

PRESS STATEMENT

HURST SPIT TO LYMINGTON FLOOD & COASTAL RISK MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

Lymington Harbour Commissioners are grateful to have been consulted by the Environment Agency on the development of the Hurst Spit to Lymington Flood and Coastal Risk Management Strategy. We understand there will need to be changes to adapt to sea level rise, and we have assured the EA of our willingness to work with them to secure a long term sea defence solution that works for the local community as well as providing value for money to the public purse.

In response to the Environment Agency's request for feedback on the preferred draft pathways which were presented at public exhibitions in November 2024, we have written to express concerns about certain aspects. Our initial concerns are set out below:

Hurst Spit Management Unit

We are unable to provide any meaningful comment on the preferred pathway (*Rollback – Minimal Intervention*) without having a much better understanding of the consequences for the wave climate in the Western Solent in general and, in particular for the entrance to Lymington Harbour.

The Western Solent is one of the most popular areas in the UK for water sports, specifically because it provides sheltered waters and anchorages thanks to the Isle of Wight, Hurst Spit and the saltmarsh islands that lie along the north Solent coastline.

We have therefore sought reassurance that further modelling/assessment of the wave climate and any associated implications for the exposure of the harbour and amenity activities in the Western Solent will be undertaken as the strategy is progressed and that the results are shared to inform responses to future consultations.

Normandy to Salterns Management Unit

The existing seawall that lies within the Normandy to Salterns Management Unit provides critical shelter to the harbour. The Environment Agency has listed its preferred [initial] pathway option as '*Hold the Line - Sustain*' and we support this option in recognition that maintaining sea defences sufficiently offshore is important to maintaining a sheltered harbour.

However, we also note that the EA has in parallel presented an alternative preferred option of '*Managed Realignment with Saltmarsh Creation*' which would move the line of the sea defences a significant way inshore. This has the potential to 'outflank' the existing and planned breakwaters that help protect the harbour and existing saltmarsh from erosion by wave action. Such outflanking of the breakwaters would leave the harbour significantly more exposed in the lower reaches to the detriment

of existing sheltered moorings and to the detriment of providing sheltered waters in which to safely enjoy water sports during windier periods.

We have therefore sought reassurance from the Environment Agency that as they develop their detailed plans they will take proper account of the requirement to maintain a sheltered and protected harbour and work in parallel with the existing harbour defence strategy for Lymington Harbour.

We have also sought reassurance that the risks and benefits of the different coastal protection options to the economic value of the harbour and its associated marinas is being fully considered in deciding the preferred options.

Cost

The Environment Agency have previously defined the 'National Choice' pathway as the *"the cheapest option which ensures legal compliance and represents the best use of public money"* using existing government criteria. The 'National Choice' was also presented as the option that attracts the greatest proportion of central government funding relative to project cost, with the balance having to be funded by local beneficiaries.

However, for the coastal management units that lie between Keyhaven East to Normandy Lagoon the proposed preferred pathways are not the 'National Choice' options but 'Aspirational Choice' options at significantly greater cost. We have asked for further clarification on why this is the case given the significant financial challenges facing central and local government.

END

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