

## **Lower Otter Restoration Project (LORP)**

### **Project Update September 2020 (for Stakeholder Group meeting 15 September 2020)**

#### **Project team**

The project team now includes the Environment Agency's contractor, Kier Group plc. We have worked together on many projects in the south west, most recently on Exmouth Tidal Defence Scheme. Several of the team from Exmouth will be involved in the planning for and construction of LORP. Kier will lead the construction of all elements of LORP, including the relocation of Budleigh Salterton Cricket Club.

#### **Funding**

In February 2020 we were pleased to confirm that we had successfully secured €26 m (£22m) of European funding from the Interreg VA France (Channel) England Programme to deliver a cross-border climate change adaptation project called PACCo, Promoting Adaptation to Changing Coasts. Part of the funding for PACCo will be used to support delivery of LORP, and sets timescales for the construction of LORP. PACCo comes to an end in March 2023, so we are aiming to complete construction of LORP by this date.

Approval of the Environment Agency's element of the funding for construction will be given after detailed design is complete, when prices for construction are known. This is likely to be in spring 2021. Construction will be able to follow once this funding approval is obtained (assuming that all other permissions and licences have also been granted).

#### **Design**

Over the last year, discussions with Natural England, the Jurassic Coast Trust (on behalf of the World Heritage Site) and South West Water (SWW) have led to a re-design of the estuary area to allow it to evolve as naturally as possible. The existing SWW Combined Sewer Overflow (CSO) pipe that runs along the back of the shingle spit will be diverted beneath the estuary, meaning that the existing pipe will become redundant and not need protecting with concrete and rock. Whilst funded primarily by LORP, the diversion of the CSO will be led by SWW as a parallel project.

Allowing the shingle spit to evolve naturally is very much in keeping with the World Heritage Site and Site of Special Scientific Interest status of the area. However, it does mean that the shape and size of the spit will be more uncertain; it is more likely to change with time and may affect access. For example, the informal lower part of the Donkey Turn path may be lost. East Devon District Council (EDDC), who lease the area from Clinton Devon Estates and manage public access, are comfortable with this approach.

#### **FAB Link**

The FAB Link project is a proposal to build an electricity interconnector, subsea and underground, between France and Great Britain via the island of Alderney. The

project is being jointly developed by RTE and FAB Link Limited, with support from the French and UK governments. The point where the cable will come ashore at the British end is in Budleigh Salterton, at Lime Kiln car park. There is geographical overlap between FAB Link and LORP in three places, leading to continued and ongoing design discussions with the promoters of FAB Link.

If approvals and finance for FAB Link are agreed, the project is expected to start construction in early 2023, meaning that the majority of LORP will have been completed before FAB Link commences. We have agreed designs for the field opposite South Farm Cottages and for the new location for Budleigh Salterton Cricket Club. We are still discussing the preferred solution for the footpath at the western side of the floodplain between Granary Lane and South Farm Road. FAB Link has planning permission to raise this footpath, but LORP will need to implement works that allow FAB Link to install their cables and maintain public access in the interim. However, because the solution for this area is not yet agreed, it will not be part of the planning application that we are currently preparing (see below). There will need to be a subsequent planning application or amendment to cover these works.

### **Budleigh Salterton Cricket Club (BSCC) relocation**

Planning permission for the relocation of BSCC was granted in January 2020; discussions are on-going with the current Club committee about the detailed design, schedule of finishing materials and securing vacancy of the existing site upon completion of works to the new ground. We are currently finalising the contract for construction of the pitch (the clubhouse will follow later). Given the earthworks nature of the construction, it is likely that this will be carried out in spring 2021 rather than autumn 2020. This still allows two years for the pitch to develop before it is used in the summer 2023 cricket season.

### **Planning permission and marine licence for main LORP scheme**

The planning application and marine licence application for LORP need to be accompanied by a statutory Environmental Statement, documenting the environmental impact assessment of the potential effects of the project. This is an extensive document that will sit alongside other supporting documents such as the drawings, a Planning Statement, Design and Access Statement, Construction Management Plan etc. We are nearing completion of this work and hope to submit the planning application and marine licence application by the end of September. The planning application will be submitted to EDDC and the marine licence application to the Marine Management Organisation (MMO).

Further groundwater modelling has been carried out to give confidence that the risk of saline water affecting the drinking water abstractions is extremely low. A monitoring plan will also be developed as the project moves forward. Additional environmental surveys to support the Environmental Statement have been undertaken during the spring and summer of 2020, and further pre-construction surveys will be carried out as the project moves into the next stage.

Once the planning application has been submitted there will be a period where the application is validated by EDDC. Once validated, the application will be put on to

EDDC's planning portal. There will be a public consultation stage during the 'determination period', although as yet we don't know exactly when this will be. EDDC and the MMO have agreed to work together on the consultation, with EDDC taking the lead. EDDC will have 16 weeks to determine the planning application once it has been validated. The MMO should also determine the marine licence application within this period.

### **Public engagement**

Our plans for another face-to-face public exhibition have been affected by the ongoing Covid-19 restrictions. We are now intending to hold a 'virtual exhibition' in tandem with the planning application, putting information online and using leaflets, posters and e-mails to let people know how to access the information.

### **Site Investigation**

Further site investigation is being planned for autumn 2020 to provide additional information for the detailed design. Kier will lead the investigations, using specialist sub-contractors where needed.

### **Issues Log**

The Issues Log has been reviewed and some minor amendments made. A revised version (v12) is appended.