

During our evidence to the JLP session on 27 February at Follaton House, just before the session was postponed due to incoming severe weather, the discussion touched on the status of the coastal section of the A379 road known as the Slapton Line.

We voiced our concern that the extreme vulnerability of the narrow shingle bar that separates Slapton Ley from the sea, and upon which the road sits, had not been explicitly addressed in the Plan. The Councils appeared unaware of the 2006 Scott Wilson report on the future of the Line, surprising since the report was commissioned by the Slapton Line Partnership, whose members include representatives from Defra, the Environment Agency, Natural England, Devon County Council, the South Devon AONB, and South Hams District Council itself.

The precariousness of the Line was brought into sharp relief on the night of 1-2 March, just a few days after the postponed session, when a 450-metre section of the A379 was washed into the sea by Storm Emma. As a result, the main road from villages east of Kingsbridge (Frogmore, Chillington, Stokenham, Torcross, and other smaller settlements) to Dartmouth is closed and will remain so for the foreseeable future. I have attached some evidential photographs of the damage to this mail.

The Scott Wilson report (Executive summary at: [Slapton Executive Summary Report August 06.pdf](#)) concluded that, while the shingle bar was unlikely to break down irreversibly within the next 30 to 50 years, the risk of damage to the road was significant (§1.9). Its principal recommendation was that the road should be preserved for as long as possible by proactive realignment landward on the bank (§1.12).

Coastal erosion events since publication of the report in 2006 indicate that its forecasts were, if anything, optimistic. In the last six years alone, three major storms (February 2014, February 2016, March 2018) have washed away part of the Memorial car park, damaged the sea wall at Torcross, closing the road for nearly four months, and most recently, destroyed the road at the very location where its realignment was recommended.

Preliminary analysis of the latest damage by the Slapton Line Partnership confirms that there is scope for one further realignment of the road to the landward side of the shingle bar, and it is on this possibility that hopes for the repair of the road now rest. A promise of the necessary funding has been secured from the DfT after an intervention by our local MP. But it is clear that this repair – assuming it goes ahead – is by way of a last chance: there is simply no further room on the narrow shingle bank for the road to be moved any further from the sea. Should the road be breached after this, there are no plans to repair it.

In our view, the absence of an assured future, even in the short to medium term, for the A379 beyond Torcross seriously undermines the sustainability of village development in communities to the east of Kingsbridge. Among other things:

The road from Kingsbridge through the villages badly needs upgrading, but it could easily lose its A-road designation.

The viability of the bus route along this stretch, already severely curtailed, must be in doubt.

The demise of the Line would mean the only main-road access to the large population east of the estuary and south of Slapton would be via the New Bridge at Bowcombe Creek, built in 1826, and incapable of accommodating two-way traffic if one of the vehicles is bigger than a passenger car.

It would be instructive to examine the recommended alternative access to Chillington and Stokenham from Dartmouth while the Slapton Line is closed, and from Kingsbridge should the New Bridge close.

We would be grateful if you would bring this submission to the attention of the Inspectors.

Yours sincerely

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For Stokenham Parish Council

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