

Slapton Line Questions

Consolidated response | October 2026

This document brings together the questions submitted through the Slapton Line Questions initiative and details the responses provided by the relevant Slapton Line Partnership stakeholders.

The A379

When will the funding outcome be known?

In August 2026, Devon County Council (DCC) submitted a £20m funding application for the reinstatement of the damaged section of A379 to the Department for Transport (DfT) Structures Fund.

The submission forms part of a competitive national funding stream, with an outcome expected in late Autumn/Winter 2026.

In the meantime, DCC continues to liaise with DfT officers to address any clarifications.

If we get the funding how long will it be before the road reopens?

DCC is unable to provide an accurate reopening date until a decision on the DfT funding bid is known.

Should funding be approved, the next step will be for the submitted scheme to be developed and then taken through the planning process. Environmental and other delivery constraints will need to be identified and mitigated appropriately to gain the necessary consents and approvals.

A high-level project timeline was presented at the June 2026 drop-in event:

Anticipated Timeline

Funding decision:	Autumn 2026
Funding agreement:	Winter 2026/27
Detailed design and surveys:	2026/27
Environmental assessment and consents:	2026/27 - 2027/28
Procurement:	Late 2027/28
Contractor mobilisation:	March-April 2028
Construction start:	April 2028

Why aren't the road and the new sea defence protection at Torcross all one integrated project?

These projects are led by different authorities, with each organisation responsible for managing different risks and delivering interventions over different timescales. The funding available for each element also comes from different government departments and funding streams. This means that funding identified or secured for one project cannot necessarily be transferred to another.

Despite these different statutory responsibilities and funding arrangements, the partners are working closely together to ensure that the individual projects form part of a coordinated approach to the challenges facing the Slapton Line. This includes aligning the design of the coastal defence works with proposals for the car park and slip road, coordinating improvements to the inland routes, and working together to support the development of funding bids. This collaborative approach helps ensure that the different projects complement each other and avoids unnecessary duplication of work.

The respective responsibilities and funding arrangements are outlined below:

- **Torcross Sea Defence Works:** delivered by the Environment Agency (EA) from funding within a national programme of projects financed through the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (DEFRA).
- **A379 Reinstatement Works:** funding and delivery led by Devon County Council with the funding bid submitted to the Department for Transport (DfT).

Why has no work been undertaken to protect what remains of the road?

Slapton Line Partnership recognises the importance of the remaining highway at Slapton and the significant concern that further coastal erosion and storm damage causes for residents, businesses and visitors.

However, there is currently no viable or funded scheme to provide additional permanent coastal defences to protect the remaining section of highway. The coastline at Slapton is highly dynamic,

and any intervention needs to be considered in the context of the wider coastal system, environmental designations, technical feasibility, funding requirements and the potential consequences for other parts of the coastline. Any intervention would be considered significant engineering works, meaning that extensive work would be required before designs could be submitted for comment by consents and licensing organisations.

In parallel, work is being progressed to improve the resilience of the inland highway network. This recognises the continuing risk to the coastal road and the importance of maintaining access between local communities should further sections of the coastal route become unavailable. The proposed improvements include new and enhanced passing places on inland routes identified through the Slapton Line Partnership Inland Working Group.

Why does rebuilding the road to the size and location that it previously was need an extensive planning process?

Rebuilding the road in its previous location is not simply a case of replacing the highway on a like-for-like basis. The coastline has changed significantly since the road was damaged, and reinstating the former alignment could require construction within an active and environmentally sensitive coastal area.

The scale of engineering required may also be substantially greater than simply reconstructing the former road. To maintain a road in its previous position, works could require significant coastal protection or supporting structures to provide a stable and resilient foundation, particularly where the coastline that previously supported the highway has been lost or altered.

Any proposal would therefore need to demonstrate that it is technically feasible, environmentally acceptable, deliverable and sustainable over its design life. This is likely to involve consideration of coastal processes and future erosion risk, impacts on designated habitats and landscape, land ownership, construction access, the effect of any new structures on neighbouring sections of coastline, and the necessary planning and environmental consents.

For these reasons, even where the objective is to return the road to approximately its former size and location, the proposal is likely to need to be assessed as a new intervention in the current coastal environment. This could require appropriate surveys, engineering design, environmental assessment, consultation, permissions and identification of a viable funding route before construction could proceed. The extent of these requirements would become clearer as proposals are developed and considered by the relevant authorities and statutory consultees.

When the works were undertaken in 2019, following Storm Emma, a valid Planning Permission was already active which allowed a much faster transition from design into construction.

What are the plans if the funding isn't received?

