

SAVE OUR ISLAND ARTICLE FOR JUNE 2023 HAYLING HERALD

WHO'S IN CHARGE?

SAVE OUR ISLAND have received a response to our concerns on Flood Risk Management from the Minister for Environmental Quality & Resilience Rebecca Pow MP.

The response is unacceptable, and is deliberately insulting. We have written a polite but firm rebuttal to Alan Mak MP, asking for his position on this subject and for advice on how to prise this secret door to the Government plans open. The response we received is clearly written by a Civil Service team following the usual dictum of change nothing and toot the department horn.

The lack of ministerial continuity is fostering this obvious thesis towards obtaining a doctorate in obfuscation and plausible deniability. There is yet another Secretary in State in charge of Defra and the Environment – the musical chairs continue. This Portfolio must be the “one to avoid at all costs”. We are now on the 4th Secretary of State responsible for the Environment since 2019, with the shortest tenure being seven weeks.

So, what did we learn from the response?

- The Civic Service are in control – and out of control.
- None of our questions or suggestions were answered.
- There is no plan to assess the flood risk of flooding from rainfall or water-table increases – two major issues on Hayling.
- No information on if and when Defra intend to update their ancient flood risk analysis and category definitions limits – all of which are so old as to be misleading and cause bad planning decisions to be made. The water table issue with the current Sinah Lane development is an example. Some of the old flood risk data goes back to 2009 – continuing to use this data, which understates the risks to a potentially dangerous level, is effectively not telling the truth to the electorate. The UN and the world's media know the real risks now, but Defra doesn't! Or is it that they just don't want you to know?
- No recognition on the need for placing a realistic cost/benefit value on leisure destinations like Hayling. We will stay at the bottom of the list for protection funding.
- No answer on our suggestions on how to simplify the Flood Protection Funding Process. In fact, they have made it worse by adding even more quangos with the power to provide funding. But of course, the total money available has not increased, giving the cake even more slices for no logical reason. The objective should be to “spend the money”, not put more quangos between the Local Authorities and the loot.

We strongly urge our Councillors (old and new) to grip this issue by the throat, and use their positions to shake some answers out of the Government.