

COUNCIL MEETING

24 February 2020

Public Questions under Council Procedure Rules

1. Member of Public on behalf of Save the beach

Question 1: Environment – coastline dynamics

Considering the impact of such a dramatic change to the coastline, there is great local concern regarding the short and long-term impacts that this proposal will have on the local sediment cycle, including the effects on the immediate areas of Holcombe, Teignmouth, the harbour entrance and Shaldon, sustainability of connected coastline beaches, viability of fishing, operation of the port and resilience of coastal flood defence infrastructure.

What assurances will TDC seek to protect those affected parties?

Response from the Portfolio Holder for Business, Economy & Tourism

We understand the Network Rail have engaged consultants to undertake modelling as part of the resilience project. Results have as yet not been made available and we would expect these to be published as part of either the Draft Environmental Statement scheduled for June 2020 or final versions as part of the TWAO submission in October 2020 as detailed in the consultation document.

Question 2: Economic impact.

With initial estimates of a minimum 8-year construction period, operations involving mass transportation of materials and plant by land and sea, erection of semi-permanent jetties, closure of coastal access, and possible consequences for the coveted blue flag water quality status of the town's beaches, Teignmouth and its reputation will be blighted by the noise and pollution of a vast construction site. Estate agents are already predicting housing values to fall and the tourism trade, worth £185m per year to Teignbridge's economy, will inevitably be affected, resulting in financial hardship for many local businesses.

What relief and support will TDC seek to protect local businesses both during construction and afterwards?

Response from the Portfolio Holder for Business, Economy & Tourism

We recognise that finding an effective and deliverable solution is not an easy task for Network Rail. If any local businesses find themselves in financial hardship as a result of the works they would need to pursue civil action against Network Rail, providing evidence that the hardship is directly attributable to the works. This would also be the case should a business suffer as a consequence of the works not being carried out, and the rail line being damaged or destroyed as a result of landslip.

The economic and environmental appraisal of these works will need to take account of the local as well as the regional impact of the works to protect the rail line.

I am sure that Network Rail appreciate the genuine concerns of local communities and we will be pressing Network Rail to address these issues and to set out how they propose to mitigate any knock on effects, whatever the solution to safeguarding the railway line.

Question 3: Statutory Objection:

Following the public statement by TDC leadership of 17 January 2020 and given the high level of public objection does TDC, as a statutory consultee, intend to challenge and negotiate with Network Rail in preparation for making a statutory objection during the application process for a Transport Works Act Order?

Response from the Portfolio Holder from Business, Economy & Tourism

It is likely that the Council may wish to be represented at the expected Public Inquiry – however this can only be confirmed at the appropriate opportunity, namely the formal Objection Period which is expected run from October to December 2020. Within our role as a consultee we will take into consideration the varied views of the general public to ensure the process is as balanced as possible.

2. Public – Save Teignmouth Beach Committee

Question 1

Will the Council ask Network Rail to undertake a cost benefit analysis for the main options they have considered, because their preferred option is detrimental to the Town's beaches?

Response from the Portfolio Holder for Business, Economy & Tourism

Network Rail are due to present information which includes Socio Economics as part of the Environment Statement which is scheduled to be published in June 2020. At that point the Council will be able to take a view whether sufficient detail has been provided or if further analysis is required.

Question 2

Will the Council please consider this section of Brunel's Sea wall for listing as 'of historical and cultural importance' please?

Response from the Portfolio Holder for Business, Economy & Tourism

Network Rail has previously applied for and secured a Certificate of Immunity from Heritage England which would prevent an application for listing being progressed.

3. Member of Public

Question 1: Heritage: Planning

The combination of Brunel's iconic sea wall set against the backdrop of our red cliffs is recognised as the national heritage, irreplaceable image and unique identity of Teignmouth's coastal landscape.

Would Teignbridge Council be willing and able to designate Brunel's heritage rail coastline as a Conservation Area and use its powers to fast track that designation to enforce stringent planning conditions to protect the aesthetic and heritage value of our famous coastline?

Response from the Portfolio Holder for Business, Economy & Tourism

Network Rail has previously applied for and secured a Certificate of Immunity from Heritage England which would prevent an application for listing being progressed.

Question 2: Amenity

Local residents, neighbouring communities and visitors from afar have expressed with passion the unparalleled amenity value of this unique natural beach environment and its iconic heritage setting with regard to leisure, physical health and mental wellbeing.

Will TDC actively participate in consultation with Network Rail to ensure that project revisions contribute to amenity value and negotiate with Network Rail to identify added amenity asset input for the town with a view to offsetting the negative impact on our crucial tourism economy?

Response from the Portfolio Holder for Business, Economy & Tourism

The Council will continue to participate in consultation with Network Rail with a view to enhancing amenity assets within the scope of the TWAO processes and attributable impacts.

Question 3: Environmental damage

The scale of this project will result in extensive land, shoreline and marine habitat destruction and substantial ecological damage in addition to the incalculable harmful carbon footprint of the construction process and materials. Conversely Network Rail promote their design parameters of this rail resilience scheme to provide resilience against climate change, yet it is questionable whether moving the line out to sea will be effective against the unpredictable force of the elements.

Will TDC uphold their environmental policies and climate change agenda to oppose the environmental impact of this design?

Response from the Portfolio Holder for Business, Economy & Tourism

Network Rail are due to present detailed information regarding impacts as part of the Environment Statement which is scheduled to be published in June 2020. At that point the Council will be able to take a view whether sufficient detail has been provided to appraise proposals against existing policies.