

Friends of Penzance Harbour

c/o 17 Jack Lane
Newlyn, Penzance
Cornwall TR18 5HZ

www.friendsofpzharbour.org

Lands End Aerodrome Action Group

c/o Brea Barn
St Buryan, Penzance
Cornwall TR19 6JB

<http://leaag-group.blogspot.com>

Press Release

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Joint appeal for DfT investigation of Route Partnership project

The Friends of Penzance Harbour and the Lands End Aerodrome Action Group have written jointly to the Department of Transport asking for an urgent review of the Route Partnership's Isles of Scilly Link project to stop millions of pounds of taxpayer's money being wasted on the wrong scheme.

In a letter to the Rt Hon Philip Hammond MP, Secretary of State for Transport, the two groups question Cornwall Council and the Route Partnership's choice of scheme for improving lifeline links with the Islands and ask why the Route Partnership failed to anticipate the likely failure of the helicopter service which carries 47% of passengers to the Islands.

Cornwall Council and others set up the Route Partnership to secure the "lifeline" links to the Isles of Scilly, but ended up focussing solely on the sea link. They are on the verge of spending in excess of £65m "improving" one lifeline service that has survived perfectly well in private hands for the last 90 years, while another important lifeline link to the Islands is about to fail with no plan in place for an alternative service.

The operator of the helicopter service claims that they can deal with their financial problems by selling off the land they inhabit at Penzance, but all the evidence points to this being only a temporary solution. Rising fuel and spare parts costs for their ageing helicopters will almost certainly result in the service closing for good in a relatively short time. And in the meantime the helicopter's move to the Lands End Aerodrome will harm an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, the adjacent Heritage Coast, and the many businesses that rely on it and trade in the area.

At best Cornwall Council and the Route Partnership are guilty of taking their eye off the ball. But the circumstances surrounding other aspects of the scheme, and in particular their choice of location for new passenger and freight handling facilities in Penzance, suggest that they are not competent to design and manage large projects of this kind.

With the likelihood of massive negative impacts on the heritage, environment and economy of West Cornwall and with large sums of EU and DfT money at stake the two groups are asking Phillip Hammond to intervene and ensure that a full and comprehensive review of the transport issues facing the Isles of Scilly is undertaken urgently. Only in this way can a local tragedy be averted and scarce government funds be spent wisely.

For more information contact either:

John Maggs
Friends of Penzance Harbour
jmaggs@gn.apc.org
Tel 01736 332741

Tony White
Land's End Aerodrome Action Group
anthonywhite1234@hotmail.co.uk
Tel 01736 871242

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 that bring real long-term benefits to the town. For more information and the latest news on the campaign go to: www.friendsofpzharbour.org
- 2) The Lands End Aerodrome Action Group is a community group set up to oppose the relocation of BIH helicopters from Penzance to the grass strip Lands End Aerodrome, a small airfield set in the heart of an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, on the Heritage Coast. Their arrival will pollute the area with near constant noise, aviation fuel fumes and road congestion and will do nothing to aid BIH's business survival or help protect the helicopter's service to the Isles of Scilly. We are working with other groups to seek alternative solutions that will protect the Island's links whilst defending this area against this unsuitable development. For more information go to: <http://leag-group.blogspot.com>
- 3) The full text of the letter is available at: www.friendsofpzharbour.org/blog_more.php?b=96
- 4) The Route Partnership is made up of Cornwall Council, the Council of the Isles of Scilly and the Duchy of Cornwall. Cornwall Council is the lead partner and has been responsible for project managing the scheme.
- 5) For pictures of the development site in Penzance go to: www.flickr.com/photos/friendsofpzharbour/sets/72157622685150544/