

**ANDREW GEORGE MP**

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76 Marsham Street  
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**ISLES OF SCILLY FERRY LINK**

I am grateful to your officials and to you for the attention you have given to this vitally important project. I regret that your Department has been obliged to review this project again; and in great detail.

It is essential, in my view, to ensure that this ferry link receives support which services to similar island communities in Scotland have received since before devolution and which are now taken for granted in that part of the UK.

There is little doubt that a project as important as this demanded balanced and thoughtful judgement as well as effective leadership skills. Regrettably these qualities have not been in great evidence when considering the manner in which the project has been handled in the last couple of years. Apart from adopting an avoidably confrontational style, the project leadership chose to adopt a policy of threatening the Penzance community that it would, implausibly, operate the service from Falmouth if its plans were not adopted without alteration. Apart from generating unnecessary and deep division in the community this tactic completely undermined the evaporating confidence I and others had in the leadership of this important project. In consequence, the credibility of their plans was inevitably called into question. Instead of seeking to reconcile, the Route Partnership's entrenched position became further entrenched.

That having been said, let me make it clear that the purpose and objectives of the project are sound and that there is considerable merit to much of the technical work that has been completed in bringing it to this point in the planning process.

I should also take this opportunity to clarify that although I have little confidence in the political leadership of this project, in contrast, I hold ██████████ and his team of officers in high regard. I am confident that they are capable of taking on a new brief and delivering in an effective and professional manner.

I have set out below a summary of my position, as I seek a constructive way forward in what I appreciate is a significant and difficult decision for you. As you will see, I am urging you not to become deflected by the high risk position which both Councils appear to have adopted in response to your invitation to them to review their proposals in the light of the spending pressures. The 'all or nothing' position they have chosen is not one I can support as this would, in the present climate, run the very high risk of achieving exactly that; i.e. 'nothing'.

.../...

**PLEASE REPLY TO:**

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Tel: 01736 360020 Fax: 01736 332866 [www.andrewgeorge.org.uk](http://www.andrewgeorge.org.uk)

## MY POSITION

As you know, I have long campaigned for funds to secure and improve the route. However, like other MPs I had no intention of intruding in detailed decisions nor the planning of the project, which were clearly matters for local stakeholders. Whatever my views about the merits or otherwise and potential impact of aspects of this proposal and about the manner in which it has been handled, my bottom line remains unchanged.

**I would prefer the project to proceed than for it not to proceed.** Nevertheless, I respect that the Government is working hard to rebalance the books in a severely challenging public spending environment. In view of this I would strongly urge you **not to accept the publicly stated position of Cornwall Council and the Route Partnership that it is an 'all or nothing' decision; that there can be no fallback position.** That is a high risk strategy and not a position to which I would be prepared to subscribe. I have communicated this opinion to them.

Indeed, the helpful and well researched contributions from others, including the Penzance Business Network, have demonstrated that there is the potential to not only save money on lower cost and less risky alternatives but to deliver better outcomes as well as help to better meet the Government's recently stated environmental objectives as set out in the Local Transport White Paper - "*Creating Growth, Cutting Carbon: Making Sustainable Local Transport Happen*".

Contained within the alternative solutions are proposals which would clearly provide a better local "*engine for economic growth*" as well as help to meet the Government's "*commitment to reducing greenhouse gas emissions*". It is my belief that the current proposal has a potentially greater detrimental impact than the alternatives in both these respects, as I will demonstrate below.

## OPTIONS FOR A WAY FORWARD

Having reflected upon all that has gone on over the years, my discussion with key stakeholders and upon the presentations and subsequent submissions by those you met on 15th December 2010, I have the following comments:

1. I do not support nor endorse the 'all or nothing' approach of the Route Partnership.
2. I am not prepared to put at risk the possibility of significant investment in this vital service by adopting such a position, and believe that better, cheaper alternatives are available.
3. As the only body able to deliver a scheme, it is clear that Cornwall Council will only accept an alternative scheme if it is induced to do so by the major fund provider (i.e. the DfT) and that such an offer of financial assistance is presented in a manner which would encourage the Council to accept.
4. If your Department is not able/prepared to commit £40.3 million towards this scheme, then I would urge the Department to offer another (lower) sum on condition that the Council commits to adopting an alternative scheme.
5. In these circumstances and in view of the need not to lose further time, I believe that it would be perfectly in order for the Department to set out the basis on which it was prepared to fund an alternative, and which elements of the existing proposal, if kept, would be acceptable.

