

# Friends of Penzance Harbour

[www.friendsofpzharbour.org](http://www.friendsofpzharbour.org)

## **How it all started**

The Friends of Penzance Harbour (FoPzH) was established after a Cornwall Council exhibition in September 2008 unveiled plans (Option A) for the redevelopment of the South Pier in Penzance. Eighty five percent of the people who attended that exhibition and left comments were against the plans. FoPzH was formed to give a voice to those objectors and to identify and promote better alternatives that would not only provide for the Scilly Link but also bring economic and other advantages to Penzance. The organisers are all full-time residents in the area.

## **The Falmouth myth**

Within a few weeks of opposition starting in Penzance, key officials involved in the project were trying to intimidate residents into accepting Option A by threatening that if they didn't the Scilly Link would move to Falmouth. Unfortunately around £3.5m had already been spent on developing Option A before residents were asked what they thought about it.

Clearly Cornwall Council is not going to give up on it easily, but the threat of Falmouth is a hollow one. Falmouth is 24 miles further from the Scillies than Penzance, so moving the Scilly Link to Falmouth would result in a huge increase in costs. It would add at least £250,000 per year to the fuel bill alone, and that's at today's prices. (Imagine what fuel prices will be like before the Council's loan to buy the ship is paid off in 15-20 years time!) The extra journey time – 4½ - 5 hours - will also destroy the day tripper trade: no-one is going to brave some of the country's roughest seas for nearly ten hours to spend a couple of hours on the Islands. Costs up, revenues down: a disaster for the economics of the service, and for islanders too.

And you can't compensate for the extra distance by increasing the ship's speed, as this just adds to the already considerable fuel costs.

You don't have to take our word for all of this: the Council's own consultants ruled this option out in 2004. It is also worth remembering that the current operator of the service – the Isles of Scilly Steamship Company – have recently said that they intend to continue operating the service for the foreseeable future and are confident that with "manageable" investment they will be able to continue to operate their existing vessels. In short, the chance of the service being lost to Penzance is zero.

Some scaremongering folk have also put about the rumour that we might lose the rail link to Falmouth too. It's nonsense. As First Great Western have pointed out, we have the train depot, the track is almost entirely a dual one, and the line also serves Camborne, Redruth and Poole, earmarked for major development over the next 20 years, as well as St Ives.

## **What it's really all about**

Reading press reports and listening to the radio, you could be mistaken for thinking that objections to Option A related solely to the loss of Battery Rocks beach, but nothing could be further from the truth. The main objections are as follows:

1. It will seriously harm a nationally important listed structure (the South Pier). This is backed up by the Council's own Historic Building Analysis which recommends elevating the listing of the pier to make it part of the most important 7% of historic buildings in the whole country.
2. It will amount to creating an industrial estate in the middle of our seafront. Freight storage sheds, big and noisy forklift trucks buzzing about. Penzance would have the only industrial estate on the south west coastal path: not exactly a tourist attraction!
3. It will put a block on future regeneration of the area. The present unacceptable lorry traffic delivering to the harbour will continue. We can say goodbye to plans for linking the harbour to the town centre (which is precisely what they are planning to do in Falmouth, by the way.)
4. By degrading the natural, heritage and amenity values of the seafront it will discourage tourists and those considering a move to the area. So it will damage businesses that serve tourists and residents.
5. The scheme involves purchasing a new ship that is too big to be maintained in the town's Dry Dock, so jobs would be put at risk. The loss of this work could easily mean the difference between survival of the yard and insolvency.
6. During the construction period - 18 months to 2 years, certainly covering two summer seasons - we can expect widespread dust and noise pollution, a "continuous steam" of very heavy lorries through the town, added congestion, and restrictions to on-street parking. No doubt some guest-house owners would benefit in the short term by putting up contractors' staff, but even they would lose out in the longer term.

## **We have a choice**

Option A is not in the best long-term interests of Penzance. There are solid economic arguments for opposing option A, and there is no need to fear being usurped by Falmouth. A number of better options exist, including the use of existing harbour-side buildings and a freight depot away from the South Pier. Investigations have shown these are "workable" solutions. All that's required is for the Council to take them seriously, and for this to happen Option A must be stopped.

To help stop Option A go to:

<http://www.friendsofpzharbour.org/pdfs/HowToHelpEdition7.pdf>