



The Government of Sark
DOUZAINE
A COMMITTEE OF CHIEF PLEAS
Committee Office, Chasse Marette, Sark, GY10 1SE
Tel: (01481) 832118 | E-mail: douzaine247@sarkgov.co.uk

Statement on La Coupée inspection and stabilisation work

Conseiller Guille on behalf of the Douzaine and Policy & Finance Committee

The immediate stabilisation work in the areas of the recent rock fall and partial wall collapse at the south western end of La Coupée was completed on Tuesday 21st January several days ahead of schedule by the team of engineers and rope access specialists from Geomarine Guernsey and Jersey. We are immensely appreciative of their rapid mobilisation and exceptional hard work over the last couple of weeks and in the last few days.

Many thanks must also be extended to Kevin and Simon Adams from the Sark Fire and Rescue Service for assisting the Geomarine team onsite and providing floodlighting into the early hours of Tuesday morning and until late last night. We are also greatly appreciative for the assistance of Isle of Sark Shipping in arranging a cargo boat charter at short notice, the harbour staff, crane driver and carters for assisting with this and for Ray Lowe and his crew in arranging charters for Geomarine workers and media.

To give a bit of background to the repair work that has been carried out. Chief Pleas first arranged for a survey of La Coupée and other cliff areas in Autumn 2023 with a separate company. The site visit took place, but despite much chasing a report was never received. In August 2024 and again in November 2024 visits were arranged to Sark by Geomarine Guernsey and Jersey engineers to inspect the harbours and surrounding cliffs and also La Coupée. These inspections were carried out by engineers using drones to video the cliff faces. A report was received in December 2024 on La Coupée which recommended that physical inspections should be undertaken by rope access teams in order to take a closer look at certain areas.

These inspections were then booked in for the next available time slot of the 10th of February.

On the 13th of January we were notified of the rock fall and partial wall collapse on the south western end of La Coupée. Geomarine were contacted immediately and arrangements were made for a Geotechnical engineer from Jersey to visit Sark on the 16th of January. At the same time Geomarine Guernsey began to mobilise resources to effect remedial work. Equipment and materials were sourced in Guernsey and also shipped in from Jersey and the UK. This work began on Monday this week and was completed on Tuesday evening, several days ahead of schedule due to the impending bad weather predicted from storm Éowyn. Today the rope access team have been clearing vegetation on further parts of La Coupée's Western side that require physical inspection, before the poor weather sets in tomorrow. A smaller rope access team will be returning at the next convenient opportunity and good weather window to inspect these areas and to also assess drainage arrangements on both sides of the causeway. A plan for further remedial works will then be made.

Not only are we grateful to Geomarine for their previous inspection work and subsequent rapid deployment after the recent rockfall but we have also appreciated their open and fair approach to quoting and charging for this work. In respect of the emergency work carried out this week, the final bill is not yet in, but works have been carried out on an hourly basis with a clearly defined table of hourly labour rates and machinery hire at market rates that can be checked against industry norms. These are all standard rates with no emergency uplift and are the same rates used for competitively tendered work. Chief Pleas will also be provided with a full audit trail of material costs. Our only other option for such work would likely have been to request a company to attend from the UK which would have added another layer of logistical challenges and delays. We are therefore grateful for Geomarine's fair approach to pricing in this urgent situation.

From 25th January the road will be reopened to general traffic. A delay of a few days is required to allow the concrete to reach adequate strength before traffic loads are applied. From the 25th onwards there will likely remain a restriction to tractors with lightly loaded trailers only, until further inspection and any additional work is completed. A stability assessment is being carried out this week and further advice

will be published before Saturday. Weekly inspections will be undertaken by Chief Pleas of La Coupée until the rest of the western side has been physically inspected and the engineers are satisfied that all necessary repair work has been completed.

Looking towards the future we are considering options for regular inspection of the cliff faces either side of La Coupée. One option is to continue with regular visual inspections and yearly drone video surveys. Another option would be to conduct yearly LiDAR (Light Detection And Ranging) surveys from which a 3D computer model of the cliff faces can be generated in order to track the progression of the natural erosion.

Once again, we would like to thank all involved in completing this project in such short order. This has been a great example of the how teams and individuals from across the Channel Islands can come together to support each other when needed. It has also shown how a small jurisdiction like Sark can implement decisions rapidly and efficiently when appropriate. Further updates will be provided as inspection work progresses.

Conseiller John Guille

Chairman, Policy and Finance Committee