

Exmouth Beach Management Plan Update

Public Consultation Feedback Summary Report

09 October 2025

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1. Executive Summary

The project is a joint initiative by East Devon District Council and South West Flood and Coastal. The public consultation, held between 18th November 2024 and 10th February 2025 through in-person events and an online questionnaire, gathered diverse opinions on the proposed options for managing Exmouth Beach.

Key findings show that the Local Aspirational Leading Option (Beach Nourishment with Groynes and Setback Floodwall) is the most favoured, with 76% of respondents in support. The National Economic Leading Option (Seawall Encasement with Setback Floodwall) received mixed feedback—36% support versus 39% opposition—with concerns raised around beach sand loss, funding, and long-term effectiveness. The Backup Option (Do Minimum – reactive patch repairs) was the least popular, with 75% opposing it.

It is important to note that delivery of any option is subject to funding. The Local Aspirational Option would be the most expensive and could only be pursued if funding is secured. In

contrast, the Backup Option is the lowest cost and is focused on maintenance and emergency works.

2. Survey Goals and Methodology

The objectives of the consultation were:

- To obtain public feedback on the proposed leading options for the Exmouth Beach Management Plan.
- To understand public perceptions on the effectiveness, aesthetics, cost, and long-term viability of each option.

The consultation particularly sought to obtain views from the following target audiences:

- Local residents
- Stakeholders in tourism and local economy
- Interested community members.

3. Survey Approach

The consultation combined in-person events and an online questionnaire.

Distribution was carried out via multiple channels including email, social media, and third-party sites.

4. Data Analysis

4.1 National Economic Leading Option

(Seawall Encasement with Setback Floodwall)

The public feedback relating to this option is mixed as shown in Figure 1 below.

Approximately 36% of the questionnaire respondents either agreed or strongly agreed with this option, whereas 39% either disagreed or strongly disagreed. Approximately 25% of respondents neither agreed nor disagreed.

In the feedback there is often contrasting views between respondents. For example, some say the option would be unsightly, whereas others say it is the most visually acceptable option.

The main themes in the comments are:

- **Loss of the beach:** there appears to be concern over whether this option would protect the levels of sand on the beach and whether this may impact the economic and flood defence benefits provided by it. Some of the responses suggested adding the groynes (from the Local Aspirational Leading Option) to help save beach levels.
- **Funding concerns:** there are general concerns over costs and funding.
- **Longevity:** there are concerns that this is a short-term option, not a long-term solution. Others, however, see this as an economical and long-lasting option.
- **Potential to combine with the Local Aspirational Leading Option:** several respondents suggested that this option could work well in combination with the groynes mentioned in the Local Aspirational Leading Option.

There is mention of the recent works at Southsea, Hampshire, where there is a setback floodwall with walkway that the respondents think works well and might be something to look at should this option be taken forward.

