

Draft Isle of Wight Landslides & Coastal Loss Forum

Note of Forum & Action and Decision Logs

Date: 11 June 2026

Chair: Natasha Dix

Note of meeting:

Introductions and Housekeeping

The meeting commenced following initial ICT delays which affected the hybrid setup. A full round of introductions was undertaken, confirming attendance from Isle of Wight Council, Environment Agency, Southern Water, Island Roads, technical advisors and community representatives. The hybrid format was confirmed as operational once resolved, and it was agreed that the session would be recorded and transcribed, with no objections raised.

Governance

The forum continued to operate under the agreed governance approach, with the use of an Action and Decision Log in place of full minutes. The Chair noted that the structure of meetings and the quality of agenda management had improved since the previous forum, with clearer sequencing and better-defined contributions supporting more effective discussion.

Review of Action and Decision Log

Progress against the March 2026 actions was reviewed in detail. Improvements to agenda management were confirmed as embedded and effective, while the membership list update had progressed but remained paused pending GDPR consent from attendees. Definitions relating to dewatering and aquifers had been developed and were presented later in the meeting, marking substantive progress against a key dependency. Notable advancement was also reported in securing funding for the St Lawrence boreholes and in progressing coastal adaptation work to the bid development stage. Some items remained outstanding, including the circulation of Bonchurch drainage reports and the publication of public-facing materials for Leeson Road monitoring, both of which were acknowledged with actions to address.

Adaptive Pathways to Climate Change

An overview of adaptive approaches to climate change was provided, focusing on the need for flexible, long-term planning in response to uncertainty. The concept of trigger-based interventions was introduced, particularly in relation to infrastructure such as roads and access routes that may need to be realigned over time. The approach was supported as appropriate for managing both coastal and landslide risks on the Island.

Coastal Adaptation Transition Bids

Updates were provided on the development of coastal adaptation transition bids, which are being prepared for submission by the end of June 2026. The bids focus on key areas including the Military Road corridor, parts of the eastern coast, and sites such as Fort Victoria. It was clarified that the available funding supports feasibility and planning work rather than capital delivery, and that the purpose of the bids is to establish evidence and options for future interventions. Draft submissions are to be circulated to forum members prior to submission to allow for comment and input. The work was noted as a key opportunity to align highways, regeneration and community planning priorities.

Planning for the Future – Adaptation Plans

The forum was updated on progress in developing longer-term adaptation plans for areas affected by landslide and coastal change. This work builds on the direction set by the ECP Committee and is being undertaken in collaboration with communities. The plans are intended to integrate infrastructure considerations, community resilience and future land-use decisions into a coherent long-term strategy.

Managing Water on the Undercliff

Southern Water provided a detailed update on the management and monitoring of the drainage network within the Undercliff. It was explained that an extensive network of sewer level monitors is in place, using machine learning to detect anomalies and support proactive maintenance. This is supplemented by regular CCTV surveys to assess network condition. While the system is generally well monitored, known vulnerabilities remain in specific locations such as the Zigzag Road area, which are identified for future investment. It was noted that major rehabilitation works are constrained by funding cycles, with significant investment unlikely before the 2030–2035 period. The discussion also highlighted that many properties in parts of the Undercliff are not connected to mains sewer systems, and that the provision of new infrastructure would typically require developer-led or Section 106 processes. The potential for more coordinated, community-level approaches to this issue was identified for further exploration.

Island-Wide Landslides

The forum acknowledged the widespread nature of landslide risk across the Undercliff, while recognising that the degree of risk varies by location. It was emphasised that prioritisation must be based on evidence of active instability and risk to life and property, and that decision making should continue to be grounded in technical assessment and monitoring data.

Coastal Team Update – Castlehaven

An update was provided on the management of Castlehaven, with assurance that monitoring and maintenance arrangements remain in place. The work continues to be integrated within the broader coastal management programme, ensuring alignment with other schemes and priorities.

Emerging Research – Geomorphological Mapping

Jacobs outlined ongoing work to improve geomorphological mapping across Bonchurch and St Lawrence. This research is aimed at enhancing understanding of landslide mechanisms and ground conditions and will inform planning policy, risk mapping and future intervention design. The outputs are expected to strengthen the evidence base for both local decision making and funding bids.

Definitions of Dewatering

Draft definitions relating to dewatering, drainage and aquifer management were presented and formed a substantial part of the technical discussion. The session improved shared understanding across the forum and reinforced that dewatering is not a single solution but a range of potential approaches depending on local conditions. It was agreed that further refinement and formal circulation of the definitions would be required to support consistent use across agencies and stakeholders.

