

Rebuttal of Friends of Penzance Harbour Claims made to the European Parliament 15 July 2010

Friends of Penzance Harbour	True Friends of Penzance & Isles of Scilly www.truefriend.org.uk Comment (Rebuttal)
<p style="text-align: center;"> Friends of Penzance Harbour www.friendsofpzharbour.org </p> <p> Address to the European Parliament’s Petitions Committee delivered by John Maggs on 15th July 2010 </p> <p> Greetings from Cornwall, Great Britain’s most south-westerly province, and thank you for considering our petition and for allowing me to speak to you today. </p> <p> I come from Penzance, a town of 20,000 people on the coast of Cornwall, near Land’s End. It is a beautiful seaside town, with an historic seafront, elegant buildings, granite cottages and an unspoilt marine environment that attracts thousands of tourists each year while remaining an honest working town. But all this is under threat. </p> <p> Cornwall Council wants to spend EU funds to build a development resembling an industrial estate – <i>une zone industrielle</i> – in the middle of our beautiful historic seafront (1). They call it “improving the harbour”. That is, extending it to accommodate a proposed new ferry boat that will travel between Penzance and the Isles of Scilly, out in the Atlantic Ocean. If it is built, the development will obliterate a much-loved beach (2), and it will bury – under infill and concrete – the historically most significant parts of the South Pier (3), one of the UK’s most important historic piers, recently Grade II* listed and dating back in-part to the 1300s. The development will compromise both the fabric (4) and the setting of our unique Art Deco seawater swimming pool (5) and Victorian Promenade (6), and it will threaten important protected species, including a bird called the Purple Sandpiper, whose current roost will be entirely destroyed (7). There isn’t a more sensitive site historically, environmentally or culturally anywhere in </p>	<p>(1) The proposed terminal is an adjunct to the current harbour. It is not “in the middle” of the sea front. The Promenade defines the sea front with Battery Rocks/Jubilee Pool defining the eastern limit.</p> <p>(2) Battery Rocks Beach is a small shale covered patch of beach beneath the tall defensive sea walls for South Pier/Barbican. It is rarely used and most Penzance townsfolk consider it inconsequential given the superb beaches in the area. It is also relatively inaccessible.</p> <p>(3) No part of the top surface of South Pier is to be covered. The foundations of South Pier on the seaward side will have rock armour laid for approximately 2/3 of its length. On the innermost 1/3 a new outer sea wall will be built to protect the Barbican. English Heritage accepts rock armour as a necessary measure where improved sea defence is required.</p> <p>(4) There is no basis whatsoever in the assertion that the fabric of either the Jubilee Pool or the Promenade will be affected by proposed work.</p> <p>(5) The ramparts of the Jubilee Pool are concrete (it would never get planning permission to be built today) whereas the new sea wall is to be faced in granite. The current sea wall is an ad hoc mix of different granite stonework with massive concrete reinforcement at the first bend in the pier.</p> <p>(6) Deleted.</p> <p>(7) The Purple Sandpiper does not breed in England; it breeds at just one or two locations in Scotland kept secret by the RSPB. The birds overwinter on rocky foreshores in the north of the UK and the coast of Devon & Cornwall (see RSPB website). There is nothing about the plan for Penzance Harbour which would inhibit the birds overwintering in Devon & Cornwall. South Pier itself, being highly vulnerable to the sea and regularly overtopped, is never going to be permanent roost for any bird, no matter how tenacious. Click on http://www.rspb.org.uk/wildlife/birdguide/name/p/purplesandpiper/ for details. Eel Grass (<i>Zostera Marina</i>) has been referred to as a threatened species. This plant requires a soft silt covered seabed, as found in estuaries, because it propagates by spreading roots (rhizomes). Mounts Bay is not its natural habitat because it is exposed to severe wave action that turns over the sea bed. It is difficult to see how work on South Pier could material affect the generally adverse environment in Mounts Bay for this plant There are extensive Eel Grass beds in the Helford Estuary which is a typically habitat for this plant.</p>

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our town.

[The economic justification is flawed]

We are told that the proposed project will produce jobs and contribute to economic regeneration in the Penzance area but it will do exactly the opposite **(8)**.

