

December 2019

Environmental critique of Network Rail Parsons Tunnel to Teignmouth Proposal

- 1) The adjacent offshore area is important for fish habitats, especially spawning and nursery grounds. This is demonstrated along the coast at certain times of year with the phenomenon of hordes of seagulls descending on the swarming fish as they swarm along the shallow waters alongside the beach. There are established mariculture sites within the Watcombe to Holcombe tidal system, most locally at the Labrador Bay mussel farm, which might be impacted by any changes resulting from alterations to the Holcombe/ Teignmouth coastline.
- 2) The Litline modelling used is quoted in the 2016 Network Rail report as, “not directly accounting for cross- shore transport, which may impact the overall shoreline changes.” It is quite astounding that, given the potential threat to Teignmouth Port and the resort’s remaining beaches, development plans were allowed to proceed without thorough and appropriate modelling being undertaken.
- 3) There is a high probability of the scheme impacting on nearby rare or endangered species, including sea horses, pink sea fern and Sea Grasses. It will not be practical to mitigate against this loss once habitats have been destroyed.
- 4) The current setting of the landward side of the rail cutting is characterised by a high density of undeveloped green vegetation, extending towards Mules Park and along the corridor adjacent to Smugglers Lane. This area provides a host of habitats for a wide array of species, but also represents an important corridor to the countryside further inland. Any reduction in this resource will affect biodiversity, and this needs to be evaluated and addressed.
- 5) Seahorses of both species will be affected. The Short Snouted Seahorse *Hippocampus hippocampus* and the Spiny Seahorse *Hippocampus guttulatus* are found from Exmouth to Torbay and they are WCA schedule 5, section 9 protected. We have inshore and offshore sightings and they would be affected by any building out to sea as the benthic species they feed on will be affected and possibly the substrate into which they establish their ‘place of shelter’ during one of their two periods of settlement. *
- 6) The Hydrography of the area will change if pillars or other obstructions are put into the water, which will have unknown consequences but most likely not good. It could cause erosion of the coast west of any development due to east-west coastal current together with consequential harmful effects on other marine species.
- 7) Dolphins and other cetacea are known to pass by this region and any noise caused by the development and ongoing change in seabed shape and hydrography could have a negative effect on them. Cetacea and seahorses are both known to be affected by noise pollution.
- 8) There are a number of Ship wrecks in this region, including the legally Protected Church Rocks wreck. Again any change in hydrography could have a detrimental effect on them.

* Seahorses have 4 periods throughout the year - two of migration (one in the spring and one in the autumn) and two of place of shelter (one in the winter and one in the summer). The two places of shelter are for breeding (summer) and refuge from winter storms (winter).