

SAVE OUR ISLAND ARTICLE FOR OCTOBER 2023 HAYLING HERALD

SUBJECT The decision of Natural England and Chichester Harbour Conservancy to oppose HBC plans to protect the shoreline around Langstone Mill Pond (HBC News Release dated 3 August 2023)

<https://www.havant.gov.uk/2023/havant-borough-council-constrained-addressing-mill-pond-and-sea-wall-concerns>

We have written to the Environment Agency, Natural England and the Chichester Harbour Conservancy to strongly object to the Natural England decision to prevent the maintenance of the Langstone Mill Pond area sea defences. There is a sound case to protect this important wildlife habitat and the area's historic importance including the Hayling Island Wadeway **PIC 1** and the centre of the smuggling 'French Trade' at Pook Lane. **PIC 2** The erosion of this very popular public access can be seen all the way from the spill way to the Wade Lane access point. **PIC 3 & 4**. It makes no sense to abandon this important fresh water reserve for an increase in the unprotected and polluted saltmarsh. There are broader issues at stake here which are not being addressed.

Natural England is a quango. Who decided that this organisation's wishes take precedence over Havant Borough Council's proposal to protect this environment?

Following World War 2, both Chichester and Langstone Harbours were primarily saltmarshes. Over the succeeding 70 years, many hundreds of acres of saltmarsh have been destroyed by nitrate runoff and toxic sewage outfalls. This is clear because the Harbours are now covered in green slime. The RAF in 1950 published a detailed series of photographs of the area which clearly show the extent of the saltmarshes (even after the WW2 pollution.) **PIC 5** Flooding more land around the Harbours for new saltmarshes could logically be argued as increasing the area at risk, not reducing it, unless a process to prevent the saltmarsh destruction is in place – which there is not. There are experiments underway to rebuild the marshes and use oysters to eat the pollution, but they are what they are – experiments.

In their submission, Natural England said:

- "A review of Chichester Harbour by Natural England has shown local extensive coastal defences are directly impacting on the extent of local saltmarsh and mudflat habitat."

However, we are not aware of any "extensive coastal defences" in Chichester Harbour, except for a recent hard sea defence nesting site installed by Natural

England. And there has certainly been no reduction in the areas covered by saltmarsh or mudflats. In fact the reverse is true – the area of saltmarsh has been increased at Cobnor and Langstone.

- “Any remedial works are seen as setting a dangerous precedent for other hard defences throughout the Harbour.”

This message is not in line with EA Guidelines which states that landowners are entitled to protect their properties from flood risk.

Natural England should be publicly pressuring the Government to catch up and come forward urgently with an updated flood risk analysis, a new flood risk zone map, and a White Paper on the Adaptation Strategy. Continuing with short-term or expediency actions may prove counter-productive.

We are also justified in questioning the role of Coastal Partners in this area. We thought Coastal Partners was the organisation responsible for the coastal planning for all of the harbours. This does not appear to be the case now. Who is now responsible for the Strategy Plan?

Flooding has to stop somewhere!



Picture 1 The Wadeway to Hayling at low tide



Picture 2 The Pook Lane smuggling harbour used for the “French Trade”



Pic 3 Erosion at the Mill Pond spillway



Picture 4 Erosion to the sea defences



Picture 5 North Hayling from the Air 1950