



Langstone flood defences

And what of the greater plan to protect Langstone? The Public Planning Authority has largely completed its Public and Statutory Consultation process. Given the size and complexity of the plan they are almost certain to pass recommendations to the Planning Department for approval. The earliest this can happen is September.

Estimates for the flood defence scheme have increased to £23.7million of which £10million has been “received” and a further £13.7million pledged. There were concerns that cost increases would create another funding gap but Coastal Partners have been able to continue attracting adequate funds. Justification for cost increases which rose from £13.m in 2022, £18.5m last year and are now £23.7m seems thin compared with similar conditions in the private construction sector. However some increases result from additional obligations, for example the provision of a salt marsh at a cost of £1.5m which will be funded by the Environment Agency.

There remains a belief, contested by Coastal Partners, that under certain circumstances seawater could still enter Langstone. The storm of April 2024 had unexpected consequences associated with the drains which must not be repeated. An accurate map indicating layout and individual ownership is surprisingly lacking. The Langstone Flooding Sub Committee chaired by Ed Neville has established contact with Hampshire County Council through whom we expect vital contact with Southern Water in order to establish what is a public responsibility and what belongs to home owners. Only then can a comprehensive defence plan be put together to prevent a repeat of April last year.

Other issues yet to be satisfactorily concluded include

- Details of effective management of the flood defence gates planned for the bottom of the High Street. We have only verbal assurances from CP that they will be closed in a timely manner at times of flood risk and reopened as soon as possible. Furthermore,

the site regularly gets tidal deposits of seaweed and shingle likely to interfere with gate closing. Who will be responsible for essential clearing maintenance to ensure gates operate correctly?

- The construction of a second wall placed alongside the existing wall from the Winkle Market to the Ship Inn will protrude in places by nearly two feet over the existing foot path. This will need widening to compensate. At six foot high, the new wall won't be the same height as the existing one being higher in some places, affecting home owners, and lower elsewhere, especially along the winkle market, providing a convenient ledge to deposit empty bottles, beer cans and waste. Discussion for a different design are in progress. The importance of a solution cannot be underestimated by CP.
- Adequate arrangements for residents in case of unforeseen problems during construction, especially if it involves urgent relocation. HBC will rely on the Contractor (yet to be appointed) to make adequate provision. This effectively makes residents third parties, leaving a feeling of discomfort. Seeing what has happened elsewhere, we believe more robust arrangements need to be put in place.
- It is still intended to establish one of several sub depots in the field behind Langstone High Street. The LRA questions why it needs to be so large, taking up two fields and how it will affect access to popular footpaths. We have also asked how plant and materials will flow from the sub depot to site and received unclear advice of the options still under review. The Highways Authority has also expressed concern about how access might affect traffic flow along the A3023.

It is inevitable that some decisions can only be made once construction of the defence plan starts but we will need to be alert for design drift if we are to avoid unpleasant surprises.