



SOUTHWOLD AND REYDON SOCIETY

Protecting the character and amenities of Southwold & Reydon

Mr Kerry Blair
Director of Operations
Waveney District Council

Cc Cllr Mark Bee, Leader WDC
Ccs Ladd and Beavan, Ward Members for Southwold and Reydon
Ccs Cllr Michael Rowan Robinson, Mayor of Southwold and Lesley Beevor, Southwold Town Clerk

By email only

20 February 2019

Dear Mr Blair,

Southwold Harbour Lands Consultation

I am writing in response to your Council's latest proposals for the governance and operation of Southwold Harbour and its Associated Lands, including the Caravan Park. On behalf of some 400 members of this Society, our Committee has discussed this matter in depth at both our January and February meetings. These are the considered views of the Society.

First, as we have stated in previous correspondence, we continue to believe that a Trust model for the governance of Southwold Harbour Lands is the best solution. For this reason, we would urge you to reconsider the status of Southwold Harbour and seek its designation as a Trust Port. This would ensure the full independence of the Trust Board/Management Committee and restore trust among the many stakeholders and members of the community who believe your Council has not managed the harbour lands in their interests. This designation need not mean that the strategic role of your Council and its East Suffolk successor is not recognised or accepted. The Council, together with Southwold Town Council, could – and should – play a key role in the appointment of Trustees or members of any management committee and would be a key partner of a Trust Harbour Board.

Secretary: Philip O'Hear - Rowan Croft, Rissemere Lane East, Reydon, Southwold, IP18 6SW

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However, recognising the strategic role of your Council in determining and securing the future of Southwold Harbour, the Caravan park, the remaining Harbour Lands and the Blyth Estuary itself (all of which are mutually interdependent, as the Council now appears to recognise), we can see some merit in the current proposal, provided certain conditions are met and guaranteed into the future. These are:

1. The proposed Management Committee must be enabled to act independently as far as possible, with its duties and powers delegated as a combination of those of a Trust Board and Management Committee as set out in the Ports Good Governance Guidelines.
2. The future ownership of all the Harbour Lands must be guaranteed in perpetuity such that they are permanently protected from sale. If a Trust Port solution were adopted, of course, this condition could be met by means of the lease to the Trust Board.
3. All profit (income less legitimate costs) from the Harbour Lands, that is from the Harbour itself, the Caravan Park and the Camping Field (assuming this continues to be operated by your Council on behalf of Southwold Town Council) and any grazing marsh income, must be ring-fenced for use in, or to preserve the future of, the Harbour Lands. This must include an appropriate financial contribution from the Harbour Lands to the maintenance of flood protection in the estuary since this is vital to the continued viability of the harbour itself.
4. The membership of Board/Management Committee should be balanced to reflect the roles and expertise of stakeholders. We propose: Two appointed by WDC, Two appointed by STC (none of these four need be elected members but could be appointed on the basis of their expertise), Four Independent Members appointed to represent stakeholders and to bring required expertise (eg from Harbour Businesses, Harbour Users, Statutory Agencies etc). An independent Chairman should be appointed by the other eight members of the Board/Committee whose expertise and experience should be appropriate to the role. The terms of office should be four years for those appointed by the Councils and six years for the independent members and Chairman but reappointment for a further term should be allowed. This would provide both continuity and the opportunity for change and an element of community control through the elected members.

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5. The constitution (Aims and Articles of a Trust) of the Board/Management Committee must allow it to operate independently but require and enable it:
 - a. to work solely in the interests of the Harbour Lands, their users and stakeholders;
 - b. to contribute to the protection of the Estuary;
 - c. to work in partnership with Waveney/East Suffolk Council and Southwold Town council;
 - d. to develop a strategic and financial business plan to ensure investment is secured for the Southwold Harbour Lands and for the protection of the Blyth Estuary;
 - e. be responsible for an agreed budget and ensure the financial results of the Southwold Harbour Lands are properly accounted for and reported to the Department for Transport;
 - f. to raise the necessary investment funds to improve the infrastructure of the Harbour Lands.
 - g. to investigate how the Board/Committee can benefit from an associated charity to support fundraising and ensure available tax advantages are claimed (eg as is now being done successfully for the Alde and Ore Estuary).

6. There should be a single management structure for Southwold Harbour Lands responsible to the Board/Committee for all operational (including Health and Safety) and financial matters. This is necessary to protect the integrity of the Harbour lands as a single entity.

Without rehearsing past concerns, our Society considers this consultation represents the last chance for a successful conclusion to the work to establish a long-term future governance of the Southwold Harbour Lands that has both the confidence of the community and the ability to raise the investment needed for long-term viability and success. Without this, the combination of loss of business and stakeholder confidence and the ongoing rise in sea levels will, literally empty and then erode a vibrant resource in our community – and one that contributes significantly to the economy of Waveney/East Suffolk.

We ask that you take our response very seriously and hope you will be able to arrive at a long-term solution that meets our hopes and expectations.

Yours sincerely,

Philip O’Hear, Secretary

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