

# Friends of Penzance Harbour

## Frequently Asked Questions

(Version 1.1, 7<sup>th</sup> February 2010)

### **1. Who are the Friends of Penzance Harbour?**

The Friends of Penzance Harbour (FoPzH) are a group of concerned Penzance residents who came together in the aftermath of the September 2008 Route Partnership (RP) "pre-planning" exhibition to help organise opposition to the RP's scheme. They meet regularly to discuss developments and plan activities; all are welcome to attend meetings.

### **2. How representative of public opinion are the FoPzH?**

Very much so and numerous "polls" back this up. At the first "pre-planning" exhibition in September 2008 (before the formation of the FoPzH) 85% of those that filled in a feedback form said they were against the scheme. At the second exhibition the scheme managed a slightly better score but still 65% of those that made it through the confusing and misleading questionnaire rejected it. When the well publicised plans were finally submitted to planners, 672 people felt strongly enough to send in letters of objection; just 8 people bothered to write in support. When a second application (for listed building consent) was submitted 669 objections were received and there were just 4 letters of support. There have also been two polls organised by *The Cornishman* newspaper: the first (in August 2009) showed 66% against the RP's scheme and the second (in January 2010) showed 70% against.

### **3. Are the FoPzH against the modernisation of the Scillies Link?**

No. We have always acknowledged the importance of the link, both to the Scillies and Penzance, and the need to upgrade facilities, but we believe that this can be done in a manner that is less harmful to the environment and heritage assets of the town and that does not put the long-term economic wellbeing of Penzance at risk.

### **4. What is the Route Partnership?**

The Route Partnership (RP) consists of Cornwall Council, the Council of the Isles of Scilly and the Duchy of Cornwall. The Council of the Isles of Scilly is a separate unitary authority.

### **5. Are there private sector interests involved in the project?**

Yes. The Route Partnership "Harbour Project Team" includes the consultants Halcrow, Birse Coastal and the Trewin Design Partnership. These private sector companies have been chosen to implement the project and will receive a fee for doing so. This work includes public relations, promoting the RP's chosen scheme, and preparing the Alternative Options Report.

### **6. What is the objective of the Route Partnership?**

It was set up to improve the sea link between Penzance and the Isles of Scilly, including provision of a new ferry and enhancements to the harbour facilities in Penzance & Scilly. While this is an objective that most local people support, the RP have in the case of Penzance chosen to focus all their attention on building new freight and passenger facilities on reclaimed land at Battery Rocks beach, expanding the ports commercial activity into a valuable amenity area, encroaching on views and affecting the setting of a number of important listed structures.

### **7. How much will it all cost?**

The whole project will now cost around £60m. This is made up £33m for new harbour facilities in Penzance and Scilly and £27m for the new ship. This is up from £44m in 2009.

### **8. Who is funding the project?**

The harbour work is being funded in-part by EU convergence funding (c. £10m) with the rest coming from the Department for Transport (DfT). The new ship is funded part by the DfT and part by Cornwall Council borrowing (c. £15m). The Council of the Isles of Scilly are not contributing.

### **9. What's all the rush about?**

The RP are claiming that the funding might be lost if a decision is not taken soon (see Q11 below) and say that work must start this year if all is to be in place by the time the existing ships reach the end of their working life. However the Minister has recently said that there is no deadline for the funding, and has confirmed that the ships will be able to operate beyond 2012 (the cargo ship is already licensed to 2014).

### **10. Is the Scilly Link in danger of being lost to Falmouth?**

No. Operating from Falmouth would reduce income and increase costs to such an extent that the link would be economically unviable; for example the additional fuel costs alone would be in the region of £250,000/annum. The terms of the government funding also stop this from being an option; if the RP wanted to move the link to Falmouth they would have to go back to square one, develop a new project and resubmit it for government funding, and this could take many years. The RP have used the threat of moving the link to Falmouth to try and bully local people into accepting their scheme.

