

Slapton Line Partnership Meeting 25th Jan 2021 via videoconference

Attendees

Cllr Julian Brazil (Devon CC Cllr for Kingsbridge & Stokenham & South Hams DC Cllr for Stokenham)
Peter Chamberlain (Devon County Council Environment Manager),
Martin Davies (Environment Agency)
Alan Denbigh (Chair)
Lee Dennison (Slapton Ley Site Manager, FSC)
Roger English (Manager South AONB)
John Fewings (Neighbourhood Highway Team)
Dan Field (Senior Specialist in Engineering, South Hams District Council)
Cllr Kate Gill (Chair, Strete Parish Council)
Julie Hinder (Chair, Slapton Parish Council)
Jim McPetrie (Vice Chair, Slapton Parish Council)
Andy Pratt (Head of Slapton Ley, Field Studies Council)
Cllr Piers Spence (Chair, Stokenham Parish Council)
Louise Soothill-Ward (Clerk, Slapton Parish Council)

Apologies: Vicky Croughan (Communications, South Hams District Council),
Cllr Richard Foss (South Hams District Council Councillor for Allington and Strete)

1. Matters Arising

Schools catchment – The last meeting (6th March 2020) agreed to include in the adaptation plan activities to influence travel behaviour to schools along the Line. This has been added.

Flood Mapping – Martin Davies confirmed that the Environment Agency flood mapping now includes information showing the road flooding from the Ley. It's not detailed enough to show individual properties. Historical events can be recorded against it and information such as photographs can be tagged against it.

Rock Armour Maintenance (north of Torcross) - Peter Chamberlain explained that DCC engineers did look at this but nothing was progressed owing to CV19 disruption. A key issue is whether there is funding left to do any work after the monument is moved. Dan said that he had concluded that because of the varying size of rocks and gaps that it might be better to be proactive and respond to further storms. The first piece of work had been done when this section of wall was first rebuilt. We should keep monitoring post storms.

2. Lower Ley Culvert blockage and Torcross Flooding

Peter Chamberlain highlighted the sequence of events around the overflow from the Ley at Torcross. Shingle blockage first occurred during autumn with Lee Dennison at the FSC encouraging partners to contribute to clearing this, but not getting a response. As Christmas approached, with the high rainfall, the Ley water levels started to rise – at the same time the South West Water (SWW) pumping station at Torcross developed a fault. Lee got SWW to provide funds and arranged clearance but which was unsuccessful as the outlet was too heavily blocked with shingle. Heavy rainfall occurred and the level rose further causing the road to flood in two places either side of the 90 degree bend in Torcross. Stokenham PC sent an email around to stir action - highlighting the risk of sewers and homes about to flood. DCC held phone meetings on Christmas Eve to assess what could be done and engaged contractors who inspected on Christmas Day and started clearance work on Boxing Day. The Fire Service then used high pressure hoses which helped but didn't completely

clear. The next step would have been to dam off the Ley end of the culvert and pump out the water making it safe to remove shingle manually. The contractors were stood down and in the meantime the flow gradually increased from a small trickle until it completely cleared the remaining shingle. Temporary tidal flaps were installed at the outlet on 7th Jan to stop shingle going into the culvert.

DCC will arrange a more permanent solution – some of the flap hinges have fatigue cracked and will be replaced. The current flaps will be replaced with aluminium flaps which DCC will fund and implement. DCC also proposes to make some mods to the inlet trash screen installed by the FSC making access easier if it needs to be pumped out. DCC would pay to do this also further investigation to see if there's anything else that can be done to prevent the problem occurring. DCC have produced a draft contingency plan for the culvert itself to handle in a safe manner; which includes the recommendation of damming off the inlet and pumping the water out of the culvert. This will be passed to Stokenham PC via the Devon Community Resilience forum.

Piers Spence thanked Peter and his team for getting things sorted – expectations were more than fulfilled! Piers said the problem was partly the Ley filling and flooding but also water coming down the hill behind Florence cottages. Potential problem is that people have traditionally cleared the culver with shovels when a digger has failed which it is potentially risky and we don't know how easy it's going to be to clear in front of the flaps when they block.

Lee suggested making the flaps lockable whilst clearing to hold back any dangerous flow. He also proposed an additional new overflow in the middle of the beach. Peter said this was considered but major engineering expertise and getting consents etc would be highly expensive and wouldn't be undertaken lightly. The engineers view was that we have a very serviceable culvert albeit with problems.

Andy Pratt asked if it should have more regular monitoring to watch for shingle build up which gets worse the longer left gets worse? Piers commented that one good 3-day storm could block it. Could a duct be drilled higher up? Jim McPetrie noted that there is an additional outlet on the Torcross Hotel side which occasionally also drains out.

Lee Dennison said the SWW equipment failed at the same time as the flooding and SWW have agreed in principle to contribute to the funding. A typical cost of £700 to get the machine in place bringing it from Beesands at low tide and tracking across with a 4-hour window. The machine is always set to one side when they are clearing.

