

Miss Adele Farrell

Stamford Court

Palermo Road

TORQUAY

TQ1 3NW

18th January, 2013

To Whom it may Concern

Dear Sir/Madam

Re: Proposed Budget Cuts to Beach Services

My sister and I operate three businesses within the Torbay area. One of these businesses is the café on Oddicombe Beach. We have traded there for the past eight years. We are also directors of the Babbacombe Cliff Railway Community Interest Company.

Both the Café and Cliff Railway are open from February half term until the end of October daily (and weekends during November and December). Our businesses and trading schedule help contribute to making Torbay become an all year round destination. We cannot aim to be a nationally competitive year round destination if our beaches are not staffed from Easter until the end of September. Visitors will simply assume our beaches are closed during this time.

Over the period we have traded at Oddicombe, ourselves and other beach located businesses (not exclusively this beach) can evidence the peak business turnover period being during the early summer months, prior to the proposed 8/10 week reduced cover period. Within our leases it states that we are obliged to open daily at Easter and from May until the end of September. Should the proposed cuts be sanctioned, the council will not be keeping its beaches staffed for much of this time.

We have many concerns regarding the proposed cuts to beach services. They will inevitably not only affect our business, but the reputation of Torbay (and its amenity) as a leading UK resort.

One of our primary concerns over the loss of full time staff on our resort's beaches is the overall cleanliness of the beaches and promenades. The Beach teams clean these areas every morning: emptying bins, sweeping the promenade, updating safety notices and cleaning up after dogs etc and many more times throughout each day. Our beaches are a favourite for youngsters having beach parties. The beach teams frequently have to clear up after such parties, with rubbish, smashed glass, human excrement and occasionally needles being found. All of these are hazardous to beach users and have the potential to harm.

Hazardous waste and litter of this nature cannot be left for beach users to see, while a depleted team tries to 'do the rounds' of all the beaches throughout the day.

At Oddicombe, the beach manager plays a potentially life saving role in policing the many visitors that stray onto the closed (Little Oddicombe) area under the unstable cliffs. One of their daily jobs is to erect the barrier to separate the closed area of the beach, this barrier has to be constantly monitored due to the outgoing/incoming tide. Not having fulltime beach staff during the Summer months carries the risk of loss of life. By being aware of the risks and choosing not to police them, neglect of such areas could also leave the council publicly liable.

Part of the promenade on Oddicombe is occupied under licence by EF Language School from the beginning of June until mid August. Should the proposed cuts reduce staff on Oddicombe to just July and August this would cause us serious concern. Allowing young people (often only supervised by peers not much older) to occupy an area of the promenade where there are rules and byelaws to comply with, without any beach staff to police their behaviour, will potentially reduce the number of visitors to the beach. In the past the beach staff have frequently had to quell unruly behaviour from this area.

Retaining focus on Oddicombe, the nature of the access road and hardstanding on the beachside requires a locked gate to ensure cars do not park from March to October. The key is kept with the beach staff. With a steady stream of visitors trying to drop off and pick up (and even park) to avoid the hill from very early season, this requires diligent policing. Notwithstanding the inevitable gridlock, children and adults will be put at grave risk.

Other safety issues include the loss of first aid and lost child points on our beaches. Also, without beach staff to monitor the 5 knot buoys, dangerous boats and jet skis will be driven too quickly in proximity to swimmers.

Dogs on the beach will also become a problem. During the winter months, when dogs are allowed onto the beach, there is a significant increase in dog fouling, both on our beaches and the surrounding promenade. With no one to police the dog ban, this will continue causing potential harm to visitors to the beach, especially young children.

Should these proposed cuts be implemented, the council has no provision in place to allow concessions on the beaches for deck chairs and beach furniture, which would be lost. We have already been advised by Council officials that there is insufficient time to arrange their publicly mooted and very woolly sounding 'big society solution' in time for the coming season (which for us personally is now only four weeks away).

As directors of the Babbacombe Cliff Railway, our ethos is to 'Protect, Preserve and Promote' the cliff railway. The council has previously invested hundreds of thousands of pounds into the railway. Since taking over the operation from the council, the Babbacombe Cliff Railway CIC has continued to do the same. We cannot afford to put part of our local heritage at risk because the council are unable to keep our beaches clean and staffed.

Torbay is primarily a Seaside tourist resort which relies heavily on Visitors. The suggestion of a policy that limits our beach services to the school holiday period is either negligently short-sighted or deliberately blinkered by budget aspirations.

How can a seaside resort be neglecting its seaside? The proposed cuts will cause catastrophic damage both financially, and to the reputation of Torbay. The ramifications of the proposed savings are significantly more far reaching to the reputation and sustainability of Torbay's core industry, than relatively meagre £100,000 saving.

As an operator, I have illustrated my concerns using my own beach as an example. Of course, every one of our beaches has its unique infrastructure, management challenges and requirements. Therefore, I expect my concerns to be viewed in the wider context of the sweeping cuts across the bay, rather than solely that of Oddicombe Beach.

Yours faithfully

Miss Adele Farrell