

False claims about plans for West Pier redevelopment dismissed as "nonsense"

Wednesday, 8 June 2022

Claims by a local businessman and campaigners that the council has misled government to secure money to transform Scarborough's West Pier have been dismissed as "complete nonsense" by political leaders.

Ten business cases for Town Deal projects in Scarborough (and also in Whitby) have been approved by government and £37.3 million to pay for them has been released.

Redeveloping West Pier is just one of the schemes.

The proposals would see the pier transformed. There will be modern and fit-for purpose facilities for harbour users with improvements for existing pier tenants and businesses. New kiosks, bait sheds and new public toilets will also be provided.

Our vision for West Pier includes a restaurant and a new public space which could be used for outdoor events and cultural activities.

The harbour and pier area play a critical role in Scarborough's local economy with strong links to the fishing and hospitality industries.

We want a scheme that supports and helps these industries to grow, while at the same time creating a destination that becomes the focal point for leisure activity and events within South Bay.

The proposals were approved by Scarborough's Town Deal Board

which is made up of local business and key community leaders.

Campaigners – including a local business owner – have made a number of false claims in an open letter published at the end of May:

The government has been deliberately misled and that the money is only for town centres

The government has approved the business cases for all the projects – including West Pier. Our submissions have been closely scrutinised by expert civil servants. If there was any doubt as to their validity – or whether they met the funding criteria – they would have been rejected. Several of the successful Towns Deal projects sit outside the immediate town centres of Scarborough and Whitby.

The Towns Deal initiative is not focussed purely on high streets or shopping areas.

There hasn't been any consultation

The Town Deal process in both Whitby and Scarborough has been the subject of extensive public consultation. In 2020, over 30,000 people, organisations and businesses were involved in the consultation process to prepare the Town Investment Plan (including the West Pier proposals) which is the key strategic document for Scarborough's Town Deal. In regard to West Pier specifically, there have been 29 consultation and information events since June 2021.

These included an initial stakeholder meeting to which the South Bay Traders Association was invited. At least one representative attended. Consultations and individual meetings have taken place with West Pier tenants directly affected by the scheme. In addition, members of the project team have attended Scarborough Harbour User Group (SHUG) meetings to give project updates. SHUG members represent all sectors that operate in the harbour.

Information about the project has also been made available to West Pier tenants via a range of channels. A specific web page provides

basic information about the scheme. The project team intend to carry out further consultation and information sessions to develop the scheme further.

A loss of parking will affect South Bay businesses

There is no evidence to suggest the removal of some car parking from West Pier will have a material effect on seafront traders, but we do acknowledge the concerns raised. A comprehensive review of on-street car parking is being carried out by North Yorkshire County Council. There are also opportunities within this scheme to better manage off street parking. Public transport links, including improved signage, increased parking elsewhere in Scarborough and the provision of alternative transport options forms part of the wider strategy for the town.

Councillor Steve Siddons, leader of the council, said:

"The campaigners – spurred on by one vocal trader – really are clutching at straws by suggesting that the council has lied to government.

"The claims being made are fantasy and farce in equal measure.

"We only want the best for Scarborough. A transformative plan for West Pier has been put forward yet it seems a small group of people are determined to prevent an £11 million investment.

"Fortunately, the plans have the backing of government, many other town centre business owners and leaders who form the Town Deal board for Scarborough.

"They see the benefit to residents and visitors of a redeveloped harbour and pier.

Councillor Liz Colling, cabinet member for inclusive growth, said:

"This is our last chance to do something bold and exciting with West Pier to totally transform this important part of Scarborough and create a lasting legacy.

"Our plans represent a massive investment in new ideas and facilities which will benefit harbour and pier users, South Bay traders and visitors.

"The fact campaigners against the scheme have resorted to spreading complete nonsense is a real shame.

"We cannot use the money allocated to West Pier for anything else other than what is in the agreed business case.

"The campaigners seem to want to leave the pier as it is. Next, they'll suggest we hand back the government's Town Deal cash."