

Save Our Island submission to the Hayling Herald - December 2022

THIS month we can start with a bit of good news.

The Boundary Commission has at last recognised, based on objections to their realignment proposals from many organisations, including Save Our Island, that Hayling Island should be treated as an exception to the boundary rules. You may remember they had proposed coupling Langstone with West Hayling together, forcing two communities which have little in common except the A3023 or risk Hayling Island losing one Councillor. Thankfully they have redrawn the boundary to keep Hayling Island separate. We will continue to be represented by 6 Councillors, 3 East and 3 West.

Now that Havant Borough Council have reorganised, they have been working hard on plans for the future, and have now published three key draft proposals: The Hayling Island Coastal Strategy, the Local Plan Consultations, and the 3-year Strategy. We will be studying these carefully and will provide our opinions and concerns in each area a bit later!

These documents demonstrate that Havant Borough Council, under new management, is taking a more serious approach to planning the future for the residents of the Borough. However, there are some overriding constraints which impact all the programmes:

The first is the Government's housing allocation for the Borough of 516 per year. You will recall that we and Havant Borough Council separately requested a reappraisal from the Secretary of State for Housing as it is unrealistic and impossible. We have not received a response to date.

In the draft Local Plan Havant Borough Council have repeated their impenetrable mantra "we will leave no stone unturned" to chase this goal.

If we assume the 516 building target was achieved, and that woodlands, parks, SSSIs and school playing fields are protected, and we do not build in the Cat 3 flood zones, then complete urbanisation of the Borough will be achieved in approximately 20 years. What happens to the next generations then? This approach of building a blanket of 'fill in' housing, rather than building new towns or villages with the commensurate infrastructure support, will destroy communities.

The second area is Flood Risk and Protection. The Environment Agency urgently need to update their flood risk forecasts to reflect the latest predictions of Global Warming. The current flood risk maps are still based on the 1.5°C target being achieved. The latest accepted projections are between 2°C and 4°C increase.

Also, the flood protection funding process should be centralised to provide a clear avenue for organisations like the Coastal Partners to appeal to for protection monies. The current system has funding monies distributed amongst many organisations including Havant Borough Council, Hampshire County Council, Environment Agency, Natural England, Highways England. This means that Coastal Partners have to spend increasing amounts of time inventing imaginative justifications and doing the rounds, cap in hand, to all these bodies. It will also be very important for agencies like Coastal Partners to understand as soon as possible the total levy of grant for each project. Government funding is based on the Cost Benefit Ratio from 0 to 8 or more: 0 = no funding; 8 = complete funding. Hayling Island coastal areas are between 1 and 3 on this scale, which means funding will be problematic in any event.

We will lead a group of like-minded residents, with support from Coastal Partners, to make a case to the Secretary of State for Housing regarding the issue of our vulnerable Island community, to change the planning process in order to maintain a sustainable and safe future for our residents.