

GOSPORT SOCIETY
STATEMENT ON PORTSMOUTH HARBOUR SEA DEFENCES

“The Gosport sea wall is the vital barrier which helps protect the integrity of Portsmouth Harbour” - Caroline Dinenage MP for Gosport in January 2022, in a reference to the Haslar Sea Wall.

The Gosport Society has under its terms of reference, appointed a Sub-Committee (the Sea Defences Committee) to gather data, monitor and lobby for firm and continued commitments by HM Government, MoD and Solent Coastal Partners (Stokes Bay Seawall) for the Gosport Sea Defences.

It has done this in view of:

1. Concerns expressed by Chris Donnithorne in his report “The threat to Portsmouth Harbour” in December 2020 with 2021 Update and arising from the recent collapse of:

- The sea wall and the structure at Hurst Castle in 2021
- The section of the sea wall fronting Haslar Hospital/Detention Centre caused by Storm Eunice in 2022 The Haslar Hospital site was sold by the MoD in 2009 and now under private ownership is being re-developed into freehold/leasehold properties where liability for the site including the on going stability and maintenance of the sea wall is being transferred to the new residential owners. There have been several collapses of this sea wall and these are becoming more frequent.
- The western section of the sea wall at Stokes Bay opposite the entrance to Stanley Park.

2. Project 3 of the Gosport Heritage Action Zone is now progressing towards disposal of the Fort Blockhouse site including the land to the west of the Haslar Hospital site with all on going and future maintenance undertaken by and at the expense to a private developer. In a similar manner to the disposal of the Haslar Hospital site, responsibility for works to the sea wall will be transferred to the eventual private developer and presumably future maintenance to the new residential owners.

The Gosport Society now states that it is alarmed by the historic and planned disposals of the Gosport sea wall to the private sector.

These structures are of critical national, regional and local importance to:

- The Royal Naval Base in Portsmouth and thus the defence of the realm

- The viability of a commercial harbour at Portsmouth, which includes local and cross channel ferries, cruise ships and other trade vessels.
- The local economy in Portsmouth and Gosport, which now and for centuries has supported military and civil marine activities.

The Gosport Society further states that as a result of natural erosion and poor maintenance of the sea defence walls in the past and the imminent planned dredging in close vicinity to Fort Blockhouse there is potential for unforeseen damage to the structures at Fort Blockhouse immediately adjacent to the mouth of Portsmouth Harbour

The Gosport Society is therefore now committed to ensuring that:

- The sea defence wall adjacent to the Fort Blockhouse peninsula site remains in the ownership of the Crown Estate and HM Government, with all on going and future maintenance undertaken by them and at their expense.
- The sea defence wall adjacent to Haslar Hospital Site is transferred back into public ownership and maintained at the expense of the Crown Estate and HM Government.
- The sea defence wall adjacent to the Haslar Barracks Site remains in public ownership and maintained at the expense of the Crown Estate and HM Government. This reflects the recent transfer of the ownership of the site back to the Ministry of Justice. Any future sale of the site to the private sector should not include the sea defence wall.

The Sea Defences Committee
The Gosport Society

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