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6. In order to avoid placing the project into protracted delay, such an alternative scheme should be capable of proceeding without the requirement for anything other than local planning permissions; i.e. no further Harbour Revision Orders, FEPA licenses, nor other permissions which would risk avoidable delay.
7. Key elements of an alternative might include:
  - i) purchase/lease and adaptation of (two) second-hand ships. Clearly this would involve operating two ships: a passenger vessel to replace the Scillonian III and a freight vessel (possibly provided by the service operator);
  - ii) revision/reduction of harbour extensions/reclamations. If the largest of the ships is no larger than the Scillonian III then pier extensions would be difficult to justify. If there were two ships then the controversial reclamation of the Battery Rocks area at the Penzance end would not be necessary either, saving many £millions. Similarly, some of the extensions/work at St Mary's might be scaled down;
  - iii) support for new elements which would advance Government carbon emissions reduction policy (e.g. out of town freight handling and the development of a passenger terminal without the higher carbon footprint of avoidable land reclamation);
  - iv) proposals for the built and historic environment should be the product of joint working and signoff by the appropriate Government agencies (i.e. CABE and English Heritage, both of whom object to the current proposals for Penzance but who have already indicated significant encouragement for the alternatives).

#### **ADVANTAGES/CHALLENGES**

The significant advantages of adopting this approach would be:

- A. It achieves significant savings of public money - between £20-£30 million; possibly more.
- B. It would carry less risk for tax payers (the current scheme's Council risk rating is "extreme", 20 on a risk scale of 1-25) and better protect them from the risk of cost overruns and budgetary challenges that are often associated with a scheme involving ship building, land reclamation and local authority ship owning.
- C. It produces a strong and immediate regenerative benefit, especially in Penzance where there is a better chance it will trigger significant private sector investment; the Council's scheme is more likely to have the opposite effect especially during the development phases.
- D. It ensures stronger likelihood that newly purchased ship(s) would not exceed the size of the Penzance Dry Dock, therefore benefiting the local economy further.
- E. It will provide flexibility in both vessel provision and shore-side facilities better able to meet future challenges - from energy supply to changing social needs and ambitions, to rising sea levels and the re-organisation of the built environment that may be required.

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- F. It will give the operator of the Link the freedom to make changes in the service provision required to meet the challenges of the future. You only have to bear in mind the current uncertainty of the helicopter service to see how the service may have to change in what may prove to be a very dynamic market.
- G. It provides a pilot exemplar - the lease of an out-of-town freight depot would provide Government with a helpful trial of how an out-of-town freight terminal would operate in a location like this. A proper assessment could then be made of its benefit to the environment, carbon emission reduction and local economic spin off.
- H. Finally, working with Government agencies (CABE, English Heritage) would, in my view, produce greater economic and environmental benefits than that available with the existing proposal - especially the use of soft-shore engineering as opposed to rock armour solutions at both harbours.

On the other hand, the potential challenges would be that:

- a. The Route Partnership has already reacted irrationally to the possibility of reasonable engagement on previous occasions and is clearly capable of doing so again on this. Although they are unlikely to walk away from a substantial grant, if offered for an alternative approach.
- b. There is a risk of further delay, though most of these elements are well understood and could be advanced quickly. The main risk is an ordinary local government local development control risk. But this is relatively low-level. Anticipating the scenario, I note that Penzance Business Network lodged a planning application with Cornwall Council last year. This should be compared to the higher risk nature and much longer development time of the building phase of Option A and new vessel commissioning.
- c. The Department cannot impose its own solution on the Council. However, it can indicate which elements of the existing scheme would be acceptable in a resubmission and which elements would not. It can recommend certain approaches and offer inducements to adopt these. (Indeed, on a potentially separate matter the Dept could give advance notice that a well worked and cost competitive application to the new Local Sustainable Transport Fund for an out of town freight depot would be looked upon favourably, thus transferring out one element of the overall project to another Departmental funding source?).
- d. The MCA has indicated that it is concerned about the extension of the licensing of the Scillonian for this summer's season and may therefore be unprepared to offer the same certification which might restrict the service this season and next, until the replacement ship(s) are in place. However, I am told that good progress is being made on this front. The injection of greater certainty about an achievable and deliverable project will clearly help to ease the risk.
- e. Finally, I note that the Route Partnership's response to your letter appears not to have answered the question about seeking local contributions. Of course, Cornwall Council intends to provide up to £10m loan capital. However, the Department may need to investigate whether there are other ways in which those with a beneficial interest in this project (namely the two harbour owners and the ferry operator) can be enabled to make an appropriate contribution to elements of the project which is relevant to their interest.

