

**EAST TOWN OF SIDMOUTH FLOODING CONCERNS  
MEETING HELD AT EDDC OFFICES  
COMMITTEE ROOM MONDAY 17<sup>TH</sup> MAY 2010 3PM**

**ATTENDEES:**

Graham Liverton(GL)	EDDC
Peter Sullivan (PS)	Sidmouth Town Council
Frances Newth (FN)	EDDC
Anthony Reed (AR)	EDDC
Peter Hand (PH)	SRA
Jeremy Woodward (JW)	Vision Group of Sidmouth
Paul Grieve (PG)	SAFE
James Diamond (JD)	Natural England
Jim Masters (JM)	Devon Maritime Forum
Richard Eley (RE)	Sidmouth Chamber of Commerce
Gordon Trapmore (GT)	EA
Martin Davies (MD)	EA
Amanda Newsome (AN)	NE
David Ford (DF)	National Trust
Aidan Winder (AW)	DCC
Nick Bott (NB)	DCC
Stuart Hughes (SH)	DCC & EDDC
Graham Troman (GTr)	EDDC
Chris Gibbings (CG)	EDDC & Sidmouth Town Council
Christine Drew (CD)	EDDC
Keith Steel (KIS)	EDDC
Graham Brown (GB)	EDDC
Peter Jeffs (PJ)	EDDC

The meeting was chaired by Cllr Graham Brown. He commenced with the introduction that the funding for coastal work should be a priority protecting the east side of Sidmouth from possible flooding.

There should be measures in place for any properties which might be affected as well as environmental issues. Different groups require different priorities.

- Cliff erosion has a dramatic affect on residents
- Sidmouth town – businesses and properties will be affected

Emergency funding should be available depending on the rate of the coastal erosion at present being experienced on a regular basis.

**GT** stated there would be no funding available from the EA as the current coastal erosion was not covered by their definition of an “Emergency”. **GT** quoted the definition of “Emergency” from the document:

#### **“What do I do if there is an emergency project?”**

There is no legal definition of an emergency. For our purposes an emergency is defined as " a unpredictable and sudden situation that poses a serious threat to loss of life and requires immediate action". An emergency is not a situation that has planned actions, which become urgent due to increased rates of deterioration.

In all cases please contact our AFCRM to inform us of the need for emergency works other wise the works cannot be considered for grant aid. It is your responsibility to liaise with statutory bodies”.

Emergency works by their nature will not have any provision for funding. Therefore we can only advise you to proceed without any approvals and that there is no guarantee of funding.

EA have assets in the area which have to be checked and it is important to keep up to date with this.

**SH** confirmed the responsibilities of the County Council and that this problem would remain a priority, However, they are not responsible for coastal protection. Any input from County must be cost effective and there must be clear responsibilities on what to protect.

**AN** commented that they would be looking for the best possible outcome

The National Trust was asked for confirmation of their ownership with regards to the beach. It was confirmed to the meeting that they own part of the beach from the water line to base of the cliff but as there no longer was any shingle in place they had no interests.

**GL** asked if we had to wait for a fatality or other disaster before something could be done under emergency powers.

**CG** asked for clarity from the EA whether they have any plan for further protection of the East side of the town should flooding threaten. Also who initiates or decides on whether help is given.

**GT** responded by saying that it was dependant on the flood risk and based on the information at the time, nothing could be identified beforehand.

**PG** passed around some aerial photographs of Pennington Point indicating land loss and average rates of erosion per year.

It was clarified by the EA once again that this rate of erosion was not going to be classed as an emergency.

**JW** outlined the need for assessments of the risk to asset, car parks and the town from flooding

**GT** discussed defense of assets stating that the cost to protecting just a small amount of properties East of the Sid is not justified – to protect the cliff with a major defence scheme could cost £millions.

**PH** stated that a lot more properties were involved than previously anticipated and are losing their property to the cliff erosion. He personally had lost some 5 meters of garden. He raised the question of “who is responsible for the liability to say workmen on private property should the land give way”.

**PH** said it is clearly set out why the work is essential but the problem is how will things be progressed? The town of Sidmouth could eventually start to lose a lot of revenue and residents will find it much more difficult, and will be worried about the consequences.

There was sympathy from the Environment Agency, but it all came back to the definition of an emergency and criteria for funding.

**GB** was keen to move things forward

**GT** was asked how much it would cost to protect the Alma Bridge as it was felt that this landmark was probably the most significant.

**GT** stated that it depended on what was required to be done. Was there a similar justification to that at Seaton Hole?

**SH** said that although not everything in the town would be affected some money from different organisations (including EA) might be put towards a smaller scheme to help to protect the town

**GT** everything has to be prioritised, the pot is just not big enough. He could not see the justification to help this particular situation, there was no mechanism in place for giving the sort of money required and there would be nothing from any national fund or local levy.

It was recognised generally that most residents would turn to the District Council for help in an emergency, so wouldn't it be better to club together to provide funds.

