

PENZANCE TOWN COUNCIL

Encompassing Gulval, Heamoor, Mousehole, Newlyn & Penzance



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12 September 2012

Norman Baker MP
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State
Department for Transport
Great Minster House
33 Horseferry Road
London SW1P 4DR

Dear Mr Baker,

PENZANCE HARBOUR IMPROVEMENT SCHEME

Thank you for your letter of 7 August addressed to Councillor Jon Pender. In light of your letter we wrote on 30 August to Cornwall Council. We have now had a reply from them and attach a copy.

As you know your department invited Penzance Town Council to put forward a scheme which:

- Was delivered on time and on budget
- Was operationally sound
- Had operational compatibility with the Isles of Scilly
- Had popular local support

All parties agree that the importance of this scheme to secure the link between Penzance and the Isles of Scilly has increased due to the imminent loss of the helicopter link.

Cornwall Council agrees with the Town Council that it is critical not to lose the opportunity for investment in the harbour which helps to safeguard the future of the sea link, both passenger and freight, throughout the year.

In your letter of 7 August you raised 4 points, all of which have been met:

4. There is no dispute between Penzance Town Council, Cornwall Council or the Isles of Scilly Council that the harbour improvements in Penzance are compatible with those on St Mary's. Indeed, as we hope you are aware, representatives from the Islands and the Isles of Scilly Steamship Company were members of the Harbour Management Board.

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3. Agreement from Cornwall Council to act as accountable body for the construction of the scheme has been received (ref. letter Blackler/Collins dated 27 July 2012). You will see from the 10 September letter that Cornwall Council remain fully supportive of the principle of the scheme.
2. We maintain that the scheme that has previously been put forward is a credible plan for delivery and it meets all the requirements (financially and operationally), it attracts a large amount of public support and it is compatible with the Isles of Scilly scheme.

One of the things the Town Council was tasked with was to enhance the passenger experience and improve the freight handling at no significant extra cost to the islanders. Our scheme satisfies these requirements. However, the scheme can be modified to minimise disruption to existing buildings and businesses around the harbour while still delivering those benefits.

1. Penzance Town Council resolved on 16 July that it was keen to see the project taken through RIBA Stages C and D either by Cornwall Council or by the Town Council with its blessing.

In more detail:

- Cornwall Council has agreed in its letter of 10 September that the capital dredging can proceed as outlined in our plan. This needs to happen as soon as possible in order to secure a ship berth beside the lighthouse pier and maintain the operational capability of the port.
- Cornwall Council agrees that the capital dredging needs no further permissions or consents as it falls within the terms of the existing Harbour Revision Order.
- At present, although there is a difference of opinion between Cornwall Council and Penzance Town Council over the need for a further HRO to cover the rest of the Town Council's scheme, this is not fatal to our scheme provided that Cornwall Council at once seeks the HRO to cover the outstanding issues. We anticipate that that order would not be controversial and we are therefore advised by the MMO that it could be obtained in about 6 months.

If an HRO has to be sought, then we all agree that the opportunity to capitalise on current European (Convergence) Funding is lost in this current tranche, in the absence of contrary advice from the DCLG on retention orders. However, the Town Council considers that other potential sources of funding are still available and we would hope that all parties would cooperate in investigating them further. This process can be aided because the Town Council scheme is capable of being phased, bringing forward its other elements, e.g. the enlargement of the North Arm.

It should also be borne in mind that if Penzance Town Council's scheme is implemented, it will not prejudice further development in the harbour.

The extensive public consultations which the Town Council has held have shown directions in which these future investments might take to the benefit of all concerned

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and Penzance Town Council looks forward to working in partnership with Cornwall Council and the Department for Transport.

Cornwall Council has endorsed a phased approach with the capital dredge as the first phase. The construction phase can then proceed if the HRO and alternative sources of funding are obtained.

Penzance Town Council is firmly of the view that the construction phase should not be deferred indefinitely but should proceed as soon as these two matters have been resolved. However, evidence put forward to the Town Council suggests that the structural integrity of the south pier is not suspect at this stage and therefore remedial engineering work is not required as part of the Town Council's proposals. It is recognised that this issue will need to be reconsidered with any future improvements.

In summary, Penzance Town Council remains confident that the scheme as presented is deliverable within the parameters outlined by your department. It is acknowledged that there are issues that need resolution and these can be accurately demonstrated during the Programme RIBA C&D. We hope that through your good offices we can give comfort to Cornwall Council to allow this scheme to progress.

I would like to reiterate that Penzance Town Council is happy to continue as an active partner in this process and discharge any functions you deem appropriate.

Yours sincerely,

Phil Rendle (Cllr)
TOWN MAYOR

Enc.

cc: Alec Robertson, Leader of Cornwall Council
Cllr Graeme Hicks, Portfolio Holder for Transportation, Cornwall Council
Nigel Blackler, Head of Transportation, Waste & Environment, Cornwall Council
Theo Leijser, Director, DCLG
Philip Hygate, Chief Executive, Council of the Isles of Scilly
Jeff Marston, Chief Executive, Isles of Scilly Steamship Company
Andrew George, MP



Department
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Our Ref: 53551

28 September 2012

Dear Clr. Rendle,

Thank you for your response to my letter of 7 August about the Penzance Harbour Project.

In that letter I asked you to confirm the scope of the scheme that you wished to take forward and provide a credible plan for delivery within ERDF funding timescales that had the endorsement of Cornwall Council.

Cornwall Council has confirmed that it would be prepared to take forward the dredging element of your proposal, as well as acting as accountable body for this and the St Mary's Harbour Scheme. I welcome this and, as I am keen to progress as much as I am confident can be delivered within the timescales dictated by ERDF as soon as possible, have invited Cornwall to develop these plans further and submit them as a formal funding bid to the Department.

Cornwall also proposes to include rock armour within the scope of its proposals. I understand this was not proposed by the Town Council so I would like to hear your views on that element before I take a final view on whether or not it should form part of the scheme.

Although you remain committed in principle to the other elements of your proposed scheme, unfortunately these do not enjoy the endorsement of Cornwall Council. In addition, as Cornwall is also of the view that they would require an HRO, you concede that these elements cannot be delivered within ERDF timescales, leaving a funding gap which you estimate to be around £4m. Given these circumstances, I am afraid I do not believe there is a realistic prospect of these elements going ahead.

However, Cornwall Council has said it is prepared to work with you to explore proposals for the wider regeneration of the harbour. If, together, you can

agree on a modest scope of harbour works that can be added to the funding bid as mentioned above, within the available funding envelope, then I will consider it. However, it is important that this does not delay the progression of those elements that we are confident can be delivered within the ERDF timescale, particularly the capital dredging.

I would like to thank you for the work you have done to get the project to its present stage and I hope that it will make an important contribution to improving the integrity of the passenger links between the Isles of Scilly and the mainland.

I am copying this letter to Alec Robertson, Leader of Cornwall Council, Mike Hicks, Chairman of the Council of the Isles of Scilly, and Andrew George MP.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Norman Baker', written in a cursive style.

NORMAN BAKER