

NON EXEMPT

HAVANT BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

1 July 2020

**WEST BEACH HAYLING ISLAND COASTAL
MANAGEMENT**

Simon Jenkins, Director of Regeneration and Place

FOR DECISION

Portfolio: Leader of the Council, Cllr Michael Wilson

Executive Director: *Simon Jenkins*

Key Decision: Yes

Report No: HBC/009/2020

1.0 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To inform Cabinet of the coastal policy at West Beach, recent coastal change and likely future changes in response to natural processes.
- 1.2 To provide an update on the current position regarding West Beach car park.
- 1.3 To set out the proposals regarding the future arrangements for 'B' Site beach huts.

2.0 Recommendation

- 2.1 That Cabinet Approves:
 - a. To note that the decision to remove the failed sea defence structures has been made under delegated powers by the Leader given the imminent threat to health and safety that the structures present. This is in line with the current policy. The policy was originally approved in 2008 and reaffirmed in 2010, details of which can be found in the background papers to this report.
 - b. To note the current status of West Beach car park and the impact that partial closure, and Covid 19 restrictions has had on capacity and budget.

- c. To review the beach hut offer at 'B' site given the impact the removal of the sea defences is likely to have on this area. Seek to identify an alternative suitable site to relocate these 50 beach huts and to delegate this to the Cabinet Lead for action.

3.0 Executive Summary

- 3.1 Hayling Island coastline consists of a dynamic shingle beach, stretching from Eastoke in the east, to Gunner Point in the west. Over the course of time, due to both natural processes and human intervention, the shape of the beach has changed. Specifically, at West Beach, the area is very exposed, and the landscape can alter significantly as a result of poor weather conditions. Increased frequency of powerful storms year on year has taken its' toll on the area. The rapid change experienced over the course of last winter has been dramatic.
- 3.2 In the last year the coastline has retreated 16 metres northwards towards West Beach car park, and since January, a further four to five metres of the beach has been lost.
- 3.3 Recent inspections of the remaining sea defences have identified that part of the structure is failing and plans for its' removal are in hand. Removal of part of the sea defence is likely to increase the rate of erosion in this area, which in turn increases the threat to the safety of 'B' site beach huts.
- 3.4 Flooding and over-topping from the beach has also impacted the western end of West Beach car park, which was closed due to safety concerns in November 2019. The area remains cordoned off.
- 3.5 This report sets out the challenges for the above issues, and proposals to address each.

4.0 Additional Budgetary Implications

- 4.1 As the landowner HBC are responsible for removal of the failed sea defences, which pose a health and safety risk. A budget of up to £85,000 has been identified within the budgetary framework for 2020/21. This includes costs of £65,000 and £20,000 contingency. These costs will be met from unused funds from the Planning Policy budget due to specific works not being undertaken this financial year.
- 4.2 These defences do not qualify for Environment Agency Grant in Aid, unlike Eastoke. We are exploring the potential for Emergency Works funding from the Environment Agency for defence removal.
- 4.3 In addition to 4.2 work will be immediately undertaken by officers to identify the required resources in order to fund this work.

- 4.4 In terms of the financial loss relating to parking income at West Beach, although it is difficult to predict accurately, if the loss is purely compared to the size of the area currently closed, income will reduce by 50% for this financial year. This equates to just over £80,000 per annum.
- 4.5 The car park income has also suffered significant financial loss due to Covid 19. The loss to date, when compared to income levels for the same period last year is £15,500.
- 4.6 'B' site beach huts generate in excess of £30,000 per annum. A review of this site is therefore relevant given their proximity to the failed sea defences.

