

SAVE OUR ISLAND ARTICLE FOR DECEMBER 2023 HAYLING HERALD

SAVE OUR ISLAND have now received a response from Natural England on our plea to protect the Langstone Mill Pond Area – which is eroding fast. Also, the Chichester Harbour Conservancy has commissioned a study by Royal HaskoningDHV addressing the issue. Both documents follow the Natural England view that if there is not a direct risk to property – then coastal roll-back is their chosen solution. No one is denying that that Climate Change is coming, but it is important to understand the impact on large low-lying areas like South Havant and Hayling Island, where there is no natural land rise to effectively limit flooding. Establishment and maintenance of protection seawalls must form an integral part of any flood risk adaptation plan. The area at risk includes our water supply, Budds Farm, the M27 and the whole of Hayling Island.

It is sad to relate that we believe Natural England's views on Chichester Harbour are not based on fact. Coastal Squeeze may be a problem elsewhere, but the loss of saltmarsh here is not due to sea rise nor hard coastal defences, as incorrectly blamed in their response. Our harbour waters have only risen by 2.5" since 1950, and there has been no extensive hard protection installed. In fact, the opposite is true, with the additions of saltmarshes at Cobnor, Langstone and Medmerry. The loss of our saltmarshes is poison from nitrates, phosphates and sewage flooding the grasses which have now been covered in green slime (see picture) and are being swept away, and the latest Government backdown on nitrate control will make matters worse.

Using generalised justifications in this way is specifically warned against in the Government Guidance Paper "What is Coastal Squeeze", published by DEFRA and the EA Project FRS17187.

The lengthy (76 page) report from the Consultant is basically a collection of existing evidence and reports of varying credibility. There is little new or original analysis provided. (<https://coastalpartners.org.uk/project/langstone-mill-pond-to-wade-lane-havant>)

The Management Summary parrots Natural England that hard defences in the Harbour are a major cause of the loss of saltmarsh. This statement is not proven, nor is it supported by any factual evidence. So why is it not questioned in this "independent" study?

Hundreds of acres of saltmarsh have been lost since 1950, due to poisoning by nitrate runoff and sewage pollution. Southmoor appears to be going the same way and there is no discussion on this issue.

It seems to confirm that if you repeat something unproven often enough, it will attain a halo of truth.

There is no independence demonstrated in the Flood Risk Analysis. They have chosen to use the current EA data, which we know is out of date and understates the risks by a significant margin. There has been no attempt to relate this to the latest data from the IPCC.

The point is that the situation will become worse – and sooner than documented. Consequently, the conclusions and recommendations will have a declining relationship with reality.

Breaching the seawall at Wade Lane (Phase One recommendation) has no logical explanation, and the “move the pond” option in Phase Three is a typical tactic – give the public a strong recommendation which is known to be unaffordable. This issue, that has not been addressed by any organisation up to this point, is that protection seawalls will be required – the decision that is required is where to build them.

For us on Hayling, this “coastal roll-back” view of these unelected but powerful bodies must be rejected. Since 1350, the survival of our Island has been based on maintaining coastal seawalls, together with the deep ditch network running through the one-way valves surrounding the Island. It is irrational to ignore this undeniable reality.



Picture shows how green slime takes over.