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## **COMPLIANCE WITH GOVERNMENT POLICY**

The alternative options present a set of proposals which would better comply with recently stated Government policy in this regard.

The alternative proposal has, according to CABE and the South West Design Review Panel, "the potential to strengthen Penzance as a real place where business, heritage and environment reinforce each other". In contrast, CABE slated the Council's preferred "Option A" asking "can this really be the most practical and environmental site for the terminal and ferry berth?" (Letter from the South West Design Review Panel (CABE) 9th December 2010, page 4 and page 2).

There are many reasons why the alternative proposals would do more to create economic growth - particularly in Penzance. Continued use of the dry dock has already been mentioned. The regenerative impact has been identified by many, including CABE. In contrast, Option A has - in my view and that of many others - the potential to serious damage the economic regenerative capacity of this important part of Penzance. In addition, many commentators have emphasised the economic regenerative benefit and economic advantages in an area which mixes industry and leisure activities well by both improving the environment and significantly reducing traffic congestion contained in the alternatives. It is hard to similarly claim that Option A can provide an equivalent benefit.

From the point of view of cutting carbon emissions, efforts to keep freight lorries and vans to the east of Penzance and to containerise much of freight to be moved into town by a single lorry movement would be significant. In addition, CABE were scathing about the environmental rating of Option A and said that it ignored entirely the massive carbon content of the infill and concrete.

## **CONCLUSION**

I hope that these remarks may prove helpful when drawing your own conclusions on how the Government should proceed with this important project.

If you were to adopt an approach as suggested in this letter then I can assure you that I will assist in promoting it. A clear and firm response from the Department which points a way forward without absolutely insisting or going so far as to micromanage would help to temper some of the less than impressive responses witnessed during recent phases of this important project.

If I can be of further assistance then please do not hesitate to contact me.

With good wishes.

Yours sincerely,

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9 December 2010



Dear [REDACTED]

**South West Design Review Panel  
SWDRP 80 29 November 2010  
Pre-application enquiry for a new passenger and freight terminal at Penzance  
Harbour**

Thank you for inviting the Panel to review your scheme and for presenting it to us with Andy Travers. We were glad to have Cornwall Council (planning) take part in this review. The Panel was grateful to you with an officer from the Council for showing us the site.

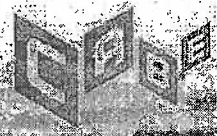
The session was convened as part of a national pilot led by CABE to explore how design review can involve local communities when reviewing projects that they are involved with or are affected by. The Panel appreciated having contributions to the session not only from the design team and the Council but also from Penzance Business Network (many of whom such as the haulier brought useful knowledge) and representatives of the Friends of Jubilee Pool, Friends of Penzance Harbour, Penzance Civic Society, Penzance Town Council and Town Mayor, and businesses currently occupying the site. We found it very helpful to come to Penzance, see the site and meet people informally before and after the session. A number of other bodies and individuals were invited but unable to attend but we had the benefit of messages from Andrew George MP and [REDACTED] that had been circulated beforehand to those attending.

As you know, we did this review in collaboration with CABE with a Panel drawn from SWDRP and the CABE national panel. This written guidance from the session is in SWDRP's name.

The Panel welcomed the opportunity to review your scheme at pre-application stage, and thus at a formative stage when constructive comments can more easily be accommodated.

This guidance letter gives our standpoint on Options A and Pz+, explains why Option Pz should be regarded as academic and then suggests some improvements to Option Pz+.

Design review  
affiliated with



As you know, SWDRP reviewed the 'option A' scheme for a new passenger & freight handling buildings & associated works at South Pier and Lighthouse Pier, Penzance Harbour on 19 May and 15 September 2009. Our guidance stated at the outset:

... we would have liked to have understood why an option *outside* the sea wall was chosen. The cost of so much reclamation must be immense and it is all very well the passenger terminal achieving a BREEAM rating of Very Good but the impact of the reclamation in terms of materials, transport and energy is far more significant. Can this really be the most practical and environmental site for the terminal and ferry berth? (SWDRP 19 May 2009)

We entered reservations about the experience of passengers in a small cooped-up waiting area, with no glimpses of the sea in anticipation of the voyage; and about the extent of rock armouring and the heavy and awkward new wall diminishing the beauty of the existing wall.