5.0 Background and relationship to the Corporate Strategy and Directorate Business Plan/s

Coastal - Background

- 5.1 HBC as the coast protection authority is not legally required to do anything to protect against flooding and erosion, however it has permissive powers to carry out works where there is a wider public benefit, clear economic benefit and an achievable solution.
- 5.2 Private landowners are responsible for flood and erosion protection on their own land. They must act within statutory planning regulations and other applicable legislation.
- 5.3 The Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management (FCERM) process is built around a hierarchy of plans and schemes which enable Local Authorities, such as HBC, to plan their work to manage coastal risks. In England we have a 3-tiered approach to coastal management: Shoreline Management Plan (SMP); Coastal Strategy; Coastal Scheme.
- 5.4 The first East Solent Shoreline Management Plan was approved and adopted in 1997, setting out the strategic management options for Hayling Island to manage coastal risk to people, the developed, historic and natural environment over 100 years. The preferred management policy along the West Beach frontage was to '**do nothing**'.
- 5.5 This SMP was updated with the North Solent Shoreline Management Plan (SMP2), adopted by HBC (full Council), and approved by the Environment Agency in 2010.
- 5.6 The SMP2 management policy for the West Beach frontage, over the next three Epochs (100 years) is '**Hold the Line**' with **Natural evolution at Gunner Point**. The natural shoreline around Gunner Point should be allowed to evolve with minimal interference.

- 5.7 A policy decision was taken in 2008, by Havant Borough Council in line with the SMP that: *“once the coastal defences reach the end of their serviceable life or become a health and safety risk, the **structures should be removed, and the beach allowed to evolve naturally.**”*
- 5.8 In order to manage and adapt to these changes into the future, the North Solent Shoreline Management Plan (NSSMP) recommended the need to develop an FCERM Strategy for the Hayling Island Coastline.
- 5.9 In December 2019, the Environment Agency recommended approval to develop the Hayling Island Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Strategy. The Strategy will shortly begin, setting the preferred FCERM approaches to deliver the SMP policies. The Strategy will challenge the consequences of implementing the current policy.

Coastal Evolution

- 5.10 The South Hayling coastline once looked quite different and this evolution ties into the history of defences along the coastline and the resulting development. At Gunner Point, the coastline was much further landward than its current position, as was the Open Beach between West Beach and Beachlands.
- 5.11 The conversion of the former Lifeboat Station to the Inn-on-the-Beach occurred in the 1960's and subsequent bolstering of this structure with a seawall and concrete apron acted to significantly change the coastline here. While beach material does bypass from east to west, it is greatly inhibited, and it therefore has built up along the central south coast, bringing this coastline further seaward. However, land west (downdrift) of Inn-on-the-Beach suffered from coastal erosion, and timber revetment and groynes were built to stabilise this section of council land in 1976. Gunner Point continues to accrete as it has done for at least 100 years and is a key source of material for recycling back up to Eastoke, from where this material originates.
- 5.12 The West Beach timber revetment and groynes were effective and enabled development of the car park and provision of beach huts. Despite over £1 million of routine maintenance which has extended their life, in 2008 these timber structures were identified to be at the end of their life and the Council agreed to not repair or reconstruct these when failure occurred.
- 5.13 Following a period of stormy conditions, failure of a 150m of the timber revetment occurred in 2012. This section was removed, leaving only the fronting timber groynes. The past 5 years has seen an increase in storm activity along the south coast of England. This drove accelerated coastal erosion which eventually outflanked the groynes in 2018, which were then removed.

- 5.14 West Beach remains highly dynamic and a risk of erosion (Annex A- Shoreline Retreat). In January 2020 the next 100m section of defences had deteriorated to a failed state following a series of winter storms and continued erosion. Plans are being developed to remove this section, leaving 50m of the timber revetment (adjacent to Inn on the Beach) and the timber groynes as they currently remain effective.
- 5.15 It is estimated that to provide new defences at West Beach, Havant Borough Council would need to invest £2M-£5M. It is no longer possible to repair the current defences and to provide short term temporary defences would be of limited value in the medium to long term in terms of flood and erosion management (Annex B- Option Matrix).

West Beach Adaptation

- 5.16 The ESCP closely monitor the coastline and have estimated coastal risk in response to removal of the whole structure over the next 100 years (Annex C), forming a 'Rebound Zone' and an 'Adaptation Zone'. The projection is based on observations made since the western section of the structure was removed in 2012 (including latest sea level rise estimates) and assumes that beach management continues from Gunner Point. There are several uncertainties around predicting this change. The 'Rebound Zone' is the immediate expected retreat of the beach due to the removal of the structures. Due to a measured increase in the severity of storms in recent years, it is possible that the beach crest position could move through this zone very quickly. The 'Adaptation Zone' shows an envelope of where a stable beach crest position could end up in the next 100 years due to continual erosion and therefore any development or land use change should be very carefully managed here.
- 5.17 These future predictions highlight the risk, but uncertainty remains in the rate of change, and therefore impact. These uncertainties relate to the highly variable winter weather, the frequency of beach recycling operations from Gunner Point, the lifespan of the remaining groynes and wider climate change impacts.