**RE** reminded the meeting of the rock armoury put in place in 1992. We need a small and modest scheme at least in order to protect the Alma Bridge. £millions will be poured into the Port Royal area for other plans but nothing is being proposed to help save the town from erosion.

How does EDDC see their role in preventing an emergency situation?

**PJ** stated that EDDC does have some powers (not duties), and duty of care regarding its own property for coast protection. We have little in-house expertise so rely for professional advice on the EA, but also to rely on external consultants or organisations to assist. All agencies have difficulty with funding. Whatever work is undertaken it must be remembered that any work, with inadvertent effects, leaves EDDC liable so EDDC has to be very careful to get the best possible advice.

**PH said** there is a real danger of the path being lost close to Alma Bridge.

**CG** asked what was the normal rate of erosion?

**JD** said it was dangerous to compare erosion rates, these could change very quickly. Averages over a long time could not be broken down to a realistic rate per year.

**AN** suggested that alternatives such as beach profiling have not been properly considered as alternatives. **NE** would not agree to work unless alternatives considered.

**GB** asked how were we to get alternatives for works that would be undertaken?  
It was suggested that the Pathfinder consultation could be used.

**PH** reminded the meeting of the 4 options originally suggested that are still open for discussion and suggested these 4 options be revisited. No-one has the money, but even if the money were available it may not mean that the help will be forthcoming unless there could be agreement on the appropriate solution.

No one has so far asked the cliff top residents if they would be willing to contribute to the cost of the work. He acknowledged that some substantial funds could be raised if they were asked.

**PS** confirmed that the Town Council had always supported District and that the TC would help to facilitate a move forward

It was suggested water from Alma Field is running off and cracks are forming not only in the ground but starting to affect properties. There was discussion over any residual TC responsibility for this. It would seem that there is not.

**AR** asked if any scheme put in place to protect the seafront/Alma Bridge could also give protection to Pennington Point? What can be done?

Any scheme implementation should be coming from EDDC.

**SH** with respect to Alma Field there is not much point in doing anything at the top of the cliff if EDDC will not do anything at the bottom.

**RE** Agreed that there will be no £million solution but there could be a more modest scheme. Joint funding from various agencies may bring things to a reasonable temporary approach.

**GB** Agreed with **RE**'s statement – conscious about pulling this together  
Need to have further talks with those willing to contribute to the funding

**PJ** stated that there was a series of possible areas of agreement. He suggested some statements to consider:

- All were agreed about the need to maintaining protection of the town west of the Sid
- All were agreed that a solution should be sustainable
- All were agreed on constraints on national grant aid
- All were agreed that all options should be explored using the Pathfinder approach

Several suggestions were made to come up with a jointly agreed statement to be released.

**PG** asked how long it would take to get the work under way. There was an expectation that the Pathfinder work would start very soon - once the options had been explored EDDC would take the lead on trying to get any solution implemented

**GB** concluded the meeting and thanked everyone for attending and it would now be a case and evaluated and of keeping up to speed and moving forward.

## **Discussion on Pennington Point 17 May 2010**

*The meeting was held on 17 May at 3pm and included representatives of statutory bodies, as well as representatives of local groups. The meeting was chaired by EDDC's Environment Portfolio Holder Cllr Graham Brown. All parties contributed to the debate and all agreed the statement below:*

**All are agreed that protection from flooding of that part of the town of Sidmouth, to the west of the River Sid, is a priority.**

**The flooding and coastal defences to this part of the town have been examined and are robust and adequate at present, however we need to be sure that they will remain so into the future.**

**There are other Sidmouth assets of concern (e.g. Alma Bridge, properties immediately to the east of the Sid, coast path etc.) but it would be extremely difficult to prove the level of economic justification that would be required in order to meet the national funding criteria, whether as planned or as emergency work.**

**There are many constraints on finding a simple and localised solution around the mouth of the River Sid to protect all or some of these other assets, but there is a general commitment to finding joint funding if a cost effective and viable scheme can be identified, and some funding has already been volunteered.**

**The Coastal Pathfinder scheme provides the opportunity to explore the options (including 4 options previously suggested) for a scheme, and then come to a joint agreement on it after canvassing the views of a wider range of local people.**

**East Devon District Council, as the authority responsible for coastal protection agrees to lead on the solution when it, and the funding, is found and agreed.**

**After the meeting, Councillor Graham Brown said: "I was pleased to meet with the local agencies and other community stakeholders, all of whom were there for the common good. The meeting was very constructive and I am confident we can now move forward together to tackle this problem, rather than as a number of disparate factions who may have similar aims, but with their own ideas about how to deliver results".**

**Councillor Stuart Hughes, local Devon County Councillor for Sidmouth and Sidford, and Cabinet Member for Highways and Transportation, said: "It was a positive meeting that brought all of the key stakeholders together. Working in partnership, the County Council would be prepared to support an initiative which improved protection for its assets as part of a wider coastal protection initiative. The County Council has taken measures in the past to safeguard Alma Bridge and the coast path and will continue to do so as long as supporting land is kept intact".**