

STORM DAMAGE TO BEACH HUTS - HORDLE CLIFF**1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 The Council licenses beach huts at 4 locations along the coast line at Calshot, Milford-on-Sea, Hordle Cliff and Barton on Sea. The severe storm on 14 February 2014 caused severe damage in a number of areas in Hordle and Milford on Sea. As a result, the Environment Portfolio Holder established a small working group to assist him in evaluating options for the Council's response to the various issues raised at both these sites. This is proving to be a complex task. This is the first of a series of reports that will be brought forwards to members and focuses on the beach huts and cliff at Hordle.
- 1.2 Prior to the storm of 14th February 2014 there were 380 Beach huts at Hordle Cliff. The beach huts themselves are owned privately. The huts are sited on land owned by the Council, which grants site licences to the owners. The location of the beach huts at Hordle Cliff is shown on the attached plan.
- 1.3 The site at Hordle Cliff has been designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), and therefore any works to this site, or any structures on it, have to receive consent from Natural England. In 2011 the Council adopted the Shoreline Management Plan which includes Hordle Cliff, where it was identified that this piece of coast line would have managed re-alignment.
- 1.4 The storm of 14th February 2014 caused significant damage to this area of the coastline. An inspection on Saturday 15th February 2014 identified significant damage to the Beach Huts at Hordle Cliff, including the destruction of a number of huts, repairable damage to others and erosion and landslip of the cliff face.
- 1.5 102 Beach Huts at Hordle Cliff were damaged by the storm as follows:
- 19 huts damaged but repairable (huts 275 to 294)
 - 45 huts completely destroyed and therefore missing (huts 199 to 274)
 - 20 huts in danger of collapse, most with unsafe access (huts 177 to 197)
 - 18 huts at risk of structural cliff failure. (huts 160 to 176)
- 1.6 The licence conditions are clear that the upkeep, maintenance and insurance of each individual Beach Hut is the responsibility of its owner. The owners believe their beach hut and its licence are a valuable personal asset. As well as the financial implications, the hut owners often view the licence as a valued asset for their families and some huts have remained in the same family for many years. The owners of these huts have been very upset by their loss and it is essential that the way forward is clear and we can manage owners' expectations for their beach hut.

2. PROPOSED WAY FORWARD

- 2.1 Huts 275 – 294. For these huts, blanket consent has been obtained by New Forest District Council from Natural England for the owners of these huts to carry out

repairs to individual huts at their own expense, subject to the conditions of the consent.

- 2.2 Huts 260 – 274. These huts were destroyed by the storm. Following discussions with Natural England it has been agreed that huts numbered 260 to 274 can be replaced, subject to planning permission being granted for each hut. It is recommended that the District Council (Environment Services) submit an application for outline planning permission for up to 20 huts in the area previously occupied by these huts. If this is successful, then individual hut owners for the huts identified in this section will be encouraged to submit a detailed planning application. If successful, the owners can replace their huts at their own expense.
- 2.3 Huts 199 – 259. These huts were also destroyed by the storm. Due to the continued movement of the cliff it is recommended, following discussions with Natural England, that for huts 199 to 259 the Council does not permit these huts to be replaced at this time until further analysis has been carried out on the movement of the cliff. It is anticipated that this period of monitoring will take between 6 and 12 months. Officers have written to Natural England to ask if they will grant consent to carry out any works to the lower cliff face to assist in making the base of the cliff more stable. A response is currently awaited. The Council has also instructed an independent company to carry out a survey of this lower cliff face so we can properly understand the full extent of the movement and its possible impact on the huts, which are currently at risk of collapse. Once the Council has received these reports it will be in a better position to decide whether it can permit the replacement of these huts.
- 2.4 Huts 177 -197. These huts remain in situ but there is a serious concern that they are in danger of collapse and may need to be removed and not replaced at the present time. These huts are located on the upper shelf of the cliff. The access in front of these huts has collapsed and there is evidence of cliff movement behind them. As with Beach Huts 199 to 259 in section 2.3, due to the movement on this cliff there will need to be a period of monitoring of between 6 and 12 months before there is any consideration of replacement. Once the report as identified in 2.3 is received, the Council will be in a better position to decide whether it can permit the replacement of these huts.
- 2.5 Huts 160 – 176. These huts suffered more superficial damage. While they remain accessible, they may be at risk in the future if the recent movement on the cliff continues in a westerly direction. It is recommended that the Council writes to these hut owners regarding this risk.
- 2.6 Licence fees. The hut owners pay an annual licence fee in the region of £450 under the terms of the licence. For those huts where the Council has restricted access or will not permit the owners to replace their huts it is proposed to waive the licence fee pending a decision on whether the huts are replaced.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 It is anticipated that, due to a reduction in the number of Beach Huts paying licence fees during 2014/15, the Council will under-recover its budgeted income at Hordle Cliff by £30,000.

4. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 Hordle Cliff is an SSSI. Therefore any works carried out will need the consent of Natural England.

5. CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 None

6. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 None

7. PORTFOLIO HOLDER'S COMMENTS

- 7.1 I would like to thank Councillors Beeton, Rippon-Swaine, Woodfield and Woods who have joined with me to form the on-going working group that, ably assisted and advised by Officers, is seeking to find an equitable way forward following the extensive damage caused by the recent storms. As mentioned elsewhere in the report, this is a complex and difficult task and this report is only the first of those that will be required to enable the Council to agree how best to proceed. I and the group support the way forward outlined in section 2 and the recommendation.'

8. CONCLUSION

- 8.1 Although this has been an upsetting time for the beach hut owners there is a requirement, as this area is designated as a SSSI, to seek consent from Natural England and to seek planning permission before huts are replaced. Unfortunately, due to the movement of the cliff, it will not be possible for 65 huts to be replaced until a further period of monitoring and the necessary permissions are in place. Of these, 20 huts may need removing urgently. Following discussions with Natural England it is recommended that an application for outline planning permission for up to 20 huts is submitted, for the area where huts 260 to 274 were previously located.

9. RECOMMENDATION

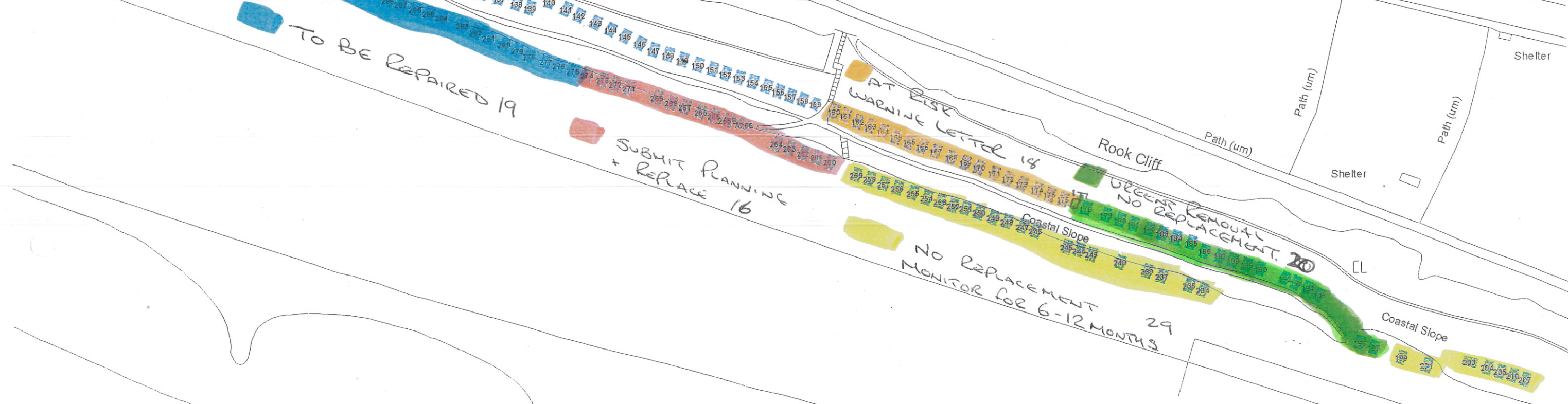
- 9.1 That Cabinet approves the proposed way forward as identified in section 2 of this report.

FURTHER INFORMATION

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BACKGROUND PAPERS

None



Hordle Cliff