Car Park - Background

- 5.18 West Beach car park is one of eight car parks situated along Hayling Island seafront. The car park runs west from the Inn on the Beach to the south eastern corner of Hayling Golf Club. In relation to the rest of the parking offer along the coast, this car park is by far the most popular.
- 5.19 The car park, however, does present challenges for the council. It is situated within the SSSI area which places restrictions on HBC in terms

of how the area is managed, maintained and which materials are used in the process of its' upkeep.

Winter 2019/20 - Impact

- 5.20 Given its' location, the car park has experienced unprecedented change over the course of this winter, due to increased frequency of powerful storms and the subsequent coastal erosion in this area.
- 5.21 The decision to close the western end of the car park was taken in November 2019. This was in response to significant over-topping of shingle and loose tarmac being washed onto the car park surface, both of which presented a safety risk to vehicles and users accessing this area. This decision has proven to be appropriate and proportionate given the on-going storms the area has experienced.
- 5.22 Located in this car park are four disabled bays. These bays are situated along the front edge. These bays were cordoned off in February due to significant flooding following spring tides and storm Ciara. In addition to the surface water present, there was a risk that tarmac could have broken away from the car park edge and redeposited onto the beach.

Current Position

- 5.23 Whilst a significant part has been closed during the winter, 50% of the car park remains open and accessible to those visiting the area (noting Covid 19 restrictions that have and continue to be in place). During 'normal' times, the area is popular with visitors, however, the number of parking transactions during the winter is significantly lower than during the summer. Should the council be unable to re-open the western end in readiness for the summer, this will have budget implications going forward.
- 5.24 Given the popularity of this car park the intention is to re-open if it is appropriate to do so, taking into account the current and emerging Government guidance regarding Covid 19. The car park is being monitored regularly, and as the weather improves the area which has been closed has been re-assessed recently. The current intention is to partially reinstate the closed part of the car park whilst ensuring that the safety of its' users is maintained. This has the potential to provide space for another 50 vehicles. Notwithstanding this, the circumstances experienced during this winter will require further consideration to be given as to whether this car park should be seasonal.

Beach huts – Background

- 5.25 The constant changes to the landscape at West Beach presented a very real and present danger for 'A' site beach huts in 2018. The threat that coastal erosion posed resulted in HBC taking urgent action to

remove all beach huts located in this area in December 2018. These huts were relocated on a temporary basis to the east of Inn of the Beach. Since then HBC has commissioned a series of ecological surveys to better understand the natural features of the SSSI area which are of national importance and include particularly rare species along the south coast.

- 5.26 Working with Natural England to discuss the survey findings and noting the temporary nature of the relocation of 'A' site, they have confirmed that there is a desire to enhance and protect the natural beauty of the area, the result of which is they would not want any additional beach huts located in the SSSI area.

Winter 2019/20 - Impact

- 5.27 This area is obviously very exposed to all that winter weather conditions offer. However, this current winter the frequency and intensity of storms has increased to such a degree that it has significantly affected the area. Whilst the impact on the beach huts to date has been negligible, the failure of part of the sea defences and the removal thereof, has the potential to change that.
- 5.28 The remaining sea defences have deteriorated, the result of which is the planned removal of a 100m section. The removal of the sea defences will have an impact on the shape of the coast in this area and although unpredictable, the rate of erosion is likely to increase, which in turn will pose a potential risk to 'B' site beach huts.

Current Position

- 5.29 Beach huts licences were due to be renewed with effect from April 2020, these are ordinarily renewed for a 12-month period. The country, however, went into lockdown on 23rd March, the key message being to stay at home, and only essential travel should be undertaken. As a result, access to beach huts became restricted, and new licences for this financial year will be issued later than anticipated.
- 5.30 The risk of coastal erosion is likely to increase once the revetments have been removed, this creates uncertainty for the safety of 'B' site beach huts. Whilst coastal erosion is predictable, what is less certain is the rate at which this will occur. Consideration therefore is required regarding the future of 'B' site.
- 5.31 Work is underway to identify an alternative, suitable site on which to locate beach huts. Any future offer will need to be outside of the SSSI area given the restrictions that are imposed by Natural England. This site however, will be subject to planning approval and is currently not allocated for beach hut use.

