

EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Sidmouth and East Beach BMP Project Advisory Group held online via Zoom on 25 February 2021

Attendance list at end of document

The meeting started at 9.32am and ended at 12.22pm

14 Welcome from the Chair

The Chair welcomed Advisory Group members to the first public meeting of the group.

15 Public speaking

There were no members of the public registered to speak.

16 Notes from the previous meeting and release of past notes

The notes from the previous meeting held on the 3 December 2020 were agreed, subject to further discussion by the Sub Group on the clarification and update of Aim 1 of the Group, currently listed as “maintain the 1990’s Sidmouth Coastal Defence Standard of Service”.

The Sub Group needed to explore further the suggested amendment of that Aim, with the proposed revised wording being “a) maintain the 50 year coast protection standard of service of the existing scheme, taking into account climate change, and b) modify the existing coast protection scheme to provide a 200 year standard of service against coastal flooding, taking climate change into account.”

The “200 year standard” was explained as an industry standard term, which was explained as the probability in anyone year of 1 in 200 (or 0.5%) that the flood level is exceeded. This is the standard metric used for all coastal defence schemes, used for determination of design and economic delivery of a scheme.

17 Project aims and objectives refresh

The Chair deferred further discussion on amending Aim 1 of the project aims, to a meeting of the Sub Group at a later date.

18 Preferred option Economics review (new funding calculator)

The Engineering Projects Manager set out to the Advisory Group the options before them following a review of the funding of the project, referred to as the economics of the project. The updated economics were key to reflect change to previously underfunded scheme. The update was that the project was between 111% and 133% funded, following the reapplication of the PF calculator, as well as work uncovering missed benefits.

The benefits of reviewing the Beach Management Plan (BMP) options were:

- Potential to investigate other options that were previously dismissed because they were too expensive under the terms of the previous fund limit; providing that those options deliver the same benefit and therefore provide the same funding eligibility;

- Review if there is the potential for a more sustainable options;
- Review if the splash wall requirement could be reduced;
- Review for a better East Beach option.

The negatives to revisiting the BMP were:

- Expected minimum delay of six months
- This would then move construction on site from year 2 to year 4 of the project
- Risk in that the alternative option selected may still be unaffordable, or may not offer the benefits required;
- Other options not recently tested for public acceptance.

If the BMP was revisited again, there would still be the requirement for Cabinet to agree before that work could begin. If no better option was found to be available after such a review, the project would have to revert back to the current working draft option.

Discussion from the Advisory Group included:

- Concern about testing the splash wall, as it was felt that comparison with the solution at Teignmouth was not a fair comparison. The design stage would cover the testing of a wall solution;
- Questioning the potential delay if the scheme is reviewed, and what could be undertaken to speed that up; The Chair confirmed that combining lead times for the work would lead to considerable delay, including factoring in consultation;
- Any scheme should be subject to constant review, and that the working option wouldn't get planning permission or be accepted by the Sidmouth population. In response, the current working option was re-iterated as likely to receive planning permission and the design stage would bring forward an attractive and effective wall solution;
- Concern that, whilst a review was welcomed to factor in the uplift in funding, any delay was of grave concern to the residents of Cliff Road, and that some form of interim works to support East Beach should be considered. In response, the Group were reminded that any permanent rock revetment at East Beach was not acceptable; however, investigation could be made into a temporary solution, whereby the rock used could then be relocated into the final scheme as an exit strategy for the temporary solution;
- The history of the scheme extended back many years, and any review would only delay yet again whilst erosion still continued, particularly at Pennington Point, and that now that the working option was fully funded, work should commence;
- Any temporary solution would have to be run past the Environment Agency assessors; using an adaptive pathway approach to include a temporary solution that then can be fully utilised in the final scheme;
- Geotube solution for under the cliff (and therefore visible) was not a viable option because of the risk of vandalism and the solution failing; however such a solution could be modelled for other areas of the scheme as an immersed solution;
- OBC needs to be updated to reflect climate change impact on beach levels.

19 **Revised preferred option proposal (Option A)**

The revised preferred option proposal (currently the working draft option) was re-iterated to the Group. It involved limited revisions, which fit within the scope of the original proposed option; therefore only required minor changes before the business case needed to be submitted.

The minor revisions had come about in response to the feedback from the local community, recognising the dislike of a 1m high permanent wall, as well as the drive to get the project to fruition.

The revisions included:

An extreme temporary top up wall, which was adaptive enough to be raised in certain sections as required and would require community co-operation to operate when required.

Concerns over this type of wall were that the operation of flood boards would be labour intensive, and unattractive when in place.

Comments from the Group included:

- If the existing foundations of the current small wall in place would be sufficient for the installation proposed in this option; in response, past experience evidenced a different and often poorer standard of foundation, so it was likely that the existing wall was not up to current constructions standards;
- Capital should be spent on installing the best scheme possible that requires less maintenance, rather than diverting an element of it to revenue costs, as that scheme would be more successful.

