

EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Exmouth Beach Management Plan Steering Group held online via zoom on 1 March 2022

Attendance list at end of document

The meeting started at 2.00 pm and ended at 4.04 pm

11 Welcome and introductions

The Chair welcomed attendees to the meeting, and introductions were made.

12 Reminder of aims and terms of reference of the Group

The agreed aims and terms of reference for the Group were provided within the agenda papers for reference.

13 Update on RNLI

The Group received an update on works to repair and complete the RNLI slipway. Photographs illustrated the work undertaken through use of a cofferdam to help protect the workforce and the site from the tidal levels. The aim was for the workforce to be off the site by 11 March 2022.

Whilst there had been some delay in the work being undertaken, the RNLI had kept the Council's Engineer updated. There had been some small expense on behalf of the District Council in remedial works for health and safety, the work had been entirely funded from donations to the RNLI – a fact highlighted by Steering Group members, who hoped that this in turn would help to drive further donations to the Institute.

The work had been completed whilst being aware of the pending work on the Beach Management Plan.

14 Update on Exe Estuary Partnership

The Chair of the Exe Estuary Partnership, Cllr Channon, outlined the work of the partnership. She requested that a short presentation on this Partnership was brought to the next meeting of the Steering Group.

The Partnership would be publishing a new document on latest findings and plans in April; however the Group were updated on the latest impact of Dawlish Warren on the Beach Management Plan. Some groynes on the Dawlish side nearest to, which had fallen into disrepair, were no longer doing their role in retaining sand and therefore may be removed.

Concern was raised by some Members in regard to how the Environment Agency viewed the project. They felt that the EA should consider the estuary as a whole, rather than look to funding the separate plans for Dawlish and Exmouth.

The EA representative re-iterated the issue with the groynes under discussion, not providing the same ability to hold sand and being a risk to public safety; therefore there was pressure from Natural England to remove them. As the site remained dynamic,

consultation was underway to seek views on these groyne elements. The EA welcomed any local knowledge input and would respond to any letter from the authority on its concerns.

15 **Update on BMP progress**

The Engineer reported to the Group the appointment of consultants from Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council (BCP) to carry out the BMP study. There was no new modelling required, therefore a smaller study would be completed, which meant more money to allocate to the delivery of the scheme.

The scope would come to the Group for comment at a future meeting, where the Group would be asked to consider:

- The most likely scheme within available funds;
- The best case scheme, which could be activated should more funding be available, whilst being complimentary to the most likely scheme.

Past experience from the Sidmouth BMP had delivered more funding to their scheme, following Government criteria changes – if the same happened during the drafting of the BMP for Exmouth, it was prudent to have an alternative option.

The scope needed focus on the areas that could be controlled by the authority, whilst being mindful of the work of the Exe Estuary Partnership and the separate plan at Dawlish Warren.

16 **Call for evidence**

(a) **Changers in Navigation Channel**

The Engineer shared with the Group information provided by Andrew Hinton, of the National Coastwatch Institution. Visual representation of the area showed the movement of elements of the coastline, in an image of the area in March 2021.

In relation to the navigational channel, the buoys had been moved several miles to deeper water in recent years. Historically, the channel seemed to have shifted back to and away from the coastline.

Contributions on the channel included:

- A further survey was due in April 2022;
- The changes were more extreme in recent years, causing the continued relocation of buoys which involves considerable cost, and impacts on there the port limits are;
- Use of the channel was advised against 2.5 hours before low water, because of the depth being insufficient;
- Continued changes and variations that vessels have to take to use the channel.

(b) **Changes in Pole Sands**

Images presented to the Group showed the changes to Pole Sands, illustrated by red loss and blue gain areas, between 1998 and 2020 (LIDAR data). The general trend was of moving inland. The images also showed significant increase between 2018 and 2020 of sand at Orcombe Point.

