

East Devon District Council

Notes of meeting of the Steering Group for the Sidmouth and East Beach Management Plan project, held at Council Offices Sidmouth on Wednesday 30 November 2016

Attendance list at end of document. The meeting started at 2.00pm and completed at 3.18pm.

Welcome and introduction

The Chairman welcomed everyone present and members of the Steering Group introduced themselves. Councillor Dawn Manley attended as an observer.

Notes of the 17 August 2016

The notes of the previous meeting of the Group were agreed subject to the removal of a statement made by [REDACTED] under note 5 Shortlist Appraisal.

Comments and changes to final reports

[REDACTED], Engineering Project Manager, outlined the changes implemented following previous steering group discussions:

- The action plan had been adjusted to take into account the required period for tender and the latest adjustments to the BMP program;
- Reference to Alma Bridge was amended to reflect that the structure of the bridge is currently being monitored, and anticipated that it will be closed in the short term;
- Land ownership for two sites, west of the Sid and on the East Beach were to be clarified;
- Recommendations would be fed back to the Coastal Monitoring Programme;
- Comment that the BMP meets the requirements of DEFRA for this stage of the process;
- Comment that the trigger levels, monitoring regime, maintenance regime and action plan was with the relevant authorities (who those authorities are was outlined at the meeting);
- Comment on the shortening of river training wall and query over the exclusion of a rock revetment on the East Beach;
- Query over the use of timber groynes on the East Beach;
- Query over the locations for the initial beach recharge;
- Query over the damages assessment and the capping of damages;
- Query over the robustness of amenity benefits.

In response to questions over the options for using timber groynes, the Group were reminded of the need to replace timber more frequently than other materials. The Dawlish replacement scheme was reported to have replaced existing timber groynes with timber again as on balance for that scheme it was the most effective option.

Comments on beach recharge had been noted and would be under review as the design for the scheme develops.

Capping of flood damages

The Group received an explanation of the introduction of capping flood damages and how that impacted on the Beach Management Plan.

- The original estimate for the BMP for flood damages was £81M over the next 100 years;
- During a review of opportunities to improve the economic assessment, the query arose of the appropriate capping of damages. The economic assessment has now been updated to cap damages at the property value, in line with appraisal guidance;
- This then reduces the estimated flood damages in the final BMP by approximately one quarter;
- The estimate of the Grant in Aid project eligibility is reduced by £1M, which in turn increases the partnership funding requirement for the preferred option (S1) by £1M;
- The review of the economic assessment also raised a number of areas where the estimated damages can be increased – this work will be included in the brief for the next stage of the project.

In discussing the issue of capping damages, the Group raised the following points:

- Should the calculation of damages also include intangible damages, which they thought may be much higher than the tangible benefits calculated so far? In response, the officer advised that EDDC have sought expert advice on where the economic case can be improved, and that would be included in the brief for the next stage. It was advised that inclusion of intangible benefits might increase the benefits by less than 10%;
- Property values had increased significantly over the period of the production of the BMP and therefore an accurate value should be taken into account in the calculations. Members of the Group were keen to see an accurate reflection of value, not just based on property prices – therefore why did this capping effectively reduce the overall damage figure? In response, the officer advice was that the original damage figure took account of an annual damage figure year on year – the capping method accumulated damage each year until it reached the value of the property, equivalent to a write-off sum;
- It was recognised that there is more value to a person's home than simply its monetary value.

ACTION To check which year the property value was taken from for the capped damages calculation; and that this will be updated if required prior to submission of the economic assessment.

Amenity benefit

The review of the economic assessment of the BMP had indicated that a more robust assessment of the amenity value will need to be included in the Outline Business Case. At present this had been estimated at £31M based on a 1992 assessment – payment rate of 5.56p in the pound gave GiA funding of £1.7M

Using a more robust assessment, calculation of the loss of amenity would be made as follows:

$$\text{Loss of amenity} = (\text{VoE}_1 - \text{VoE}_2) + (\text{Tc}_1 - \text{Tc}_2)$$

Where:

VoE₁ = Value of enjoyment at existing site

VoE₂ = Value of enjoyment at alternative site

Tc₁ = travel costs to existing site

Tc₂ = travel costs to alternative site

To make up the difference in funding required between option S1 and option S4, the amenity value would need to be £215M.

