

# **EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL**

## **Minutes of the meeting of Exmouth Beach Management Plan Steering Group held at online via teams on 28 November 2025**

### **Attendance list at end of document**

The meeting started at 10am and completed at 11.12am

### **1 Introductions**

Councillor Geoff Jung of East Devon District Council chaired this meeting of the Group.

Cllr Jung welcomed everyone to the meeting and introductions were made.

### **2 Beach Management Plan progress to date**

Alan Frampton presented the final update of the Exmouth Beach Management Plan (BMP) ahead of its submission to East Devon Council's Cabinet for approval on the 3 December 2025. He outlined the background from the long-term coastal management policies set by the Shoreline Management Plan (2011) and the Exe Estuary Strategy, both aiming to "hold the line" and maintain defences. The updated BMP extends the previous plan area and incorporates new monitoring data, climate change projections, environmental designations, and recent defence work (e.g., Dawlish Warren and Exmouth tidal defences).

The update involved evidence review, coastal process analysis, economic assessment, stakeholder workshops, and public consultation. Findings show a highly dynamic beach with no clear long-term erosion trend but significant variability, placing importance on maintaining beach levels to protect sea defences. The economic appraisal identified approximately £20m of coastal flood and erosion-related damages eligible for grant funding, and around £800m of wider local economic value linked to the seafront.

Three leading management options were developed:

1. **National economic option** – Strengthening and raising the seawall; effective for flood risk but likely to reduce beach area over time.
2. **Local aspiration option** – Installing additional groynes (illustrated to the Group as "T" groynes) to stabilise beach levels and preserve amenity; higher environmental hurdles and larger local funding requirement.
3. **Backup option** – Reactive maintenance of existing defences; lower upfront cost but higher long-term risk and reduced beach levels.

These options form an adaptive pathway, with immediate reliance on the backup option while funding is secured and further technical and environmental studies are progressed. Major works are not expected to be required for around 10 years.

Mr Frampton explained that current funding rules leave a multimillion-pound shortfall for the preferred options, but upcoming changes to government funding policy could significantly reduce the local contribution required. Future steps include developing an

outline business case (from 2028/29), securing funding, addressing habitat regulations challenges identified, conducting environmental surveys, and preparing for construction in roughly a decade.

The plan outlines ongoing monitoring, trigger levels for intervention, and maintenance processes. It was emphasised that although East Devon has no statutory duty to undertake coastal defence works, there is a clear economic and community case for progressing the BMP, which will ultimately pass to the new local authority created under local government reorganisation.

The Group raised some questions, as set out below.

Firstly, Cllr Eileen Wragg:

- Welcomed groynes returning; asked what form they would take (timber, rock, hybrid).
- Raised concern that sand can scour out beneath rock armour.
- Asked why timber had previously been discounted as too expensive.
- Queried whether coastal changes elsewhere (e.g., Dawlish Warren) are being considered.
- Asked whether the coastal advisory group covering Portland to Rame Head still operates.

In response to those points:

- The design is still flexible: groynes could be timber, rock, or a hybrid; exact layout and number are not yet fixed due to concept-stage uncertainty. Further modelling and detailed design will determine the best choice.
- Timber is more expensive over its whole life—lasting ~25 years versus 100+ years for rock—so long-term replacement cycles must be considered.
- Environmental factors may favour timber because rock structures occupy more space and could have greater habitat impacts.
- Work on impacts across the wider coastline continues; modelling and environmental assessments will be required.
- The South Devon & Dorset Coastal Advisory Group still exists and met recently; it oversees coordinated coastal management and Shoreline Management Plan implementation.

Secondly, Cllr Graham Deasy:

- Asked whether modelling accounts for long-term erosion of Orcombe Point and how this affects tidal flows, sand movement, and wave energy.

In response:

- National erosion maps indicate only minor erosion of Orcombe Point; the larger issue long-term is sea level rise, which increases wave energy on the seawall.
- Previous detailed modelling of tidal flows and sediment transport informs current conceptual understanding.
- Further updates to modelling will be required during detailed scheme development.

Cllr Pauline Stott:

- Asked whether there is a current plan for Dawlish Warren, since changes there affect Exmouth.
- Asked whether the RNLI lifeboat station will be consulted regarding groyne placement.

In response:

- The Environment Agency plans a “no active intervention” policy for Dawlish Warren until at least 2050.
  - Old gabions will be cleared when they fail, but defences will not be actively removed early.
  - Dawlish Warren is expected to naturalise and gradually flatten, causing more sand movement, but the EA will focus on strengthening estuary-side defences instead.
- Impacts on Exmouth are recognised, but Exmouth Point will be more affected than the eastern frontage covered by the BMP.
- The RNLI will be consulted.
  - Groyne design must maintain lifeboat access.
  - A hybrid option (groynes eastwards, seawall enhancements near the lifeboat station) may be required.

Cllr Nick Hookway:

- Asked about economic and habitat impacts, including sediment-related habitat loss (e.g., oyster beds).
- Queried whether Teignbridge District Council has been consulted, given Dawlish Warren’s economic value.
- Asked whether Exmouth and Dawlish Warren beach management plans need to be considered together.

In response:

- Strategy work has considered system-wide impacts across the estuary.
- Current understanding suggests no strong direct sediment link between Exmouth Beach and Dawlish Warren; connections are indirect via tidal channels and sandbanks.
- Any groyne option would require updated modelling to confirm impacts.
- The wider estuary strategy will review options for all areas together, ensuring joined-up management across authorities.

### **Attendance List**

G Jung (Chair)

N Hookway

O Davey

E Wragg

### **Also attending:**

Thomas Aldridge, Devon County Council

Carlo Bove, Coastal Estates Manager

Cllr Graham Deasy, Exmouth Town Council

Alan Frampton, BCP

Harriet Googe, Environment Agency

Cllr Pauline Stott, Exmouth Town Council

Martin Davies, Environment Agency

### **Officers in attendance:**

Louie Belfield, Communications

Debbie Meakin, Democratic Services Officer

**Apologies:**

Max Underhill, RNLI

Chair .....

Date: .....