

## Subgroup meeting 12<sup>th</sup> Aug 2021

An informal zoom meeting to share views.

All subgroup members were present except Paul Griew.

1) The first discussion was on the notes of the meeting with the consultants. It was agreed that these notes needed to be made public as soon as possible but that there were difficulties still to be overcome in matters of tone.

There is no wish to be confrontational with the consultants and yet it is impossible to avoid the fact that there was disappointment within the subgroup with what they were hearing.

Further work will be done, and if necessary slightly different versions will appear on the VGS website and on the EDDC website.

2) We then considered the best way to respond to the complaints from the World Heritage Site Jurassic Coast Trust and from Natural England. It was asked if these letters could be thought to be in the public domain; it will be ascertained whether this is the case and the answer given when known.

As the Natural England letter supported the position of the WHS letter it was felt that a similar response would serve for both.

In short, we could view their contact with us as a positive because the only way their claims of bias can be dealt with is by them coming to the meetings and putting their case during discussion.

They are always invited to attend but generally Mr Scriven of the WHS is too busy ;and it is accepted that NE has many calls on its time, and needs to justify the cost of attending meetings as it is a publicly funded body. It is hoped that their concern means that it will be possible for them to join us in future.

There is no wish from EDDC, its Officers, nor the Advisory Group to be at odds with organisations which protect the environment. It was felt that unfamiliarity with the people making up the Advisory Group could lead to language and tone being misinterpreted and that the concept of fully recorded Zoom meetings was still very new to us all.

Geoff and Tom are to write appropriate responses encouraging both clear communication of the precise details and position of both bodies to any work on East Beach, and increased interaction in the future. It is hoped this will allow the work of the BMP to progress smoothly.

3) It had previously been mentioned that Simon Jupp MP had asked for an update on the progress of the Pause work and that a short report would be given to him. The position is now that there will be a short Zoom meeting with him as well as an outline report. This report will be made public. No date for this meeting or report was stated.

4) It was reported that there was nothing much to share from the consultants as a phone call from them trying to arrange to do so had only been received as this meeting was starting. The consultants were working on adapting the option they had shown in the meeting on the 30<sup>th</sup> July, and had considered making the islands smaller and closer to shore. The results of these considerations were not yet available.

The subgroup discussed the conflicting needs of beach users ( in the widest sense) and possible solutions for protecting the town. Consideration of possible rip currents brought up the fact that as the sea defences work they change the shape of the sea bed so rip currents that are in one place at the time of installing defences will move to different places as time goes on. Therefore their position can be very difficult to model.

Ultimately the discussion got us no further as we are totally dependent on the results of the consultants' work.

5) Frustration was expressed with the amount which had been achieved since the BMP was paused in February 2021

It was asked if we were now confident that any misunderstandings which had been obvious at the last meeting had since been ironed out. The answer was given that there weren't really any misunderstandings on the consultants part; everything they had done which appeared to be a misunderstanding was actually simply a result of them having to work to regulatory guidance.

The point was made that if they were following the Scope then we must, despite our best efforts, have written the Scope badly. There was unresolved disagreement on this point but we were assured that they had now been told, beyond doubt, that the emphasis must be on retaining a healthy beach.

It was emphasised that East Beach must be maintained in a 'not less safe' state than it is now in case someone decided to go swimming there. It was stated that people do swim from there but members of the subgroup felt it was very, very rare to see someone swimming there.

Reviewing the cost given for 4b in 2016 for islands which are much smaller than the ones shown a few weeks ago, it was stated that the costs for both schemes had been around the same price. This gave some hope that if islands similar to 4b were costed now they might be affordable. We must not, however get confused between costs for the scheme and costs only for the construction. The hope may not be that great.

The issue of recharging the beach v natural beach growth was revisited. In the closed cell of Sidmouth the beach movement is to the west, except in strong westerlies. In Lyme Bay as a whole the movement of sediment is from west to east. The increase in easterlies may mean that the strength of the closed cell needs to be recalculated. Previous predictions in 1992 about how much matter would be accreted around the new rock islands had greatly underestimated what had actually happened. This shows how complex the sea bed and wave movements are off Sidmouth. Hopefully modelling will give us a good idea about how things will go.

6) The meeting closed with a discussion of how the final stage of this process is expected to go.

Modelling is an option but we are not yet at the stage it is worth starting it. Before we do modelling we need to be comfortable that we can afford the option being modelled and that it will work technically. Models are generally used to confirm what you are relatively confident will happen based on expert judgement.

As time goes by the experts are becoming more convinced that we will end up reverting to having a groyne on East Beach, not only because of cost but to allow future recharges. It will probably be a long one as in the Paused Option. However, nothing is firm until the consultants report back. This does not mean that the idea of an island off Town Beach has been rejected in favour of a splash wall though.

We were told that the final report from the consultants would not be available until after the date on which we had to decide whether to revert to the Paused Option or to go ahead with an Alternative Option. It will not be with us until the end of September.

We will have to make recommendations, preferably through the whole Advisory Group, based on what information we can get in the time available; accepting that we are not going to have access to a final report.

Tom and Geoff feel that it is important to get the Project Board set up to help with decision-making as we will have to make some really big decisions based on recommendations.

It may be that we have another meeting next week, depending on what the news is from the consultants on Monday when Tom is able to get their update. To be confirmed.