigh to circulate details.

Martin Davies mentioned that the SDADCAG (the local Coastal Action Group) were doing a refresh of the Shoreline Management Plan.

Action: Alan Denbigh to contact Graeme Smith to find out details.

Close of meeting

Ecology Studies Locations

