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Sent: 27 March 2023 13:46
To: [REDACTED]

Subject: Design & planning of Bryher sea defences

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I am a regular visitor to Bryher (long winter stays) with a background in environmental and flood risk management. Work clearly needs to be done to prepare for the effects of climate change on Bryher since the island is vulnerable to sea level rises and extreme weather events, but I have serious concerns about the design and planning of the proposed sea defences – as have the Environment Agency and Natural England - and I object to the proposed start date.

My specific concerns are:

(1) More hard defences are not a sustainable solution. Their effectiveness will be limited while the damage to the island's environment, natural beauty and character and, consequently, the tourism economy will be significant. Other less damaging and more cost-effective options should be explored with the community and statutory consultees (taking a much stronger partnership approach) – see examples further below.

(2) The main statutory consultees – the Environment Agency, Natural England and Historic England - have all raised significant objections and suggested some alternative, less damaging, more cost-effective options, and yet it appears that the Council is still proceeding with the works.

The community has had limited real involvement (in understanding the current and likely future risks on Bryher from climate change, and identifying and assessing the options). Many residents are not aware of the scale and likely impact of the proposed works.

(3) The planning of the works – particularly the plan to start in the spring/summer of this year - shows a lack of understanding of the island. The materials delivery/movement and the construction work on this scale will cause significant damage to the environment, infrastructure and economy, and has serious implications for health and safety.

(4) No significant attention has been given to building community resilience (e.g., flood proofing and protection), developing local response capabilities, and raising community and visitor awareness.

Examples of less damaging and more cost-effective options are provided below, most of which have already been suggested by the Environment Agency (objection letter dated 18 January 2023) and local residents:

Great Popplestones

Some of the existing rock from Little Popplestones (which is redundant) could be reused to reinforce the landward side of the existing rock armour to protect against erosion from overtopping.

Stinking Porth

The beach could be left to dissipate energy naturally while using an unobtrusive structure to stabilise the landward side of the crest. Overtopping would drain away naturally between tides, and opportunities to facilitate the drainage should be considered.

Great Porth North

The beach adjacent to the slipway could be left to dissipate energy naturally while rock armour is used to stabilise the crest towards the road. Overtopping would drain naturally away between tides, and opportunities to facilitate the drainage should be considered.

Green Bay

Landscaped berms could be set back around the boat yard and the residential property, to protect against periodic flooding, leaving the beach to dissipate energy naturally. Experience elsewhere (in Dawlish, Devon) has shown that the proposed geotube could be unsightly since any landscaping cover would not survive tidal incursions.

Kitchen Porth

Since the Environment Agency suggest that a rock armour defence at beach level would fail, more local flood protection measures should be considered for property and infrastructure.

Stony Porth and Great Porth South

Overtopping from these beaches could be channelled away to the east using drains and landscaped berms.

All of these options should provide similar, if not greater, benefits to the sea defence, in line with SMP2, while causing far less damage to the environment and the natural beauty of Bryher that people love (so causing less damage to tourism, the primary source of income on the island). And crucially, these defences could be maintained using island capabilities. As the impact of climate change increases, more local flood protection of properties can be used (e.g., a landscaped berm around the perimeter of Hell Bay Hotel), and essential infrastructure could either be re-sited or protected as appropriate.

Overall recommendation

Based on the above, I believe the proposed capital works should be delayed and a detailed review undertaken before proceeding. Funding is very much needed on Bryher but it should be used much more effectively by taking a holistic and practical approach.

Thank you.

Regards,

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