

PENZANCE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE



NEWSLETTER

Issue 63

28 Dec 2012

Editor's Comments.

Best wishes to all Chamber members and other interested readers of this newsletter for 2013. The national economic outlook remains grim and the outlook for Cornwall no better. Welfare benefit cuts in particular will reduce disposable incomes in Cornwall next year and this follows lost jobs at the Heliport and elsewhere. Penzance has shown remarkable resilience in the past and there are a number of initiatives in the pipeline for 2013 (some touched upon below) that will promote business in Penzance once delivered. Penzance has plenty of unrealized potential and therefore the capacity to perform better compared to other towns than it has in the past. It just needs to be made to happen.

The next Chamber Committee meeting is on Tuesday 8 January in the Wharfside Conference Room (top floor, near the 'Management Office'). It will start at the earlier time of 17.45 to suit those who live out of Town. Committee Meetings are always open meetings and members are welcome to attend, especially new members.

Make a note of www.penzancechamber.co.uk, it is 'smartphone friendly' and updated much more frequently than in the past.

Best wishes,

Dick Cliffe

Chairman/Newsletter Editor

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New Members

We are pleased to welcome the following new members of the Chamber:

Bremner McKenna Associates Ltd

Penmorvah Guest House

Marine Discovery

D M Motors (Queens Street)

Great Street Award 2013 – Chapel Street in Top 3.

Chapel Street was a finalist in the Academy for Urbanism's Great Street Award 2013. The other finalists were Hope Street (Liverpool) and Exhibition Road (London). The winner was Hope Street. It is just a reminder in gloomy times that Penzance has a lot going for it.

Council Tax Benefit Changes

Cornwall Council has decided to go ahead and require all residents of working age to pay 25% of their Council Tax irrespective of income. The move is in line with central Government policy which has seen nationwide entitlements to Council Tax Benefit become optional for working age adults and funding for Council Tax Benefit (paid to Councils) reduced by on average 10%. Members with longer memories will remember the political difficulties created by the universal Poll Tax/Community Charge in the early 1980s. The difference this time is that Central Government is giving Council's the choice of imposing it on the poorest element of the community. See news links below:

Cornishman online: <http://tinyurl.com/ceehbeb>

BBC: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-20039452>

Lands End Airport.

Waterlogging of the grass strip at Lands End Airport has meant extended closures and diversion of Skybus flights to Newquay Airport. The IOSSCo are looking at options to create a more durable runway surface using a special type of matting laid on the grass surface. Having invested heavily in a new terminal building and ATC Tower it is certain to be an extra expense the Company could have done without. However, creating a durable surface is essential for Scilly, the Company and for the economy of West Cornwall.

Friends of Isles of Scilly Transport (FRIST) Update.

The islands have now been without the BIH helicopter service for 8 weeks. It was always expected that the transition from the BIH/Skybus combination to total reliance upon Skybus would be tricky given the latter's vulnerability to disruption by weather. However, exceptionally bad weather has created additional problems and especially at Lands End Airport.

FRIST had an early meeting with the Minister, Norman Baker MP, on 1 November. The FRIST delegation included two representatives from the IOS Council (its Chairman and Transport Committee Chairman) as the Minister thought it would be helpful. The Minister was not expected to roll over and agree that the islands should have a subsidized vessel operating all year round and the Minister politely declined on the grounds that the remaining commercial operator was

investing to fill the void created by BIH's withdrawal and there was the possibility that other operators might be attracted to provide services. FRIST's position was not helped by uncertainty about the IOS Council position which now appears limited to seeking a freight subsidy only. You can read the DfT official position here: <http://tinyurl.com/cmwwdrq>

FRIST has helped ensure that the Isles of Scilly have a high profile both in the media and politically. Some 2000+ people have signed up to support the campaign including 42% of the adult population of the islands. Andrew George MP capped off the year with a question on the matter during Prime Minister's Questions. The full implications of the loss of the helicopter service are still slowly unfolding.

Website: www.frist.org.uk

Facebook: www.facebook.com/groups/iostransport

Twitter: www.twitter.com/FRIST_IOS

Chairman's Comments. The FRIST campaign has helped to give the islander's plight a high political profile but a balance has to be struck between highlighting the islanders' plight and reassuring potential visitors that the islands will be open for business in 2013. Graphic accounts of the hardships and indignities experienced by some islanders needing to travel off the islands have not been published on the FRIST website. Some have been included in letters to Ministers sent upon the initiative of individuals. There is a misunderstanding that unsatisfactory transport to the islands means the remaining operator (IOSSCO) is failing. This is untrue. The IOSSCO can only provide services that are commercially sustainable as it receives no financial help at all – Scilly is unique in the UK in having no Government help with transport. For its size the IOSSCO is making a very large investment in both the Scillonian and Lands End Airport. The IOSSCO is delivering all it can on a commercial basis. There is however a gap between what the IOSSCO can provide commercially and what Scilly needs to prosper. The longer this shortfall is ignored or denied the more avoidable damage will be done to the islands with knock on effects for West Cornwall.

Penzance Harbour.

