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PENZANCE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE



NEWSLETTER



Issue 51

18th July 2011

Be re-assured that your Editor is engaged in a heavy session of self-flagellation for the delay is getting this newsletter out to you all. The newsletter will be coming out on a fortnightly basis in future unless events require more frequent updates.

If you would like to see your business advertised in this newsletter then please send me (dick.cliffe@gmail.com) your advert and ensure "Pz CoC Newsletter advert" is in the message title.

MP's Proposals for IOS Ferry Link

The MP's Harbour Working Group has met several times recently. The last meeting on 15 July. Steven Richford has attended the meetings as Chamber representative.

The objective has been to find a way developing a solution for Penzance to the point where Cornwall Council could be asked to pick it up and deliver it without the risk of a repeat of the internecine warfare seen over the past two years. For this to happen there has to be a scheme for the Harbour which is essentially agreed within the local community, deliverable within the lower budget and blessed in principle by the funders (DfT and Convergence). There needs to be a 'Client' or owner of the project during this interim phase and the Town Council is being asked to adopt this role. The MP is seeking some financial support for consultants to assist the Town Council in this task. He is also proposing that the Town Council accept the Penzance Seafront Forum as a junior partner to help with community consultation. The role of 'Client' for Penzance Harbour works is of a course a 'poison chalice' second to none but there is a shortage of alternatives for this essential project.

This interim phase with the Town Council as Client is supposed to finish in Dec 2011 with DfT giving its blessing to a plan with broad local support. The IOS Council announced on the 15th July that their proposal for St Mary's Quay was ready for submission. Curiously the Minister (Norman Baker) has stated that work on St Mary's will not be funded until a solution for Penzance is agreed. This is a millstone the Islanders do not need and risks losing ERDF match funding for both St Mary's and Penzance should the debate in Penzance drag on. The only reason for this impediment is political because the only common element is the vessel and budgets and permissions are likely to limit anything radically different (vessel-wise) from today.

Penzance Town Council is meeting on 18 July to decide whether to proceed as proposed by the MP's Working Group.

Harbour Car Park Development Proposals.

The Chairman had been approached by BBC Cornwall over the issue of Penzance Harbour Car Park development proposed by Olympian Homes. The Harbour Car Park currently provides around 700 parking spaces and Cornwall Council has a long term contractual commitment to maintain 500+ car parking spaces in support of The Wharfedale Shopping Centre. The development proposals are not yet in the public domain but it is a large mixed use development believed to include 5000+ sq m of retail space

including a supermarket and decked parking. See BBC Internet news item for our Chairman's comments here <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-cornwall-14025162>.

The new Harbour Car Park proposal is delaying planning decisions on the proposed Tesco's extension and the new Sainsbury's store proposed for the Penzance Heliport site. This is because under national planning regulations there is what is called the 'sequential test'. The purpose of the test is to ensure that out-of-town locations are only considered after town centre and edge of town centre applications have been considered and turned down. As there has been no consultation of the Harbour Car Park proposal any planning decision is a long way off meaning that a decision on the Sainsbury's application is even further off. This has to be a concern for BIH who need to sell the Heliport site to meet financial obligations.

Pz Seafront Forum – Presentation to Members 5 July 2011

Hadrian Pigott, Chairman of Penzance Seafront Forum, and Keith Bell (local architect) briefed the Chamber members on the recently formed Forum. Hadrian Pigott explained the initial objective was to establish a local planning forum to help Penzance speak with one voice on what it wanted to see happen in the iconic seafront area. In the longer term he hoped it would develop into Development Trust instigating regeneration projects and delivering them with private or public sector partners. Members questioned Hadrian Pigott closely on how this initiative would succeed where other past initiatives had eventually fizzled out after delivering little.

Keith Bell displayed a satellite view of Penzance Seafront and invited members to identify the area in most urgent need of attention. This apparently simple task proved difficult because, as we all know, there are many pressing issues concerning the seafront.

Hadrian Pigott was grateful for the Chamber's support in getting the Forum off the ground and helping to run a stall on Quay Day that had attracted over 160 inputs (pins placed into the map) from the public. Whilst Chamber members were generally skeptical of the Forum's chances they wished him success and were grateful for him taking time out to brief Chamber members in person.

The Chamber's representatives on the Forum are Dick Cliffe (dick.cliffe@gmail.com) and Steve Richfords (StevenRichford@richfords.com).

Pz Seafront Forum Seeking Town Council Support.

The Forum has met with Cornwall Council and proposed that the Council should submit an application (to Dept for Communities & Local Govt) for the Forum to be a "Neighbourhood Planning Front Runner" - essentially a local community planning 'guinea pig' to see how the Government's Localism Act works in practice. Cornwall Council require that the Forum have Penzance Town Council's support. The Town Council is considering the Forum's proposal at its meeting on the 18th July along with the MP's Harbour WG's proposal that the Town Council act as Client for the Penzance Harbour project with support from the Forum for community consultation purposes.

Please subscribe to the Forum's email newsletter at the website (www.penzanceseafront.com) to be kept informed on important developments. There is also a link to a 'Twitter' account for those that use this medium.

Penzance Empty Shop Numbers Falling.

Amidst the national retailing gloom it is pleasing to hear from The Cornishman that Penzance is faring better than many towns in Cornwall with 10.7% shops currently vacant. Truro did slightly better with 10.3% but St Austell (25.2%), Camborne (20.1%) and Redruth (18.2%) were much worse.

Penwith Radio looking for Business Support

Please look in your email inbox and respond to our Secretary's email (17 July) regarding business support for Penwith Community Radio who are currently in the process of applying for a community radio licence and are seeking support for their application from local businesses who may be interested in either advertising or sponsorship of the station/shows. No commitment to advertise with Penwith Radio is required.

Outlook for Affordable Housing seen as Deteriorating.

Affordable housing is an intractable problem in the Cornwall and the South West generally. Two items from Rural Services Network highlight the expected adverse impact of Government policies.

"Rural areas musn't lose out on the provision of new affordable homes, argues independent housing consultant Stuart Davies".

<http://www.rsonline.org.uk/Opinion/We-need-affordable-rural-homes.html>

"Localism 'will mean fewer homes"

<http://www.rsonline.org.uk/Community/Localism-will-mean-fewer-homes.html>

CORNWALL CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

HMRC Policy Change could see even more Businesses Close

See <http://www.cornwallchamber.co.uk/news/business/361.php>

At the start of the week after Habitat goes into Administration, Dolphin Bathrooms, Moben Kitchens, Sharp Bedrooms and Jane Norman are poised to go through Administration and many businesses have been unable to make their latest quarter's rent payment, the discovery that a policy change at HMRC could see many businesses forced to close is not welcomed.

In an attempt to recover in excess of £650m of arrears on Time to Pay Agreements alone, HMRC's policy on distrain has changed, and not changed for the better.

- Once distraint has taken place, businesses will be given 5 days to pay in FULL
- If payment is not made an auctioneer will be instructed to value, remove and sell assets irrespective of the financial return to HMRC
- No time will be given to negotiate
- Assets will not be left for a liquidator to sell
- Applications will be made to court to sell the assets of a company in Administration

Businesses will be able to try and buy back their assets at auction, but not before.

Posted 28th Jun 2011 by member Straight Talking Business

Editor's comment: Business Debt Line (0800 1976026) is a trusted and quality assured not-for-profit source of good debt advice for businesses. It is vital to get advice early because options are limited once goods have been seized. Website <http://www.bdl.org.uk/englandandwales.asp> (beware of websites imitating BDL).

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