
From: Claire Rogers <PROVIDED> 07 September 2021
Sent: 17:17
To: Planning (Isles of Scilly)
Subject: Porth Hellick Sea Defence Work

Dear Planning Department,

I would like to submit my thoughts on the planning application for the sea defence work at Porth Hellick Beach.

I have read through the plans and have also met on site with Stephen Swabey to discuss the proposals.

I have a strong interest in this project, as I am the owner of St. Mary's Riding Centre, and we frequently use Porth Hellick to take visitors and locals horse riding. Porth Hellick is my main route and we use it up to four times per day in the peak season. It is the only route on Scilly where we can do a 1 hr circular route to include coastal and beach riding and take riders for a paddle in the sea. It is not possible for us to use Pelistry or Bar point as these areas are more difficult to access and often very busy. For many people, riding on Porth Hellick is a once in a lifetime experience and a wonderful activity for all the family to enjoy, and this is evident on our Trip Advisor Page.

https://www.tripadvisor.co.uk/Attraction_Review-g488312-d6226768-Reviews-St_Mary_s_Riding_Centre-St_Mary_s_Isles_of_Scilly_England.html

We believe we provide a good service to the tourism industry of Scilly and we do so with a great deal of respect and sensitivity to the natural environment of Porth Hellick, and have worked closely with the Wildlife Trust for many years.

I was born on St. Mary's and now live near to Porth Hellick on Lunnon Farm. I feel that I know Porth Hellick very well - I am there nearly every day, and see it in all seasons, weathers, tides and wind directions. I am acutely aware of the need to protect the bank from erosion and maintain the sea defences and therefore I am in support of this project in general, but with some significant reservations. I think it is very important to fill the gaps in the bank, particularly in the area of the Sir Cloudesley Shovel Monument, where erosion is most evident. I am in full support of using similar vegetation to what is there already, in particular the Fascicularia, although I understand this is not native, but it seems to be doing a tremendous job in defence against the sea. I would be interested to learn why it is so important to use only native species.

As horse riders, we take a route along the bank but to the landward side of the main path so as to avoid walkers and prevent erosion, but also to assist with the gentle trampling of the ferns and brambles to encourage biodiversity and the generation of new plant growth, as directed by the Wildlife Trust. We then cross through the bank and down on to the sand, heading straight for the sea. We prefer to use the western gap wherever possible, near to the bench, but often we have found that people leave bikes, buggies and kayaks here in the path, making it impossible for us to pass safely with the horses and we have had to turn around on many occasions. After riding along the beach we ride back up past the Camel and up by the concrete shed to the east, where the intended slipway will be.

We do need access at both ends of the beach, as it is only on a low tide can we do a circular route on the sand and come off the same way we go on. On a high tide we progress carefully along the top of the

beach, paddling in the water as we go, and are obviously mindful of the nesting Plovers and other beach users.

The slip way should not cause us too many problems as far as I can tell, as if it is suitable for vehicles and for boat users, then presumably the horses will manage providing the surface is non slip and the gradient not too steep.

The boardwalk at the far end is of particular concern to me. I have raised my concerns with James Watt and also with Stephen Swabey. In my 30+ years of horse riding and as a BHS Stage 4 Senior Yard Manager and Accredited Coach I have never ridden along any kind of boardwalk and would not wish to do so.

My concerns for the boardwalk for horses are as follows:

Stepping up from, or on down on to the sand - even if the ends of the boardwalk are buried, the horses will find this difficult. As the sand shifts and drops away or builds up, the ends will be obscured. I have been working with horses long enough to know how they react, and although our horses are obliging and patient, they will simply not tolerate this, especially if they feel a solid structure beneath the soft sand.

Slipping - even with a non-slip surface, horses will find this difficult and slips and falls would be a very real risk. Wire covering is not acceptable as the studs on horses shoes could get caught.

Slatted walkway - Even with a small gap between the slats, it is entirely possible that a horse will catch the front of their hoof, especially with horse shoes on (which have a central toe clip) and trip and fall.

Noise - clattering hooves on any hard surface will no doubt upset even the calmest horse and may cause them to spook or panic. This is not acceptable with beginner rides/children on leading reins. I risk assess every section of my ride, and this would be an area of huge safety concern and instructors/ride leaders around the country would agree with me.

Damage - the weight bearing surface of a horse's hoof is considerable. The BHS provides useful information on load bearing as per the link below. It is my firm belief that horses would damage any boardwalk surface. I do not believe that any boardwalk would be able to withstand 10-12 horses passing over it. It is not possible to wait in turn, we have to remain as a ride and stay together as the horses are stressed if separated.

Line of sight - we may not be able to see clearly over the bank, in order to make a decision to proceed, once committed to crossing, we could not pass other users safely on the boardwalk, and of course we could not turn or reverse or stop and wait easily.

Edge - It is entirely possible that a horse might drop a hoof off the edge of the boardwalk, and become caught between the slats and the vegetation and either panic or cause injury as it struggled to free itself.

Flexible structure - I understand that the boardwalk is to have a degree of flexibility to allow it to move and be relocated if the sand dune changes shape and position. Horses would be very unnerved by a surface that moved underneath them and they would feel even the slightest change. There may be considerable movement of the structure as the horses step on and off and walk along.

I hope that you will take my views into consideration - a number of local horse riders have contacted me to express similar concerns to my own.

In summary I feel that the proposed boardwalk is unnecessary and is likely to cause a health and safety hazard to my business and other riders. As a year round business, we will need access to the beach at all times throughout the year. Any delay to the completion of the works would have a considerable impact on my business especially during the Summer months from May through to September.

I would be very pleased to meet on site to discuss further if this is required.

Thank you very much

Kindest wishes

Claire Rogers

<https://www.bhs.org.uk/advice-and-information/free-leaflets-and-advice>

Free Leaflets - The British Horse Society (BHS)

Find a range of useful leaflets to view and download below. All leaflets are in PDF format. All the leaflets on this page contain advice for access and rights of way in England and Wales.

www.bhs.org.uk

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