The current focus is on securing the funding required to deliver the proposed works, alongside progressing improvements to the inland routes to strengthen the resilience of the local highway network.

If the funding application is unsuccessful, the proposed works would need to be reviewed against the funding and resources available, and consideration given to what alternative options may be achievable.

A definitive longer-term approach cannot therefore be determined until the outcome of the current funding application is known.

If the funding isn't received is the only thing on offer to communities' minor enhancements to the inland lanes?

The proposed improvements to the inland routes should not be viewed as the only response to the challenges facing communities along the Slapton Line. They are an important measure that can be progressed now to improve resilience and help maintain access should further disruption occur on the coastal road.

Should the DfT funding not be secured, the position will need to be reviewed with partners, including consideration of alternative interventions, funding opportunities, and the priorities for future investment.

Has anyone studied the impact on people's mental health from the closure of the road?

Slapton Line Partnership recognise that the loss or closure of an important transport route can have impacts that extend beyond travel and access, including uncertainty, isolation and concern about the longer-term future of communities.

No specific assessment of the mental health impacts arising from the closure of the road has been undertaken as part of the current project. The concerns raised regarding mental health and community wellbeing are acknowledged and can be considered as part of future engagement and the development of longer-term proposals.

In parallel, recognition on the impacts of flooding and property loss on mental health, and the intangible impacts of flooding on people due to loss of personal effect have been used to enhance the Environment Agencies business case for coastal works at Torcross.

Why isn't anyone working to get a temporary solution in place in the short term?

Devon County Council has been clear that it does not have the funding to rebuild the A379 without additional funding. If funding is not approved, DCC would look at the minimum work needed to tidy the ends of the damaged section and make structures safe. In parallel, substantial work is being progressed on the inland routes to provide a more effective alternative for local users. Any proposed

temporary solution would also need to be clear about what it is intended to achieve and be assessed against the constraints at the site.

Could a road construction approach such as the Churchill Barrier in Orkney, or Eriksay Causeway in Outer Hebrides be used for the Slapton Line?

The eventual engineering solution for the Slapton Line could potentially have similarities to approaches used elsewhere in the UK, including causeway-style construction. However, any solution would need to be specifically designed for the local coastal environment. This will require detailed design, environmental assessment, and engagement with relevant stakeholders, alongside greater certainty over funding, before a preferred solution can be identified and progressed.

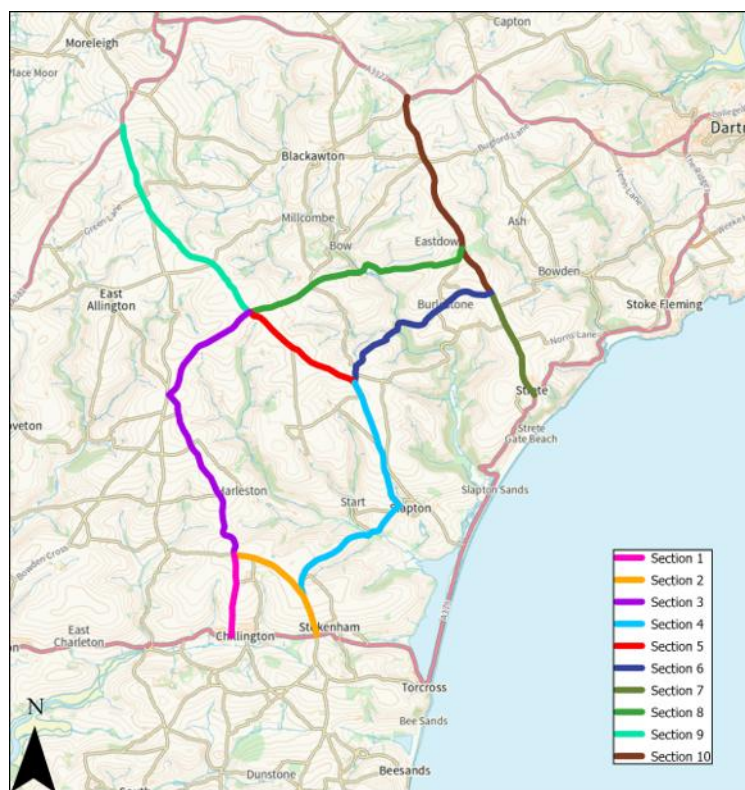
The Inland Routes

What are the planned enhancements to the inland routes?

The planned enhancements to the inland routes focus primarily on providing new passing places and improving existing passing places on routes connecting settlements affected by the closure of the A379 Slapton Line.

The location and spacing of passing places are being determined with particular consideration to intervisibility. Wherever practicable, the intention is that the next passing place will be visible from the preceding one, helping drivers anticipate oncoming vehicles and reducing the likelihood of vehicles having to reverse.

