

Minutes of a Meeting of the **COASTAL CHANGE & BEACH MANAGEMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE**
held at the Town Hall, Swanage, on **WEDNESDAY**
7th FEBRUARY 2024 at **2.15 p.m.**

In Attendance: Councillor M Bonfield – Chairman

Councillor C Finch – Swanage Town Council
Councillor C Tomes – Swanage Town Council
Mr I Brown – Swanage Coastguard
Mr R Eatwell – North Beach representative
Mr A Espana – FCERM Team, Dorset Council
Mr E Fox – RNLI
Mr P Loudoun – Seaweed concession representative
Mr R Marsh – Marsh Boats
Mr P Palmer – Pierhead Watersports and Bylaw Enforcement
Ms S Parker – Dorset Coast Forum, Dorset Council
Mr M Penny – FCERM Team, Dorset Council
Mr D Picksley – Environment Agency
Mr H Potter – Swanage Pier Trust/Swanage Sailing Club
Mr N Reed – Deputy Station Manager, Swanage NCI
Mr G Richardson – RNLI (until 2.35 p.m.)
Mr D Roper – Swanage Angling Club
Mr K Sheppard – RNLI
Ms E Steenkamp – FCERM Team, Dorset Council
Ms R Tanner – Land & Wave
Mr D Turnbull – RNLI
Mr M Turnbull - Founding Chairman, Swanage Coastal Change Forum

Also Present: Councillor C Moreton – Deputy Mayor
Councillor M Whitwam – Swanage Town Council
Dr M Ayres – Town Clerk
Mrs E Evans – Democratic Services Officer
Mr C Milmer – Visitor Services & Business Development Manager
Ms G Percival – Assets and Compliance Manager
Mr G Roman – Grounds and Estates Manager

There were 16 members of the public and one member of the local press present at the meeting.

Public Participation Time

The following matters were raised during public participation time:-

- A concern was raised regarding the instability of the cliff between Ocean Bay and Sheps Hollow and the impact on the properties situated above. A query was raised as to the ownership of the land and subsequent responsibilities. In response it was

noted that a presentation would be made by officers from the FCERM team under agenda item 3) which would cover the concerns raised.

- A query was raised around any assistance offered to property owners affected by cliff erosion. In response it was noted that a range of guidance is available including a householder's guide and the Shoreline Management Plan. It was reported that Dorset Council are also developing a Cliff Management Strategy.
- A question was asked regarding when replacement steps at Sheps Hollow would be installed. In response it was noted that a review of the steps would be commissioned as part of the Coastal Transition Accelerator Programme project.

1) **Apologies**

Apologies for their inability to attend the meeting were received from Councillor T Foster (Town Mayor), Mr T Flux (National Trust), Mr T Greasty (Designated Bathing Zone representative), Mr M Jones (Swanage NCI), Mr A Mears (Wessex Water), Mr R Waitt (Planet Purbeck), Mr C Wiggins (Beach concessionaire).

2) **To approve as a correct record Minutes of the Meeting of the Beach Management Advisory Committee held on 1st November 2023**

Proposed by Mr D Roper, seconded by Mr G Richardson and AGREED:-

That the Minutes of the Coastal Change and Beach Management Advisory Committee Meeting held on 1st November 2023 be approved as a correct record.

3) **Dorset Council's Flood & Coastal Erosion Risk Management (FCERM) Team update including the following projects:**

Further to Minute No. 4) of the Coastal Change and Beach Management Advisory Committee meeting held on 1st November 2023, an update was provided by the FCERM team which included the following:

a) **Swanage Town Centre Coastal Protection Scheme**

It was reported that the modelling update had been completed and internal meetings were being held to undertake the longlist appraisal process. A workshop in relation to this had been hosted by STC on 11th January 2024. It was noted that the project objectives and measurement criteria were in the process of being refined. It was reported that a Multi-Criteria Analysis workshop would be held on 19th February 2024.

b) **Beach Renourishment scheme**

It was stated that the Coastal Processes Assessment had determined that the rate of erosion had been overestimated in the Beach Management Plan (BMP). It was noted that a Partnership Funding calculator was currently being performed and the results would be reported to a future meeting. It was noted that as part of the agreement with Natural England, Bathymetric surveys were scheduled to take place in March and June 2024. The condition of the beach was noted as 'good' overall. The beach had recovered well from recent storm events, however, the north section of the beach had low areas in certain locations.

c) **Cliff Management Strategy**

It was reported that preliminary observations were taken on 28th November 2023. Durlston appeared to be retreating slowly, however, North Swanage had complex geology which led to different failure modes, mudslides (weak mudstones) or rock falls (strong sandstone). It was noted that further inspections would be undertaken in March 2024 via a LiDAR survey (light detection and ranging) and an update would be provided to a future meeting.

d) **Coastal Transition Accelerator Programme (CTAP) project**

It was reported that the business case was underway, and it was anticipated that a Project Manager and a Consultant would be appointed by the end of February 2024. Discussions were continuing with the Environment Agency (national team) regarding the outline business case (OBC) delivery. It was noted that the OBC submission date had changed to late summer 2024 and engagement with key stakeholders would commence March 2024 and with the wider community in June 2024.

