



CYNGOR TREF Y
RHYL
TOWN COUNCIL

Our Ref / Ein Cyf: D02-24Hig290721

Your Ref / Eich Cyf:

Date / Dyddiad: 29th July 2021

Town Mayor / Maer y Dref: Councillor / Cynghorydd Mrs Diane L. King

Town Clerk / Clerc y Dref: Mr Gareth J. Nickels

Highways and Environmental Services
Denbighshire County Council
County Hall
Wynnstay Road
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Consultation: Central Rhyl Coastal Defence Scheme

I refer to the above scheme which is currently the subject of consultation by the County Council and which was the subject of debate at the Town Council meeting held on 21st July 2021.

The Town Councillors received a presentation on the proposed scheme from Mr Wayne Hope, Flood Risk Manager, Denbighshire County Council, together with representatives of Balfour Beatty and Mott MacDonald, and I would first of all like to thank all parties for their attendance at short notice.

This letter represents the formal response of the Town Council following the above meeting, however you are advised that individual members are seeking the views of their ward residents and are likely to respond to the online consultation directly in due course.

In this regard the Councillors are concerned that for a scheme of this magnitude there is a lack of understanding amongst the residents of the potential impact of the scheme. The Council considers that the number of related coastal schemes (such as other progressing coastal defence schemes, off-shore wind farm developments etc) have diluted the impact of the consultation and is likely to lead to residents and businesses not understanding or appreciating the importance of this particular consultation (if they are even aware of it at all?). In addition, the consultation exercise itself appears to be very limited with only three weeks response period for online responses.

In considering the proposals the Council were obviously conscious of the importance to the town of having a fit for purpose sea defence in place to protect against future flooding. As stated in the press release, the existing sea defence is now approaching a time when it needs to be replaced.

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However, the Council are also aware that any construction undertaken needs to be sympathetic to the tourism industry of the town and the needs of the residents to be able to access and enjoy their beach.

The Council does appreciate the level of investment required from both Welsh Government and the County Council to deliver the scheme, but as it is likely to have an ongoing impact on the viability and wellbeing of the town as a resort and place to live for many decades, the Council believe that it's imperative that the final scheme chosen is the right scheme for both its residents, businesses and the town itself.

In this respect the town councillors would wish to raise the following areas of concern as part of the consultation:

- Despite reassurances given by officers at the meeting, there is significant concern that whatever scheme is agreed, there could be a negative impact on the level of sand on the beach.
- The use of Rock Armour is considered inappropriate and detrimental to the visual appearance of the beach and the promenade.

While the Council appreciates that Rock Armour may be the favoured approach, it is considered unacceptable due to its negative visual impact on the beach and the physical barrier it creates for those wishing to access the sands from the promenade. The use of rock boulders is also considered to be contrary to the findings of the Rhyl Town Centre Vision document, which identifies reuniting the beach with the town centre as a key action point for the future of the town.

- Access points will need to take account of beach users including those with mobility issues.

It is accepted that specific access points will be created as part of the scheme, however the sands are seen as a playground by youngsters and the reality is that human nature will result in people ignoring the designated access points and will attempt to cross the boulders with consequential accidents arising.

- Members are concerned at the potential loss of income to the promenade businesses, kiosks, the Pro Kite Surfing, hotels and attractions and their ability to remain viable, especially given the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic over the past 16 months and the relatively small trading window available to them.
- No mention has been made within the consultation as to the period of time that the construction works will take, but based on the works undertaken to the East Rhyl defence scheme, it is likely that the central part of the beach will need to be closed for at least a couple of seasons.

The Council is concerned that the works undertaken will result in a significant period during which the beach will be closed to the public. This will have a significant knock-on negative impact on the ability of the resort to attract large quantities of visitors to events such as the Airshow, upon which a significant number of businesses within the town centre are heavily reliant.

Given the above concerns the Council makes the following formal representations in respect of the consultation.

- The period of consultation is considered too short for a scheme of this magnitude. Members have reported difficulty in accessing hard copies of the consultation response form for their residents.
- The information provided on the scheme is considered insufficient to enable residents to make an informed decision on the proposals. The Council believes that the leaflet produced and the information provided on the website is over simplistic and does not show what the completed scheme will look like.
- The use of Rock Armour is considered inappropriate and detrimental to the future wellbeing of the town in terms of its negative visual appearance. While it may be an appropriate mechanism in a more rural coastal setting, it is considered inappropriate for a resort town which relies heavily on the beach to attract its visitors.
- The Council remain concerned that the proposals could result in the loss of sand from the beach and require further assurances that whichever scheme is ultimately agreed, there will be no scouring of the beach with appropriate revenue budgets being established for the monitoring of beach levels and remedial action if required.
- That construction works should be staggered with works being undertaken in phases to avoid the whole of the central beach being closed at the same time and that deliveries of materials should use appropriate routes avoiding residential areas and the town centre. In this regard the existing compound used for the construction of the East Rhyl works should be utilised.
- Detailed proposals for beach access should be provided with appropriate disabled access incorporated.

Yours sincerely

Town Clerk

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