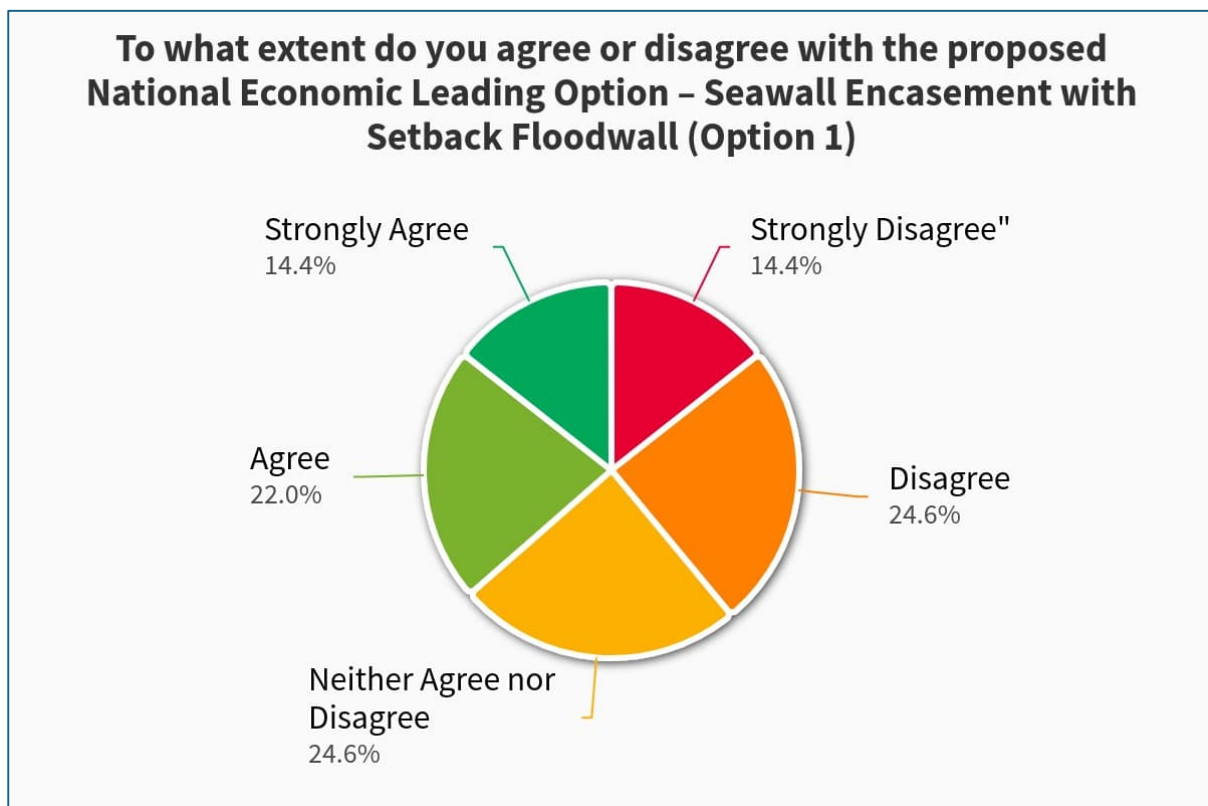


Figure 1: Public opinions on the National Economic Leading Option



(Beach Nourishment with Groynes and Setback Floodwall)

The public feedback relating to this option is generally positive as shown in Figure 2 below. Approximately 76% of the questionnaire respondents either agreed or strongly agreed with this option, whereas only 10% either disagreed or strongly disagreed. Approximately 15% of respondents neither agreed nor disagreed.

The main themes in the comments are:

- **Protecting the beach:** many of the comments relate to the ways in which this option may help to protect the beach by aiming to maintain sand levels through trapping the movement of sand. In turn, many respondents felt that this could benefit the local economy, tourism industry, house prices and the local community in general.
- **Preferred materials:** where mentioned, the preferred material appears to be timber, which was seen by the respondents as lower cost and safer (in terms of children climbing over rocks vs over timber groynes).
- **Access along the beach:** there are concerns that access would be impaired, particularly for the RNLI quad bike, dog walkers, kitesurfers, and those with mobility impairments.
- **Previous models of the area:** some respondents are concerned over how previous numerical models of the area have performed, and whether or not having groynes along the beach at Exmouth is going to be beneficial or detrimental to the Exe Estuary / Dawlish Warren / Exmouth beach as a whole. It is important to view the area holistically, especially considering the complicated coastal processes which are known to exist.
- **Reinstatement of sand dunes:** this was suggested by several respondents, and comments were received in support of losing the road and seawall and letting nature reclaim ground back to the Maer.
- **Cost:** this option is viewed by some as being expensive.
- **Potential to combine with the National Economic Leading Option:** several respondents suggested that this option could work well in combination with the National Economic Leading Option.

Overall, as can be seen in Figure 2, opinions are overwhelmingly in favour of this option.

