

EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Sidmouth and East Beach BMP Project Advisory Group held online via zoom on 23 January 2024

Attendance list at end of document

The meeting started at 2.00 pm and ended at 3.49 pm

51 Welcome

The Chair welcomed all to the meeting.

52 Note of previous meeting held on 8 March 2023

The notes of the previous meeting were agreed subject to amendments of typographical errors and explaining the acronym of MMO as Marine Management Organisation. In response to a question, the Outline Business Case submission to the Environment agency would be published online for the benefit of the group as soon as possible.

53 Project update

The Engineering Projects Manager gave an update on the project. He highlighted the recent developments of:

- Beach Management Plan fully approved/assured by the Environment Agency
- Detailed stage of the design can now get underway
- The Plan now becomes a scheme, referred to as a Beach Management Scheme (BMS)
- Funding can start to be drawn down to progress the project.

The outline business case that supported the plan would soon be published online for information.

Thanks were expressed for the involvement of many parties in getting the project to this stage, particularly when the programme was under threat of removal.

The Project Board had met with Atkins and Kier to request the preparation of a suitable proposal with a view to appoint them as consultants/contractors to deliver the project. Early engagement with Natural England and the Jurassic Coast Trust had also been sought with Atkins. There was also consideration of an external project manager to aid delivery.

54 Introduction to Kier/Atkins

Introductions were made to the Group of associates from the Atkins/Kier arrangement. Present at the meeting were:

- Adrian Parker, Kier, DCloS Delivery Manager
- Richard Greet, Estimating Manager
- Andrew Yetton, AtkinsRealis Associate Director
- Heather Coutts, AtkinsRealis Associate (EIA)

The Group were told about the Collaborative Delivery Framework, and were shown the range of services that AtkinsRealis and Kier provided to this. Both had over 25 years

experience in working in the South West for Atkins; and in relations with the Environment Agency delivering FCERM projects for Kier.

A number of examples of previous successful projects were shown to the Group from around the South West area and elsewhere in the country, such as:

- Lydd Ranges coastal defence scheme;
- Bunn Leisure coastal defence scheme;
- Sandy Lane coastal works;
- Starcorss and Cockwood Harbour;
- Teignmouth Point Sea Wall; and many others

The design process stages were also explained.

Specifically on the Sidmouth and East Beach BMP, based on the funded option 6, a slide was shown to the group displaying the desired outcomes along with visual representation of the design elements along the beach that would be further refined as the project progressed.

Comments from the Group included:

- A plea to ensure the new timetable was met, because of the protracted nature of developing the scheme and securing funding that had taken many years; in response, it was explained that the project would have contractual milestones, subject to securing permissions (such as planning permission). Once the project scope was finalised, this would give a clearer timeframe to be shared with the local community;
- If priority to the east beach element of the scheme could be made, because of the properties at immediate risk at that end;
- Close liaison requested with the consultants in regards to the ramp project so that this could be incorporated both into the scope (subject to the client's approval) and into the public consultation exercises.

55 **Short term programme**

The Engineering Projects Manager advised that the design proposal, based on the scope drafted by the subgroup of the Advisory Group, was expected from Atkins/Kier in March 2024. There may be further consultation with the subgroup at this stage.

The Project Board would form a view on the proposal brought forward by Atkins/Kier, to ensure that the scope is updated to provide a deliverable scheme.

The final scope would be circulated to the Group before consultation with the wider community on the design details. The proposal will also feature a programme setting out the works to completion.

56 **Presentation from Ebb Tide on Sidmouth seaweed biosphere/marine nature reserve/farm**

The Chair welcomed John Hammond and Tony Coulson, Directors of Ebb Tide to the meeting.

Mr Hammond set out how Ebb Tides undertake the harvesting of seaweed and develop a number of products from it. He also showed the phases for putting a seaweed biosphere in place.

He showed the group a location map of a potential site for a seaweed biosphere. An artificial reef would be created with natural materials. Evidence gathered from similar installations in other countries showed a wave activity reduction on coastal areas of up to 40%. There were also a number of other benefits, including carbon offsetting, increasing marine stocks and diversity, and cleaner waters. The Group were told of some existing projects, and the links with experts in various related fields that the company had.

Whilst the proposal was not part of the current BMP, they requested that it was considered for future inclusion if possible. They were seeking funding for their “soft engineering” solution.

In response, the Chair and attending officers were in agreement that the proposal, whilst unproven at this stage, should be referred to the contracted consultants to see if such a proposal could add benefit to the scheme – however not to the detriment of the progression of the scheme being implemented. Further discussion would be welcomed between parties, as there were clear benefits but also a clash with current policy in regard to that in place by the Jurassic Coast team.

There was general agreement within the Group that seaweed biospheres offered a number of wide ranging benefits and should be explored where possible.

57 **Proposed next meeting period**

The next meeting of the Advisory Group was likely to be held in the summer of 2024. In the meantime, any updates on progress would be circulated to the group by email.

The Project Board would plan out the public consultation periods. A request was made to give adequate notice of the engagement exercises, ideally at least two months.

Attendance List

Councillors present:

Todd Olive
Geoff Jung (Chair)
John Loudoun
Marianne Rixson

Also present (for some or all the meeting)

M Davies
T Burch
S Scriven
P Shepperd
Aldridge
Elliott
P Griew
Rafferty
Walden-Till
Goodman
Coulson
Coutts

Greet
Hammond
Parker
Skinner
Yetton

Officers in attendance:

Tom Buxton-Smith, Engineering Projects Manager
Andrew Hancock, Assistant Director StreetScene

Councillor apologies:

I Barlow
S Hughes

Chairman

Date: