

Friends of Penzance Harbour

www.friendsofpzharbour.org

News Release

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DfT Decision: Statement by the Friends of Penzance Harbour

The Friends of Penzance Harbour was formed spontaneously in response to the publication of the Route Partnership's plan for Penzance Harbour in September 2009 (subsequently known as Option A). We were of the opinion that the scheme was ridiculously expensive, destructive and inappropriate. For two and a half years we have campaigned, along with many others and with the continued support of the majority of the people of Penzance, to prevent this scheme and replace it with something better.

The response from the Route Partnership and officers of Cornwall Council has been a disturbing lesson in power-politics. By rubbishing all alternative schemes, by-passing local democratic bodies and public opinion, insulting all those who disagreed with them, trying to frighten the local population with threats to remove the ferry service to Falmouth, re-running planning meetings until they came up with the required decisions, and many other dubious means, they have painted themselves into a corner. They maintained until the end- as they told the Minister - that it was their scheme or nothing.

However they came up against a body they could neither bully nor bypass. The Department for Transport has characterised their scheme as poor value for money, the level of spending as unjustifiable, and has criticised the actions of the council in forcing this ultimatum. So Option A is dead and Cornwall Council's alternative is - nothing. So convinced were they that their tactics would win the day that no "Plan B" contingency has been prepared. In any democratic institution this was a gross neglect of the public interest for which they must be held accountable.

Fortunately, despite all official discouragement, other bodies have continued to seek a solution to the future of the ferry link which would be beneficial both to the Isles of Scilly and to the future regeneration of Penzance Harbour - to say nothing of the council-tax payers of Cornwall who were expected to underwrite the Council's bloated scheme with all its financial risks. It is from these considered and creative scenarios that the future of the link will be ensured.

The Route Partnership and the main actors from Cornwall Council have been utterly discredited by the Department for Transport's decision and a new consortium of interested parties must be convened without delay to carry these solutions forward. This time they should include all interested parties, representing those who best understand the issues involved. The Friends of Penzance Harbour will continue to encourage and support all efforts to produce a plan which ensures an economically viable and sustainable ferry service to the Isles of Scilly, preserves the integrity of Penzance's seafront and provides for regeneration and revival of Penzance Harbour.

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Notes for Editors

- 1) The Friends of Penzance Harbour is a community group set up to oppose Route Partnership and Cornwall Council plans to build passenger and freight terminals and a lorry park on the town's historic seafront. The group is at the same time promoting less destructive alternatives, of which the Penzance Business Network's proposal is the best developed.
- 2) For pictures of the development site and historic South Pier go to:
www.flickr.com/photos/friendsofpzharbour/sets/72157622685150544/
- 3) Polling has consistently shown that a substantial majority of residents are against the Council's scheme. For a breakdown of evidence of public opinion go to:
<http://www.friendsofpzharbour.org/pdfs/PublicOpinion.pdf>
- 4) For the latest news on the campaign and information about developments to-date go to:
www.friendsofpzharbour.org