The Group were reminded that it would be unlikely that the Environment Agency and DEFRA would accept a business case which predominately protected amenity as opposed to residential property.

The Group discussed how the calculation was reached, including:

- The criteria that DEFRA required didn't cover other aspects of amenity;
- Potential local and other investors needed to be made aware of the other factors that would be impacted, such as on tourism levels and the economic benefits to businesses in the town;
- The difference between option S1 and S4 for amenity value was huge, and therefore it was difficult to see how much of that difference could be made up even with exceptionally high levels of tourism;
- The role of providing potential investors with information about the amenity benefits should be left to the Sidmouth BMP Partnership funding sub group.

In response to a question about the consultation on the Sidmouth BMP to date, the Group were informed that all the statutory partners had responded, as had two local community groups.

ACTION to circulate to the Steering Group the consultation responses from the Environment Agency and Natural England for information.

Partnership Funding sub group update

John Golding, Strategic Lead – Housing, Health and Environment, updated the Group on the progress of the Partnership Funding sub group; the notes from that sub group meetings being available in the agenda papers for the meeting.

The sub group had agreed their remit on the 29 September and discussed the benefits and beneficiaries of beach management; at their second meeting on the 24 October the group discussed progress and worked through the Local Government Association Partnership Funding Guide, prompting debate on possible funding streams.

██████████ from the EA clarified that the local levy contribution was unlikely to be £1M in total but could not commit a figure of what that contribution was going to be at the present time.

Overall the sub group had put some positive ideas forward for funding streams, and there was some growing confidence that it would be possible to fund option S1, but those streams were some way off providing enough for option S4.

The Group discussed the need for clear communication to the public and potential investors, as there was still a persisting misconception that sale of the current Council headquarters would release significant sums for the Council to use as it wished. The Chairman reminded the Group that the relocation was, and continues to be, a cost neutral exercise.

Next Steps

The work to be undertaken for the next few months was outlined:

- Final BMP report to be issued to the Council by early December
- Specification for bathymetric surveys and sediment sampling to complete, to be tendered via South West Coastal Monitoring Program in December/January 2017;

- Funding for the recommended improvements in Coastal Monitoring will have been calculated and included in the Council's draft budget;
- The Outline Business Case will be drafted and circulated to the Steering Group for their comment in December; it will then go before Cabinet and Council for approval;
- Capital bid for Outline Business Case to be included in the Council's draft budget;
- Outline Business Case to be completed by June 2018 in line with BMP Action Plan;
- Investigations into training wall construction to complete and application for funding repair made in 2016/17 financial year.

Discussion took place on the merits of undertaking modelling of both option S1 and option S4 to determine further detail on requirements and costs of both options. The Group clearly had no desire to put any further delay on the process, but felt that there would be some benefit in instructing the consultants, when putting forward the modelling requirements, undertake it for both options. This allowed the Group to have an ability to keep their options open and have confidence on putting forward the right option to the EA.

In response, [REDACTED] from the EA outlined the steps needed now in terms of the submission of the business case for the Board to assess the scheme, with a view to approval of the whole scheme. The EA will want to hear a preference for an option within that submission. He agreed that it may be helpful for the Group to investigate the cost implications of instructing consultants to undertake modelling of option S1 and option S4.

ACTION Request to consultant to quote for additional cost to undertake modelling of the preferred and an alternative option.

Any Other Business

Questions covered:

- Concern about cliff falls following inclement weather. This issue doesn't form part of the brief of this project; the responsibility rests with the landowner of the cliff;
- Impact of fallen dead trees near Alma Bridge falling into the river Sid and being washed out to sea. Investigations are being carried out currently into the foundations of the bridge; a check of the land mentioned and the trees located there will be made;
- Investigation of recent weather impacting on recharged shingle will be undertaken.

ACTION [REDACTED] to investigate issues with trees outlined under AOB. Offers to request a post storm survey of Sidmouth beach.

Date of Next Meeting

Date to be confirmed, but a provisional date of 15 March 2017 at 2pm was agreed subject to a meeting room being available.

Attendance list

Steering group members present:



