

PENZANCE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE



NEWSLETTER



Issue 55

31 Oct 2011

Editors Comments.

Well some good news to report in this newsletter. The Chambers efforts to support the building of a Sainsburys Superstore have borne fruit with the Strategic Planning Committee giving its approval on 20 Oct. It helped to have the support of the Town Council and lots of individuals writing in – thank you to all that did so. No business in Penzance is pleased that BIH had to sell its Heliport but it was unavoidable for BIH to survive. At this rather grim time it is reassuring to see a major investment in Penzance; it is a vote of confidence in the future Penzance as a retail destination.

The Sainsburys decision makes successful relocation of BIH operations to the proposed St Erth site a priority and understandably there is opposition from people living nearby. Details of the application and how to register your own views on the matter are provided below – letters of support to the Planners would be welcome. Whilst there are a number of issues that might decide the future of the IOS helicopter link, the lack of a heliport in 2012 has to be top of the list.

Also in this edition are details of the new Penzance Harbour Project (lets hope it fares better than the last one) and Cornwall Councils proposals to save money by closing a number of public toilets in Penzance and elsewhere. It is hard to comprehend the thinking given the overwhelming importance of tourism to area. For the full details and who to write to see below.

Myself and Mike Waters are keen to receive feedback from members. Not every member supports every policy of the Chamber. We are cautious about claiming monolithic support for any position we take and it is helpful to know the views of those that dissent so we can reflect the range of opinion when questioned about the views of Chamber members.

Dick Cliffe

Editor

Sainsbury's Store Application Approved

The Strategic Planning Committee approved the Sainsburys/BIH application to build a Sainsburys superstore on the Heliport site by a large majority ...in the end. The Chamber spoke in support of the application with Dick Cliffe as Vice Chair standing in for Mike Waters who was out of action due to back problems. At times it did not feel like it was going the right way with St Erth (proposed alternative heliport) and a misunderstanding of the town centre vitality problem clouding the issue. Eventually more considered viewpoints prevailed. There was an acknowledgement that the site was being sold because it had to be sold for BIH to survive. The issue then became the proposal itself. It helped enormously that so many people had supported the Sainsburys proposal both during the in-Town public consultation and through submissions to Planning Officer. Approximately 75% of the 206 public responses to the Planning Officer supported the Sainsbury's application. Those against were often motivated by concerns about the proposed relocation of the heliport – a separate issue given that the sale of Penzance Heliport cannot be avoided.

Cllr Mario Fonk, the local member for the application, spoke at the meeting and stated he had been received a very large number of letters and emails in support. Cllr Jon Pender, Penzance Town

Council, spoke in support. With the application also recommended by the planners Councillors felt they had no justification to refuse the application. Those objecting were exercised more by concern about the principle of supermarkets than the reality of the retail sector today, what major retail destinations need to offer to remain attractive and the wishes of consumers.

Tesco Extension not Approved

Tesco had applied to extend their Penzance store to increase the non-food product range. They were heard first at the Strategic Planning Committee meeting on 20 Oct and it was clear from the beginning that it was doomed. Two issues sunk the application. The first there was the issue of building the new car park on Ponsandane Field which is the only remaining open green space separating Penzance from the business/retail park on Eastern Green – retaining such green spaces to avoid ribbon development is a valid planning . The truly fatal issue was that the Environment Agency had an in-principle objection to the extended car park being built on a flood plane. Representatives for Tesco made the point that the Planning Committee had the legal authority to over-rule/ignore the objection but the Councillors were having none of it and there was a unanimous vote to refuse planning permission (the Planning Officer had recommended refusal).

St Erth Heliport Proposals Submitted

You can find details BIH's proposals under planning application PA11/07713 on the Cornwall Council online planning register. There is already a concerted campaign underway by objectors. One can understand why residents in Cannons Town are unhappy, particularly those next to railway line and close to landing site, but the centre of St Erth is 1.0 km from the proposed site – Britons Hill Penzance is a similar distance from the current Heliport and that has hardly become a no go zone with blighted house prices. Given that Lands End Airport is closed off to BIH there is strong logic to locating the new heliport at the St Erth site given its proximity to the A30 and a main line railway station. It is a vitally important link for the IOS given the greater vulnerability of the fixed wing Skybus service to disruption by bad weather. Islanders need your support so please comment if you have a mind to.

Planning application and papers:

<http://planning.cornwall.gov.uk:8181/rpp/index.asp?caseref=PA11/07713>

To file comments online go to:

<http://planning.cornwall.gov.uk/online-applications/> and search for PA11/07713.

To write to the Planning Officer:

Email Peter.Bainbridge@cornwall.gov.uk (Ref: "BIH St Erth application PA11/07713")

Note: As stated previously, BIH had no choice but to sell Penzance Heliport because the site was mortgaged to the Bank of Ireland to secure various loans understood to total £12 million (from last set of accounts publicly available). It was a case of BIH selling the site or risk the Bank of Ireland exercising its right to do so thereby closing down BIH. The issue now is whether there is an economic future in continuing the service (hence the concern over Air passenger Duty proposals – see next item) and a heliport in West Cornwall to operate from?

