

SAVE OUR ISLAND ARTICLE FOR MARCH 2024 HAYLING HERALD



We are pleased to report some good news this month. The plan to preserve the Langstone Mill Pond has been approved!

We have written to Lyall Cairns (Coastal Partners) and Alex Rennie (Leader of Havant Borough Council) congratulating them and their respective teams' patience and tenacity to prevail against powerful and expensive opposition from Natural England and the Chichester Harbour Conservancy. Alan Mak also personally supports this preservation initiative.

Coastal Partners have now released a Statement of Common Ground which represents a significant move forward to determine the shorter-term planning for our harbour's vulnerable coasts. <https://www.havant.gov.uk> (& search for LANGSTONE MILL POND to view the Havant Borough Council press release.)

However, there remains a national imperative to look further into the future, and we have discussed with representatives of the Environment Agency the need for the Government to get its head around the urgent requirement for a long-term adaptation strategy.

We all know that global warming will now be between 2-3°C out to 2100. The resulting sea level rise will result in our nation's low-lying coastal communities (including Hayling) becoming unsustainable at some point. In the interim, we must use these vulnerable areas for more flexible purposes, including food production, leisure in all its dimensions, and wildlife preservation. The last thing we should be doing is building housing dormitories based on a false sustainability premise which will just increase the magnitude of the problem. The majority of our harbour coastlines are never going to attract long-term defence funding based on the Environment Agency cost/benefit calculation system.

If Natural England and the Conservancy wish to attain a responsible leadership role, they need to place far more emphasis on the future, and engage with the Environment Agency on longer-term planning based on the known facts and best forecast intelligence. Their ultra-short-term position would have resulted in an unnecessary and catastrophic destruction of the Mill Pond area in a few hours. 'Managed Retreat' or 'No Intervention' is not a gentle process, as Southmoor proves. These unelected bodies should be bending over backwards to establish credibility as there is no democratic oversight on their opinions or judgements.

We must also comment on the Press Release mentioned above. Sadly, it does not recognise the huge amount of time and effort from the residents and friends of Langstone who were instrumental in fighting for the Mill Pond's survival. The photo of the water meadow in it is misleading – it seems to show ingress from the sea, but this is not the case. The water meadow is flooded because the chalk stream feeding the Mill Pond has been blocked with debris, so the stream took a new route to the sea. Without the blockage, the field would be dry.

Press Releases from HBC should always be designed to support and enhance relationships with the electorate.

It is also important for us to note that Natural England have chosen to remain silent and not to add any words of congratulation or support.