The new ferry and harbour improvements are not designed to carry any more passengers or freight than at present **(9)**. It will put jobs at risk **(10)**. The proposed single combined passenger & freight ferry will replace separate passenger and freight ferries (which is the preferred arrangement of the current operator) and need fewer crew, and the new ferry will be too big to be repaired in the town's own Dry Dock, putting marine engineering jobs at risk in what is an important local marginal business **(11)**. And the last thing a tourist destination needs is an industrial estate-style development in the middle of its scenic seafront **(12)**. A recent consultation commissioned by Cornwall Council itself has shown that a pedestrian-friendly seafront and harbour area is essential to the future economic importance of the town, but the proposed project will ensure that heavy lorries continue to blight the area making this long-standing ambition of the town impossible **(13)**.

We are also told that without the project the ferry service will fail or have to move to another port. This is entirely without foundation. The service has operated successfully from Penzance for the last ninety years and everyone, including the current operator and Cornwall Council's own consultants, has said it cannot operate successfully from anywhere else **(14)**. The next nearest port is around 40 km (70%) further away from the Scilly Islands, meaning a much longer journey time and much higher operating costs **(15)**. And the current operator has made it absolutely clear that they have no intention of operating from anywhere other than Penzance and would continue to do so with or without public funding **(17)**. So the Council's argument that the project is securing the existing link and protecting jobs in Penzance is entirely bogus.**(18)**

(8) Ferry passenger numbers have shrunk over the last 10 yrs with increasing competition from air links. A better service could increase day tripper numbers and bring extra tourism revenue to the IOS and Penzance. The recent AECOM public consultation exercise in Penzance regeneration shows how the proposed Harbour plan aids regeneration by collocating all of the ferry facilities on South Pier using a newly created compound built on reclaimed foreshore. No other solution provides such a tidy result. See <http://www.cornwall.gov.uk/default.aspx?page=23164> for regeneration map of Penzance Harbour & Barbican.

(9) The current ferry vessel is not an attractive travel option except in good weather. Its capacity is not fully used. A more comfortable service would increase usage.

(10) The proposed new combined ferry would employ 3 less full time crew and 4 less part time crew. These savings make the ferry solution more economically sustainable. This small loss of jobs has to be compared with jobs at risk if the ferry has to be relocated to a new port. Parliament was advised that 190 jobs depended, directly or indirectly, on the ferry service from Penzance. (Hansard 5 Jan 2010 : Column 34WH) .

(11) The dry dock is a marginal business because the size of vessels has risen over the years and the market for dry dock work on smaller vessels has shrunk as a result. The future of the dry dock depends on being competitive and innovative in the wider market. Government intervention to force a sub-optimal ferry solution will burden taxpayers with extra costs (or the Islanders) without guaranteeing the survival of the Dry Dock.

(12) Penzance has a stunning sea front which will not be affected by the project. The harbour is more functional and will become more accessible and presentable with the completion of the planned work. Tourism businesses are convinced that the project will only improve the experiences of tourists.

(13) The AECOM map of Penzance Harbour & Barbican shows how well the project fits into plans to open up the Harbour (see earlier link). This is in contrast with Option Pz, a solution proposed by the local MP and supported by objectors, which puts the freight and passenger terminal on the harbour front.

(14) If keeping the ferry at Penzance proves impossible (politically or due to lack of capital funding) then Falmouth becomes the default solution. It is a different business case but Falmouth has been used for services to Scilly in the past as a temporary solution. The longer transit time is expected to limit day tripper journeys significantly but extra fuel costs are partly compensated for by the lower cost of fuel at Falmouth, opportunities to share facilities and lower harbour fees.

(15) Running 2 vessels from Penzance costs broadly the same as running one vessel from Falmouth based upon fuel consumption increasing by 70%.

(16) Deleted

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[Missed opportunity]

Cornwall Council's choice of scheme represents a massive missed opportunity. The harbour facilities do need improving, traffic and other problems in the harbour area need addressing, the link to the Scillies could be made more attractive - and people are supportive of action - but the Council's whole approach is wrong. Alternative schemes have been put forward, that respect the seafront and harbour area and address the genuine (19) needs of the town and of travellers to and from the Scillies (20). These include using a fast ferry (21), and locating the lorry terminal and warehouses out of town (22). But these have not been properly investigated. Cornwall Council (23) made up its mind years ago to persist with its preferred scheme, and has been deaf (24) to suggestions that alternatives should be impartially investigated.

We have learned recently that the helicopter service between Penzance and the Scillies is almost certain to close in the next few years, because the helicopters are very old and they are very heavy on fuel (25). The Council has completely ignored this in planning its project (26). A fast ferry would go a long way to filling the gap left by the helicopter (27), and unlike the proposed new - and slow - ferry would provide Islanders with the possibility of getting to and from the mainland in a day (28).