Through liaison with the Slapton Line Partnership Inland Working Group, ten sections of road have been identified for potential improvement, as shown on the map below:



The delivery programme has considered the prioritisation routes established by the Slapton Line Partnership Inland Routes working group. The routes identified for improvement in the first tranche of the work are the north-south routes connecting settlements to the A381/A3122. These are shown on the map below.

Approval to progress tranche one through to construction, up to a value of £1.24 million, was given by the Devon and Torbay Combined County Authority Board in May 2026.

To minimise disruption and ensure that all inland routes remain open throughout the summer peak, work on the further sections is anticipated to be programmed for Autumn/Winter 2027. This remains subject to securing the necessary approvals and consents.

The concept for enhancing the inland routes was modelled using a microsimulation model early in the scheme development. The modelling indicated that new passing places could increase route capacity by approximately 20% and reduce journey times by approximately 25%.

The modelling assumed that all vehicles using the Slapton Line route would divert via the inland routes, representing a worst-case scenario. The model does not allow vehicles to reverse and assumes perfect visibility between passing places. It is therefore likely to overestimate existing capacity and underestimate journey times under current conditions. The proposed improvements aim to create routes where visibility between passing places is substantially improved, making the model more representative of the enhanced routes. Existing journey times are difficult to quantify because they vary significantly depending on opposing traffic.

Has any analysis been undertaken to assess if local congestion will be worse if the inland routes are enhanced and the A379 is not rebuilt?

Devon County Council has undertaken traffic counts on the inland diversion routes following the closure of the A379. Initial surveys were completed in March 2026 and repeated in August 2026 to monitor changes in traffic flows. DCC will continue to monitor use of these routes to better understand ongoing impacts and inform future decisions.

The current situation, with the A379 closed and improvements to the inland routes yet to be delivered, is likely to represent the worst-case scenario in terms of traffic congestion and network resilience.

The inland route improvements are being progressed independently of efforts to reinstate the A379. The initiatives are funded through different sources and are not mutually exclusive. DCC is progressing the funding bid for the reinstatement of the A379 and implementation of inland route improvements in parallel.

Will the enhanced inland routes be suitable for bus services?

The planned improvements to the inland routes are intended to improve access and resilience for a range of road users, including providing additional opportunities for vehicles to pass safely on sections of the network where the roads are currently constrained.

However, the works are not intended to upgrade the inland routes to the same standard as the A379, and their suitability for regular bus services will depend on factors such as vehicle size, route geometry, widths, passing opportunities and the operational requirements of individual bus operator

DCC continues to work closely with service providers to ensure effective and efficient bus services are maintained.

Other issues

There seems to be lots of organisations involved in the Slapton Line. Why is this complexity necessary and who is responsible for what?

The Slapton Line Partnership (SLP) was formed in 2001 in response to the first closure of the road caused by coastal erosion. It brought together organisations with responsibilities or interests in managing the coastline, highway network, local communities, and environment.

Different organisations have different statutory responsibilities. However, no single organisation has all of the responsibilities, powers or funding necessary to address the range of challenges facing the Slapton Line. The key statutory responsibilities are summarised below:

- **Environment Agency;** wide-ranging role including a Strategic Overview for all flooding and coastal change management in England; a statutory duty under the Flood and Water Management Act 2010 to develop a National Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Strategy for England; has permissive Powers, but not a Duty, to deliver flood defence works including the maintenance of flood defences at Torcross.
- **Devon County Council:** Highways Authority and Lead Local Flood Authority
- **South Hams District Council:** Planning Authority and has as a duty under the Coast Protection Act 1949 to regulate coast protection works undertaken by other organisations and individuals.
- All owners and occupiers of Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) land are legally obliged to seek **Natural England's** prior consent for any operations listed in a SSSI notification that they may wish to undertake or permit others to undertake.

The Partnership's role is to help ensure that these individual responsibilities and projects are considered collectively. Each organisation remains responsible and accountable for decisions and projects that fall within its own statutory responsibilities, while working through the Partnership to develop a coordinated approach for the wider Slapton Line.

Who should people in the community contact about progress?

The Slapton Line Partnership website provides a forum for the organisations involved to coordinate their work, but individual projects remain the responsibility of the authority or organisation leading that particular area of work.

Where possible, updates on the overall programme and key projects will be shared through the Slapton Line Partnership and established community communication channels, so that residents have a clear and consistent source of information.



For questions about a specific project, these should be directed at the organisation responsible for delivering that work. This helps ensure that enquiries are answered by those with the appropriate responsibility and most up-to-date information.