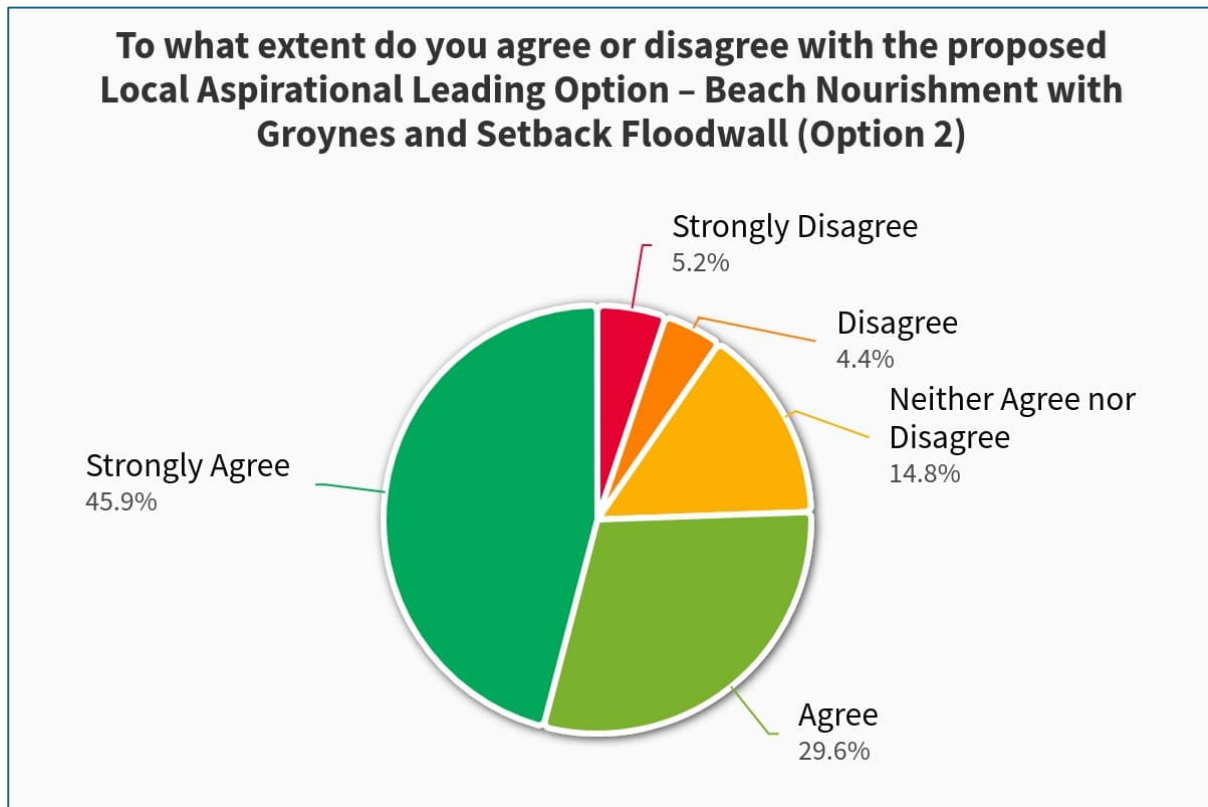


Figure 2: Public opinions on the Local Aspirational Leading Option

4.3 Backup Option

(Do Minimum – reactive patch repairs)

The public feedback relating to this option are generally negative as shown in Figure 3 below. Approximately 75% of the questionnaire respondents either disagreed or strongly disagreed with the option whereas only 13% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed. A further 13% of respondents neither agreed nor disagreed with the option.

The main themes in the comments are:

- Unacceptability of this option:** there are some strong comments on this option that are of the opinion that this approach may in practice amount to doing very little to manage the risks facing the frontage and how this shouldn't be an option. Respondents also had concerns about how it does not protect the beach, residents, the local community or tourism. Some comments predicted that this approach may bring about the end of Exmouth as a beach resort.

- **Short term solution:** this option is generally seen as a short-term solution which will only lead to more expense in the long term.
- **Financial:** comments relating to the financial aspects of this option ranged from the lack of funding from central Government and concern over the potential for EDDC having to find the funds. In addition, the option is seen as a waste of money in the long term by some.
- **Combine with other options:** several comments suggest combining the options together – for example, the gradual introduction of the National Economic option as funds are available, coupled with the introduction of the groynes for the Local Aspirational option, and then the patch repairs as an ongoing addition to these.
- **Natural solutions:** the reintroduction of the sand dunes is mentioned, and there are suggestions that nature should be allowed to reclaim The Maer.

