



Slapton Line Partnership

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Coastroad users shape project strategy

The biggest assessment of the views and needs of the people affected by the Slapton coastroad has been carried out by the Slapton Line Partnership (SLP).

The telephone survey, conducted over a week in November, gave one in five people - more than 400 in the immediate vicinity of the coastroad, the chance to have their say. A further 200 plus residents were surveyed from neighbouring parishes and towns by the independent research company *Marketing Means* assigned by the SLP. The broad survey included questions on the existing coastal policy, the plans people are making for the next road closure, and how they would like to be updated on the state of the coastroad and the work of the SLP.

SLP Communications Officer, James Spencer, said: "The responses we received to the survey were fascinating and will reap great rewards over the duration of the project. Some results were as we might have expected, like the figure that 75% of people in the Slapton area will have their routines affected by a road closure. This information only reinforces the need for the SLP's on-going *Making Space for Water* project.

"Other results were reassuring. For example, the survey proved that more than 90 per cent of the residents living near the road were aware of the future road closures - previously there were concerns that people were unaware of the limited future of the road.

"And there were more sophisticated areas of the survey, such as an analysis of the knowledge held on the road and the work of the SLP, with responses broken down according to age groups and location of household. This will help us to identify the needs of individual groups and tailor the SLP's support to these groups. "

The opinions captured are being used in conjunction with the existing Adaptation Plan as the

foundations for the SLP's £250,000 *Making Space for Water* project, which is being funded and supported by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra). The project's central objectives are to support people using the coastroad as they plan for the changes to their lives caused by future road closures. Despite the SLP's commitment to maintaining the road for as long as possible, for reasons including sea level rises the route is expected to be repeatedly shut due to storm damage and eventually closed altogether.

Chairman of the Slapton Line Partnership, Alan Robinson, said: "The Slapton Line Partnership exists to support all the people that rely on the road, whether for work or leisure. For us to reach these people and spend the funding where they most need it, we have to first find out more about them. This survey was about the community having their say and us listening and it has been an invaluable process."

The survey was carried out at the beginning of November. The majority of the interviewees were randomly selected from the parishes immediately surrounding the Slapton coastroad. For the first time however, coastroad users from further neighbouring parishes and towns, such as Dartmouth and Kingsbridge, were also asked their views.

The survey results come in the same month as the SLP's first paper-based Contingency Planning exercise test. The desk exercise, which did not necessitate an actual closure of the road, tested the SLP's readiness for a closure of the road. A range of organisations attended, and SLP areas tested included highways planning and how news of the next closure would be communicated most quickly and effectively to the residents and businesses using the road.

The survey and results are available on the SLP's website – www.slaptonlinepartnership.co.uk, by email on request from communications @slaptonlinepartnership.co.uk or by post on request, please call 01803 861234.

Notes to Editors

1) The Slapton Line Partnership (SLP) is South Hams District Council (SHDC), Devon County Council (DCC) and Natural England (NE), supported by the Environment Agency (EA), Field Studies Council (FSC) and Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).

2) An independent study by coastal engineers Scott-Wilson in 2006 concluded that the road would suffer repeated breaches and at some point be claimed by the sea altogether. (Scott-Wilson executive summary: "Long-term [shingle] barrier retreat rates were estimated at 0.3metres/year [in Aug 2006], increasing over time due to sea level rises.")

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