



PRISON CONSULTATION REPORT

During the month of November 2017, the Prison Consultation Working Group undertook Public Consultation on the proposed new sites for the Prison.

The two proposed sites, situated in the Bottom Woods area of Longwood are:

1. West of the Met Station.
2. An area known as the Goat Pen.

A public consultation meeting was held on Wednesday, 15 November at the Harford Community Centre to hear the views/comments of, in particular, residents living in the Longwood and Bottom Woods area due to the proposed sites being situated in this area.

Flyers were also organised for Hon Christine Scipio-O'Dean to distribute to the public, outlining the pros and cons of each of the proposed sites.

The layouts of the proposed sites was placed in the Foyer of Essex House and at Longwood Supermarket for the public to view. Anyone wishing to make any comment on the proposed sites for the new Prison were invited to place their views in the comments book that was left in the Foyer of Essex House or be sent to the Secretary. A comments book was also placed at Longwood Supermarket albeit half way through the consultation. This report contains the results of the consultation held.

1. Summary of Public Consultation Meeting (*detailed minutes at appendix 1*)

Only one public consultation meeting was held at the Harford Community Centre on Wednesday, 15 November. 30 members of the public attended the meeting. The public did not expressed any concern over the Prison being built in the Longwood area but felt that it should not be situated in the NCA and Wirebird area.

2. Written feedback from the Public (*comments at appendix 2*)

The public was invited to feedback their views via the comments books made available at the Longwood Supermarket and the Foyer of Essex House, granted the book was only made available at the former venue half way through the consultation process but comments was also invited to be sent to the Secretary to the Prison Project Board.

Only two comments was placed in the comments book at Longwood Supermarket and no comments was placed in the book at Essex House. One written email was received with comments and one verbal comment was received by the Secretary. Comments are located at appendix 2.

APPENDIX 1 (MINUTES FROM THE PUBLIC CONSULTATION MEETING HELD ON 15 NOVEMBER 2017)

Minutes of the Public Consultation meeting held at Longwood on 15 November 2017 at 7.30pm

In attendance

Hon Derek Thomas
Ms Lesley Giles
Mr David Goodrick
Ms Alfreda Yon

Chair
Prison Manager
SHG Chief Engineer
Secretary

30 members of the public

DT welcomed all present.

Members were informed that the current prison facility is unfit for purpose so there is a great need for SHG to build a new prison. A new prison has been a priority for SHG for a number of years.

The existing premise is not fit for purpose and is an infringement on Human Rights.

Two sites has been identified:

- Goat Pen Area; and
- West of the Meteorological station.

Both sites are of suitable size, however the distance to travel to the Goat Pen area is further than the other site.

However, should development of a Prison proceed in the areas, it will offer opportunities to the community including Private Sector businesses. A further public consultation process will be undertaken during the planning phase.

DT reiterated that the purpose was therefore to hear member's views of the two proposed sites.

DG provided members with a presentation on the two proposed sites before questions were taken from members of the public who were present.

Questions and Responses

Members raised concern about visual aid as a map showing the 2 areas would have proved beneficial.

This was overlooked by the panel and apologies was made.

Disappointment was voiced regarding the composition of the panel, particularly as no-one was present from the National Trust or Conservation Team from Scotland and the two sites are in a National Conservation Area (NCA) and currently home to 30-50 wirebird nests. It was felt that there wasn't sufficient work being done to demonstrate that other areas were investigated other than those in a prominent conservation area.

It was mentioned that there is no objection from constructing a Prison in the Longwood area, and the residents would welcome it, however it should not be sited in an NCA and which is home to the islands wirebird which clearly the islanders are passionate about.

DT advised that a lot of work has been carried out on establishing suitable sites for the Prison. National Trust has been consulted and will continue to be. An initial Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) had been made available on the SHG website.

Further comments were made that the Initial EIA was not made available to those persons who do not have access to the website, coupled with this was the website is not easy to navigate. The report should have been made available at Longwood Supermarket.

An apology was made for not providing hardcopies.

