

## **STATEMENT of Councillor Mike COCKERILL [Ind.]**

### **in response to a cue from Councillor Joe PLANT [Con.]**

Cllr. Plant, thank you for the question and for the prior notice of the content.

When I saw the edited version of my interview about the Whitby Piers Coast Protection Works that was recently broadcast by the BBC Look North programme, I was both concerned and annoyed.

I was annoyed as, during the interview, I had provided positive information that would, I believe, have given a deal of comfort to colleagues and particularly the people of Whitby about the ongoing work in regard to the piers at Whitby. Unfortunately most of it wasn't broadcast.

I was concerned that the BBC had put out such an unbalanced article. The allegations made that that this Council is doing nothing to progress this important project are both misleading and unfair.

The lack of positive information in the televised article sent out totally the incorrect message.

By way of update, we have appointed Mott McDonald as our consultant to procure, project manage and supervise the Whitby pier works and officers are currently in the process of working with them to finalise the tender assessment following a European wide tender process.

#### **This information was not televised.**

Officers will be preparing a report on the outcome of this tender process later in the autumn for consideration by members, with a view to engaging the successful contractor shortly thereafter.

#### **This information was not part of the broadcast.**

The contractor will then begin the next stage of the project, which will be to design, cost and build the final scheme.

I confirmed that the estimate would be independently verified to provide us with a firm cost for the project.

I further stated that the securing of this verified cost would be the first time a firm project price would be available and would then allow the funding to be clarified and confirmed.

#### **This was not televised.**

#### **I emphasise that this will be the first point at which we have a firm project cost.**

I also explained the basic construction of the piers being of 2 stone block walls, with the cavity in between being filled with stone and soil.

This type of construction was common at the time the piers were constructed and did not provide a water tight structure. This meant that the natural tidal movement of water could move the infill, eventually leading to the creation of voids.

This is the major problem, although we can all see that there has been some movement of some of the stone blocks.

#### **This was not included in the broadcast.**

Following my mentioning the possibility of securing grant aid, via the Marine Management Organisation, for European Funding towards the project, I was asked about the effect of Brexit on the availability of European funding.

I replied that my understanding was that due to the anticipated timescale of the work on the piers Brexit would have no adverse effect.

**This was not broadcast.**

**I understand the next decision panel for the EU funding will be held during November.**

I stated that when the first reports about the condition of the piers was first prepared that the grant aid could have been up to 100% of the cost of the work but now any shortfall had to be made up by beneficiaries.

**More about this later.**

I acknowledged that it was some years since the need for a significant amount of work being required to safeguard the piers was reported. I also clarified that during that time the Borough Council had been working through the various and numerous stages of work required to be undertaken when seeking to secure grant aid from government departments as well as the EU. I also stated that the progress of this work had not been helped by changes to those requirements together with delays in the publication of the funding criteria. A similar situation exists with other ongoing projects.

**This explanation formed no part of the broadcast.**

I confirmed that the benefit of the completed scheme to hundreds of Whitby properties had been valued at over £128 million.

In an effort to provide some positive news, I stated that the aim of the Council, providing the necessary funding had been secured, was to start the work on the piers during Q3 of 2017 with an anticipated completion before the end of 2018.

**This was not reported in the broadcast.**