

SAVE OUR ISLAND ARTICLE FOR FEBRUARY 2024 HAYLING HERALD

PROTECTION OF OUR HARBOURS

HERE WE ARE in a New Year. Let's hope this election year may inject some commonsense into our elected bodies regarding the flooding from all sources.

You may recall that we wrote to Natural England regarding the sea defences. The Harbour Conservancy has responded with the comment which, although heartfelt, displays an ignorance of the critical implications of climate change to Hayling Island.

“One of the reasons why the natural environment of Chichester Harbour is in a state of emergency is because there are too many hard sea defences, which cause coastal squeeze. The dilemma is that some communities wish for hard sea defences to be maintained. Yet we cannot improve the environment unless we start to re-naturalise the water's edge, as it should be in an AONB – natural beauty, not bricks and mortar. Hard sea defences are a development pressure, it is not just housing that has a landscape impact.”

This response does not address the issues that:

- a) The Harbour Conservancy's preferred natural coastline; namely the hundreds of acres of saltmarsh in the harbour, have been poisoned, and will continue to be poisoned for the foreseeable future. There is no strategy to resolve this: and
- b) Hayling Island is the lowest lying border within the harbour, and 50% of the Island is in a Cat 3 flood zone now. This area will increase when the IPCC prediction of sea level rise comes true. The Harbour Trust recently chaired a meeting on the Environmental Decline of Chichester Harbour, which strangely did not include Havant Borough Council, nor make any reference to Coastal Partners who are responsible for the production of the Hayling Island and Harbours' coastal strategy plan.

It is recognised that adaptation and some coastal realignment will be required to respond to climate change, but Hayling Island requires a managed coastal protection plan to survive.

As far back as 1340, as a result of major inundations, the Island landowners were fined for not maintaining the seawalls. Landowners are not fined today, and the seawalls are eroding all around the Island. One recent example agreed by Natural England is the Southmoor seawall breach resulting in an unmanaged and dangerous inundation. (See picture 1)

Picture 1



Picture 2

We are very close to witnessing more and larger areas of uncontrolled erosion on Hayling Island as shown by this picture (pic 2) of the Northney coast in 2023, where no corrective action has been taken.



We will be expanding on this major problem in the next issue.