

Report to: Cabinet

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## **Budleigh Salterton Beach and Cliff Management Plan**

### **Report summary:**

A new Budleigh Salterton Beach and Cliff Management Plan is to be developed to set-out sustainable approaches to managing the risk of coastal erosion at Budleigh Salterton over the short and long-term.

The project is estimated to cost £195k with £165k of Local Levy having been secured from the South West RFCC and £30k from EDDC, to deliver the project over the next 2 years (from April 2025 to March 2027).

The project will be led and managed by Alan Frampton from the South West Flood & Coastal team (through the BCP Council-EDDC shared service agreement).

To guide the project, a Project Board and BCMP Advisory Group will be formed.

The BCMP Advisory Group will comprise representatives of the diverse range of stakeholders representing the community of Budleigh Salterton as well as statutory bodies and will have a remit of advising the project team and Project Board as the project develops.

The Project Board will comprise of senior officers (Director of Place, Assistant Director StreetScene and Engineering Projects Manager) and Portfolio Holder for Environment – Operational from EDDC to ultimately oversee and direct the project, including making final decisions having considered feedback from the advisory group.

The final BCMP will be brought to EDDC cabinet for approval and adoption in due course.

### **Is the proposed decision in accordance with:**

Budget Yes ☒ No ☐

Policy Framework Yes ☒ No ☐

### **Recommendation:**

It is recommended that:

- 1) Cabinet note the commencement of the project and authorise the establishment of both the Project Board and Advisory Group, and grants delegated authority to the Director of Place, in consultation with the portfolio holder for Environment – Operational, to agree representation on both the Project Board and Advisory Group.

### **Reason for recommendation:**

Supporting the project will ensure development of the Budleigh Salterton BCMP will have the appropriate governance and oversight and input from key stakeholders.

Portfolio(s) (check which apply):

- ☐ Assets and Economy
- ☐ Communications and Democracy
- ☐ Council, Corporate and External Engagement
- ☐ Culture, Leisure, Sport and Tourism
- ☐ Environment - Nature and Climate
- ☒ Environment - Operational
- ☐ Finance
- ☒ Place, Infrastructure and Strategic Planning
- ☐ Sustainable Homes and Communities

**Equalities impact** Low Impact

**Climate change** Low Impact

**Risk:** Low Risk;

**Links to background information** Click here to enter links to background information; appendices online; and previous reports. These must link to an electronic document. Do not include any confidential or exempt information.

**Link to [Council Plan](#)**

Priorities (check which apply)

- ☒ A supported and engaged community
- ☐ Carbon neutrality and ecological recovery
- ☐ Resilient economy that supports local business
- ☐ Financially secure and improving quality of services

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## Report in full

### **Background**

Along the open coast of Budleigh Salterton, the Shoreline Management Plan (SMP) policies adopted in 2011 assessed (at that time in 2010/11) that there is a risk from coastal erosion to residential and commercial properties over the next century, with most being at risk in the 50 to 100 year period. The risk to properties and the nature of existing defences and environmental constraints varies across the frontage, and consequently the SMP policies also vary across the frontage from west to east. With reference to Figure 1, these policies are summarised as:

- 6a39 (Otter Estuary): The policy for the Otter Estuary is for managed realignment, as has been implemented recently through the Lower Otter Restoration Project completed in 2023, which has delivered floodplain reconnection and habitat creation, which in turn has helped to reduce flood risk within the estuary. The area will continue to be actively managed to promote natural processes and environmental enhancement, which will support objectives for the environmental designations (Site of Special Scientific Interest and Marine Conservation Zone). Habitat creation within this unit will act to compensate for anticipated losses in the Exe Estuary resulting from Hold The Line policies causing coastal squeeze.
- 6a40 (Otter Estuary Spit): The policy for the spit across the mouth of the Otter Estuary is to maintain a non-interventional (No Active Intervention) approach to allow natural coastal evolution to continue. This will support objectives for the area's internationally important conservation and landscape designations and as sea levels rise allow the spit to adapt and rollback into the estuary. This rollback will pose a challenge for how the transition to the adjacent defended section will be managed.
- 6a41 (Budleigh Salterton): The policy is to Hold the Line of defence through maintenance and eventual improvement of defences. Longer-term the SMP foresees the need to undertake a more active approach to management of the shingle beach in this area, something that is not required at the present time as the beach is stable and accreting in this unit, in order to ensure the risk of coastal flooding and erosion to development is managed.
- 6a42 (Budleigh Salterton West to Straight Point): The policy along this unit is No Active Intervention because the ongoing erosion of the cliffs is vital to continuing to supply natural, local beach sediment that benefits policy unit 6a41, whilst also allowing natural coastal evolution to continue which supports objectives for the area's internationally important conservation and landscape designations. As a consequence, cliff top property and infrastructure is predicted to be lost to coastal erosion over time – so images such as those recently seen at Sidmouth (see Figures 2a and 2b) are likely to become increasingly common in this area as well. Given this, the SMP recommends developing a coastal adaptation plan for this area.