It was commented that the two sites were in an NCA, and it was asked why hadn't the Prison Project Board recognised this and who sits on the Board.

DT explained that the Board is chaired by the Governor, those on the panel as well as the Financial Secretary Chief Secretary, Chief of Police, DFID Representative and Keith Munns the FCO Prison Advisor.

DG advised that the island is 95% conservation area with the remaining 5% in a residential area, so trying to ensure that there isn't an outcry from residents, there can only be an area in a conservation area.

It was asked what other alternative sites has been looked at.

Mention was made of White Hill, Donkey Plain, a lower section in the Bottom Woods area, in addition to two more sites on either side of the access road to the Meteorological Station.

White Hill was specifically eliminated due to the costs involve, which was about £3.5m just for infrastructure about 15 years ago.

Questions were asked why we are not pursuing the Sundale site.

DT responded by explaining that the cost to refurbish Sundale had not demonstrated Value for Money. Furthermore the designs were not able to comply with Fire Security and some further NOM's standards.

Clarity was sought on NOM's standards.

LG advised that NOM's has now been renamed Her Majesty's Prison and Probation standards.

There are 4 categories of Prisoners; A – D. The standards demonstrate the service and requirements which needs to be made available for each category of prisoner. Whilst there are a lot of specific requirements under these standards, some would not be applicable to St Helena. An example given was the fence and perimeter wall. These standards also ensures that the Prison is a facility where it can rehabilitate prisoners so that they are released better people with behaviours that are acceptable to the community.

It was felt that the information made available to the public was unclear and misleading and it is very difficult to understand what criteria is needed to select a site. It was also asked who had prepared Annex A.

Annex A – Site options (which accompanied the Exco Memo) was shown to the Chair, as the cost information was redacted and the public was unable to understand the cost which was involved in these sites.

DT explained that he wasn't aware of the costs. He further explained that there were a number of sites identified in the Bottom Woods area and this was done in consultation with Elected Members.

DG further commented that a Project Manager from Turner and Townsend was on-island and completed this exercise. Turner and Townsend contract with SHG has since been terminated.

It was mentioned that given the importance of a Prison, it would've been important for Riana - Chief Planning Officer to be involved in the process and even present at the meeting. It was confirmed by DG that Planning has been consulted and it was through her involvement that the Initial EIA was undertaken.

It was very strongly emphasised that SHG needs to ensure they learn from previous lessons and made specific mention of Ruperts which is not operational and also the Airport which has unable to be operational for at least 18 months after completion.

Question was raised as to why only Executive Council members were invited to the meeting and not the entire Legislative Council.

DT emphasised that the entire Legislative Council members were aware of the meeting and invited to attend, a non-Executive Council member within the audience demonstrates that, but it is entirely up to those Councillors who wanted to attend or not.

It was pointed out that whilst the existing prison does not lend itself to easy prisoner escape due to its construction nature, escapes has taken place especially with a prisoner named "Brandt" who was caught in the midst of his escape.

A question was raised about having a sports field in close vicinity and asked if the panel was aware of this.

DT confirmed that they are aware of the Sports Field development but emphasised that there will not be any impact on the Prison.

It was also asked if SHG would allow a person to build a home on that site, as it is appears that when SHG wants things done they will bend the rules but as soon as a resident wants the same thing then the answer is always no.

It was also asked if the Government took into consideration that one of the sites is currently leased to a member of the public to rear his animals, and what alternatives will be given to him if this site is pursued. It was also mentioned that everything seems to be pushed out to Longwood district.

DG explained that the person has a 1 year license and not a lease, so it is being managed annually.

A question was raised regarding the cost and how can we request DFID to fund a prison when there isn't a design and no-one can share any information on costs.

AY explained that it is hoped the funds to construct a new prison will be part of the new Capital Programme, however there is no indication forthcoming from DFID as to when we will get a new Capital Programme and the level of funding. The existing Capital Programme will come to an end at December 2017.

It was asked why SHG can't look at a site possibly White Hill again - if this is the better site as alluded to - and the costs and put this forward to DFID. Should they choose not to fund the project, the implications will not look good on DFID, as they would be the ones refusing, and this would be an infringement on Human Rights.

It was also asked if White Hill has now been eliminated as the site has been given to the investors interested in building Log homes.

No-one was aware of this.

It was also asked if there has been any other options looked at such as sending prisoners overseas to serve their sentencing.

DT explained that the cost per person per year is just too high. Previously it was approximately £80k per prisoner per year, and that does not include family who will need to travel for visits, as they must allow for that otherwise that would also infringe on their Human Rights. This option is not cost effective.

On a slightly different matter, it was asked about the site at Alarm Forest which was excavated for the Fire Station, and whether this is being pursued.

AY explained that the site can be rehabilitated, however we are awaiting the cost information on the methods to rehabilitate that site. The site can be utilised, but until we receive that information it will be difficult to understand the cost of the works which will need to take place to make it usable.

A final comment was made advising that the prison is not fit for purpose and if someone was to visit the prison, they would close it down and those locked up would walk free.

Concern was voiced on what are the next steps?

It was explained that the findings of the meeting will be made to the Prison Project Board and they will decide on how to proceed.

The Chair thanked all for attending and the meeting closed at approximately 8.50pm.

APPENDIX 2 – COMMENTS/FEEDBACK FROM THE PUBLIC

Comments from members of the public:

- Why put the Prison near the Airport?? Would you want tourists to see something better than the Prison when coming of the plane? Think of Tourism and not yourselves.
- Nothing wrong with Prison at Bottom Woods.
- The proposed Prison Sites are located in Wirebird area.

-----Original Message-----

From: Loz Andy

Sent: 21 November 2017 07:41

To: Nicole Plato nicole.plato@sainthelena.gov.sh

Subject: FAO Secretary Prison Project Board

Dear Nicole

I would like to register my object to the proposal to build a Prison on either of two sites in Longwood known as West of Met Station and Goat Pen for the following reasons.

1. Both areas are within established NCA's and a build of this nature would be inappropriate.
2. The LDCP has no provision for this classification of development within a NCA.
3. The visual impact of this large scale development will have a severe impact against the backdrop of the Barn and Flagstaff.
4. The proposal would be in conflict with a component of our strategy to attract tourism via promotion and protect of our Natural Heritage and potential hinder economic growth.
5. The proposal is not in line with the goals set in the upcoming SARI International Conference scheduled for January 2018.
6. A site known as "Shooting range" has already been rejected because it is in a "sensitive Wirebird area". Both remaining sites are within Wirebird areas.
7. Potential for a detrimental impact on Wirebird breeding due to loss of habitat.
8. Does not comply with SDP - Environment, focus areas,
 - i) Managing our Nature Conservation Areas.
 - ii) Protecting our endemic species.
 - iii) Protecting our environment from mismanagement.
 - iiii) Enforcing environmental Ordinances, Regulations and policies.
9. Does not comply with several aims and objectives within the National Environmental management Plan.

Further to the above objections I would like to register my dissatisfaction with the Public Consultation process.

1. Information displayed at Longwood Supermarket lacked important detail with regards to the proposed sites ie map not showing site size/acreage, building footprint area, identifying Wirebird Zone and impact on existing land user/s.
2. Written information on display gave no references to author or how the statements were prepared.
3. The EIA was not present and had not been published for public reference as it should have been.
4. No representation from either the National Trust or ENRD Conservation to justify their findings or field questions from the public.
5. Panel members seemed ill prepared and were unable to confidently answer some questions.
6. Minimal information available with regards to final building design, standards applicable or indicative costs.
7. The Chair stated that there was no intention to alter site boundaries in order to allow the development to proceed. This will mean that land could not be excised from a NCA and reclassified to permit its use. Therefore the LDCP will apply and prohibit the development.
8. No printed information was available at the meeting.
9. The site map, a critical piece of information, was not displayed during the presentation by the panel.
10. The Chair failed to ask a direct question to the audience in order to judge their feeling via a show of hands.

Kind Regards
Andy Hook