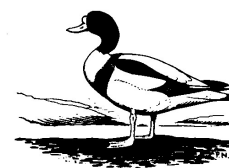

TOWN WALL, HARTLEPOOL HEADLAND

A FORMAL RESPONSE BY TEESMOUTH BIRD CLUB TO A SCOPING REPORT



TOWN WALL, HARTLEPOOL HEADLAND



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RPT024

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Introduction

- 1.1 The Teesmouth Bird Club (TBC) was founded in 1960 and is one of the longest-standing nature conservation bodies in Cleveland. We have a particularly good knowledge of the birds of the Tees Estuary and produce the annual *'Cleveland Bird Report'*. We are responsible for reviewing all bird records within the Cleveland area (defined by the boundary of the former County of Cleveland, now the 4 unitary authorities of Hartlepool, Stockton-on-Tees, Middlesbrough and Redcar and Cleveland). Our membership stands at over 450. The Club published the *'The Breeding Birds of Cleveland'* in November 2008, which is the culmination of 10 years' planning and fieldwork, involving over 10,000 hours, to describe and map the distribution and abundance of all of Cleveland's breeding birds - the first time this has ever been done in our area.
- 1.2 A considerable number of our members watch seabirds at Hartlepool Headland from the Heugh Lighthouse and have done so for well over half a century. Consequently, Hartlepool is nationally famous in birdwatching circles and appears in all of the main national site guides. Because of our affinity with the Headland, TBC is aware of its special historic and townscape character, with its strong Medieval roots. The Club is currently seeking funding for a project to restore the old coastguard lookout at the Heugh Lighthouse and build a new bird observatory on the site, within the Headland Conservation Area.

Teesmouth Bird Club's Appraisal Process

- 1.3 This brief report is in response to a letter from Hartlepool Borough Council dated 10th July 2009 requesting TBC's comments on a Scoping Report prepared by Scott Wilson on behalf of Hartlepool Borough Council (HBC). This outlined current problems with the Town Wall as a sea defence structure and identified issues that the consultants considered should be included in the ensuing Environmental Impact Assessment.
- 1.4 TBC's Conservation Sub-Committee appraised the report and the comments outlined in this document represent the official views of the Club. Our appraisal involved:
- (i) Have all the likely environmental impacts (positive and negative) been identified for further study?
 - (ii) Are any additional studies/surveys required over and above those outlined in the Scoping Report?
 - (iii) Are there any significant ornithological issues arising out of the study that HBC and their consultants should be aware of?
- 1.5 Our response is confined solely to ornithological issues.

2.0 TBC'S RESPONSE

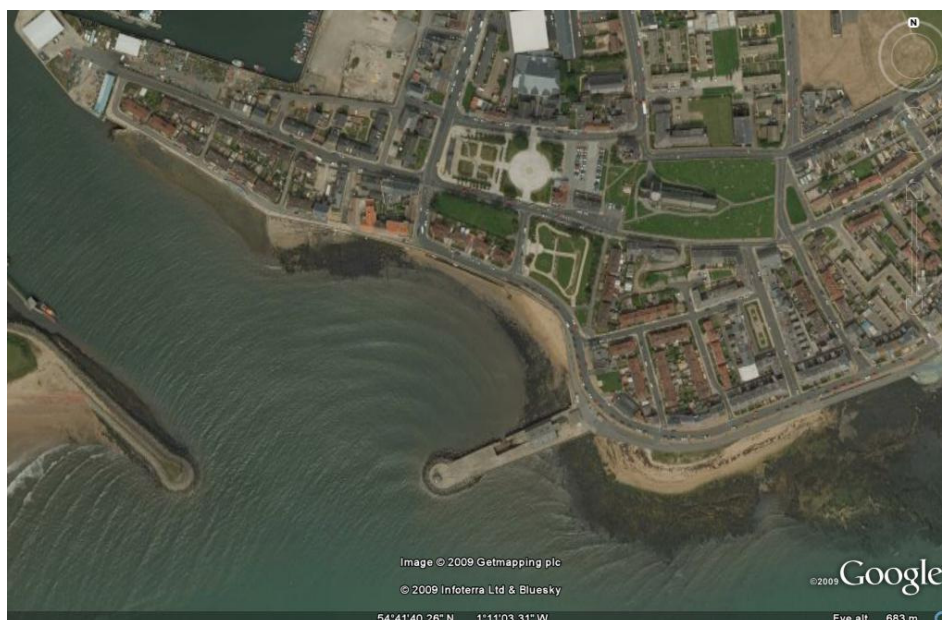
General Comments

- 2.1 The Scoping Report is well written and clear and identifies all the key issues and environmental impacts that are likely to arise. We acknowledge that there are difficult issues surrounding the need for sea defence and the protection of the historic Town Wall.

- 2.2 Town Wall does not fall within the Ramsar site, SPA or the Tees and Hartlepool Foreshore and Wetlands SSSI and there are unlikely to be any key ornithological issues arising out of the EIA, though the former does lie in close proximity to the Town Wall. TBC has no major concerns over this project.

Specific Comments

- 2.3 Our specific comments are as follows:
- (i) The area we are concerned with is Fish Sands, which fronts the gate through the Town Wall. As well as being a much-valued local beach, which is well used by local people, the sands also attract small numbers of wintering and migratory birds, such as Sanderling, Turnstone, Oystercatcher and Redshank. The construction of new groynes across Fish Sands would significantly reduce the value of this area for both birds and people.
 - (ii) The rocky outcrops adjacent to the pier and below the northwestern (the old) section of the Town Wall are often used by birds. Eiders often rest here and the rocks are a favoured haunt of small numbers of wintering Purple Sandpipers, which feed among the seaweed-covered rocks. Other species often roost and feed, including Oystercatcher, Turnstone and Redshank, and terns occasionally rest on the existing groynes after fishing in the Harbour. Rock Pipit, a highly localised species in Cleveland, also occurs here.
 - (iii) The open water of the harbour is an important area for birds, particularly in winter, and is regularly used by the following species: Eider, Red-breasted Merganser, Great Crested and Red-necked Grebes, Guillemot, Cormorant, and Red-throated, Black-throated and Great Northern Divers. The harbour provides shelter for storm-driven birds and is consequently well watched by birders. The key issue here will be potential disturbance during any construction works to repair or rebuild the wall.



TOWN WALL AND HARBOUR, HARTLEPOOL HEADLAND SHOWING THE MAIN BIRD HABITATS

- (iv) TBC holds information on the birds of Hartlepool Harbour and its environs and we will be pleased to provide this to contribute to the consultant’s desk research. We make a modest charge for our data. We will also be able to advise on any other ornithological impacts not yet identified as the EIA progresses, so that there are no adverse ‘hidden surprises’ at a later stage in the project development.
- (v) We consider that the information contained in (iv) should be supplemented by some additional modest ornithological surveys of the foreshore fronting the Town Wall over the coming autumn and winter months (when the maximum numbers of birds will be present) to provide up-to-date bird counts. One count a month, of two hours’ duration, between September 2009 and March 2010 inclusive, will be sufficient to provide a more complete picture. TBC could undertake these surveys, on request.
- (vi) This project may offer opportunities for some mitigation and enhancement of the foreshore for birds and we would be pleased to discuss ideas with the consultants during the EIA process.



TOWN WALL AT NIGHT



TOWN WALL GATE TO FISH SANDS

3.0 FUTURE CONSULTATION

- 3.1 We would appreciate being consulted further on this project as it develops.