

# Friends of Penzance Harbour

[www.friendsofpzharbour.org](http://www.friendsofpzharbour.org)

## News Release

16<sup>th</sup> November 2009. For immediate release

### **Out of control Council circumvents normal planning procedures, makes mockery of local democracy**

The new unitary Cornwall Council has decided that elected local members will not be allowed to review the Council's own planning applications for a hugely controversial development on Battery Rocks beach in Penzance.

Officers at Cornwall Council have ignored the views of the chair and vice-chair of the West Area Planning Committee and for the first time have chosen to send planning applications directly to the Strategic Planning Committee. Previously applications were referred to Strategic from an Area Planning Committee. Members local to the Penzance area make up half the 12 members on the West Area Planning Committee but only two members from the Penzance area are on the 21 member Strategic Planning Committee.

The issues to do with a listed building and the sea wall are by no means strategic. They are to do with local arrangements for the Isles of Scilly Link, not with whether there should be such a project. The choice of how the local facilities in Penzance Harbour should be improved is a decision that should be taken locally.

The effect of the move is to disenfranchise the Council members representing those most directly affected by the scheme, and sidestep massive public opposition to the plans.

"This is just the most recent in a series of initiatives by Cornwall Council to circumvent normal planning procedures and controls and to remove elected local representatives and their constituents from the decision making process" said John Maggs, Spokesman for the Friends of Penzance Harbour. "First the consultation process ignored the clearly stated wishes of local people, then the Council decided that it didn't need to apply for planning permission for most of the works, and now it has decided that the planning consents that are required will not be scrutinised by local members. On top of this the Council says that the final decision about whether to build on Battery Rocks beach or go for alternatives will be taken by the Cabinet of the Council, where Penzance, one of the largest towns in the County, and its surrounding area has no representation!".

The decision comes just days after Penzance residents were presented with the findings of the Penzance Harbour South Pier "Historic Building Analysis", and told that the pier is one of the most important historic structures in Cornwall and that the parts of the pier that will be permanently buried by the development are the most sensitive historically. The author of the report, Nick Cahill, recommends that the pier's listing be upgraded to "at least Grade II\*", placing the pier amongst the top 8% of all historic structures in the UK.

"The pier is a hugely important and iconic part of the Cornish landscape as well as a key element in the identity of the town, and the first thing the new unitary authority wants to do

for Penzance is bury it in rubble and concrete!" said John Maggs. "And when residents protest at this local government-sponsored vandalism, the Council responds with a series of ad hoc procedural manoeuvres that wouldn't have looked out of place in Soviet Russia".

The Friends of Penzance Harbour are promoting a less destructive alternative approach to enhancing facilities for the ferry service to the Isles of Scilly that involves the re-use of redundant existing buildings and the creation of an out of town freight depot to remove heavy traffic from the historic seafront area of the town. This approach, which is widely supported among the public and local business community, will preserve valuable natural and heritage assets and help facilitate the regeneration of the harbour area.

"By pushing ahead with their ill-conceived and unpopular scheme and not properly progressing alternatives that the public would support Cornwall Council are placing the funding for the project in jeopardy and risking the failure of the whole scheme" said John Maggs.

**For more information contact John Maggs on 01736 332741, 07966 322379, [jmaggs@gn.apc.org](mailto:jmaggs@gn.apc.org)**

### **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. Its web site contains more information about the plans and local opposition to them: [www.friendsofpzharbour.org](http://www.friendsofpzharbour.org)
- 2) The Friends of Penzance Harbour have recently made a formal complaint to Cornwall Council in respect of planning procedures claiming maladministration leading to injustice. The complaint can be viewed at: [www.friendsofpzharbour.org/blog\\_more.php?b=54](http://www.friendsofpzharbour.org/blog_more.php?b=54).
- 3) The Friends of Penzance Harbour have also made a request to John Denham MP, the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, to "call in" all the proposals being made by Cornwall Council for major works at Penzance Harbour. The letter can be viewed at: [www.friendsofpzharbour.org/blog\\_more.php?b=58](http://www.friendsofpzharbour.org/blog_more.php?b=58)
- 4) For pictures of the development site go to: [www.flickr.com/photos/friendsofpzharbour/sets/72157622685150544/](http://www.flickr.com/photos/friendsofpzharbour/sets/72157622685150544/)
- 5) For pictures of a recent protest go to: [www.flickr.com/photos/friendsofpzharbour/sets/72157622810639288/](http://www.flickr.com/photos/friendsofpzharbour/sets/72157622810639288/)
- 6) For pictures illustrating the history of the South Pier go to: [www.flickr.com/photos/friendsofpzharbour/sets/72157622794934386/](http://www.flickr.com/photos/friendsofpzharbour/sets/72157622794934386/)
- 7) The Cornwall Council officer responsible for making the decision is Phil Mason, Head of Planning and Regeneration (01872 322611).
- 8) The Chair of the West Area Planning Committee is Cllr Bill Maddern (01736 364954; [william.maddern@cornwall.gov.uk](mailto:william.maddern@cornwall.gov.uk)).
- 9) The Historic Building Analysis was commissioned by Halcrow Group Ltd on behalf Cornwall Council and is part of the documentation accompanying the Cornwall Council request for listed building consent in respect of the South Pier. It can be viewed at: [www.friendsofpzharbour.org/pdfs/HistoricBuildingAnalysis.pdf](http://www.friendsofpzharbour.org/pdfs/HistoricBuildingAnalysis.pdf).