The purpose of our more recent review was to give guidance on *your* scheme on its own merits, not to make a comprehensive comparison with Option A. However, the Panel noted that both Options Pz and Pz+ are within the sea wall, give passengers a view of the Harbour and the bay beyond, and have no major impact on the existing wall.

We also noted that Option Pz+ largely removes freight movements from Wharf Road and the Harbour; offers better connectivity with the town and is more likely to lead to a better experience for pedestrians in the Harbour area and to draw people there. Option Pz+ would seem best suited of all the options to fulfil the AECOM study's concept of a 'vibrant waterside environment for a mixture of uses and activities throughout the day and evening'.

We agree with [REDACTED] that Option Pz+ would 'allow Battery Rocks and the land rising to St Mary's Church to become a natural focal point for life in Penzance. With mixed use and leisure, fishing and marine developments, you could create an attractive new quarter in the town that would enjoy spectacular views in all directions.' And we agree with Andrew George that option A would significantly damage the heritage of the Harbour while Option Pz+ has the potential to enhance that part of the town.

The Panel considers that Option Pz+ has sufficient merit to justify the Route Partnership undertaking a comparative technical study, and if the study so suggests reconsidering their current plans.

To make the two options more easily comparable, we recommend that the Route Partnership draws up a brief for Option Pz+. At present, we suspect that you are inferring a brief from option A.

In addition, your 'client' of local businesses is not the client that could or would develop the terminal. We hope all sides will see the merit of taking forward Option Pz+ as a scheme on a proper basis. We recommend that the current design team is commissioned to this end, to enable the merits and demerits of Options A and Pz+ to be fully tested and compared.

The Panel considers that Option Pz+ is hugely preferable to Option Pz. Freight movement on Wharf Road and the Harbour is a major consideration. Option Pz would bring numerous small loads as is currently the case. By providing for freight to be consolidated on a site away from the Harbour, Option Pz+ would bring a greatly reduced number of larger loads. We also question whether the site is large enough for a passenger and freight terminal and the movements that the latter necessitates. So the Panel firmly prefers a passenger terminal only at the Harbour i.e. Option Pz+.

Just to be clear, we are not yet offering support to Option Pz+. That could come only in the light of the study we advocate. In particular, we want to see the business case for the freight handling involved compared to the terminal delivery in A. We'd also want to be reassured that the site proposed near the rail head is feasible and can be developed (despite the technical challenges of a sea wall site with loose granite to be removed) at reasonable cost.

The Panel now turns to offer some guidance on your scheme and how it could be improved as it goes forward. This concerns heritage, the design of the building, and spaces.

On heritage, we call for a conservation plan for the Pier and sea wall as a grade II\* listed structure. This would assess its significance, give guidelines for what alterations if any might be acceptable and make recommendations for its repair and maintenance. This should be done whether or not Options A, Pz or Pz+ go ahead.

While awaiting such a plan our views are that rock armour is to be avoided if at all possible and that raising the sea wall might be acceptable but would be a matter for English Heritage to advise on. A structure against the wall could be acceptable if it was well and sympathetically designed and reversible (in heritage terms).

Option Pz+ like option A would provide an opportunity for section 106 funding to assist the repair and maintenance of the listed structure. Indeed, it would obviously be unwise to invest in a site here if protection from the sea was not assured. It is reasonable to expect that the issue of repair costs be linked to any permission to redevelop here.

A further heritage issue is the future of the Meadery. We note that the building is not listed and believe that a well designed new building could contribute more to the character of the area. The loss of the existing businesses in the Meadery and in the 'green sheds' is one we hope you and the Council will tackle sympathetically with a view to facilitating relocation.

On the proposed building, we suggest locating it at the western end of the site and favour a single-storey building with a larger footprint – a longer, lower, simpler building. We suggest you think more in terms of a lighter character in design and materials: it doesn't have to defend itself from the sea, nor be a grand civic gesture. A lightweight design is likely to be more flexible, allowing for change over time. Glazing has to be carefully considered in relation to energy use. We'd encourage you to think how the roofscape could be made interesting as the terminal will be seen from higher land behind. And we found it hard to accept baggage security as a key issue: we hope the building can be open and usable with minimal secure areas. Use all day, independent of the ferry, is good and is much more sustainable (in many aspects of the word) than a building used merely for the ferry traffic.