(17) The current ferry operator is a member of the Route Partnership seeking a solution to the problem of ferry link sustainability. The operator cannot afford to replace his ageing vessel using commercial finance and the cost of keeping the vessel to the required standard for continued MCA licencing is becoming prohibitive. The statement about the operator continuing to run the service indefinitely using the Scillonian III is a mis-understanding of the economics of the situation and the regulatory compliance hurdles that have to be jumped.

(18) From (17) above the assertion that the public does not have to intervene to ensure a future sea link is manifestly untrue. The deficiencies in the harbours and the vessel are known. The level of spending required to bring the Harbours up to current standards for safe operation is well beyond local resources. The financial position of the operator is a matter of public record (Companies House).

(19) Objectors frequently question the genuineness of the Islander's requirement without stating which part of the requirement is not genuine. The requirement for an all year around ferry service (less frequent in the winter) can hardly be termed fraudulent.

(20) Only a cursory reference to Islander's needs is made.

(21) The fast ferry relates to a 27 knot twin hulled vessel proposed by a retired ex- Chief Executive of IOSSC. It is by far the most expensive vessel solution considered for the new ferry link because of its high fuel consumption and the need for a separate freight vessel. It has a much lower passenger capacity (367 verses 600) and must complete two round trips as day in the summer to meet peak demand. As it is a relatively small SWATH vessel there are uncertainties about what sea states (wave heights) it can operate in. It also has a deeper draft and cannot sit on the seabed in either harbour like the current vessel or proposed new combined vessel. The proposed fast ferry vessel - CloudX - entered service in 2002 for 6 months on a ferry route between West Palm Beach (Florida) and the Bahamas. It was withdrawn for commercial reasons after 6 months and has been on the second hand market since looking for a buyer. The fast ferry lacks economic and operational credibility for the IOS Ferry Link. Link to seller of CloudX: <http://www.cloudx.com/sale.php>

(22) This is a referral to an out of town freight centre (Option C) for the receiving of deliveries of freight. Penzance Harbour receives approximately 40 tons of freight a day destined for the Isles of Scilly. This level of freight has been going through the harbour for generations. Estimates of the cost of an out of town facility, which means freight is double handled, vary between £150,000 and £330,000 (bidder's proposed reduction in charter fee). This cost would have to be added to already sky-high freight costs or absorbed by the operator and deducted from the charter payments made to the Council. The net effect would be to slow down the repayment of the loan for the new vessel and undermine the economic sustainability of the solution. Certain types of freight have to be delivered to the ship directly (building materials, animals, fuels etc) and harbour vehicle movements represent less than 2% of all vehicle movements (13,000/day) on the harbour road. Congestion in the harbour area is caused by the lack of vehicle turning areas and lack of space for freight which means vehicles have to meet the ship on the day of sailing causing a bottle neck. Option A removes the bottle neck

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[The process is flawed]

You are told by the Commission, in your 'Notice to Members', that it **appears** that the process surrounding the project is taking place in line with applicable regulations and procedures. That is wrong. (Appearances can be deceptive!) The process has been undemocratic in the extreme (29). We have been denied the protection which the statutory planning procedure is supposed to give us (30). The Council told the public that we would have the opportunity to object to the plans. Meanwhile it secured from the former Government a Harbour Revision Order, and then told us that this Order meant that apart from Listed Building Consent it did not need to go through the normal planning process. From the moment that the plans were published the inhabitants of Penzance have been overwhelmingly against them (32). The Town Council has repeatedly voted against them. Not one candidate in last year's Cornwall Council elections supported them. The area's Member of Parliament in Westminster is against them (34). And English Heritage, the government's advisor on historic buildings, is opposed to them (35).

and provides a compound for receipt of freight and the turning of vehicles.

(23) Cornwall Council investigated Option C (out of town freight option) in considerable detail despite it being implausible from the outset.

(24) Option A is not a brain child of Cornwall Council. It origins go back to 2003 and regeneration studies carried out for Penwith District Council by YRM Architects. The idea was to concentrate the ferry activities around South Pier using reclaimed foreshore so that the rest of the harbour could be opened up to the public. It also solved a long running sea defence problems at the Barbican.

(25) The helicopter service is expected to move from Penzance but not close.

