

## Report on the Sub-group meeting

11<sup>th</sup> Oct 2021

All members were present apart from Chris Lockyear.

The topics covered were the draft consultants' report Tom circulated last week, the input of Natural England and their concerns about possible designs, and the need to get the Outline Business Case submitted and approved in this Environment Agency funding period.

The discussion wandered a great deal so this report will be based on the topics of discussion.

### **Consultants' draft report.**

This is the only report we can expect from the consultants before Cabinet need to make a decision on which design to take forward. It may be possible to get them to amend the report before then to correct any confusion.

The points raised about the current document were that,

- a) It was unclear at times about whether the costs given were for the whole or just part of the scheme
- b) It appeared contradictory at times about whether the islands proposed in that particular design would or would not provide protection without a splash wall
- c) The information given did not seem to accord with what has been experienced with the current islands
- d) The document is not suitable for public release as it is unclear to lay people

We are going to feed back, via Tom, our concerns to the consultants and ask that the document is improved.

The report seems to confirm that they didn't target their attention where we (the lay people) had expected: they used up time making detailed calculations where rough ones would have sufficed to make a decision, and did not establish exactly what money was available before starting the design process.

### **Natural England**

They are a statutory consultee for any beach management scheme and have always been invited to attend Advisory Group meetings but have chosen not to do so.

They had a closed meeting with Tom and Geoff recently, this meeting also included Sam Scriven representing the Jurassic Coast Trust and thus the World Heritage Site. Tom has now received permission to share his notes with us and he will circulate them soon.

Despite NE having very clear ideas of what they will accept on East Beach, and them feeling that Tom and Geoff didn't accurately convey those ideas in a previous meeting, they have now said that they will be unable to attend the next Advisory Group meeting to put their points. This is disappointing as we were looking forward to getting clear information from them. The feeling in the meeting was that a representative of the WHS could not speak for NE no matter how closely they worked together. It would still be hearsay evidence and not the primary source.

In a letter that NE sent to EDDC in 2016 they mentioned several things which constitute a 'risk' to any scheme we propose. Later communications appear to have added further demands. It would be very helpful to be able to question them to ascertain whether these points have been assessed properly by us.

We spent a long time, as we often do, trying to second guess what NE might find acceptable or objectionable in a design. This is ultimately futile and a waste of time. They need to be there to tell us.

It was agreed that Tom should contact them and try and find a date when they could attend, before Cabinet meets. The provisional date of the morning of 19<sup>th</sup> Oct for the next Advisory Group meeting is not convenient for representatives of CRAG so a revised date would be welcomed by them.

## Environment Agency and funding

The EA gets its funding in 6 yearly blocks and there is money available for our scheme within the current period, if it is approved. It is therefore important that we get approval soon so that we are certain of the funding.

There is no certainty of what money will be available to the EA in the next funding period, so if we drift into that we run a real risk of the scheme being approved but us not being able to get the money to carry it out.

The EA are very keen for us to submit a viable plan as soon as possible.

Tom has put together a report to go before Cabinet at the beginning of November so that they can decide what to do.

The three options are

1. Revert to the Preferred Option and the previous Outline Business Case with minor variations to reflect work which was subsequently done on possible designs for the splash wall.
2. Go with the Alternative Option which has emerged from the 6 month Pause which is a greater variation on the PO where a high splash wall has been replaced by an island off Town Beach but the large groyne on East Beach is retained.
3. Reject both options and start again.

There are compelling reasons for option two to be chosen and we are hopeful that Cabinet will agree.

Perhaps the most compelling is the economic case concerning funding, as detailed above. Tom made it very clear to us that until, and unless, we get funding approval and the money is guaranteed to us we can not do further design work, or modelling work.

However, once the money has been obtained in principal then we can do modelling and design work which will inform the actual shape of the final scheme. He was clear that if this further work came up with a superior design solution to the one originally approved then we could ask permission to use the superior design. This permission is likely to be given if the design truly is superior, because the EA wants the best scheme as much as we do.

This information was very welcome to the group. We welcomed the idea of the design at this stage being acceptable to the EA and being approved for funding and yet not being a final design set in stone. We all felt that further work could bring us to a better design for Town Beach while not holding up work to be done on East Beach.

It was felt important that we communicate clearly to the public that in an ideal world we would have wanted the balance of the design to be different but that we were compelled in another direction due to Government funding rules. In short, we would have to accept an inferior solution to the problems facing us. We have to be pragmatic about what can be achieved.