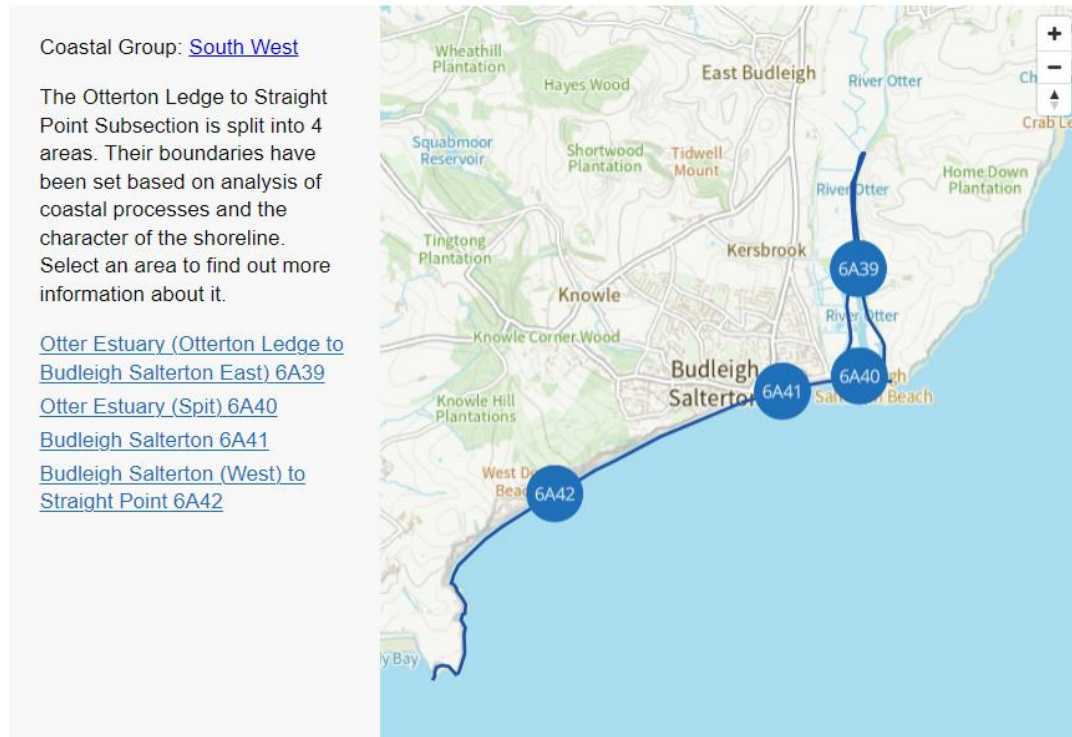


Figure 1: Map of SMP policy units covering the Budleigh Salterton area (from SMP Explorer <https://environment.data.gov.uk/shoreline-planning/subsection/SMP16/7> )



Figure 2a: Recent cliff fall at Sidmouth showing risk to a property that is metres from the cliff edge (1<sup>st</sup> November 2024; <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cn8grjrk7lo>).





Figure 2b: Recent cliff fall at Sidmouth leading to closure of a section of coast path (9<sup>th</sup> November 2024; <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/ce8d6vz3gnvo>).

