



## Falmouth Harbour Commissioners

**The announcement from the South West RDA (Regional Development Agency) last week, confirming that it is not in a position to provide funding for the Falmouth dredging and cruise project, has sparked intense debate within the town on the future of the project and indeed the town itself. Here Falmouth Harbour Master and Chief Executive of Falmouth Harbour Commissioners, Captain Mark Sansom, tells us why Falmouth should not see this as the end of the line and why project supporters should look to the future and alternative options.**

Given what we see as the importance of the project we were obviously disappointed to be told last week that the South West RDA would not be able to provide direct funding for the dredging of Falmouth Harbour. However, while we were hoping to secure funds from the RDA towards this project we are clear that we do not see their decision as the end of the line for our ambitions. We are committed to helping the port realise its potential and believe that there are other possible sources of funding including Convergence that could potentially be used.

In announcing its decision on the dredging project the RDA said it recognised the importance of the Harbour and the Docks to Falmouth's wider economy and wanted to continue to work with us on making the most of this important asset.

We intend to hold them to this and over the coming weeks we have meetings planned with the RDA and other partners to discuss the future of the project and what we need to do to take it forward, including looking at alternative means of funding.

A lot has already been done. To date a number of studies have been carried out to establish the viability of the project and this will help us in moving forward to pursue alternative funding options.

The Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), which the RDA part-funded, looked into possible environmental impacts for channel dredging, wharf improvements and the building of a new cruise terminal to attract more visiting passenger liners to Falmouth.

The £410,000 EIA was carried out by world leading environmental consultants Royal Haskoning in consultation with Natural England and the Environment Agency and with funding support from the South West RDA and the Objective One Partnership for Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly.

The overarching findings of the EIA, published last November, were that the project could be completed without causing an adverse affect on the environment.

More recently a full Economic Impact Assessment has been scoped by the Cornwall Development Company for the Port of Falmouth Development Initiative. This assessment, for which funding has been identified, explores the economic case for three main options; 1, Do nothing, 2, Improvements to the port's facilities, with dredging

and 3, Improvements the port's facilities without dredging. And two other sub options will also be considered; Preparation for Renewables and Super yachts.

The findings for the full report will make interesting reading and provide us with a number of options to explore and build upon, in particular, the role Falmouth could play in renewable energy development and support, in particular wave power.

We will also be looking at how we build on leisure use, and also considering the options for developing a base for the construction and maintenance of super yachts.

The Falmouth Port Development Initiative is so much more than just a dredging project and this is something I think has passed-by most people. We have the opportunity now, to really take stock of what we can develop and offer in Falmouth and quantify the economic benefits.

Our vision is to maintain the current strengths of the port;

- Safeguarding its position as one of the prime generators of prosperity in Falmouth and a contributor to the regional economy,
- Maintaining its reputation for high quality ship repair and servicing, marine manufacturing and provision of bunkering and other offshore services,
- Safeguarding its unique habitat and environment for the benefit of future generations

We also aim to build on its current strengths, by developing its assets for the benefit of the local and regional economy.

- Improving public facilities where possible, providing fair and open access
- Improving infrastructure
- Developing new business opportunities where possible, particularly in support of renewables development
- Contribute to an improvement of the natural environment

We have some way to go to realising our ambitious plans but we are on the right track. Despite the fact the South West RDA cannot fund the project we remain determined to develop a strong and compelling economic case for the development of the port which we can take to other funding partners in both the public and private sectors.

As a final thought, my message is that everyone involved is extremely passionate about the project and working with partners to move it forward. We understand that it requires substantial funding and we are committed to exploring and pursuing all possible funding avenues.

**Ends.**

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**For further information, contact:**

Shelley Fletcher  
Deborah Clark Associates  
01208 77900  
07796 175634

[shelley.fletcher@dca-pr.co.uk](mailto:shelley.fletcher@dca-pr.co.uk)

**Notes to Editors:**

Falmouth Harbour, including the Carrick Roads, is reputed to be the third largest natural harbour in the world. Falmouth Harbour Commissioners are a statutory port

authority with responsibility for the Inner Harbour at Falmouth (excluding Falmouth Docks), the Penryn River up as far as Boyers Cellars, the southern part of the Carrick Roads and a large part of Falmouth Bay. As well as providing regulation of its Harbour Area the Commissioners provide small craft facilities for residents and visitors.

Falmouth Harbour Commissioners is a statutory port undertaking created by an act of parliament in 1870. It operates as a trust port and has a board of eight commissioners who act as trustees. Falmouth Harbour Commissioners are committed to operating the harbour in an open and accountable manner and welcome feedback from harbour users.