

PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND RESPONSES

COUNCIL - 21 MARCH 2022

Question 1

From Caroline Wright to the Leader of the Council:

The abrupt decision to cease beach management in Hoylake without any risk assessment, has caused continued strife and grief in a once unified community. Hoylake has become a political pawn! A Conservative ward within a Labour constituency, yet residents (voters) have been treated with contempt by all Labour councillors.

The motion (by Alison Wright) to review the Hoylake shore using a 40/60 split and test site was denied. The motion (by Andrew Gardner) to review the conflicting information on Spartina (world renowned non-native invasive species), also denied by this council!

The 13,000 strong petition to Save Hoylake Beach (without chemicals) completely ignored.

However, a huge thank you goes out to the diligence of Councillor Phil Gilchrist who took the time to review the compromise suggestion raised by Hoylake Beach Community, and approached North Lincolnshire Council who had experienced a similar predicament. The reply from NE Lincs council was prompt and detailed, they obviously understood this difficult situation. Councillor Gilchrist shared all this information with the full council members by email on 10 November 2021. It's beyond disappointing to hear that Councillor Gilchrist received no feedback at all.

The £30K beach report landed belatedly a few weeks ago, and shows that costs will be incurred in both 'Do Nothing' or 'Do Everything' scenarios. Marshland is noted as the most likely development, which comes with the associated risks of rising beach levels, fresh water stagnant pools and mosquito infestation from the old drainage system. Hoylake is one of the three Wirral amenity beaches left, and the town was built on the back of its seaside tourism trade.

Given the budget deficit position, can this council afford to reject the compromise request from the Hoylake Beach Community volunteer group, and incur additional costs and risks (including potential flooding) with the 'Do Nothing' scenario, or, will you RESPECTFULLY start to work together, and following the public consultation act promptly to reach a compromise which allows an amenity area?

[Response from Councillor Janette Williamson:](#)

[The Report is not advocating one option or the other. The way the Council has approached this difficult issue is to provide the evidence and then use this as a basis](#)

for working with the community and developing the most appropriate solution for Hoylake, within the constraints that apply. The Council recognises that a compromise solution is likely to be required and is committed to working towards such an end, however because of the statutory requirements the Council cannot say, at this stage, that it will definitely allow an amenity area as that decision would require assent from Natural England.

Question 2

From Kelvin Wright to the Leader of the Green Group

Councillor Pat Cleary stated publicly on his blog dated the 19 Oct 2021 the following: *“Dunes will defend us from sand storms and sea storm surges without the need for expensive, artificial defences such as currently being implemented for West Kirby at a cost of millions of pounds.”*

Now that the Hoylake Beach Report is out and it states in section 9.1 - *‘however, there is also a risk that a developing dune system could form a barrier against any overtopped water flowing back to the sea and could thus enhance flooding in some locations.’*

Does Councillor Pat Cleary feel the report is scientifically inaccurate and that he is correct?

Response from Councillor Pat Cleary:

The Royal Haskoning report contains two scenarios with respect to flooding and the size of dunes and whether they are a broken band or continuous:

1. A broken bank of dunes will not provide any advantage over still water flooding, but also will not prevent floodwater from returning to the sea [page 49 of the report]
2. A continuous band of high dunes, which would give protection in terms of still water level flooding, but also prevent any water which did overtop retreating to the sea as quickly. [page 47 of the RH report]

This is an either/or situation and would apply equally to a hard flood protection. In both a continuous or broken dune, as explained in the RH report, there is a considerable advantage to having a green beach, be that dunes or saltmarsh, in terms of wave energy reduction. This is the cause of most damage in storm surges. [Page 64 of the report, (4,5)]

I welcome the publication of the Royal Haskoning and report and see no reason to disagree with its findings. It is important to ensure that our approach to the management of the beach at Hoylake is underpinned by a scientific understanding of the processes that are underway and how we can best work with them to protect biodiversity, defend ourselves against climate breakdown and minimise its impact.

REFERENCES

1. From page 49 In the Do Nothing scenario the developing dune system could start to have a flood defence function, should the dunes potentially grow higher than the sea wall, reducing the impact of waves. This would however not affect the scale of the flood zone because that would require a continuous, uninterrupted row of dunes.
2. From page 47 The Do Nothing scenario would reduce the direct hazard and nuisance of wave run-up on the road, its users and the lower-lying parts of properties; however, there is also a risk that a developing dune system could form a barrier against any overtopped water flowing back to the sea, and could thus enhance flooding in some locations.
3. From page 64 which states Protection of the current defences and communities behind from coastal erosion and flooding by providing a barrier and habitat to absorb wave and tidal energy.
4. Sigren, Jacob, Jens Figlus, and Anna Armitage. "Shore & Beach." Coastal Sand Dunes and Dune Vegetation: Restoration, Erosion, and Storm Protection 82.4 (2014): 5,7.
https://www.academia.edu/15698164/Coastal_sand_dunes_and_dune_vegetation_Restoration_erosion_and_storm_protection
5. Rajan (2018) Storm Surge and its Effect- A Review on Disaster Management in Coastal Areas Civil Engineering Research Journal Volume 4 Issue 5 - May 2018 <https://juniperpublishers.com/cerj/pdf/CERJ.MS.ID.555649.pdf>

Question 3:

From Mr K Randles (read out on his behalf) to the Leader of the Council

[Pictures included on Page 5]

The north Wirral foreshore is attracting an increasing number of overwintering waders and summer gulls and terns. This may be due to regular disturbance of roost sites in the adjacent Dee and Mersey Estuaries but may also be due to the areas of open intertidal mud and sand, free from vegetation and rich in invertebrates, attracting certain species such as the Bar-tailed Godwit that prefer unvegetated intertidal sand and mud as feeding grounds. Allowing the natural succession of all areas of foreshore into saltmarsh could therefore result in a loss of important feeding and roost sites and a reduction in the internationally important numbers of wading birds for which the site is a proposed Ramsar Site.

'Common Cord Grass often produces extensive monoculture swards of much less intrinsic value to wildlife, and in many areas is considered to be a threat to bird feeding grounds on mudflats'.

UK Biodiversity Action Plan – Habitat Action Plan for Coastal Saltmarsh

'Wirral Coastal Rangers promote Hoylake beach as one of the best coastal birdwatching sites in the north west'

The above statements should sound familiar as these facts come from WBC very own 2010 Hoylake beach management plan and highlights the importance of keeping the birds roosting and feeding sites as clear of vegetation.

Now that the Royal Haskoning survey has confirmed that Hoylake's unique roosting site will be lost due to dense vegetation.

I just want to reaffirm the importance of Hoylake's roosting area.

This is the only exposed beach area above the hightide mark on the entire northern Wirral coastline, that's how vital this area is to these birds.

My question:

I would like to ask the labour party leader is a "Do nothing approach" a realistic option for Hoylake's current wildlife who rely on unheeded access to all of these areas and what would be the consequences for these birds if WBC adopt that policy?

[Response from Councillor Janette Williamson:](#)

[The impact of any beach management scheme will be subject to assessment under the Habitats Regulations when the impact of any proposals on all environmental features, including birds, will be assessed.](#)

PICTURES ON NEXT PAGE SUBMITTED WITH MR RANGLES' QUESTION



Hoylake Beach Site Management Agreement



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