Air Passenger Duty & IOS Helicopter Link

You will have read in the Cornishman that the Government is considering an extension of air passenger duty (APD) to include smaller aircraft including helicopters and private jets.

Currently APD is not payable on aircraft or helicopters with an authorized take-off weight below 10 tonnes or aircraft with fewer than 20 seats. The BIH Sikorsky S-61 weighs about 8.5 tons fully loaded and so is currently exempt APD as are Skybus aircraft.

The Govt proposal is (to quote the document):

4.12 The Government proposes a per passenger tax for passengers aboard aircraft with an authorised take-off weight in excess of 5.7 tonnes where APD is not already payable. The proposal is to have a

single rate of duty per passenger in 2012-13, irrespective of distance travelled, equivalent to the highest standard rate of APD. The precise definition of flights covered by the new tax will be determined in light of consultation evidence and responses.

See; http://cdn.hm-treasury.gov.uk/2011budget_airpassenger.pdf for full details.

The proposed new *highest standard rate of APD* is £144-£166 (proposed 3 band highest rate). The proposed new lowest band of APD is £13-£16 (economy) or £26-£32 (standard).

It is unlikely that the Government has any intention of imposing the high APD rates to public scheduled flights in small aircraft – these have probably been inadvertently lumped in with private jets due to clumsy drafting of the consultation document. What does seem to be intended is that APD will be applied to smaller aircraft and helicopters.

The impact, assuming the new rates of APD are either ~£15 or ~£30 per flight, is a £30 (+16%) or £60 (+32%) increase on return helicopter fares to St Mary's and Tresco.

It appears that Skybus aircraft will continue to escape APD altogether because its largest aircraft appears to be just below the 5.7 tonne limit.

Given that BIH has suffered declining passenger numbers in recent years due to competition from Skybus, it is difficult to see them surviving if standard tickets rise to £220 or £250.

The Governments consultation on APD closed in June and a decision is imminent.

New Penzance Harbour Project Kicked Off

The Penzance Harbour Scheme Management Board has now met 3 times. It includes 3 members of Penzance Seafront Forum, one of whom is your editor. The aim of the MB is to:

“oversee the effective delivery of a preferred scheme that responds efficiently to the operational and functional needs of the operator whilst capitalising on community benefit wherever possible and does not preclude community ambitions for the future development of the harbour.”

The progress to date is that Hyder have been appointed as the consultants for perform an “Options Review” on Penzance Harbour. A consultant's brief has been drawn up and agreed both within the Management Board and with the Consultants following the last meeting on Wed 26 Oct. The Town Council have received a quote from Hyder for the package of work and approached the DfT for a grant to cover most of the cost (Town Council contributing £10,000). The DfT has been pressing the Town Council to submit its request so a prompt turn around is expected.

One of the requirements from the DfT was that the Town Council setup a limited company to accept the funds and deliver the Penzance Harbour “Options Review”. The consultants brief (and the budget to deliver it) includes a significant amount for community consultation which will run throughout the process.

The target dates are Feb 2012 for identification of the preferred option and Apr 2012 for its submission as a strategic plan to the DfT. If everything works perfectly (lets ignore the past) then DfT will bless it and Cornwall Council will be asked to deliver it with a combination of DfT grant and ERDF funding.

The project funding is expected to be about 50% of the original Option A funding so we are talking about a substantially reduced scope for this project. Expectations will have to be managed.

See Cornishman online item below:

<http://www.thisiscornwall.co.uk/New-harbour-initiative-launched/story-13677200-detail/story.html>

To keep up to date follow the Sea Front Forum's Facebook site at www.facebook.com/PzSF001

....and register for the newsletter at www.penzanceseafront.com if not already registered.

Public Inconvenience proposed by Cornwall Council

Cornwall Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) proposes reducing spending on public

conveniences by approximately 50% from £2.85 million (2010/11) to 1.49 million in £2013/14. The level of cuts is high because, to quote the Council, they are "under no statutory obligation" to provide public conveniences. They intend to achieve the savings by closing some toilets and transferring others to town and parish councils (with some funding) however Cornwall Council expects town and parish councils to be able to run them more efficiently resulting in savings.

The Public Convenience WG report proposes achieving the necessary savings by closing 114 out of 247 public conveniences (saving £1.1 million). The remaining toilets are proposed for transfer to Town and Parish Councils who are expected to be able to reduce costs of operating these toilets from £1.741 million by 14.5% (saving £251,000).

