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# Slapton Line Partnership

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## Attendees

### In Person:

Caroline Voaden MP	CV
Charlie Pritchard Williams (Clerk of Dartmouth Town Council)	CPW
Cllr Georgina Allen (South Hams District Council)	GAL
Cllr Jane Abbey (Chair of Slapton Parish Council)	JA
Cllr Jonathan Hawkins (Chair of South Hams District Council)	JH
Cllr Julian Brazil (Devon County Council & South Hams District Council)	JB
Cllr Julie Taylor (Kingsbridge Town Council)	JT
Cllr Nigel Hannaford (Vice Chair of East Allington Parish Council)	NH
Cllr Paula Doust (Stokenham Parish Council)	PD
Cllr Peter Hadley (Chair of Frogmore & Sherford Parish Council)	PH
Cllr Peter Osbourne (Slapton Parish Council)	PO
Cllr Piers Spence (Chair of Stokenham Parish Council)	PS
Cllr Ralph Clark (Chair of Strete Parish Council)	RC
Cllr Tim Singleton (Strete Parish Council)	TS
Dan Field (South Hams District Council)	DF
Dave Shorten (Environment Agency)	DS
Gill Claydon (Clerk of Stokenham Parish Council)	GC
James O'Dwyer (Wild Planet Trust)	JOD
Josh Bennett (Devon County Council)	JB
Lou Hoskin (Slapton Line Partnership Adaptation Manager)	LH
Mac Lloyd-Skinner (Environment Agency)	MLS
Martin Davies (Environment Agency)	MD
Matt Hawes (Field Studies Council)	MHA
Matthew Hill (South Hams District Council)	MHI
Meg Booth (Devon County Council)	MB
Rachel Roberts (Caroline Voaden MP's Office)	RR
Roger English (South Devon National Landscapes)	RE
Steve Mullineaux (South Hams District Council)	SM
Tim Moseley (Vice Chair of Stoke Fleming Parish Council)	TM
Tom Vaughan (Devon County Council)	TV

### Online:

George Arnison (Environment Agency)	GA
Michelle Pierce (South Hams District Council)	MP
Owen Staden (Natural England)	OS
Vicky Croughan (South Hams District Council)	VC
Mike Bomford (Devon County Council)	MBO

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## Agenda Items

The Slapton Line Partnership Adaptation Manager (Lou Hoskin) gave a general introduction to the meeting and indicated that she would be chairing the meeting. Highlighted the fact that it has been an emotional few months for many people but asked for attendees to be civil and respectful. Speakers are each to give a situation report, then other business can be discussed.

## Opening Remarks

*Caroline Voaden MP*

- Thanked everyone for coming and the councils for their hard work over the past few weeks.
- Acknowledged that everyone will have heard her updates already, and said there isn't much to add as it is currently parliamentary recess. Her petition will be presented in the Chamber of the House of Commons on Monday evening, which will be an opportunity to raise the issue on the national stage. Advised that she would continue to bring attention to the coastal erosion in Start Bay and its impact on communities.
- Said that clarification was needed on whether South Devon would see any of the £10.5bn coastal funding that has been mentioned by the Prime Minister. Reassured everyone that a great deal of work is going on behind the scenes and the issue will remain high on the agenda, even though she might be speaking publicly about other issues such as SEND.

## Devon County Council

*Meg Booth*

- Asked the SLP for feedback on key areas:
  - 1) **Public transport** – a shuttle bus is operating from Torcross to Kingsbridge, while taxis are now in place to connect to the 93 bus service. They have already altered the timings of the Slapton taxi, but welcome feedback.
    - a. GC: The shuttle bus hasn't turned up on occasion, but this might be due to issues getting through. There have also been roadworks in Stokenham.
    - b. PO: Questioned why a taxi is being used in place of a bus, as it doesn't seem efficient.
      - i. MB: The return journey from Strete to Slapton adds 6.5km, which impacts the timetabling. CV also queried this with Stagecoach and received the same response.
  - 2) **Main diversion signage** – temporary signage has been put out on the main diversion route (A381 and A3122) and they are looking at altering permanent signage, such as removing Dartmouth from signage in Kingsbridge pointing towards Torcross. They are hoping to get this work done by 6th March, which is a tight timescale.

