**Welcome to the first edition of the Embankment Road (Bembridge) Coastal Defence Scheme Newsletter.**

We aim to share all the latest news and information about the work currently proposed for the coastal defences along Embankment Road here and on our dedicated website.

**Why is work needed?**

The coastal defences along Embankment Road are ageing, with some sections reaching the end of their useful life. If nothing is done to restore the defences, they will be at increased risk of failure.

This would lead to flooding of the low-lying land behind impacting properties, infrastructure, and the important wetland habitats at RSPB Brading Marshes nature reserve.

**What work has been done so far?**

During May this year we carried out surveys to check for existing utility cables and pipes that are used for residents and businesses so we know their location and can safely avoid and protect them from damage during future work. We understand that any disruption to roads and footpaths can be difficult to live with, and we would like to offer our thanks to the local community for your cooperation during this time.

**Who is the Isle of Wight Coastal Defence team?**

We are a partnership of organisations and specialists who are working together to deliver improvements to the coastal defences around the island. We consist of the the Environment Agency, The Isle of Wight Council, and specialist engineering companies JBA Consulting and VolkerStevin. The area along Embankment Road has been identified as a priority area for us to work on, and together we will be carrying out investigative works and repairs to the coastal defences.

**What work is next?**

To help us assess the viable options for repairing the existing coastal defences along Embankment Road, we need to deepen our understanding of the ground conditions including monitoring groundwater. To do this, we will need to drill boreholes at various points along Embankment Road using specialist equipment to retrieve a core which is sent to the laboratory for analysis. You can see the proposed areas for the boreholes below:

**When will the investigations take place?**

Equipment and welfare cabins will be transported to the site compound in late August 2023. Work will begin in early September 2023 and is expected to be completed by the end of September 2023. Working hours will be restricted to 7am-5pm Monday to Friday where possible.

**What equipment will be used?**

It is expected that a drilling rig suitable for forming boreholes in soil and rock will be used. Barriers will be erected around each exploratory location so that the work can be completed safely. These barriers are expected to be in place for between 1 and 3 days as we progress along Embankment Road.

**Will there be road closures?**

There will be two-way temporary traffic lights to allow space for the drilling rigs and safe working space for the site team as well as some footpath closures for which diversions will be put in place.

**What measures are in place to protect the environment during the work?**

Reducing the impact of the works on surrounding wildlife and habitats is a priority for the Coastal Defense Scheme. Brading Marshes and St. Helen's marshes form a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and includes a range of coastal and inland habitats that we will be closely checking with our partners and specialists.

**Wintering Birds Survey**

The Wintering Bird Survey 2022/23 survey found that Bembridge Harbour, Bembridge Lagoons & RSPB Brading Marshes all play a vital role to birds by offering both key feeding and roosting sites. **Bembridge Harbour** is an important foraging resource for species such as Dunlin, Redshank, Black-tailed Godwit and Greenshank which feed on the mudflats exposed at low tide and features such as jetties within the harbour supply important roost sites for species such as Ringed Plover, Dunlin and Oystercatcher. **Bembridge Lagoons** support several species of wintering duck such as Pochard and Shoveler which were recorded nowhere else within the survey area whilst **Brading Marshes** acts as an important foraging and roosting resource for species such as Dark-bellied Brent Goose, Curlew and Lapwing over the high tide period.

Going forward, the recommendations from the wintering bird surveys in 2022/23 will be used to inform our approach to works to ensure the delicate ecosystem is not negatively affected by any proposed works along the coastal defences.

**Further Information**

If you would like any further information on the work and why it is needed or have any concerns about the proposed work, please contact us by phone 03708 506 506 or email IOW\_FDschemes@environment-agency.gov.uk.

You can also sign up to our mailing list to keep up to date on the projects and receive future copies of our newsletter by emailing IOW\_FDschemes@environment-agency.gov.uk