

COUNCIL MEETING 21 SEPTEMBER 2022

Item 4 – Public Questions Received under Standing Order 27.5

	Question From	Question to	Question
1	Ms Margaret Tait	Cllr Satchwell	<p>Is Havant Borough Council (HBC) aware of the damage caused to the collapsed Langstone seawalls to the east of Langstone Mill and west of Wade Lane? We are most concerned because of the environmental impact of draining the millpond near the mill and the contamination of hundreds of square metres of land behind the seawall along this stretch.</p> <p>Concerned Havant residents have set up an on-line petition that has already raised over 1,300 signatories. The advantage with this format is that all the signatories can be contacted with updates. We have also measured footfall at this location and over a period days at the end of August counted an average of 140 people an hour along this 300 metre footpath. That equates to over 1,000 people a day and in excess of 100,000 people a year.</p> <p>We talked to hundreds of people and found that a large number were visitors enjoying the unique view and marvelling at the 40 roosting egrets by the pond. We know that for hundreds during lockdown this part of the Wayfarers Way became a sanity-saver if not a life saving stretch of coast. It is worth noting that this area is one of Havant's top assets and attractions.</p> <p>Council members may not be aware of the rapidly declining state of the sea defence. The Coastal Partners webpage dated Sept 2022 is already out of date. There used to be a bench here which had to be removed a couple of weeks back because of the erosion. If nothing is done quickly there is a risk that there will be a massive hole punched into this path as happened at nearby Southmoor.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What can HBC do to help remedy the situation?• What solution has been proposed to stabilise the problem in the short term and what can be done in the long term?

Reply:

The council have been working with the interested parties here since June 2021, when this issue was first identified.

Position statements were gained from the Chichester Harbour Conservancy, Hampshire County Council and the Environment Agency and presented on our website to draw attention to this matter. However no party is responsible or has come forward to claim responsibility for these failing sea defences [Damaged sea defences – Langstone Mill Pond to Wade Lane, Havant — Coastal Partners](#) –

All parties have expressed an interest in finding an acceptable solution here. HCC Countryside Service now recognise the wider implications for the future of public access along this section of coast and are keen to work in conjunction with partners; either to work towards preserving the existing access alignment or to secure an alternative alignment. Though HCC has reiterated that as a highway authority, it has no legal authority or responsibility to maintain of the sea wall.

The council were made aware of the unsafe bench and took measures to make the area safe. Chichester Harbour Conservancy confirmed it was one of their memorial benches, and appointed NorseSE to remove this to storage and our webpage will be updated accordingly.

The difficulty we have is ageing seawalls, around most of our coastline, much is not in our HBC ownership and very limited revenue budgets to maintain our own HBC assets. There is also a National Strategic Policy move away from a presumption to defend to one of adaptation although I do not believe we either have all the tools in place to adapt or carry society with us at the moment

Cllr Bowerman is trying to organise a multi-agency meeting, to see if there is an appetite to respond collectively but initially the County will need to decide what to do with regard to the Right of Way e.g. when to close, divert or whether to maintain the existing route and undertake appropriate measures to replace the failed brick seawall.

If there is a willingness to restore some defences along this frontage, then it maybe more agreeable with those with an eye on conservation to find a “softer” less permanent solution creating the space and time for adaptation e.g. moving the footpath and public acceptance.

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Item 9 – Councillor Questions Received under Standing Order 27.4.1

	Question From	Question to	Question
	Cllr Munday	Cllr Satchwell	<i>In relation to the collapse of Harbour sea wall next to Langstone Mill - What action can we as a Council take to ensure a speedy resolution to this problem?</i>
	<p>Reply:</p> <p>The response to the previous question addresses the responsibilities of HBC and that direct action here is beyond the resources of the council. However, in light of the public interest does the council need to consider a letter to HCC to more firmly draw attention to the urgency of this matter and formalise their commitment to a resolution?</p>		

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Item 10 – Councillor Urgent Questions Received under Standing Order 27.4.2

Question From	Question to	Question
Cllr Hughes	Cllr Pike	<p>On two occasions in the past three months, illegal encampments have been set up public land in the centre of Purbrook. On both occasions, they arrived on a Friday knowing full well that the legal process to have them removed will take until at least the following Monday afternoon. During that time period, elderly residents, living less than 50 feet from the open space are subjected to anti-social behaviour created by the noise of quad bikes, the barking of many, many dogs, barbeques, music etc. When the site is cleared HBC (through NORSE) is left with the clean up.. litter, human waste, animal waste. Previous policy advocated 'tolerating' such encampments as the eviction and clean up costs were 'cheaper' than other solutions. This is not acceptable.</p> <p>What steps are Havant Borough Council going to undertake to secure that location and prevent further illegal encampments at this location and other similar blighted locations across our borough?</p>
<p>Reply: This Council's policy has never been to tolerate unlawful access to Havant Borough Council owned sites. This administration has put in place plans and resources in order to better secure our sites, and that work is ongoing.</p> <p>However, it is important that the rights of occupying groups must also be considered in a lawful process. The current process is to seek prompt removal and eviction of any occupiers via the courts.</p> <p>Council officers will respond as soon as an encampment on Council land is reported. Officer safety is paramount and they will visit the site with the Police. Once on site the Council Officers undertake a needs assessment and serve an order for the occupants to leave within 24hrs and then a summons to attend Court usually within two to three days.</p> <p>This year we have had 10 encampments on Council property, which is less than recent years excluding Covid, and I think demonstrates our processes are rapid and robust.</p> <p>The anti-social behaviour described by Cllr Hughes is appalling, we meet regularly with the police and we always call on them to provide a rapid Police response to such incidents.</p>		

With regards to securing land, I reiterate that this Council has plans to address all sites used illegally. Some need extensive works, and others need smaller measures. Cllr Hughes can be assured that Ladybridge Road open space will be attended to, and I will continue to work with Ward Councillors to bring in measures that achieve security as well as increasing tree cover and making our open spaces more welcoming for play and other leisure activities.