

PE1557/D

Petitioner Email of 14 April 2015

Dear Sir

Please find my response to Dumfries and Galloway councils reply to the Scottish Parliament petition committee in response to my petition.

SOS SAVE OUR SANDS CAR PARKS AND RIVER VIEWS.

The council says that my petition has not been fully explained to the 5000+ people that have signed.

According To Mr. Herriot from Dumfries and Galloway council many of the people did not understand what they had signed.

The petition is simply worded, and is simple to understand. I find this reply by the council to be extremely patronising to the thousands of people that have signed my petition and many have expressed their views to me and the local media.

I requested a FOI a freedom of information request from Dumfries and Galloway council regarding the procurement details of their proposed flood prevention scheme.

As I don't have any lawyers at my disposal whereas the council has a legal department within its organisation. Having said that there are points that I will question.

Within the FOI I asked the question was the design work for this proposed flood prevention scheme advertised EU wide and how were the landscaping design company Gillespie's awarded this project.

The reply was as follows. The council say that there was no need to advertise this project EU wide as according to the council Gillespie's the landscape design company were already doing work for them. Surely this is not correct as this is a large project and should surely have been put out to tender. There was only ever one design put to councillors for discussion and debate at the relevant meetings.

An increasing number of councillors when asked about this project informed me that this was the only design for this flood prevention that has been put on the table for them to discuss. This is something that requires more investigation especially when public money is being used and there are companies out there that have declared an interest with their build time and costs at half of what the council proposed scheme

will cost and keep our beautiful river views and important town centre parking. In these days of austerity costs and build times are extremely important and should be seriously taken into consideration.

Public engagement by the council.

The council inform us and the Government that they have been investigating the flooding for sixty years. I feel this is an extremely long time to investigate this and at what ongoing costs to the public purse.

They inform us that through charrettes that they have shown the public what they intended to do. Where are the figures from these held charrettes as no figures have been supplied to the petition committee or the people.

In December 2014 my petition was gathering pace. The council decided to call a public meeting. Around a hundred concerned people attended. The council showed off their plans and photos to the public. After the people had viewed their display they were invited to ask questions. There were many questions asked about river views and vehicle parking, as council will remove 230 car parking spaces to make way for their earth bund. The removal of our towns toilet facilities with no clear plans if they will be rebuilt or not. The purchase of a pay car park to try and find space for the loss of the 230 important car parking spaces. This is a car park that is pretty full most days already and if free parking, would be full most days defeating the purpose of purchasing this car park with monies from the public purse. Many more questions were also asked, with many still to be answered. At the end of the meeting a straw poll was asked for and was refused on two occasions by the chair of the committee councillor Ted Thompson.

The council decided to have another public display of their plans, held in a shop they own in Dumfries High street named the Bakers oven. During this display the council decided to build a model of their earth bund design on the Whitesands next to the river Nith. When they built this 3.5 metre model with 30 degree 8 metre grass banking's, suddenly reality set in with people coming in great numbers to sign our petition as the councils display didn't portray the full dimensions of their design in their display photos and plans.

As a member of Georgetown community council I sit on the councils common good sub committee but have no voting rights. At a recent common good sub committee meeting held on the 30th March 2015 in the council offices Buccleuch street Dumfries there was an update report on the councils asset register handed out at the beginning of the meeting resulting in no real time to read it. On this document was a list of apparent common good land and buildings. The list was in two parts one part included confirmed buildings and land that belong to the common good. The other part of the list had properties and buildings that are still under investigation, some of

which are critical to the councils proposed flood prevention scheme. They are Brewery street, Lands of upper and lower dock (not just current Dock park). The river Nith – Solum, basically who owns the Whitesands. Are these properties and land, common good, or common land. or other owners. Is this not something that should have been investigated long before all this money has been spent on this council proposed flood prevention design scheme.

Following on from the above I believe that the council's community engagement procedure has failed badly as many people still oppose the council proposal. There is no community consensus for their design. Provost Ted Thompson has announced that officers will now prepare alternative options but we are waiting for these options to be published and consulted on. In the meantime, our campaign committee has formally asked for a meeting with the officers concerned, as was recommended by your Public Petitions Committee. This has not been granted and no meeting has been offered.

I still take the view that the Scottish Government should not fund any work on this current proposal. Please insist on a community consensus proposal before considering any funding application.

I have also attached images of the following:

- 1: is full size model of earth bund
- 2: is the artists impression of what view we will get of the river from the road side.
- 3: is a beautiful view of our ancient Devorgilla bridge across the river Nith. This view and many others will be lost.
- 4: is a photo of the car park that the council propose to buy to help find spaces for the 230 displaced car parking spaces if they build their proposed design for flood prevention.

David R Slater



