

Friends of Penzance Harbour

www.friendsofpzharbour.org

News Release

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Misinformation, threats and false promises win the day

The Strategic Planning Committee, Cornwall Council and local supporters of Option A have been persuaded by a tissue of misleading information, threats, and false promises.

The Strategic Planning Committee made themselves look foolish, flip-flopping a decision made only twelve weeks earlier on exactly the same proposition with no additional information. They have committed themselves to approval of partial destruction of a Listed Building against the specific objection of English Heritage who are reputedly about to upgrade the South Pier to Grade 2*, and other bodies including the CPRE and the local Town Council. That's going to look very amateurish indeed when seen from across the Tamar.

Cornwall Council

A full exposure of the tactics Cornwall Council has employed to get its way will not be a pretty picture, though we know only too well how the arts of threat, promise, arm-twisting, bullying, and gerrymandering have been employed. Worst of all is their cynical refusal to enter into any meaningful negotiation with a local community who will have to bear the burden of their decisions, in absolute contempt of their own stated principles of localism. They also bear the blame for risking the scheme's overall funding by taking an extraordinary eight years to come up with their crude plan and then another eighteen months fighting Penzance's community to force it through. They may have waited too long. If the funding is lost in the next round of the democratic process they will be wholly and absolutely to blame.

Local supporters of option A

It's the saddest aspect of this fiasco that so many local people have been willing to delude themselves that this scheme held something of advantage to Penzance. If they had held their nerve and had Option A thrown out, then a scheme which did have some genuine regeneration would have to have been found, since a) the link to the Isle of Scilly has to be preserved, and b) it can only be run viably from Penzance.

A glance at the Option A plan shows a development which can be achieved in its entirety

without any knock-on benefits to the harbour or the town. It is a pure addition, and if it were built tomorrow the rest of the harbour area would look precisely as it does now. The vague promises of additional finances to follow will disappear in the mist and be forgotten as the project costs inevitably over-run. For a recent financial example the founding of Cornwall Council itself stares us in the face.

Instead the Option A supporters will experience the disappointment of two years of traffic gridlock, a development which blights the seafront, and a list of excuses - the financial situation, etc - which explains why nothing positive will happen to their harbour. They were offered threats and promises, and fell for both.

We are particularly disappointed with the actions of those local people who have spent the last three months whipping-up support for Option A. After the December vote we urged these people to get together with us, the Town Council, the Civic Society etc and together direct Cornwall Council towards a scheme with some benefits for Penzance.

Instead they decided to undermine and divide the town's previously united front, sowing bitterness in the process, and ultimately proving that a society divided against itself is powerless against an outside threat. Ironically the situation regarding the future of the harbour is, because of their actions, now more uncertain than it has ever been.

What next

The Strategic Planning Committee recommendation to approve the proposal will now go to the Secretary of State for final determination. No decision is expected before the election.

For more information contact:

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Notes for Editors

- 1) The Friends of Penzance Harbour is a community group set up to oppose plans to build passenger and freight terminals on the town's historic seafront, and promote less destructive alternatives that bring real long-term benefits to the town.
- 2) The Strategic Planning Committee voted 14:7 in favour of approving the application for listed building consent. The only Penzance councillor on the committee, Ruth Lewarne, voted against.
- 3) For the latest news on the campaign go to:
www.friendsofpzharbour.org
- 4) For pictures of the development site go to:
www.flickr.com/photos/friendsofpzharbour/sets/72157622685150544/