Indeed, in recent years the risk to the coast path in the western section of Budleigh Salterton has already started to be seen. This area, covered by policy unit 6a42, has experienced lower beach levels and this has seemingly coincided with an increased number of cliff falls which, in turn, has started to impact cliff top infrastructure including damage to amenity assets and loss of part of the South West Coast Path – which will need to be diverted inland in the near future as a result (with possible impacts on the local economy) – and is now starting to pose a more immediate risk to cliff to properties which poses a concern for the wellbeing of residents and the wider community (see Figures 3a to 3c). This is occurring sooner than foreseen in the SMP – meaning the SMP assessment of risk needs review – and there is a need to undertake a detailed investigation to assess the current situation and nature of the risks in order to guide future risk management decisions.



Figure 3a: Closed off part of coast path (left) and amenity asset due to signs of movement caused by cliff instability (right) (May 2024).



*Figure 3b: Illustrating the proximity of the cliff top to properties (May 2024).*



*Figure 3c: View of the cliffs in policy unit 6a42 from the beach, showing evidence of recent cliff falls (May 2024).*

Along the central section of Budleigh Salterton in policy unit 6a41 and onto the spit in policy unit 6a40, the beach levels are stable and accreting. This is a benefit in terms of aiding present management of coastal flood and erosion risk, but for how long this will be the case as sea levels rise and the climate changes is uncertain. In addition, there are two outfalls that discharge to the sea via the beach, but which are regularly blocked by shingle that in turns poses a flood risk upstream (see Figure 4). Given the accretion of shingle in this area and the seeming loss of shingle updrift to the west, there appears to be an opportunity to undertake beach recycling in this sediment sub-cell but this needs to be investigated in detail in order to provide evidence to support the environmental consents that would be required to do so, as well as understand any possible implications for how the spit would evolve given it is also currently adjusting to the opening of the Lower Otter Restoration Project immediately to the north of the spit.

In addition, as the SMP policy in this area is to Hold the Line, there is also a need to consider what measures may be needed to deliver that policy in short to long-term, and explore opportunities for wider regeneration and/or access improvements along the seafront area as part of any future improvements to coastal defences which may in turn provide links to future partnership funding contributions.





Figure 4: View westwards along the beach from within policy unit 6a41 (left) and view north of one of the outfalls that regularly gets blocked by shingle, posing an upstream flood risk (May 2024).

## **Proposed Solution**

In order to investigate these challenges and determine appropriate and sustainable approaches to managing the coastal flood and erosion risks to the community and environment, £165k of Local Levy funding is sought to enable development of a new Beach and Cliff Management Plan (BCMP) for Budleigh Salterton covering the area shown in Figure 5.



Figure 5: Proposed Budleigh Salterton Beach & Cliff Management Plan study area.

This new BCMP will be developed with extensive engagement and consultation with the community and statutory stakeholders in order to co-develop options that respect the concerns of both the community and the many environmental constraints within the area in an adaptive way. This will involve being open and transparent from the outset about the likely viability (or not) of different options in different parts of the frontage to manage stakeholder expectations, whilst allowing stakeholders opportunity to input to the process and identify potential opportunities for adapting or improving some parts of the frontage to deliver wider place-based outcomes as part of any future coastal protection measures that may be identified.

Development of the BCMP will consider the wider sediment transport processes in the area (i.e. the wider sediment sub-cell within which the proposed study area shown in Figure 5 is situated), and in line with good practice as set out in the Beach Management Manual second edition (CIRIA, 2010) & Cliff Instability and Erosion Management in Great Britain: A Good Practice Guide (Halcrow, 2011). This will ensure that the management plan produced is the key document guiding the management of coastal flood and erosion risk along the Budleigh Salterton frontage in a sustainable, integrated way that also acknowledges the internationally designated environmental interests of the area.

### **Key Partners**

The project will be delivered by South West Flood & Coastal (SWF&C), a shared-service partnership between East Devon District Council and BCP Council.

Delivery will involve extensive engagement and consultation with the community and statutory stakeholders such as Natural England and the Jurassic Coast Trust. A new BCMP Advisory Group will be set-up with representatives from the community and statutory consultees, as well as elected members to support this.

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### **Financial implications:**

The costs involved are covered from external funding and a budget already in place for EDDC contribution of £30k.

### **Legal implications:**

There are no substantive legal issues to be added to this report at this time. The matter will return to Cabinet in due course for further and more detailed approval.