

**NOTES OF THE MEETING OF THE  
SLAPTON LINE PARTNERSHIP**

**HELD VIA REMOTE VIDEO  
ON TUESDAY 12<sup>th</sup> OCTOBER 2021**

**1. INTRODUCTION & APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

**Those present were:**

Anthony Mangnall MP	MP for Totnes
Cllr Judy Pearce	South Hams District Council
Cllr Julian Brazil	Devon County Council
Peter Chamberlain	Devon County Council
John Fewings	Devon County Council
Cllr Hiliary Bastone	South Hams District Council
Cllr Richard Foss	South Hams District Council
Dan Field	South Hams District Council
Vicky Croughan	South Hams District Council
Martin Davies	Environment Agency
Ben Johnstone	Environment Agency
George Arnison	Environment Agency
Eamon Crowe	Natural England
Michaela Barwell	Natural England
Dennis Flynn	Wild Planet Trust
Dr Kirsten Pullen	Wild Planet Trust
Andy Pratt	Field Studies Council
Lee Dennison	Field Studies Council
Piers Spence	Stokenham Parish Council
Gill Claydon	Stokenham Parish Council Clerk
Jane Abbey	Slapton Parish Council
Louise Soothill-Ward	Slapton Parish Council Clerk
Kate Gill	Strete Parish Council
Graham Campbell	Strete Parish Council
Roger English	South Devon AONB
Vanessa Gray	South Devon AONB – note taker

**Observers present were:**

Nigel Smith	Frogmore & Sherford Parish Council
Sue Beswick	Frogmore & Sherford Parish Council

**Apologies for absence were received from:**

Julie Hinder (Jane Abbey deputised)	Slapton Parish Council
Gavin Wollacott (Louise Soothill-Ward deputised)	Slapton Parish Council

## 2. COASTAL DEFENCES – PRESENTATION / DISCUSSION LED BY ANTHONY MANGNALL MP

### 2.1 Anthony Mangnall MP led the discussion:

- i. Discussions have taken place to date with Cllr Pearce on the implications of losing Slapton Line in the immediate future. This matter has also been discussed with DCC and at Westminster.
- ii. Following an introduction to Dan Field, a further meeting took place recently to discuss options on where investment could be made.
- iii. Whilst there may potentially be a temporary solution extending the life of the road, there is unlikely to be a permanent solution, given storms and sea level rise and back routes will be essential.
- iv. The need to respect SSSI status is acknowledged however Defra have a list of examples where man made interventions exist alongside retained SSSI status.

### 2.2 Cllr Pearce made the following observations:

- i. The main concern is that environmentally there appears to be little opposition to letting the line go.
- ii. If the line goes it will be a disaster for those that live there, for tourism and will damage the general economy of the South Hams area.
- iii. Seemingly there is no effort to find an alternative route round should the line be lost. In the absence of an alternative the only way forward is to defend the line. As leader of the council, given the social and economic consequences, this cannot be allowed to happen.

### 2.3 Dan Field:

- i. Defence of the line is challenging and ongoing.
- ii. A great deal of work has taken place up to this point, including the production of a Beach Management Plan.
- iii. A number of Vulnerability Assessment images, illustrating change over time, were shown to Partnership.
  - a. Vulnerability Assessments
    - Following a recent drone survey undertaken by University of Plymouth, a further Vulnerability Assessment for 2021 was produced.
    - Between 2021-2021 the average erosion rate was 13m.
  - b. SLP are requested to consider what buffer may be acceptable
    - 10m buffer – less than 50% of the line has sufficient space for this size buffer (a Storm Emma event).
    - 5m buffer – less than 28% has sufficient space for this size buffer.
    - 2.65m buffer – less than 15% has sufficient space for this size buffer.

**Action 1 (Dan Field):** Provide copies of slides for distribution to Partnership.

### 2.4 A general discussion followed:

- i. Dennis Flynn, Wild Planet Trust
  - There is an orange line to protect SSSI status but otherwise wish to be pragmatic and supportive of proposals.
- ii. Eamon Crowe, Natural England

- Sent a paper through Defra to Anthony Mangnall MP reaffirming the position with background.
  - From a SSSI point of view, there is natural geomorphic process taking place.
  - Working with SLP post Storm Emma, NE's position is to look for alternative routes. There will be no consent for further plans for hard engineering on the line.
- iii. Cllr Brazil, Devon County Council
- the SSSI designation may potentially need to be removed to allow the line to be protected.
- iv. Martin Davies, Environment Agency
- Whilst short term interventions are recognised on a case by case basis, a long term approach is at the front of thinking.
  - The EA need to identify and support the long term management position. The line will be lost at some point so conversations need to take place for adaptation.
  - The questions submitted by Slapton Parish Council are good, as they focus in on the detail.
  - Later clarification following remarks from Cllr Bastone: the EA is part of the Slapton Line Partnership and supports the SLP strategy for adaption.
- v. Ben Johnstone, Environment Agency
- The issue is not unique within the South West, other locations are also vulnerable (such as Westwood Ho!, Bude, Dawlish Warren).
  - Need to plan for the eventuality the line will be lost. Adaptation means change so the future will not be the same as the present and the past.
- vi. Cllr Foss, South Hams District Council
- Understand the position of NE and the EA however it would be beneficial if they could also address parish councils direct.
  - Losing the road will be a major disaster with nothing in place to mitigate. There are a raft of issues including emergency services response times on minor roads.
  - Understand the SSSI issues but it is a matter of balance. Road and footpath wise, any alternative is decades away, so we need to protect what we have.
  - Inland routes have been looked at. It is not possible to go around the back of the Ley.
  - Earlier this year, a contractor pulled a few rocks back from the beach to save the road. There are other rocks presently on the beach that could also potentially be moved back.
- vii. Andy Pratt, Field Studies Council
- The FSC is also reliant on road with their operations at Slapton reliant upon it.
  - Listening to the erosion rates and taking into account SSSI status, the focus needs to be on the long term. There is a huge amount of work that can be done so energy, focus and funding should be directed there.
- viii. Peter Chamberlain, Devon County Council
- Worth a reminder that a huge amount of work has been done to date.

- In 2018 significant work commissioned by SLP was undertaken by CH2N to prepare the Beach Management Plan. This was a major piece of work to look at the options in detail, looking at possible solutions and testing their viability.
  - We have the information base there to draw from and ideas of costs.
  - Following Storm Emma SLP put in place a revised strategy that accepted the inevitability of losing the road.
  - The revised strategy states the need to maintain the road as long as is practical and within constraints to do so, prior to implementing an adaptation strategy.
  - This may include
    - Protect the area in front of the car park at Torcross (possibly hard engineering)
    - Look at maintaining the viability of existing stone in place beyond the car park there.
    - Look at existing stone buried in beach and how it may be utilised.

This would not protect the road for very long however this would do what we can with the resources there.
  - The Adaptation Plan has had a delay in moving forward, however some work is already done so there is something in place to move forward from. A provisional wish list exists that recognises where funding and support is needed, including
    - An extra £500k a year for 5 years to bring the standard of roads up.
    - £50k for village traffic management schemes.
    - £75k per annum for a further two years minimum to extend employment of the Adaptation Manager beyond the two years available from the local levy.
    - £600k to improve car parking at Torcross and Strete Gate to maintain economic viability if the road is lost.
    - £50k a year for 5 years for an annual inspection and maintenance/excavation and re-stacking rock armour.
  - Although this is fairly rough and ready these have been clearly stated to date.
  - Encourages SLP to take the adaptation plan forward.
- ix. John Fewings, Devon County Council
- Works to date include additional passing places, repair works on some drainage ditches and surfacing issues.
  - Future works required will be junction issues and potentially hedgerows. Some areas will remain pinch points such as Gara Mill.
  - Substantial obstacles and require land acquisitions.
  - Even with all this, any back route will not achieve the capacity of the A379.
- x. Lee Dennison, Field Studies Council
- Need to focus where a large investment is made, on something that will not last long or in the future.
- xi. Cllr Bastone, South Hams District Council

- Need to protect the line and invest in the future. The line is important for the economy of the area, also affecting Kingsbridge and Dartmouth.
- The Ley is the largest lake in the South West, beautiful and full of wildlife, and important for the local economy.

2.5 Anthony Mangnall MP recognises there are steps that can be taken on the line as well as looking at alternative routes.

i. **ACTION 2 (SLP):** Send documents to Anthony Mangnall MP to make the case on SLP's behalf. Provide the following:

- Proposal for immediate action on the line
- Long term adaptation plan
- Forward the report referred to by Peter, updated to reflect any changes

2.6 The AONB Manager thanked Anthony Mangnall MP and Cllr Pearce before they left the meeting and brought this part of the agenda to a close.

### **3. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING (25 JANUARY 2021) AND ANY MATTERS ARISING**

3.1 No amendments to the minutes of the previous meeting were made.

### **4. SLAPTON LINE ADAPTATION PLAN AND PROJECT MANAGER**

4.1 The AONB Manager reminded Partnership the strategy as it currently stands was informed by consultations and public sessions held across the Start Bay and wider area.

4.2 The primary area of activity for the future is adaptation. The draft adaptation document is not a fully worked plan but a scoping report to be used as a starting point for the Adaptation Manager.

4.3 Some elements had been worked on to date, such as the work looking at the minor roads network. AONB staff have been collating issues and concerns ready for the Adaptation Manager.

4.4 Recruitment for an Adaptation Manager is now live. The post has funding for two years of activity. The AONB Manager gave his apologies for the delay in recruitment of an Adaptation Officer whose role will be pivotal as dedicated support on Slapton Line activity.