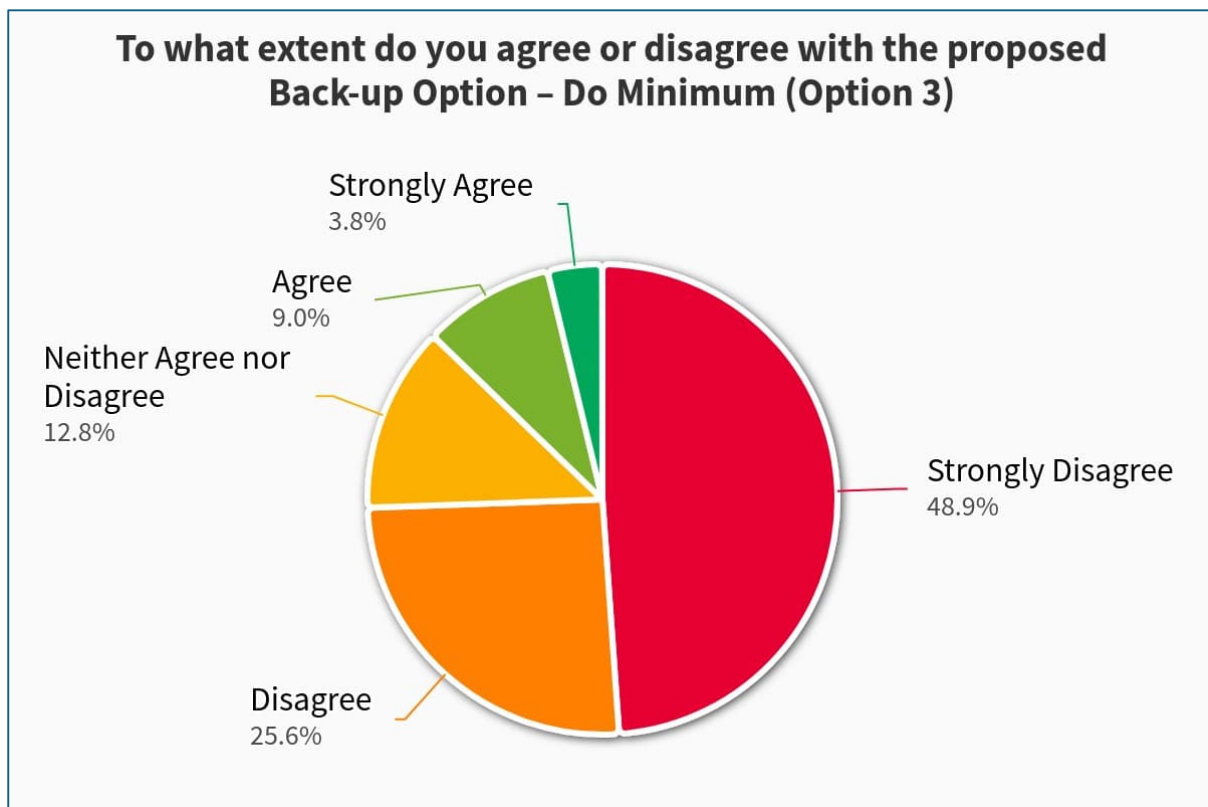


Figure 3: Public opinions on the Backup Option

5. Key Findings

- The Local Aspirational Option receives the most public support and is considered beneficial for the beach, economy, and community.
- The National Economic Option has mixed support, with specific concerns about aesthetics, longevity, and cost.
- The Backup Option is largely unpopular, viewed as inadequate and short-term.
- Some feedback suggested blending features from different options, though this was only raised by a small number of respondents.
- The public also supported the inclusion of natural defences, particularly sand dunes, which will be explored further as part of future design work.

6. Summary and Next Steps

Based on the consultation, the Local Aspirational Option is the most publicly supported, with clear majority preference. This support reflects its potential to stabilise the beach while offering high levels of flood and erosion protection. However, it is also the most expensive option and can only be delivered if sufficient funding is secured.

The National Economic Option, while less popular, remains the leading option from a national funding and economic standpoint. Some concerns were raised that will be considered as part of the next stage.

The Backup Option, although unpopular, will continue to be retained as a fallback due to its lower cost and higher likelihood of delivery through existing maintenance budgets or emergency work.

While the option structure remains the same, the feedback received will be considered as part of the development of the Outline Business Case (OBC) which will need to be undertaken in order to further develop the detailed scheme design, costings and environmental assessments. Based on the feedback, the principles to guide the OBC are to include:

- **Prioritising the Local Aspirational Option**, subject to funding availability. Feedback on improving beach access for people and vehicles and environmental impact – including considering sediment system impacts across Exmouth, the Estuary, and Dawlish Warren – will be addressed in the OBC.

- **Continue development of the National Economic Option** in parallel as the more economically viable option in case funding for the local aspirational option is not secured. Consider public suggestions such as groyne inclusion, and ensure clearer communication about cost and long-term effectiveness, as part of the OBC.
- **Retain the Backup Option** as a low-cost, emergency or maintenance-led approach if funding is not secured for more ambitious solutions. This will in effect be the Do Minimum option considered in the OBC.
- **Use feedback to inform hybrid design features**, where appropriate, during development of the OBC.
- **Revisit the assessment of natural solutions** like sand dune reinstatement undertaken as part of the 2025 BMP Update if there are proposals to move the local road to create the space for such features.
- **Further engagement and consultation.** During the OBC process, EDDC will engage further and, where required, conduct further formal consultation with statutory consultees and the public.

7. Additional Information

Copies of the survey questionnaire and excerpts from open-ended responses are available upon request.

Figures referenced in the report (Figures 1, 2, and 3) illustrate public opinions on each option.

Additional commentary and case study references (e.g., the setback floodwall with walkway at Southsea, Hampshire) are included as supporting evidence.