

HMS Ganges Mast

NEWSLETTER #1

Babergh's commitment

Babergh District Council recognises that as a listed building, the Mast and its condition – whilst predominantly the responsibility of the landowner – is a matter in which Babergh has an interest and a role.

The Council is very aware of the depth of feeling associated with the HMS Ganges Mast. Therefore, this regular series of newsletters aims to keep all of the key stakeholders up-to-date as to both procedures and progress regarding the repair and refurbishment of the Mast and the timescales involved.

What are Babergh's objectives regarding the HMS Ganges Mast?

Fundamentally, as with all of the 3800 listed buildings in the District, Babergh wants to see the HMS Ganges Mast maintained in as good a state of repair as possible because of its value as an historic feature of regional interest.

In this particular case, Babergh is keen that the landowner, Galliard, fulfills the obligations imposed by listed building legislation and takes steps to maintain the mast in an appropriate condition.

What has Babergh's approach been in working with Galliard?

Since late 2007, Babergh has raised concerns about the mast and has urged that it be repaired. The company then engaged consultants to carry out a "Condition Survey Report". Babergh stepped up its pressure on the owners late in 2008. The Company has consistently advised that the mast will be repaired but the Council has not been supplied with a timescale for completing the work.

Why hasn't Babergh made use of either Repairs Notices or Urgent Works Notices and why can't Babergh itself contract the work to be done and then bill Galliard?

Babergh would only be able to intervene if the works that needed doing could be classified as being "urgently necessary for the preservation of the listed building".

An Urgent Works Notice would only be considered if the Listed Building is severely at risk – a situation that has not applied to the HMS Ganges mast because it is not in imminent danger of collapse. In essence, the state of the mast may have to worsen before Babergh would be able to apply this Notice.

A Repairs Notice is a preliminary to compulsory acquisition and as a



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consequence must be carefully considered. The likely cost of any basic repair work could run into a large five figure sum – which Babergh might not be able to recover from the company. This would leave all of Babergh’s Council Taxpayers out of pocket. Any such decision would need to be made by Babergh Councillors in light of other competing uses for the sum and against the backdrop of a worsening financial situation for all Councils.

What has been happening recently?

The good news is that in response to a letter from Babergh’s Head of Natural & Built Environment on July 2, Galliard’s Planning & Urban Design Manager replied on July 10 saying that the company “takes very seriously it’s (sic) obligations arising from ownership of a listed structure”.

At this stage, Babergh has no reason to think that this is mere rhetoric as the company has already commissioned a specialist contractor to provide a quote for the restoration of the Mast.

Furthermore, Galliard has indicated their willingness to put in an application for Listed Building Consent to fulfil the obligations imposed by legislation.

Babergh has written back welcoming this progress, but has requested that such any application be both appropriately detailed and be with the Council by no later than September 10. This is because Babergh’s Strategy Committee will meet on September 17 and will consider a report outlining the options open to the Council depending upon Galliard’s preceding actions.

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