(26) There is no justification for additional public involvement in the provision air services - there is a working competitive market providing the services required. The proposed all year round combined ferry service does safeguard against the loss of air services for weather or other reasons.

(27) The fast ferry is not an adequate alternative to the helicopter service because it does not run in the winter and its operations will be severely restricted in bad weather.

(28) The high operating costs of the fast ferry solution which requires a separate freight vessel will push up ferry prices and close the price gap between ferry and air travel. Fuel costs for the fast ferry solution (2 vessels) are 62% higher than for the proposed single combined vessel. See <http://www.ioslinkharbours.co.uk/downloads/006ijw372%20002%20-%20Report%20Rev%201.pdf> (Isles of Scilly Ferry Options 6 Oct 09). SWATH option: One round trip per day, 100% availability – fuel consumption for month of June compared between vessel options).

(29) The fact that a minority against the project have not held sway does not mean the process has been undemocratic. The Strategic Planning Committee Meeting on 8 Mar 10 was a model of openness and democracy in action. See next items also.

(30) A supporter of FofPH took Cornwall Council to the High Court (Cartwright verses Dept of Transport) claiming that the original Harbour Revision Order was not properly advertised to the public and the minister was misled into approving it. The judge dismissed the claimants arguments as "unsustainable" and the claim that the minister had been misled as "fanciful". The application for Judicial Review was struck out as having "no prospect of success".

(31) Deleted.

(32) The claim that inhabitants of Penzance have been overwhelmingly against the plans throughout is disputed. Canvassing of Penzance residents in Jan 2010 revealed a great deal of support for the project and antipathy toward FofPH for claiming to represent the community. By Feb 2010 there was a supporter's Facebook campaign with 3700 'fans' and a paper petition expressing support with over 3000 names. Over 800 people wrote to the Council Planning Office in support of the project. When the Council reconsidered its decision on 8 Mar

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[A grandiose 'vanity project']

In these difficult financial times, when Cornwall Council should be looking at cost-effectiveness, its leaders appear more interested in the grandiose "vanity project". One Councillor Hicks, the elected official responsible for the scheme, is actually on record as saying that "the prime concern [of the Council] has not been to reduce capital costs, [because they will] be covered by grant funding"! (36) While every community welcomes public grant aid it is important that it meets a genuine need and is spent wisely. Please help us not just to protect what is best about our town but to ensure that valuable EU funds are spent on a project that enhances the town and carries the support of local people. (37) END.

2010there was convincing evidence of large scale public support. The Strategic Planning Commit changed their decision despite a Lib Dem whip to vote against the plan (vote 14 for and 7 against).

(33) Deleted

(34) The local MP initially 'sat on the fence' on this issue. On 8 Dec 09 he lobbied the Council's Strategic Planning Committee by email to vote against the project at the meeting due on 14 Dec 10. In Feb 2010 he initiated a project to find a solution acceptable to everyone (Option Pz). This new option was presented 3 Mar 10 at a public meeting chaired by the MP and heavily advertised in the local paper by FofPH. Copies of the Option Pz proposal were uploaded onto the Council's website with other papers for the Planning Meeting on 8 Mar 10 and was perceived as a naked attempt to wreck Option A. At the General Election in May 2010, the MP, who had the endorsement of the FoPH, lost nearly 10,000 votes from his majority leaving him in a marginal seat. As recently as 24 Jun 10 he has stated he supported the Route Partnership plans (see Radio Scilly link below) but he has generally been keeping a low profile as his efforts with Option Pz were widely seen as unhelpful. Radio Scilly recording at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z91JeusMFPQ>

(35) English Heritage has changed its position on the planned changes to Penzance Harbour. Much of this we attributed to heavy lobbying by FofPH from Oct 09 onwards.

(36) Cllr Hicks is quoted out of context. Capital cost constraints have been a major consideration through out the project and were the cause of the elimination of many previous options. The objective of the project was in part to make necessary investments in Penzance Harbour to prevent the need for ferry to be relocated with consequential damage to the local economy. If avoidance of capital spending was the driver then Penzance would have been abandoned in favour of Falmouth which required minimal new investment to run the ferry. However, a Falmouth solution damaged the tourism industry on the IOS and in Penzance.

(37) The project does carry the support of the majority of Penzance residents. The EU funds (£11 million) covers 32% of the cost of upgrading both harbours to meet regulatory requirements and protect structures from sea damage.

Completed by
Dick Cliffe 29 July 2010
True Friends of Penzance & Isles of Scilly