(c) Changes in Dawlish Warren

The Group were shown images of the Dawlish Warren area to demonstrate the changes over past years; from 1999 through to 2014, with an increase in size of stable sands edging closer to Exmouth. There were some losses by 2020, but overall the shift has been outwards across the estuary.

Discussion on Dawlish Warren included:

- Recent article in Devon Live covering the changes to the area.

(d) Changes in the beach Western Section

The western section was currently at healthy levels. This area contained tanks owned by Devon County Council, which in past years have been visible, but are currently covered.

There was no additional evidence provided on this section of the beach.

(e) Changes in beach Central Section

The central section of the beach originally had sand dunes in the 1950s, when Queens Drive and the Maer were built. As the dunes started to reduce and disappear, steps were taken in the 1970s to re-instate the dunes, which involved extensive maintenance both to sustain the dunes, and keep the road clear of sand.

Current levels are very low, and currently too low for the sand to dry out and stabilise. Whilst there was some nostalgia over reinstating the dunes, in practical terms this would require a substantive and costly recharge.

Discussion on this section included:

- Relocate some of the sands at Orcombe point to this location;
- Public support for reinstatement of dunes at this section of the beach;
- Users of the beach eroded the dunes due to their leisure activities;
- Any substantial recharge could be swiftly removed by storms, so to recharge extensively at this point would not be cost effective;
- The wall at this point was last checked in 2015; a note was made to check if a more recent survey on the condition of the wall had been undertaken;
- Any recharge or recycling of beach material to this section was likely to be moved by storms to the navigational channel;
- Work was needed to improve that section of the beach, whilst being affordable.

(f) Changes in the beach Eastern Section

The Group were informed of the increase in beach height at this point of the beach, which resulted in sand on the road. This small quantity of sand was removed and relocated (if not contaminated by road users) to Orcombe point, as that had ease of access to the beach.

Sand could be relocated to other parts of the beach if access was improved at other sections. This would be factored into the review of the BMP.

The existing groynes at this section of the beach are extensively covered by sand, so any required maintenance to those sections requires considerable shifting of sand before any assessment or work can be undertaken on them.

Easterly storms make little impact on this section of the beach, because of Orcombe Point acting as a headland.

In relation to the eastern section of the beach, the following points were made:

- The groynes in that area were rebuilt in the 1960s; these were now overly successful and too much sand was retained in that area;
- The navigational channel had previously followed alongside the beach until Orcombe Point; now that channel turns in front of the lifeboat station and has far less energy in it;
- Enquiries should be made for other photographi evidence of historic changes from the Exmouth Museum and the reference library in Exmouth for all sections of the beach

17 Date of next meeting

The next meeting would include a report on the expected paper from the Exe Estuary Partnership, and a presentation on the work of that partnership to inform the Group. The finalised scope should also be ready for the Group to consider.

Although no scheduled date was set, the next meeting was expected to be scheduled for May 2022.

Attendance List

Steering Group Members:

Councillor Paul Millar

Councillor Olly Davey

Councillor Eileen Wragg

Councillor Christine Channon, Devon County Council

Councillor Tim Dumper, Exmouth Town Council

Councillor Pauline Stott, Exmouth Town Council

Chetna Jones, Exmouth Town Council Deputy Clerk

Harriet Googe, Environment Agency

Max Underhill, RNLI

Ivor Jones, National Coastwatch Institution

John Morgan, Exmouth Watersports Ltd

Also in attendance:

Councillor Paul Arnott
Councillor Nick Hookway
Councillor Maddy Chapman
Councillor Peter Faithfull
Grahame Forshaw, Exeter Port Authority

Officers in attendance:

Tom Buxton-Smith, Engineering Projects Manager
John Golding, Strategic Lead Housing, Health and Environment
Debbie Meakin, Democratic Services Officer

Apologies:

Andrew Hinton NCI
Matt Hosey BCP
Alan Frampton BCP
Cllr Geoff Jung EDDC

Chair

Date: