

GIVE US THE FACTS !

We have noticed a disturbing and growing level of political ‘spin’ pervading recent HBC pronouncements and press releases. Could it be that the authors are not comfortable with giving us, the residents, the facts and the truth, and they consequently spend time and money on misdirection, exaggeration, obfuscation and avoidance to claim successes and achievements when they are unfounded?

- **WEST BEACH:** The second stage of revetment removal in July on West Beach was claimed as a success – “on time and in budget” – with congratulations for the contractor, who was just doing what he was paid a lot of money for. The truth is very different. HBC chose in 2008 to stop funding sea defences for the western half of Hayling Island beach. The resulting erosion has twice required the defences (revetments and groynes) to be removed as they became dangerous to beach users. This erosion has taken place at a much higher speed than predicted by the ESCP, and has resulted in a loss of and damage to local businesses, car parks etc. This erosion and associated damage will continue for the foreseeable future in line with the Environment Agency’s tide rise predictions as a result of climate change.
- **NITRATES:** The Warblington Farm set-aside (for nitrate neutrality) is being sold as an event of national significance and a major strategic model to allow housing development to continue unimpeded. The facts are slightly different. The nitrate reduction will only become a reality in 20 years’ time, and as far as we know, the area in question will remain a dairy farm with the farmer agreeing to no longer add nitrate fertiliser to his meadow grasses. There is also no mention of the fact that this project will only affect a tiny percentage of the pollution of the Solent, and there is no mention of the Solent pollution monitoring measurements required to ensure compliance with the rules.
- **LOCAL PLAN:** The third example directly impacts everyone living or visiting the Borough. On 9 September the full HBC Council approved the 2037 Local Plan. This is arguably the most important decision to date and will impact all our lives for decades to come. Considering the significance to all their constituents, an immediate and major press release was expected. But what did we get? SILENCE! It was left to your Residents’ Associations to broadcast the event. Of the six Hayling Island Councillors, two voted in favour, two voted against, and two did not vote.

We are not sure where this increasing enthusiasm for spinning information has come from, but it takes us for fools and makes HBC appear disinterested in its constituents’ views.

We have not read the vision and objective of the HBC Communications Department, but we are prepared to bet it includes words like accuracy, timely, openness and transparency, so why are we being fed a diet of opaque gruel devoid of any informational nutrition?