Grants and Funding

An update was provided on funding activity, including the successful award of £100,000 from the Regional Flood and Coastal Committee for ground investigation works at St Lawrence. This funding will support the installation of two boreholes and associated groundwater monitoring to improve understanding of slope stability and inform future interventions. It was recognised that this represents an initial phase of evidence gathering rather than a full solution. Wider funding opportunities continue to be explored, including national programmes and partnership funding routes, although the gap between available funding and the scale of required investment was acknowledged.

Save the South Wight Statement

A statement was received from the community representative group, highlighting concerns regarding the urgency of intervention and the scope and pace of current activity. The Chair confirmed that the approach being taken reflects both the constraints of available funding and the need to proceed in a phased, evidence-led manner. It was reiterated that risks across the wider Undercliff are recognised, but that prioritisation must focus on areas of active failure and immediate impact.

Coastal Loss

Updates from the Environment Agency confirmed that coastal schemes are progressing through design and development stages, with integration across agencies continuing. The forward coastal defence capital programme for 2026/27 was outlined, noting that prioritisation is determined by national funding criteria and assessed levels of risk to property and infrastructure. This reinforces the need for strong evidence to support future bids.

Bonchurch Surface Water Issues

The forum discussed ongoing surface water management issues in Bonchurch, recognising that localised drainage constraints continue to contribute to flood risk and wider instability. It was noted that sections of the local highway network and surrounding areas do not benefit from comprehensive or consistently performing drainage infrastructure, with some properties and land not connected to formal systems.

Previous commitments to circulate drainage and CCTV survey information were acknowledged as incomplete, with agreement that these will be reissued to support a clearer shared understanding of the current network condition. The importance of a coordinated approach between Island Roads, the Council and Southern Water was reinforced, particularly in identifying defects, maintaining existing assets and exploring options for improvement within current funding and statutory constraints.

The forum also recognised that surface water management in Bonchurch cannot be addressed through a single intervention and will require a combination of maintenance, targeted improvements and longer-term planning. This aligns with the wider approach being taken across the Undercliff, where evidence gathering and phased development of solutions are required to support future investment and reduce risk over time.

1. Previous Actions – Updates from 5 March 2026

Item	Original Action	Update (June 2026)	Status
Governance & Agenda	Agenda items 2 weeks prior; improved agenda structure	Achieved; agenda quality improved	✅ Complete
Agenda Guidance	Guidance on agenda items vs comments	Implemented and working effectively	✅ Complete
Membership List	Update and circulate full membership	Not completed due to GDPR consent requirement	🔄 Outstanding
Definitions (Dewatering, Drainage, Aquifers)	Establish definitions group; produce primer; return in June	Definitions were presented and discussed as a substantive agenda item. Shared understanding improved; further refinement and circulation of materials required to finalise agreed terminology.	✅ Partially complete (ongoing refinement)
Dewatering Roadmap (Cllr Blake)	Draft roadmap	Work in progress; dependent on definitions	🔄 Ongoing
Bonchurch Drainage Reports	Gather and Circulate evidence pack	Report by RF has been shared, Highways team to confirm availability of which reports that are relevant and shareable to support the future understanding of the area.	⚠️ Not completed

Funding for Dewatering	Continue lobbying and funding exploration	Ongoing; additional bids submitted and planned	 Ongoing
Leeson Road Monitoring	Publish FAQs and traffic light system	Still in development; technical feasibility issues	 Ongoing
Emergency Response Plan	Publish ERP with public explanation	Near completion; due shortly	 Near complete
St Lawrence Borehole Bid	Provide methodology and update	£100k bid secured; approach confirmed	 Complete (next phase underway)
EA Borehole Integration	Explore efficiencies	Ongoing; update later in meeting	 Ongoing
Homeowner Leaflet	Update and publish	Final amendments underway; publication imminent	 Near complete
Southern Water Mapping	Provide accessible mapping	Work in progress; GDPR and system transition issues	 Ongoing
Planning / Ditches Issue	Move to flood risk group	Transferred to working group	 Complete
EA Coastal Schemes	Hold joint design review	Completed; updates provided separately	 Complete
Coastal Adaptation Plans	Bring to June meeting	Now main agenda item	 Complete

2. New Actions Arising (June 2026)

Action	Owner	Deadline
Seek GDPR consent from members and circulate updated membership list	Natasha / Lily	Before next forum
Re-circulate Bonchurch drainage/CCTV reports to members	IWC / Highways	Immediate
Finalise and publish homeowner advice leaflet	LLFA / Comms	Immediate (June)
Circulate Coastal Adaptation bid drafts for comment	Lily / IWC	Before 30 June 2026
Submit Coastal Adaptation Transition bids (Military Road, East Cowes, Fort Victoria)	IWC	30 June 2026
Develop adaptive management approach (trigger points for road rollback / signage strategy)	Lily / Highways / Island Roads	Next forum
Duncan (Southern Water) to provide Section 106 process and case studies for sewer	Southern Water	Next forum
Members to confirm if they do not consent to sharing	All members	Immediate
Continue development of shared technical definitions (dewatering, aquifers etc.) and circulate	Definitions Group	Next forum