The 'coup d'état' in Cornwall Council has resulted in Cllr. Bert Biscoe becoming portfolio holder for transport in Cornwall Council. He has been keen to improve relations with Penzance Town Council and move on the Penzance Harbour improvements. However, after a burst of visits and meetings progress is, predictably, constrained by the realities of the situation which are that the new Penzance Harbour proposals are not deliverable in time to benefit from the current round of ERDF funding. Only dredging and rock armouring of South Pier are achievable in that timescale and only the rock armouring would be eligible for ERDF match funding (dredging is not eligible). Penzance Town Council need convincing that the rock armouring of South Pier is necessary as they have been lobbied by the Friends of Penzance Harbour who are against it (English Heritage accept it as a necessary evil). So far Cornwall Council has not presented its case for rock armour. Reducing overtopping by the sea on South Pier is the IOSSCO's highest priority after dredging of the harbour as it is an operational constraint and a hazard. However, the IOSSCO is agnostic on how this reduction is achieved. It is difficult to see any significant investment in Penzance Harbour from the DfT (or ERDF) beyond dredging whilst this question remains unresolved.

The most recent news is a report from Scilly Today dated 20 Dec 12 that the IOS Council were concerned about delays in their harbour project going out to tender. The delay was believed to be caused by the changes in Cornwall Council.

See Scilly Today 20th Dec 2012: <http://tinyurl.com/c6avvw9>

Sainsburys/BIH Deal Completed.

The sale of the Heliport has been completed following the withdrawal of the last legal action and the granting of planning permission for the detailed design. Work is expected to start in Mar/Apr 2013. Sainsbury's have confirmed that Section 106 funds will be paid when work starts on the new store and not just before the start of trading which is the latest the money can be paid without breaching the contract with Cornwall Council.

Town Team.

Town Centre Market Project. The Penzance Town Team met on 9 Oct 2012 and the main item on the agenda was how to take forward the establishment of a Town Centre Market located in The Market Place (Lloyds Bank area). The new market was one of the proposals in the Penzance Portas Bid. Although Penzance was one of the 390 unsuccessful bidders, it is expecting to receive a grant of £10,000 under a Dept of Communities & Local Govt initiative which encouraged Town Teams and local MPs to work together (Andrew George MP is a Penzance Town Team Partner). The meeting agreed to work up a detailed plan for the new market. The plan will then be forwarded to Penzance Town Council for agreement before being forwarded to Cornwall Council who are accounting authority for the £10,000 grant. The proposed market is due to open by Easter with one market a month (on a Saturday) initially.

Meeting notes: <http://tinyurl.com/cq6jj98>

Penzance BID. Cornwall Council had asked, and Penzance Town Council had agreed, that £20,000 of the Sainsbury's 106 fund should be allocated towards funding the start up costs of the Penzance BID. With the Heliport sale now completed and Section 106 monies due in Mar/Apr 2013 it has been provisionally agreed with Cornwall Council that Penzance BID preparations could start in May 2013. The Town Team needs to create a BID Steering Group which represents all sections of the business community contributing to the BID fund.

.....Interested in getting involved in Penzance BID! Contact the Chamber Chairman

Discovery Map Project. Town Team members leading the Discovery Map Project met on 11 Oct 2012 to explore the launch of a Penzance Discovery Map project. For the project to proceed the Town Council needed to agree to hold the funds and Cornwall Council needed to complete the Discovery Map Tool Kit – the project guide that Penzance would trial. The launch event took place on 11 December 2012 in the Queens Hotel courtesy of Anthony Holman who provided the venue at no charge. The event was well attended and a number of sponsorships offers were made. The first meeting of the Discovery Map Steering group is due to take place in the second week of January.

Meeting Notes: <http://tinyurl.com/bmao42q>

Gas Works site – Planning Appeal

The application (<http://tinyurl.com/cef2yce>) by Churchill Retirement Living to build a private sheltered housing complex + 5 retail units on the old Gas Works Site, Wharf Road, was turned down by Cornwall Council's Western Area Planning Committee earlier in 2012. The decision was appealed and the appeal was heard in St John's Hall over 3 days in November (decision due in January). Churchill Retirement Living brought in expensive legal help to challenge the Council's position – their investment may well pay off as a formidable case to overturn the decision was made. The Chamber took no significant position on the original planning decision because a poll of members on 25 April 2012 revealed little interest and the few views expressed were split for and against the application. When the appeal was imminent, and after the deadline for submissions had passed, the Chamber Chairman discovered that several members were strongly against the proposed development but there was little the Chairman could do at that late stage although he did

work with Tony White Penzance Seafront Forum to reinforce their case against the application. The lesson for Chamber members is that major planning applications are often important and the Committee needs to know your views if it is to act in your interests.

Looking Ahead

Date	Event	Chamber Rep.
8 Jan 13	Chamber Cmttee. Wharfside (2 nd flr) 17.45	Committee/Members
10 Jan 13	Civic Society Talk - Sustainable Towns – Is the Penzance Plan Sustainable? Prof Mike Jenks Queens Hotel. 7.00 pm	Anybody can attend. Small charge to cover refreshments.
2 nd wk Jan Date TBD	Discovery Map Steering Group Meeting	PDTA

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Membership. If not already a member then consider joining. Membership costs £25/year. Downloads:

Invitation letter <http://tinyurl.com/8twvh97> , Membership form <http://tinyurl.com/8lrcmkn>

Bank standing order form: <http://tinyurl.com/9ulmpl5>