Further to questions raised, it was clarified that the surveys being undertaken in March 2024 would provide information regarding seabed and beach levels. It was noted that the beach level was not reducing as quickly as expected and therefore the date for recharge may be later than 2025/26, depending on the results of the modelling.

4) **Seaweed removal and beach raking – Presentation by the Assets and Compliance Manager**

A presentation was provided by the Assets and Compliance Manager, regarding seaweed removal and beach raking. It was noted that the current contract for beach raking and seaweed clearance would be coming to an end within the next two months, and the current contractor had indicated a desire to cease the provision of seaweed clearance, a service he had provided for the last 30 years.

The current operation to remove seaweed had been completed by the use of a tractor and trailer, the seaweed then being used as fertilizer on agricultural land. It was noted that changes in land management were being made on many local farms preventing nutrient enrichment to the land, thereby rendering the current operation impractical. It was noted that alternative measures and the associated challenges needed consideration and the following information was provided:

Seaweed removal

- Specific machinery is used for seaweed removal with additional challenges around the use of red or white diesel. Impact on machinery of operating on beach sand/salt etc.
- Requires constant monitoring to assess tides, access and the beach needs building up to gain access over groynes.
- The seaweed cannot remain for too long due to smell, integration with sand.

Where to take it

- Seaweed had previously been removed and used locally for agricultural purposes. Changes in policy mean that in many circumstances seaweed is no longer accepted onto agricultural land for nutrient enrichment. Initial discussions have not indicated a suitable location for deposit for agricultural purposes and previous locations cannot be used.
- If seaweed is treated as a waste product, rather than for agricultural purposes, the costs increase dramatically. At the moment the council cannot locate a location for tipping and if possible the council would need a mechanism to remove from the beach.
- The council do not own a suitable location for disposal.

What other authorities do

- Most places now do not collect seaweed e.g. Cornwall with only a very limited number collecting, such as Torbay.
- A number of other authorities push the seaweed back into sea and it is becoming part of the environmental agenda to leave it where it is.
- Blue Flag – desire to leave it in situ unless it constitutes a nuisance. In cases where it is removed the question is phrased - ‘how do you remove and dispose of it in an environmentally friendly way’.

Challenges of Swanage Beach relating to seaweed

- Swanage beach is relatively small and situated close to the town centre. The beach contains a number of groynes and has fairly unique tidal system.

Risks

- Large holes in beach.
- Seaweed on beach and impact on local economy.
- Resident and visitor expectations regarding the appearance of an un-raked beach.

Options

- Leave the seaweed on the beach.
- Push the seaweed back into the sea.
- Dispose of as waste.

Members acknowledged the difficulties arising from both the removal, or retention, of seaweed on Swanage Beach. It was reported that, having assessed the available options for the forthcoming the season, as a trial, the Town Council would most likely arrange for the seaweed to be pushed back into the sea. It was anticipated that this could provide challenges and in order to manage expectations of both residents and visitors the Town Council requested the support of attendees to communicate the current situation as necessary.

Thanks were given to the current seaweed and beach raking contractor for his invaluable service over the last 30 years.

5) Swanage Green Seafront Stabilisation and Enhancement Scheme (Sandpit Field, Weather Station Field and Spa Beach Hut Area) – Report following public engagement

Further to Minute No. 145) of the Council meeting held on 11th December 2023, it was reported that the consultation had attracted 468 responses. It was noted that when presented with the question ‘Given all the considerations presented at this stage, which option would be your preferred scheme?’ 51.1% chose the enhanced scheme and 43.6% chose the essential scheme, 5.3% responding ‘don’t know’. The consultation results had also highlighted a strong desire for an improvement to pedestrian safety along the northern section of Shore Road (between the junction of Victoria Avenue and Ocean Bay) and an update would be provided to a future meeting.

6) Commercial Opportunities on Seafront – Update

The Visitor Services and Business Development Manager (VSBDM) reported that Expressions of Interest had been received and had been reviewed by the Property Panel. It was anticipated that the successful businesses could be in operation from the hardstanding adjoining the Information Centre by the Easter break, subject to final negotiations.

