

## **Livermead Sea Wall Collapse – Lessons Learnt**

### Background

A briefing report on the breach to the sea wall at Livermead was considered at the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board in April 2013. The report answered five specific questions which had been raised by the Vice-chairman of the Board and gave a summary of the response to the incident. At that meeting, the Board agreed that it would carry out a review into the circumstances surrounding the collapse and the subsequent response to determine if lessons could be learnt.

### Scope of the review

In terms of the collapse at Livermead in April 2013:

- To understand the decision making process up to the start of the contract to carry out works to the sea defences at Livermead.
- To review how the public were kept informed during the period of the collapse and subsequent discharge of sewage from Hope's Nose.

In relation to the sea defences generally:

- To consider the prioritisation of future works to Torbay's sea defences and the associated the budget position.

### Areas of questioning

#### A. Decision making process

1. When was the previous inspection of the sea wall at Livermead? How does the inspection report from May 2012 compare with the previous report?
2. Funding for the works was agreed in July 2012 but with an instruction to apply for match funding. Why was remedial work was not carried out at that stage? Did the delay, caused by applying for match funding, mean further damage was caused to the wall contributing to its collapse?
3. How did South West Water engage with contractors and at what stage? Could this have been carried out earlier (i.e. before the contract was awarded)?
4. The Board received the summary of the incident response at its meeting in April 2013. Was this in accordance with the Council's emergency procedures? Have those procedures been reviewed to take account of any lessons learnt?

5. How much has the emergency works cost compared to the costs anticipated for the managed works? How will these additional costs be met?

B. Communication

6. Do you believe the community could have been better advised about the spill? Why was there no general release of information as to whether swimming was safe?
7. Who took responsibility for informing the public about the sewage in the water? Where both South West Water and the Council clear about those responsibilities?
8. Why did the Council not inform the public of the consequences of the decision to turn off the sewage pumps in the press release issued on the Tuesday following the collapse (2 April 2013)?

C. Future works

9. Whose responsibility is it to maintain the sea defences in Torbay?
10. What is the current condition of the sea defences in Torbay? How are these monitored?
11. What impact will the (apparently) changing weather patterns have on the condition of the sea defences?
12. Will the monitoring arrangements change as a result of the collapse at Livermead and/or the changing weather patterns?
13. What arrangements are in place for the repair and maintenance of the sea defences?
14. How are repairs and maintenance to the sea defences funded? What is the current budget provision set aside for this issue?
15. How are repairs and maintenance to the sea defences prioritised alongside other demands?
16. What external funding opportunities are being pursued? What discussions are taking place with other authorities and central government about this issue?

Sources of Information

Torbay Council – Residents and Visitor Services/Communications/Finance  
Environment Agency  
South West Water  
The Met Office