3. Decisions Made

Topic	Decision
Governance	Continued use of Action & Decision Log confirmed in practice
Meeting transparency	Recording and transcription agreed (no objections)
St Lawrence approach	Proceed with borehole investigation despite objections
Funding strategy	Continue multi-source funding and feasibility-first approach
Coastal Adaptation	Prioritise feasibility/adaptation planning bids over capital works
Undercliff investment	Acknowledged broader need, but phased, location-based approach required
Monitoring approach	Maintain and expand monitoring (boreholes, sewer monitoring, highways)
Membership sharing	Subject to GDPR consent rather than automatic circulation

4. Proposals Agreed

Proposal	Outcome
St Lawrence Ground Investigation (£100k, 2 boreholes, monitoring)	SECURED and progressing
Coastal Adaptation Transition Bids (3 areas)	DEVELOPMENT PROGRESSING will circulate for comment
Adaptive management approach (e.g roll back and trigger-based road interventions)	Concept supported
Section 106 exploration for mains drainage (Undercliff communities)	AGREED to explore in principle (further work required)
Joined-up working with EA, Southern Water, Island Roads	CONFIRMED

5. Proposals Not Agreed / Not Supported at this time

Theme	Proposal	Reason Not Supported
Scale of Intervention	Immediate implementation of large-scale Undercliff drainage/dewatering schemes	Not feasible due to absence of funding, lack of supporting evidence base, and requirement for phased investigation-led approach

	Expansion to wider Undercliff borehole or intervention programme at this stage	Prior capital bids not approved; current funding limited to targeted investigation
Approach to St Lawrence Investigations	Do not proceed with St Lawrence borehole investigations	Not supported; technical advice confirmed investigations are necessary to understand risk and support future solutions
	Reject use of £100k funding due to perceived limited scope	Not supported; funding considered appropriate for initial ground investigation phase
Prioritisation of Locations	Re-prioritise funded work away from St Lawrence to other Undercliff locations	Not supported; St Lawrence remains priority due to active instability and recent loss of residential properties
Timing and Sequencing	Delay action until full funding for comprehensive solution is secured	Not supported; agreed approach is phased (investigation → modelling → funding → delivery) to manage active risk and enable future bids
Infrastructure and Drainage Solutions	Immediate delivery of new sewer or drainage infrastructure across unserved areas	Not supported; outside current statutory duties and funding availability; would require alternative delivery routes (e.g. Section 106)
	Implementation of alternative sewer routing solutions as immediate response	Not supported at this stage; options noted but not currently funded or required for immediate delivery
Coastal and Strategic Funding Expectations	Use current coastal adaptation or EA funding to deliver infrastructure works	Not supported; funding streams limited to feasibility or are legally constrained to specific purposes
	Deliver full mitigation of coastal infrastructure risks (e.g. Military Road) through current bids	Not possible; current funding supports planning and feasibility only, not capital delivery

6. Technical Clarifications and Agreed Positions

To ensure a consistent and evidence-based understanding across the forum, the following clarifications reflect the agreed technical position following discussion.

Topic	Clarification
Purpose of Boreholes (St Lawrence)	It was confirmed that ground investigation boreholes will provide essential data on shear surfaces, groundwater behaviour, and slope stability required for risk modelling and future design and community protection.
Value of Initial Funding (£100k)	The forum noted that while funding is insufficient for full intervention, it is appropriate and necessary for phased investigation and evidence gathering.
Approach to Landslide Mitigation	It was reaffirmed that a phased approach (investigation → modelling → funding → delivery) is required, and that large-scale solutions cannot proceed without baseline data.

Funding Constraints	The forum confirmed there is currently no statutory funding route for Undercliff-wide dewatering or drainage schemes; funding must be secured through staged bids and evidence-based proposals.
Prioritisation of Locations	It was confirmed that St Lawrence remains a priority due to recent active failure and direct loss of residential properties, while recognising risk exists across the wider Undercliff.
Definition of Dewatering	The forum acknowledged that “dewatering” is a complex, location-specific intervention and not a single solution; further definition work is ongoing.
Sewer and Drainage Responsibility	It was clarified that provision of new sewer infrastructure is not a statutory duty of water companies in unserved areas and may require community-led or Section 106 processes.
Coastal Adaptation Funding	It was confirmed that current coastal adaptation funding supports feasibility and planning only, not delivery of major infrastructure works.