4.5 With two year funding in place, there needs to be quick wins in the package of activity with actions mapped out from the adaptation plan. The offer from Anthony Mangnall MP to champion this in Government and potentially unlock further funding was welcomed by the AONB Manager.

4.6 A list of questions from Slapton Parish Council was circulated. The questions mostly refer to the draft adaptation plan as it currently stands however the scope of the plan is not finite and one of the functions of the role will be to look at what other further work could take place. There are clearly a range of issues that are of concern to residents, the 2018 storm was referred to. Concerns include emergency services and authorities with statutory responsibilities. The AONB Manager informed Partnership there are plans in place that can be referred to and utilised however plans will also be revisited and statutory agencies look again at the programme.

### **During a discussion, the following matters were raised**

- i. Why has it taken so long to get an Adaptation Manager.  
The AONB Manager responded that this was due to pressure and high workload however the post was now being advertised.
- ii. It is important to understand what is wanted  
The AONB Manager responded that the new officer will be looking at issues already obtained through community activity.
- iii. We need to put forward an adaptation plan that includes some defence options to Anthony Mangnall MP by Christmas at the latest. This needs to be the number one priority of the Slapton Line Partnership and the Adaptation Manager.  
The AONB Manager responded that the detail referred to by Peter Chamberlain can be added to and that passed across to Anthony Mangnall MP. Recruitment, although actioned, has a timetable that is difficult to speed up. It is imperative to get the right calibre officer in post and they will have a notice period to serve before taking up the role. Getting a contractor to cover the post was considered however the cost versus advantage were difficult to accommodate within budget.
- iv. Cllr Bastone informed Partnership that an assessment for additional parking at Strete Gate is underway but some way off being finalised.

### **5. MINOR LANES – DCC TRANSPORT STUDY**

- 5.1 John Fewings informed Partnership that a number of works took place in 2019 using money from central Government. The works improved passing places, drainage and road surface.
- 5.2 Now looking at increasing the number of passing places, improving junctions and potentially moving hedge banks.
- 5.3 John Fewings shared concerns that even with improvements, the existing route will not have the capacity of the A379. If that capacity needs to be matched, a great deal of investment as well as land purchases will be required.
- 5.4 WSP are looking at a traffic study on the A379 and other roads and determining the impact on routes where the traffic may potentially go.

### **6. TORCROSS – OUTFALL AND OTHER DRAINAGE ISSUES**

- 6.1 Peter Chamberlain informed Partnership the interim gate placed at the end of the culvert was lost in severe weather. The gate was intended to be temporary, placed there to stop shingle compacting and causing severe issues.
- 6.2 Engineers finalised the design of a heavy duty gate that is to be installed on 25<sup>th</sup> October. The contractor postponed other works to be able to bring the planned installation date forward to October (from December). Whilst there can be no guarantee of longevity, the new gate is much more substantial than the interim gate.
- 6.3 In the absence of any clear responsibility for the outfall, Devon County Council took the lead on these works. Whilst this is not an outright solution to all the issues it will help. However there needs to be a collective approach going forward.

## **7. RELOCATION OF SLAPTON MONUMENT**

7.1 Whilst the engineering approach for the move is mapped, little progress has occurred since the last meeting largely due to the following:

- i. Agreement on the ongoing maintenance is required before permission is granted from the Field Studies Council to move the monument to Strete Gate.
  - a. Peter Hales, Chair of Strete Parish Council has drawn up and distributed a document for ongoing maintenance of the monument. The document, that also estimates costs for each parish council, has been sent to six parish councils and two associated groups. Currently waiting for each parish council to hold their next meeting to discuss and signal their agreement (or otherwise).
  - b. The draft Parish Agreement was also circulated to Partnership prior to today's meeting.
  - c. How the Strete Gate site is passed across into ongoing maintenance and the condition of it has to be discussed and agreed. The site is presently very overgrown and will need to be cleared before ongoing maintenance commences.
- ii. Planning permission will need to be in place before the monument is moved.
  - a. DCC do not currently have staff in place to do this however once the land issue is resolved DCC will find a way for staff will be released to get planning permission in place.

### **It was decided that**

- The group of Parish Councils will convene a meeting to discuss the draft agreement, keeping Partnership informed of progress.
- Once Parish Councils are agreed, discussions should take place with Lee Dennison, FSC Slapton Ley, before the agreement is executed. FSC will need to ensure all risks and liabilities are covered.

7.2 The AONB Manager reminded Partnership funding for moving the monument came through the Coastal Revival Fund and that this is protected and ring fenced. An element of the funding was for contract works on the Sherman Tank located in Torcross car park. The process had been tortuous with contractor difficulties and the pandemic. However working together with contractors, volunteers and other individuals, works have now completed satisfactorily. The AONB Manager thanked Partnership for their patience.

## **8. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

8.1 Nothing raised.

These notes remain as draft until approved at the next meeting of the Slapton Line Partnership.