

Undercurrents

International sport confusion

The decision by the International Paralympics Committee to lift the ban on Russian and Belarus competitors from competing in the Winter Paralympics under their own flags rather than under a neutral flag has far wider implications than just other nations boycotting the opening ceremony in protest. The ban was imposed in 2022 not because of Russia's invasion of Ukraine but because Paralympic sport was being used to promote the invasion, evidence of which has now ceased.

The issue has been further confused because the international ruling bodies of participating sports have not lifted their bans. This was the situation for the International Ski & Snowboard Federation, who were over ruled by the Court of Arbitration of Sport. The case has been put that those in sport should be able to compete regardless of the behaviour of their politicians and military. On the other hand, it was likely to result in an unpleasant atmosphere in the Paralympic Village. A Ukrainian competitor was banned for wearing a helmet bearing pictures of Ukrainian competitors killed by the Russians, representative of over 650 Ukrainian competitors and sports officials killed by the Russians and over 800 of their sports facilities damaged, hardly likely to result in fair competition.

Where does this leave us for the 2028 Los Angeles Olympic Games? Are the Americans at risk of being banned from their own event, following their unprovoked attack on Iran, an unprecedented situation? Would it be possible for them to host an Olympic Games from which they were barred or would the venue need to be moved elsewhere? By allowing British airbases to be used, do we risk being placed in a similar situation to Belarus? Could de-escalation begin with regime change in Iran or elsewhere or is escalation more likely? China wants Taiwan but has been discouraged from taking it by the past threat of the USA. Unlike the USA, China does not have a deleted weapons stockpile. Even travelling to international sporting events could get even more difficult before it gets better.

Coastal erosion

When Devonport dockyard was being extended a source of aggregate was needed and it was decided to take it from off Beesands and Hallsands in Start Bay. Dredging started in 1897 and 650,000t was removed before protests by the local fishermen at the effects on the



The remains of Hallsands.

seabed managed to stop the work but the damage had already been done. Hallsands, built on a raised beach, began to be affected immediately but a combination of high spring tides and an easterly storm in January 1917 destroyed 29 of the 30 houses in the village, just a few pieces of wall remaining at the foot of the cliffs. The whole of the bay suffers a heavy dump with easterly winds.

The A379 was built in 1856 and has been protected in part by low profile sheet piling defences since 1918. In the winter of 2001 the sea broke through the Slapton Line, which carries the road, and locals fought for the road to be adequately protected, fearing that the council approach of soft defences would result in the closure of the vital road. It suffered major damage in 2018 and again in February this year, also with significant damage to buildings in Torcross. The seawall in Torcross was built in 1980 after previous defences were damaged. Sea defences in front of properties in Torcross have moved recently but the EA say they are sound.

Beesands is named from bay sands. The Skerries Bank offshore provides protection with the sea breaking on it, especially at the southwest end in bad weather. There is an inside passage but there can be broken water all the way to the coast as far as Tinsey Head, between Beesands and Hallsands, with strong easterly winds.

Caroline Voaden (S Devon, LD) has presented a 40,000 signature petition to the Government and has led an Adjournment Debate on the subject. The Government have offered sympathy.

Jenny Riddell-Carpenter (Suffolk Coastal, Lab) has presented a Select Committee statement, *Erosion of trust: the impact of coastal erosion on communities*, on behalf of the EFRA Committee, her constituency including Thorpeness where 11 houses have been lost to the sea this year. As well as losing their homes, residents have each had to pay up to £50,000 to demolish what was left.

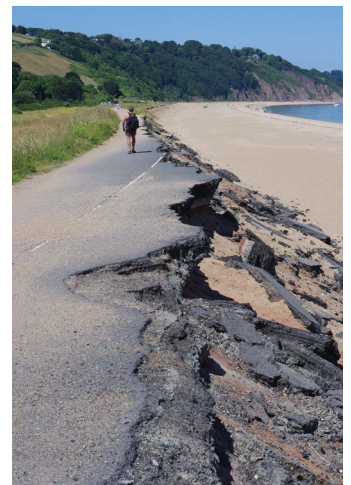
Happisburgh, Hemsby, the East Riding and the Isle of Wight are other locations facing serious coastal erosion.

Motor emissions

Munira Wilson (Twickenham, LD) has implied that boat owners on canals and rivers should be generating their own renewable energy power to reduce exhausts. While most canoes are paddled or sailed there are some fitted with motors and the occasional experimental canoe with solar panels, even a steam canoe or two. Defra are considering craft that do not carry AIS transponders rather than small fry at this time.

IDBF incorporated

The IDBF has been incorporated in Hong Kong, the traditional home of dragon boat racing, with 84% of delegates at an extraordinary congress in favour. This protects officials from financial liability in the event of bankruptcy, being sued or facing other such threats. Speeches



The A379 in 2018.