20 **Managed adaptive approach option (Option B)**

Managed adaptive approach option B means rebuilding the splash wall slightly higher with structural means to raise to 1m if and when required. This option mitigated the concern about raising the wall to 1m in height and was also adaptive so that it could be raised as required. Previously this option had been too expensive under the existing funding calculator.

Concerns about this option were that it was less effective than option A from day one of the project; and may only be able to afford to include a bare concrete wall with no attractive cladding.

If chosen, some re-modelling would be required that may reveal that further work was required in later years.

This option was not considered worth pursuing.

21 **Analysis of the Sidmouth Beach Management Plan's Aims & Objectives - A framework compiled by the Vision Group for Sidmouth**

Mary Walden-Till presented her detailed report on behalf of the Vision Group for Sidmouth. She outlined that the report put forward information to help inform debate, including the risks if planning permission is not achieved.

The Chair thanked Mary and the VGS for the report, which he felt was a useful resource for the historical context of the project.

The Group noted the report.

22 **Advisory Group recommendation on proceeding**

A suggestion was made to amend the recommendation beyond that set out in the agenda papers.

The Group were offered the following choices:

- Pause the project to explore other options, which will include investigating and delivering as appropriate temporary protection for East Beach; should the pause delay delivering protection at East Beach past the current 2 year time scale envisaged
- Pause the project to explore other options, which will include investigating and delivering as appropriate temporary protection for East Beach; should the pause delay delivering protection at East Beach past the current 2 year time scale envisaged
- Abstain

The majority of the Group chose to pause the project (12).

A suggestion was also made, following the poll of the group, to look to prepare a planning application for a temporary rock revetment at East Beach now, in order to help reduce lead in times.

ACTION The Engineering Projects Manager to prepare a report to Cabinet on steps to review the BMP, including the feedback from the Advisory Group.

The Chair gave this thanks for the fantastic work by the Engineering Projects Manager in helping move forward the scheme.

23 **What happens next**

The next steps, following the advice from the Group on proceeding, would now be:

- Report to Cabinet for approval;
- Subject to approval, consultant to work on modelling options;
- Sub group to assist in scoping and check as required;
- Results of modelling back to Advisory Group;
- Advice taken to proceed with a new option or revert back to Option A.

The sub group was required to help move quickly with the consultants, with an expected size of 4 – 5 members. Membership of this sub group would include representation from Sidmouth Town Council, the Sidmouth Chamber of Commerce, Cliff Road residents and Mr Burch for his expertise. Creation of this sub group would first need Cabinet approval.

The Group were reminded that all work at this stage must keep sight of the fund limit in order to meet assurance requirements for delivery.

24 **Update on Seaton and Sidmouth seafront recent storm flooding**

The Group were shown images and video of recent storm impact at both Seaton and Sidmouth.

The images of Seaton proved that storm events could overtop walls, even with floodgates closed; and that wave action had caused the beach levels to build up a ramp to the height of the wall at Seaton that then led to overtopping. This event had not been preceded by a flood warning; only a flood alert.

The same event had considerably less impact on the Sidmouth seafront.

The Group noted the evidence of recent storm impact.

25 **Project Board roles and responsibilities**

The Group considered a report outlining the role and responsibilities of the Project Board, who would deliver the scheme. The Project Board was subject to Cabinet approval.

The Board setup was modelled around the Environment Agency model for a project board; however Cabinet would need to approve the level of delegation that the Project Board will have. The roles and responsibilities of the Project Board would be put to Cabinet at the earliest opportunity to consider.

26 **Any other business - date of next meeting**

The date of the next meeting of the Advisory Group is scheduled for 9.30am on 4 May 2021.

The Chair thanked everyone for their contributions.

Attendance List: Advisory Group Members

Councillor Geoff Jung – Chair, EDDC

Councillor E Rylance, EDDC

Councillor J Loudoun, EDDC

Councillor M Rixson, EDDC

Councillor S Hughes, EDDC

Councillor D Bickley, EDDC

Councillor I Barlow, Sidmouth Town Council

Councillor C Lockyear, Sidmouth Town Council

J Radford, Cliff Road Residents Association

Paul Griew, Cliff Road Residents Association

Sara Hook, representing Sidmouth Hotels

Tony Burch, by invitation of the Chair

Ed Harrison, Sid Vale Association

Martin Davies, Environment Agency

Mary Walden-Till, VGS

Thomas Aldridge, DCC

Richard Eley, representing Sidmouth Chamber of Commerce

Tom Buxton-Smith, EDDC

Andrew Hancock, EDDC

Darren Roberts, EDDC

John Golding, EDDC

Peter Blyth, EDDC

Apologies

Nick Jennings, DCC
Sam Scriven, Jurassic Coast
Chris Woodruff, AONB
Phil Sheppard, Sidmouth Lifeboat