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- a. PO: The sign in Strete still says 'No access beyond Strete Gate', which the Parish Council has already asked to be updated.
  - b. PS: Could signage be added at Totnes Cross saying which way to go to get to the villages?
    - i. MB: Have to be careful about how much info is given [on signs], but the team are looking into this. *Will advise LH of any updates.*
- 3) Inland road signage** – is the route identified in 2024 still the one that should be investigated? Local knowledge is helpful, and TV will be leading on this.
- a. LH: The SLP had already been looking at this point, with members adding comments to an online map. This has been shared with TV and *will be shared with MB.*
- 4) Emergency services** – they are fully aware of road closures and have been engaged through the recovery process. No concerns have been raised.
- a. JOD: Are there any size restrictions in place? Inappropriate vehicles might be using the back roads.
    - i. MB: The only option is to divert onto A roads, and DCC can't stop people using other roads. If there is a serious problem, they could impose weight restrictions but this is not straightforward due to access requirements.
  - b. JB: Need to ask for Sat Nav systems to be updated, as people will just follow routes they are given without knowing any better. This is a piece of work to do behind the scenes.
    - i. CV: Has a contact for Sat Navs, so can pass on the details when a route is decided.
    - ii. JA: The 'fast route' option will take drivers down minor roads due to the 60mph limit.
    - iii. MB: Speaks regularly to Sat Nav industry as this is an issue in other areas.
- 5) Inland road network** – Since 2024, the network of roads DCC are looking at has been expanded. There are 214 locations for improvements based on issues such as visibility and the distance between passing spots. The approximate costing to update 200 locations is £6m without any planning permissions and ecological mitigations. This is based on 10 locations requiring high cost solutions and most being low cost. DCC has now identified £1m to spend next financial year (26/27). The SLP will be partly responsible for deciding where to focus.
- 6) A379 repairs** – DCC has submitted a high level estimate of £18m to the Department for Transport. This is principally looking at repairing the section of road between Torcross and the Monument car park, plus some works at Torcross. DfT have requested more details, plus a business case. This is likely to be a light touch business case, but they are yet to confirm. There is an Economic Study from 2023, and DCC can provide further information so they are hoping to share with DfT quickly for them to consider.

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## South Hams District Council

Steve Mullineaux

- Gave an update on the main areas SHDC is working on:
  1. **Torcross Tank car park** - Open but susceptible to high tides/waves. Clean up is in progress following Wednesday's winds and high tide. At some point after half term, date TBC, the car park will close temporarily while a permanent entrance is installed, as it is currently just flattened hard core. Will only be closed for a day or so. [SHDC will communicate when the date is confirmed.](#)
  2. **Beesands** – 1000 tonnes of big boulders have been ordered to protect the access road into the village, due to concerns that the sea could undercut the car park.
  3. **Torcross village** – SHDC has been liaising with Stokenham PC regarding residents' concerns about vibrations. **They are arranging a session between the Environment Agency and residents**, so the EA can reassure residents and talk about their work. This is not a quick fix, and monitoring is needed.

Points raised:

- 1) PO: No communication has been received by Slapton Parish Council from SHDC or DCC following recent storms, all information has come via social media or other Parish Councils.
  - a. SM: [SLP website will be used as main communication method moving forward](#)
- 2) RC: Are there any plans to bring more rock to protect the rest of the Slapton Line?
  - a. SM: Not at the moment. This links to DCC's work – the £18m figure is to repair the road itself, future defence work will be on top of this.

## Environment Agency

Martin Davies

- Stated that regarding the impact on properties in Torcross, the EA manages the seawall and is aware of the vibrations, overtopping and damage to properties. The immediate task was to check on the stability and the structural integrity of the defence – they found the seawall to be structurally sound and are not concerned about failure of the defence.
- In 2016, sheet piles of 12-13m were installed to provide stability, but the beach has lowered 3+ metres in recent months, so wave energy has transferred to the land and properties behind the wall. In addition to recent monitoring, they will be onsite in the coming weeks to set up monitoring points to work out further movement and will also be carrying out work to look at the voids in the future. They are aware there has been movement in the expansion joints but the sheet pile walls themselves haven't moved, hence they are confident about the structural integrity of the wall.
- In terms of the stability and overtopping, the EA is aware the defence isn't working as it should so consultants are now looking at the economics and will see whether Government grants could be used. Costs need to be calculated based on designs – one

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option is rock similar to at Beesands – and a cost-benefit analysis will be done. There is currently no funding available but that won't stop them bidding.

- The £10bn Government funding is England wide, so any project will be competing for a part of this. EA staff have been onsite, but MD recognises that communication could have been better.

Points raised:

- 1) CV: Has £10bn funding already been allocated or is it for new projects?
  - a. MD: Across Devon & Cornwall, has more or less been allocated.
  - b. GA: £10bn covers a 10 year period for coastal erosion and flooding projects. This includes all EA projects across the country, as well as local authority projects that they administer. There is a lot of small print. Funding is distributed by Treasury on a yearly basis, and each year the EA has to bid for the following year's tranche. A programme of work has already been approved for 2026/27, and any new projects will have to bid for funding with a competitive business case. If a project is successful, it might not be immediate – might not secure funding for a few years. The EA will do what they can to get Torcross work pushed up the agenda.
- 2) CV: What does it mean that the seawall isn't working as it should?
  - a. MD: The defence works best if there is shingle in front of the sheet pilings. It is clear that waves are now going over the wall, so some kind of energy dissipation is needed for it to perform properly.
- 3) PS: A lack of shingle is causing vibrations as well as waves running up the wall – 15-20m waves are therefore raining shingle down on top of buildings, so the wall is contributing to the damage rather than preventing.
  - a. MD: Work needs to be done, but a decision needs to be made over what could be done. Rock armour was previously looked at in 2016 but wasn't a popular decision. All options need to be looked at again; the EA is not abandoning the community.
- 4) PS: Is beach recycling an option?
  - a. MD: The trend is for shingle in the south of the bay to be moved northward, so recharging is unlikely to provide long term solution due to south-north movement.
  - b. GA: Only a few weeks before Christmas, the state of beach was healthy then a few weeks later metres had been lost. SHDC previously did recharge the beach, which was costly, but the shingle had been stripped away in a few tides.
- 5) MD: The seawall in Beesands performed well, so rock in front could be a solution for Torcross.
- 6) JB: Stated that Torcross residents clearly need reassurance, so a meeting with the EA is crucial. Residents speak about a guarantee from the EA to hold the line until 2055, and want to know about rebuilding, insurance etc. If Torcross seafront gets destroyed, what about houses at other side of Ley? There are real concerns about the future. Stated it is unhelpful for Government to keep talking about £10bn funding as it makes it sound like there's money available.

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Also asked for Beesands residents to be included in an EA meeting – those who live behind the village green, as they may be thinking they only have about 5 years left.

- a. GA: There is a fundamental misunderstanding of SMP, as the EA cannot offer a guarantee – all work is on best endeavours basis.

## Field Studies Council & National Nature Reserve

*Matt Hawes*

- Stated that FSC would work with SLP to develop a long-term approach regarding the A379, including to mitigate the impact on nature if the road is rebuilt.
- Addressed the question of what would happen if the Ley is breached. A 10 year management plan for the NNR, including the Ley, would be reviewed and adapted as necessary. The timing of such a breach can not be predicted, as a 2007 report suggested a breach was likely in 50-100 years but parts of the ridge now appear to be vulnerable. They will continue to manage changing habitats and species. If there is a breach, it is predicted that there will be a loss of freshwater habitats and reed beds, which would become salt marsh, brackish lagoons and intertidal mud flats. There was a historic plan to build a dam at Slapton Bridge to protect the Higher Ley, in case the Lower Ley was breached, so they would look at this again.
- Regarding strapwort, there have been some translocation successes so this will be looked at again to mitigate in case of a breach. There are concerns about some fish populations, so FSC is working with EA to mitigate.

Points raised:

- 1) MD: Plymouth University didn't think the shingle ridge would be breached as it would heal itself.
  - a. PS: Might have to review that opinion based on current state.
- 2) JB: What is the effect if the Ley is breached, from a biodiversity point of view? Are there unique species?
  - a. MH: There are some unique species such as strapwort – only growing in 2 sites in UK – that might be affected depending on the nature of breach. Other protected species might be affected, but there are areas further inland that would continue to support so the impact wouldn't be catastrophic. At the moment, the Ley consists of freshwater with a very small amount of saltwater from storms etc. If the Ley was breached, it would transition to being mainly saltwater – FSC focuses on science and education, so they would monitor to look at opportunities to mitigate and protect. If designated species were impacted, FSC would look at opportunities within NNR, as approved by Natural England.

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## Natural England

Owen Staden

- Shared that many SLP members attended a working group meeting in January on environmental designations. They talked about NE's role on the SLP and gave information on designations.
- Addressed a couple of key areas:
  - 1) **Flooding at Deer Bridge** – NE have reviewed and responded to requests and will continue to work with SLP and DCC. If Devon Highways and EA confirm dredging is needed, they will look at this. NE to follow up with Devon Highways and EA. *MD to take action away.*
    - a. RC: Questioned correspondence from DCC in November 2024 saying work had been carried out between Townsend Cross and Deer Bridge.
      - i. JB: The road running between these points has been worked on, ie passing places etc.
  - 2) A379 – NE agreed to emergency works after recent storms. NE are now waiting to hear the next steps so they can support with advice. Need to understand they extent of work before they can move forward. Future conversations will need to take place about the shingle ridge.
    - a. JB: Will the SSSI designation change if Ley becomes saltwater?
      - i. OS: SSSI designation is for shingle ridge itself.
      - ii. LH: Understands confusion over SSSI. *Action for LH to produce info about SSSI in collaboration with other agencies.*

## Stokenham Parish Council

Cllr Spence

- Thanked SHDC & DCC for their work, and spoke about the three impacted villages:
  - 1) **Hallsands** – the smallest community which is largely privately owned. Asked whether rock could be dropped off for community to move around, and Landmarc could spend half a day dealing with the rocks on beach? The big concern is the road into village. SWW main which runs across road is also vulnerable. The Parish Council has carried out survey of householders and is sharing information as needed.
  - 2) **Beesands** – 75 people in the village. The southern end (Cricket Inn plus mostly holiday homes) is protected by the seawall. The village green has reduced from 15m to 9m in the last fortnight – nobody knows how long this buffer between sea and houses will last. Landmarc has done a fantastic job of putting rock back along edge of village green. Immediate concern about vulnerability at bottom of road into village/slipway. Residents would love a seawall all the way along – they know that's not possible so want reassurance that rock armour will be put back after every storm. An evacuation plan needs to be looked at – could evacuation steps be built at the back of the pub? Parish Council can help with planning permission if needed, and possible funding from flooding resilience schemes.

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- 3) **Torcross** – multiple related issues. The real concern is the threat to viability of community.
- a. **Seafront homeowners** – 4 or 5 permanent residents and the rest second- or holiday homeowners – want reassurance. The seawall is keeping the sea out but not preventing serious damage. Should they stay and reinstate their homes or sell up and move away? Some have moved out on the advice of their insurers. One insurer commissioned a structural engineer who reported the property was not habitable until the gable walls were secured, but no work should be done until the integrity of the seawall was confirmed. Residents need help to decide on their next best move. SM previously mentioned a survey?
    - i. SM: Building Control recently visited, did a visual assessment saying no houses are in danger of falling down so no further action. If they had said there was danger to the public, they would cordon off.
  - b. **Slapton Line** - SHDC have done great work bringing in rock and this appears to have averted an imminent breach of the shingle ridge by the Tank car park. But the works are temporary and it looks like now is the time to consider extending the defences as envisaged in the Strategy, to stop the sea out flanking the spit north of Torcross Point. The previous economic assessment focused on the value of the A379, but if houses on Torcross seafront and to the west of the Ley are impacted, the economic loss would be much higher. What is the latest research on the vulnerability of the barrier and the best estimates for the timing of a permanent breach of the Ley?
  - c. **Communications** - unhelpful press coverage of the impact on Torcross will negatively affect the tourist trade. Need help from SHDC comms teams to get the message out that Torcross is open for business and there are still plenty of reasons to visit. We must use the interim period while the road is out of action to advance the adaptation agenda.

#### Points raised:

- 1) LH thanked PS for his work
- 2) MD: Plymouth University has been commissioned to do some work on where the shingle has gone. Mentioned an email that said sheet piling has come loose at Torcross Point, which could be health and safety issue
- 3) PO: Most emphasis is on Torcross area, but there is also erosion at Strete Gate end of Slapton Line – down to 10ft of land buffer in some areas.
- 4) JOD: Does South West Coast Path Association have any money to support?
  - a. RE: A small amount of money might be available.

## Slapton Parish Council

### *Cllr Abbey*

- Acknowledged that issues in Slapton are trivial compared to Stokenham Parish but stated that lessons need to be learned to prevent the village being cut off. Highlighted issues including unmanaged risk, poor communication, and failure to assess routes.

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- Deer Bridge and Five Mile Lane were flooded so village was trapped for two days, with no flooding incidents logged on Devon Highways system. Maintenance has been poor in recent years with no evidence of works on Five Mile Lane. We now know Deer Bridge could have been lawfully maintained for years rather than flooding annually, but why has no one taken ownership?
- Flood waters have now receded, but back lanes are gridlocked. Businesses are experiencing a drop in trade, particularly the village shop, and deliveries are being cut as suppliers can't risk delay. There is now a taxi into the village, but previously there was no public transport.
- Who is the officer within Devon Highways who is responsible for Slapton? Proper coordination and emergency planning is needed, as well as a proper solution for the A379 as the back lanes are not a suitable option without investment.

## Strete Parish Council

*Cllr Clark*

- Agreed with JA's statement.
- Strete has less problems but is a ghost town as a result of the breach of the A379.
- Raised concerns about Strete Gate to Sands Road turning due to erosion – the Monument is now 6m from edge. Asked for rock armour along northern end of beach.
- The double decker 93 bus is now travelling down Three Mile Lane, causing travel issues. This happens whenever there is a closure on A379, and the issue has been raised on numerous occasions.
- The heavy traffic on Three Mile Lane is causing the road surface to break up. RC understood that work was going to be done on Three Mile Lane in 2025 but nothing has been done, so hopes 3 mile lane will be included in £1m work.

## Frogmore & Sherford Parish Council

*Cllr Hadley*

- Endorsed what has been said by others. Parish is only suffering in minor way, but quick action is needed.

## East Allington Parish Council

*Cllr Hannaford*

- Spoke about the impact on parishioners linked to travel. There are single track lanes in and out of the village, which they don't want to be signposted as they would like them to

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only be used by locals. As well as inconveniencing locals, it would also give a bad impression to tourists.

## Stoke Fleming Parish Council

*Cllr Moseley*

- Impact on Stoke Fleming pales into insignificance compared to other Parishes.

## Other business

### 1) Inland road network

- a. LH: There was due to be a working group meeting on the inland road network a few weeks ago, but this was postponed – new dates have been sent out so SLP members are encouraged to respond. Others may also wish to join the working group.
- b. TS: How will adaptation be done while A379 is closed?
  - i. LH: Agrees that ideally adaptation works would have been done with A379 open. As that is now not currently the case, we will be working the community very carefully on this to understand the best options.
- c. RC: Are there specific priority routes for the inland road network? When will work take place?
  - i. MB: Will share a map of passing places etc with colour coding.
  - ii. LH: Timings will hopefully agreed through working group.

### 2) Memorial

- a. LH: Visited on 19<sup>th</sup> February and aware this is a point of concern. This has been an ongoing discussion within SLP for a number of years. Permission to relocate the Memorial lapsed in December, and a priority is to get the permission in place again. [This will be discussed in the Amenities working group.](#)

### 3) Highways Officer

- a. TV: Tom is representative on SLP. Lisa Redmond is local Highways Officer but she has been very busy. [LH to share TV's details.](#)
- b. JA: Had to contact DF to get a response from Highways as no one had come to Slapton to check.
- c. TV: Encouraged everyone to go through the DCC portal to log issues in case of staff absence.

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- d. JB: Stated that it is unfair for DCC to be criticised for not sorting out flooding in Slapton, as this was a SWW issue which DCC got SWW to sort straight away. DCC also sorted buses and taxis. JA and JB both apologised.
- e. JH: Acknowledged that Lisa Redmond has lots to do so needs more help and support. Said LH is a breath of fresh air for SLP but asked why no work has already taken place.
- f. PO: Appreciates work Highways has done in response to the emergency.

**4) A379**

- a. JOD: What would the timetable be for the A379 if moneys become available?
- b. DF: If money arrives, it would take years for the A379 to be replaced, even if working at an accelerated pace, due to planning permission and environmental impact assessments etc. This work needs to be parallel to the adaptation process, which has now been triggered. Work on the A379 will not be part of the SLP discussion. Can't start the planning process until we know what the plan is.