5.32 Identification of a new site has stalled due to the current Covid 19 crisis. However, work on this has recently started again. An application will be submitted as soon as is practical to do so.

6.0 Relationship to the Corporate Strategy and Directorate Business Plan/s

6.1 The approach outlined in this report is in-line with the Corporate Strategy to promote economic prosperity whilst managing the challenges of a changing coastline. With sustainable development to ensure a safe, healthy and vibrant community.

6.2 The proposed approach set out in this report aligns with the Regeneration Strategy, which was adopted by the Council in 2018. While the removal of the defence structures will have an impact on the coastline, the regeneration plans that are being developed are being done so with consideration given to the changing coastline although there may need to be changes to the phasing of delivery and some of the detailed elements, the strategy itself is not prejudiced.

7.0 Options considered and reasons for the recommendation

7.1 The option to temporarily relocate the beach huts to the car park has been considered, however, notwithstanding the fact that approval from Natural England is unlikely to be gained, West Beach car park will be used to establish the compound required for the removal of the sea defence structures. This option will be further explored as part of the review if approval is granted.

8.0 Resource Implications

8.1 Financial Implications

8.2 The financial support required to carry out the removal of the sea defences will be met from the existing budget framework.

8.3 Human Resource Implications

8.4 There are no human resource implications

9.0 Legal Implication

9.1 As a landowner we have a duty of care to our neighbouring landowners. Instructions to counsel have been prepared to review our responsibilities and issue a letter to the private landowners to ensure fulfilment of the Council's 'duty to neighbours' obligation prior to removal of the sea defences.

10.0 Risks

10.1 The current health and safety risks are being managed through fencing to secure the area, signage and regular monitoring of the condition of

the structure. However, this will become increasingly difficult to manage as we approach the busy summer period and the beach continues to be drawn down through the voids in the sea defence structure. If no action is taken the structure could be at risk of collapse following the next significant storm event, requiring an emergency response.

- 10.2 Following removal of the timber revetment this section will be subject to localised erosion as the beach adjusts back to its natural profile, as illustrated by the adaptation zones. More regular wave overtopping and flooding of the hinterland over high tidal events under extreme storm events is likely, therefore access to the car park will need to be managed.

11.0 Consultation

- 11.1 Extensive public and statutory consultation was undertaken for the 1997 Shoreline Management Plan and the updated 2010 Shoreline Management Plan.
- 11.2 A liaison meeting with council officers was held with Hayling Golf Club on the 30th January and Inn on Beach on the 24th February 2020. Officers from the Coastal Partnership attended a Hayling Island Residents Association Meeting on the 12th February 2020 to answer questions from local residents and affected groups.

12.0 Communication

- 12.1 The coastal partnership maintain a webpage providing further details on the history, issues and policy at West Beach.
- 12.2 A letter outlining the current position was sent to 'B' site beach hut users on the 12th March 2020. Further communication will take place following the outcome of the Cabinet meeting.

Communication with private landowners in the area has also taken place.

- 12.3 Communications regarding the regeneration plans will need to be carefully considered. This will be managed as part of the Regeneration Communications Strategy.

13.0 Appendices:

- Appendix A – Coastal beach crest retreat – February 2020.
- Appendix B – Defence Matrix – long term options.
- Appendix C – 100 year Coastal Adaptation Zones.

Background Papers:

- Coastal Defence Panel Meeting – 24th September 2008 – Panel support to halt maintenance, make Breastwork safe, but not be repaired or reconstructed in the event of its failure.
- Executive Meeting – 20th October 2008. Noted the delegated decision taken by the coastal panel 24th September 2008.
- Council Meeting– 15th December 2010. Decision to adopt North Solent Shoreline Management Plan Policy and Action plan Items.
- Cabinet Lead Decision –16th May 2017 – Approves the recommendations of the South Hayling Island Beach Management Plan 2017-2022 and funding application.
- North Solent Shoreline Management plan: northsolentsmp.co.uk
- ESCP West Beach Webpage: <https://www.escp.org.uk/history-west-beach>
- Havant Regeneration Strategy - <https://www.havant.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/Have%20oppo%20rtunity%20with%20Havant%20update%20March%202019.pdf>

Agreed and signed off by:

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