7) RNLI Lifeguards – 2023 Review

A presentation was provided by representatives from the RNLI Lifeguards, which provided a review of service provision during 2023. It was suggested, as part of the 2024 recommendations, that the lifeguard unit be located further north to be positioned in the centre of the designated swimming zone and in between the red and yellow flags. The benefits were noted as being a more centralised position, between the Banjo Pier and Ocean Bay, providing an improved observation point towards the north, while still providing sufficient cover in the south. This matter would be given further consideration in due course.

8) **Proposal to form a Surf Life Saving Club**

It was noted that this item would be deferred to the next meeting of the Coastal Change and Beach Management Advisory Committee meeting being held in June 2024.

9) **Update from the Visitor Services and Business Development Manager**

The VSBDM provided an update which included:

- **Events** – It was reported that Coastal Barbarians Rowing Regatta would be held on 27th April 2024.
- **Private sites** – It was anticipated that the replacement staging for the private beach huts would be completed by the end of March.
- **Southern section of Shore Road** – It was reported that following the 18 month experimental traffic regulation order, the order had been made and the southern section of Shore Road (between the junction with Victoria Avenue and the Mowlem) would be permanently closed to vehicles.
- **Northern section of Shore Road** – It was noted that feasibility studies may be progressed in order to inform discussion regarding options for traffic flow for the northern section of Shore Road (between the junction with Victoria Avenue and Ocean Bay). It was noted that the road was currently closed to allow Dorset Highways to repair damage caused by Storm Ciaran.

10) **Updates from representatives/organisations**

- **Environment Agency** – It was reported that the concrete temporary wave barriers, which had been dislodged by Storm Ciaran, had been repositioned with the shorter end facing the sea. The barriers would be removed during the last week in March.
- **Swanage Pier** – The Strategic Plan for the future was being prepared and the café on the pier had a new operator.
- **Swanage Angling Club** – It was reported that the AGM was being held later today and a report would be provided to a future meeting.
- **Marsh Boats** – Comments were made regarding the uneven surface of the stone quay. In response it was noted that the quay was a Grade II listed asset and that conservation officers had advised the Town Council on the most suitable materials and methods to be used by the contractors to repair the quay.
- **Swanage NCI** – It was reported that the NCI currently had 60 watchkeepers. A tea and cake event would be held on Easter Sunday, 31st March 2024 and Easter Monday 1st April 2024. It was noted that there had been fresh ground movement at Peveril Point.
- **Bylaw enforcement** – It was noted that news regarding the implementation of a designated waterski zone was awaited.
- **RNLI Lifeboat** – It was noted that the RNLI had received a brand new inshore lifeboat and that 2023 had been a busy year.
The chairman explained the use of throw bags (used in a similar way to lifesaving rings) and noted that the RNLI anticipated placing the bags in locations around the bay such as the Pier and Ocean Bay. It was noted that training would be available in the appropriate use of the bags to save lives without endangering the lifesaver.
- **Coastguards** – It was reported there had been 102 incidents and ten fatalities during 2023. Praise was given for the assistance provided by all involved in the response to the incident in Swanage Bay in the summer.
- **North Beach representative** – It was noted that concerns regarding land slippage and its impact on the built environment had been addressed earlier in the meeting.
- **Founding chairman, Swanage Coastal Change Forum** – A visual interpretation of the anticipated sea level rises affecting Bude over the forthcoming years was

shared on screen. It was noted that the use of imagery was a powerful tool in communicating the effects of sea rise and the impact on coastal locations.
<https://www.budeclimate.org/shoreline>

11) Items of information and matters for forthcoming agendas

- a) Swanage Beach Management Overview
The contents of a briefing paper prepared by the VSBDM were noted.
- b) Motion for the Ocean [Motion for the Ocean – LGA Coastal SIG](#)
It was noted that further information would be provided to the Environment and Green Spaces Committee.
- c) Swan Brook Partnership Project
It was noted that an update regarding the project would be presented to the next Meeting of the Environment and Green Spaces Committee being held on 28th February 2024.
- d) Coastal Resilience Study – Update
Further to Minute No. 12 c) of the Coastal Change and Beach Management Advisory Committee meeting held on 1st November 2023, it was reported that as a newly elected council would begin its term in May 2024, this item would be revisited following elections, and that Dorset Council input would be essential.
- e) Town Council Beach Management Tour – 22nd May 2024
The date for the beach management tour was noted.
- f) Swanage Bay Byelaw Review
Further information would be provided to a future meeting.

12) Date of next meeting

The date of the next two meetings were noted as Wednesday 12th June 2024 @ 2.15 p.m. and Wednesday 2nd October 2024 @ 2.15 p.m.

The meeting closed at 3.55 p.m.