### **11. Is there a danger that the funding could be lost?**

We believe not, and that as with the suggestion that the link might move to Falmouth, the RP are using the threat to intimidate local people into accepting their scheme. Government funding is available for the project because the sea service to the Scillies is a vital link and public funding is considered necessary to secure it into the future. For this reason it will always compete effectively with other demands on government funding, regardless of the political party in power. The local Member of Parliament, Andrew George, has also said that he will work with Cornwall Council and the DfT ministers concerned with the funding to ensure that Penzance has sufficient time to make an informed decision about the various possible options.

## **12. Why one larger ship instead of two (as now)?**

The RP propose to replace the current two ships (one freight, one combined passenger and freight) with a single larger combined passenger and freight vessel. The RP claims that this will be cheaper to operate but previous studies and the commercial reality experienced by the current operator suggests otherwise. This is an important issue because many of the problems associated with the locating of the passenger and freight terminals stem from the decision to operate a single larger vessel. According to the RP a single larger vessel also necessitates the extending of the listed Lighthouse Pier and the addition to the back of the Pier of brutal rock armouring to stop seas coming over the quays when the ship berths in winter.

## **13. How would an out of town depot work?**

Goods for the Scillies would be delivered to the out of town depot instead of to the proposed depot on Battery Rocks beach. They would be stuffed into containers and brought to the ship by lorry each day for immediate loading. The ship would sail from the same place; only the depot would be located out of town and this would have the effect of removing 250+ vehicle movements for each freight sailing from the harbour area (just 4 or 5 lorry trips will be sufficient to bring the goods from the depot to the ship). The preferred location for an out of town depot is Long Rock industrial estate, where an existing unit (no. 18) would make an ideal depot site, although other possibilities exist.

## **14. If the new passenger terminal isn't built on Battery Rocks beach, where will it go?**

A number of possible sites exist. If the new ship operates from the Lighthouse Pier then the passenger terminal could be located in the old Trinity House Lighthouse Centre or on the site adjacent to the Waterside Meadery. Plans have also been put forward by the RP to redevelop the Meadery and Penwith Marine Services (green sheds) site but the FoPzH believe this should only be a last resort and that affected businesses should be properly compensated and/or relocated.

## **15. What is the Harbour Revision Order?**

This is the act of Parliament required to extend the harbour facilities in a seaward direction. It is akin to planning permission and gives Cornwall Council the right to infill Battery Rocks beach, extend the Lighthouse Pier and place the rock armouring along the length of the South and Lighthouse Piers. It came into force in September 2009. The HRO process started in 2005 and notice was placed in the Cornishman newspaper. No objections were received from the public and it is now thought that the public either didn't see the notice or were not aware of its significance.

## **16. What do English Heritage and other statutory bodies think of the RP scheme?**

Early in 2009 English Heritage stated that "consideration be given to locating the passenger and freight terminal in an alternative location, less harmful to the historic environment". In December 2009 they objected to the RP's request for Listed Building Consent. The Commission for Architecture in the Built Environment (CABE) South West Design Panel stated in June 2009 that they "would have liked to have

understood why an option outside the sea wall was chosen. Can this really be the most practical and environmental site for the terminal and ferry berth?"

**17. What is the position of the local MP?**

Andrew George helped secure the funding for the project but knew little of the RP's plans until he attended the September 2008 "pre-planning" exhibition. Since then he has been working to ensure that proper consideration is given to alternative options. He has recently described the RP's plans as "politically undeliverable", and said that "it is frankly unacceptable that Penzance should have been left with important decisions to be taken in a climate of 11th hour brinkmanship, those decisions should still be taken with care and not leave a legacy for future generations to regret at their leisure." He is currently working with local business people and others to develop an alternative to the RP's chosen scheme.

**18. What is the position of the Town Council?**

The Town Council have repeatedly objected to the scheme and are calling for alternatives to be properly assessed.

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