The Public Convenience Working Group Final Report (Oct 2011) can be found here:
<http://democracy.cornwall.gov.uk/mgConvert2PDF.aspx?ID=36222>

Agenda (item EE/162) and minutes of the meeting discussing this topic can be found here:
<http://democracy.cornwall.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=595&MId=3120&Ver=4>

For the Penzance the proposed closures are:

Location	Cost
Penzance Penalverne	£12,241.94
Penzance Clarence Street (St Clare)	£4,834.11
Penzance South Pier	£13,944.40
Penzance Superloos	£22,686.48
Penzance Newlyn Fore Street	£6,838.85
Penzance Morrab Gardens	£4,016.69
Penzance Wherry Town	£12,810.06

Comment. There is a need to review provision of public toilets because standards are highly variable, opening hours irregular and some may be unnecessary. The running of public toilets is also a function that ought to be more efficient if organized locally rather than from Truro. However, slashing the budget by 50% simply because there is no statutory obligation is grossly irresponsible. There seems to be blindness at County Hall to the obvious; Cornwall as a whole and coastal towns in particular are heavily dependent on visitors and we do not want to send the message that we aspire to third world standards of public hygiene. It is considered that public convenience closures would be a third gratuitous blow to Penzance as a tourist destination following ramping of parking charges and abandonment of the Tourism Information Centre.

If you are concerned then you might like to write to the Committee Chairman with a copy to your local Councillor.

The Chairman of the Environment and Economy Overview and Scrutiny Committee and also the Public Convenience WG is:

Cllr Fred Greenslade,

Email fred.greenslade@cornwall.gov.uk

Address: Trevarno, 32 Wellington Road, St Dennis, St Austell, Cornwall, PL26 8BN.

Protection from HMRC Tax Inspections

Accountants often offer small businesses insurance to cover the costs of an HMRC tax/PAYE inspection which can be substantial even if you prove to be "whiter than white". The Federation of Smaller Businesses includes this package as part of its membership and depending upon your circumstances this can be an attractive solution irrespective of the other benefits of FSB membership.

More details of the service the FSB offer here: <http://www.fsb.org.uk/tax-protection>

Taxman urges South West employers to ditch 'A N Other' in PAYE returns

Employers in the South West are being urged to get their PAYE paperwork in order, after more than 500 returns incorrectly claimed to employ "A N Other" in 2009/10.

Every year, employers send PAYE data to HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC), which gives details of employees' tax and national insurance contributions. However, it is not always accurate. This can cause problems for the employee, for example, incorrect amounts being deducted from their pay. It can also use up valuable employer and HMRC time and money putting the error right.

As well as 507 "A N Others", employer returns submitted across the UK for 2009/10 revealed the following incorrect information:

- 128 staff entered as Mr, Ms or Mrs "Dummy"
- 572 people whose surnames only included the letter X, ranging from "Mr X" to "Mrs XXXXXX"
- 75 staff with the surname "Casual", 11 "Cleaners", 9 "Workers" and 6 "Students"
- 824 employees with the surname "Unknown" and
- 40 people were apparently 200 years old or more after incorrect dates of birth were submitted.

For more information on getting your employer data right, visit

<http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/rti/employerfaqs.htm#7>

Employers can trace a national insurance number by using HMRC NINO trace at

<http://search2.hmrc.gov.uk/kb5/hmrc/forms/view.page?record=IAQUiB2-5w&formId=404>

RURAL COMMUNITY NETWORK

(<http://www.rsnonline.org.uk/news>)

New £80m fund for Small Grants to Community Groups

An £80m fund is to provide small grants to community groups and local social action projects. The [Community First fund](#) was officially opened by Civil Society Minister Nick Hurd on Thursday (7 October). It is billed as a flagship Big Society initiative encouraging people to help each other out and giving them the tools they need to make a difference. Follow link for more details.

<http://www.rsnonline.org.uk/news/community/item/1630-%C2%A380m-community-fund-launched>

Grants for renewable heat systems

HOUSEHOLDS across the country can now apply for a government grant of up to £1,250 to help towards the cost of installing renewable heat systems.

Called the Renewable Heat Premium Payment Scheme, the programme is targeting households without mains gas.

"We are keen to promote this funding to ensure as many rural households as possible benefit from it before the funding ends in March 2012," said a government spokesman.

Eligible systems include biomass boilers, ground and air source heat pumps, and solar thermal hot water systems. More details at:

<http://www.rsnonline.org.uk/news/community/item/1632-grants-available-for-renewable-heating>

Cornwall Chamber of Commerce

www.cornwallchamber.co.uk/

MPC minutes signal weak economic prospects, says BCC

Commenting on the MPC minutes, published today by the Bank of England, David Kern, Chief Economist at the British Chambers of Commerce (BCC), said:

“The minutes confirm that the decision earlier this month to leave rates on hold at 0.5% and to increase the QE programme from £200-275bn was unanimous. The discussion which took place before the decision shows the committee was aware that global economic circumstances have worsened, and that the UK is facing a period of weak growth in the next few quarters.....

Click here for the rest of this item. <http://www.cornwallchamber.co.uk/news/chamber/424.php>

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CHAMBER OF COMMERCE CONTACT DETAILS

Chairman. Mike Waters, Sycamores, Relubbus Lane, St Hilary, Penzance TR20 9EG

Email: mike@safetyuk.co.uk or chairman@penzancechamber.co.uk Phone: 01736 762888

Vice Chairman. Dick Cliffe, Elmsdale, Alexandra Road, Penzance TR18 4LZ

Email: dick.cliffe@gmail.com tel. 01736 331734

Secretary: Lucy Keen, email: secretary@penzancechamber.co.uk