If this happened twice per year a budget of £1500 per year would be needed. SWW, PCs and other partners could contribute. Clearly if damming and pumps were required costs would be higher.

Actions:

- Lee to approach SWW for a contribution and pass on results of this to Alan to negotiate any shortfall from other partners for contributions to this.
- Peter to take suggestion on being able to lock the gates whilst clearing them to engineering team.

3. Moving the Monument

Peter - No progress since March last year as a result of CV19. There is a complete design and completed assessments but no planning permission or detailed landowner agreements from FSC as

yet. The latter was lacking a maintenance agreement from Parish Councils (in the monument catchment area those affected by the evacuation) - agreed in principle but not firmed up.

The money to cover the costs of moving will be carried forward.

Actions:

- Peter to identify colleague to submit planning permission and get project back to live status with engineers.
- Kate Gill to agree with Lee at the FSC: costs and methods, then agree pro-rata contributions for PCs. Strete PC clerk to draw up agreement.

4. Recruiting Adaptation Manager

Roger explained that with the exceptional demands of this year including CV19 and a huge public enquiry that he had not been able to pursue the recruitment process.

Workload is clearer from next week onwards – now ready to move forward on this and to coordinate diaries between Roger, Peter and Martin for interview dates. Hope to have someone in post for new financial year.

Martin said that committee updated on delays so money rolled forward into next year.

Actions: Roger to resume recruitment process

5. South West Coast Path Torcross cliff section repairs

Peter explained that the Coast Path over Limpet Rocks (Stokenham footpath 29) which used to go up the cliffs and towards Beesands was damaged in storm Emma in 2018, had to be closed and was replaced with an alternative. The original plan to reinstate in 2018 had been delayed with discussions about the England Coast Path. The alternative path currently goes inland a short way the other side of the old hotel and up a quite steep climb. Natural England didn't agree this was a satisfactory solution and wanted reinstatement of the original route. The funding is from the Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE). Devon Public rights of way colleagues haven't been able to do this yet - they are negotiating with the SW Coast Path Association to do this. The design work is complete but it will require MMO environmental consent related to the base of the cliff. Plans are being progressed though no date yet available.

A comment was made that this repair sounded expensive and queried if the funds could be used for other purposes. Peter responded that the funds were agreed for this, it was a high profile national path and that the improvements would improve access for people who have difficulty with the current steep and narrow access.

6. Update on Memorial Car Park from Summer 2020

The Memorial Car Park toilets were removed owing to septic tank damage by erosion during Storm Emma.

Dan Field reported that there was a meeting in SHDC to consider if toilets should be replaced in another location nearby – money was assigned to that aspiration in the programme but no further progress.

Julie Hinder reported that there were lots of complaints about defecation on the path from residents and visitors during the summer and that the barrier hasn't stopped day vans coming in.

Jim said that we are likely to have a lot more people having holidays in this country as a result of the pandemic. There are a number of options including closing the car park or having limited time for parking. It is going to be a problem again this year. We aren't going to get new lavatories. Signage is not a solution.

Piers said the same problem occurred at Hallsands and Stokenham PC paid for two portaloos for the six weeks of summer which cost £600. They were well used. In his opinion, if you provide car park which people pay for, you are morally required to provide a loo.

Dan said that the car park keeps people from parking on the road but is being eroded little by little – how long will the car park be able to stay open. The SHDC car parking teams looked at costs for portable loos – but very expensive and a lot higher than at Hallsands.

Julie and Louise said that in 2018 the cost estimate for six loos for 31 weeks was £5940 (April-October) and they are only serviced once per week (probably an issue in the context of CV19). This is not affordable on the Slapton precept. The loos would also need some kind of staking/anchoring (Natural England requirement).

Kate said that an additional problem is people with motor homes emptying loos in the public toilets or into the hedge (Louise added that emptying into the sea was also a problem and wondered if people might be able to use campsite facilities if they paid to do this). Strete PC are looking at marshals to police behaviour. She anticipates also an enlarged car park at Strete owing to the re-siting of the memorial and is already discussing this with the land agent.

Julian Brazil commented that enforcement is all very well but we need this to boost our economy and need to do something as we will have the problem again. He suggested talking to the MP who has offered help identifying funding – we had submitted a shopping list and buying additional land at Strete Gate would be expensive.

Julie agreed with Julian that the adaptation plan is about encouraging use – the Line will become more of a destination when the road goes.

Andy said we need to progress the adaptation plan in order not to continue having this kind of discussion and we need to start developing the vision.

Actions: Julian to chase Chris Brooks on progress on toilet facility funding/solution.
Alan to approach MP about any sources of funding.

7. Beesands Included in Adaptation Plan

Alan suggested that an item covering Beesands should be added into the adaptation plan would aid the works here and help with communications in the area.

Dan agreed that the adaptation manager's role could include this.

Louise said that Slapton needed to better understand the adaptation plan – Alan explained that it had been shared with the Partnership including Slapton representatives so far. The intention was that it would be further developed working with the residents of the area a process which should have already been happening.

Actions: Alan to circulate draft adaptation plan to Slapton representatives and to include a reference to Beesands in the next draft.