

Comment on planning application for Porth Hellick: P/21/050/FUL

I welcome the fact that remedial works are to be undertaken at Porth Hellick. The opportunity of ensuring protection of the water supply must, surely, be of high priority. In addition, the Higher Moors SSSI (some of which is part of our farm tenancy) is of high environmental value. But Planning must ensure that wherever possible these works do not look too 'industrial', they are not 'overkill', and that they retain the wild and natural character of Porth Hellick.

I am also grateful for the opportunity to comment upon the proposals, and would like to thank Dr. Swabey for meeting us at the site on Monday evening, and at short notice. His presence was much appreciated.

Dr. Swabey was able to explain and clarify some points of confusion or concern. For example, it was made clear that the main area of dune-building will be at the Eastern end, and not along the whole length of the dune area (although necessary infilling in the existing dune will take place).

However, I do have concerns about one or two of the proposals:

The slip:

At the site meeting there were in-depth discussions about the slip, its construction, the materials to be used (preferably local), how it would work, and so on.

I am a little concerned about the use of the building blocks proposed, but I have no experience of these materials. I hope that any topping material will not be eroded, or the blocks undermined, thus leaving the blocks used for construction exposed. If this is the case it could be both unsightly and dangerous.

I remain concerned that the existence of a slip could funnel water up the beach and towards the leat and the pond – this would obviously be counter-productive.

The imported material is to be crushed Cornish granite (4-10 mm grading). Dr. Swabey stated that, for various visual and strategic reasons, he would prefer to use local materials. This has to be a more appropriate option where possible.

From the text submitted to Planning:

- *It has been agreed with the client not to provide any clearance between the toe of the newly raised dune and the existing shed on the east end of the beach....*

...The raised dune will require local profiling around the existing shed on the east end of the beach.

From discussions at the site meeting, it seems as if ways around possible problems this throws up are being considered. This should be clarified, especially in regard to the use of the shed and the area surrounding it, including the beach.

- *It is understood that the client has in discussions with Dutchy and it no longer the intention of Dutchy that boats will be launched from the beach. (From the text submitted to Planning).*

It seems, from email correspondence, that it is not the intention of the Duchy to prohibit boat-launches and retrievals. But this must be definitely clarified – not to be able to launch and bring up our boats would be most unsatisfactory. In addition, to build a slip and then not to be able to use it for launching boats would seem to be entirely counter-productive.

Representations were made to Dr. Swabey about the difficulties involved in the use of a slipway and especially the boardwalk by horses. These discussions are I believe, continuing.

The board walk at the Western end:

I find this possibly problematic, both for the area surrounding it (is it 'OTT' and too out of keeping with its surroundings?), and, as mentioned previously, for horses. Further, if erosion should occur, will this walkway be left too exposed/unsightly/dangerous?

From our site meeting it would seem that there are ongoing discussions about possible solutions to these questions, and these matters should be clarified.

Re wild flowers, biodiversity and practical applications:

The use of fascicularia on the bank at Porth Hellick has proved invaluable over the years since it was planted. Although not specifically indigenous (many naturalised species in Scilly are not strictly indigenous but form part of our interesting flora) it is tough, hardy and withstands wave pressure and salt ingress, and, being tough and thorny, is 'people-repellant'. It is therefore a very useful addition to the area and is significant in the protection of the bank thus far. This should not be ignored, and further planting, as specified in the Brief, is helpful/essential to maintaining the bank in good condition.

When the fascicularia was planted, Tamarisk was tried but quickly failed. Hottentot Fig was also planted and this has succeeded. Again, it is not native and can swamp smaller and more delicate native plants, but it can provide some aid against the sea.

To the list mentioned in the Brief could also be added add horned poppy, which always used to flower on Porth Hellick, and still does at times, especially at the Eastern end of beach. Also, camomile, scentless mayweed, convolvulus, thrift, fennel, all of which grow in the area, would be pleasant additions where possible.

From the text of the submission:

A mix of sapling and mature plants is to be used.

Please ensure that 'sapling' in this context does not imply the planting of trees.

There is no mention (I think) of ringed plovers which have recently returned to nest (on the beach). Nesting plovers should be safeguarded.

It appears that the required volume of crushed material (~276 m³) is to be brought in over the Downs. This could further exacerbate the now-multiple and already very heavily eroded tracks over the Downs. Remedying this erosion – or even not doing so - for use by laden and by light lorries, could prove damaging to the fragile soils. If tracks are laid, and even if then removed, an unintended

consequence may result – that of encouraging even more traffic to the area, which would cause even more erosion.

Associated works:

In the Brief, mention is made of access to beach area for leat maintenance. (As previously mentioned, use of the slip should not be exclusively for this). But no mention is made of the leat on the landward side, where it is not in very good condition. This could be rectified at little extra cost.

The old wall on the East side of the beach from near the shed to Dick's Carn (The Camel) could be mended. It is a useful defence and it is vulnerable; to repair it would not cost much as a proportion of the whole project. This repair work could be especially important as it appears that there has been no study of the effect of the sea on this area once the new works have concluded, and erosion could be locally exacerbated.

Other general comments:

Handrails, straining posts and permanent fencing are mentioned (2.89 EA Minimum Technical Requirements). If these are used, please ensure that they have no bark and that they are checked for damaging insects and diseases.

Re ownership and responsibilities: who will own, insure, maintain and take responsibility for the new works? This is an important issue and should be clarified.

Penny Rogers 7.9.21