

24 FEB 2020



HOUSE OF COMMONS  
LONDON SW1A 0AA

Allocation .....

Neil Jack  
Chief Executive  
Blackpool Council  
Bickerstaffe House  
1 Bickerstaffe Square  
Talbot Road  
Blackpool  
FY1 3HA

Our Ref: PM/RS

17 February 2020

*Dear Neil*

As Members of Parliament we are acutely aware of the need to deliver investment and regeneration across Blackpool and recognise the great deal of work going on to deliver a long-term vision for our town. While it is vital we work together to tackle the social and economic issues facing our town, it is vital that every effort is made to ensure schemes are viable and can be delivered and that the most appropriate partners are chosen as part of this process.

You are, I'm sure, aware of the great deal of public concern over the agreement Blackpool Council intends to sign with Holmes Investment Properties for the redevelopment of the eastern portion of the Stanley Park golf course. The failure of Mack Trading was regrettable and left the authority in a difficult position. We recognise the questions which remain over the viability of an 18-hole course at Stanley Park and the significant investment required to address drainage and other issues on the eastern portion of the site. Equally, we understand the need to protect public amenity and green space in our town.

A report was recently presented to members of Blackpool Council, outlining concerns over the HIP scheme, the financial security of HIP and its suitability as a partner. Reference was also made to failure by Mack Trading to invest in the course and questions were raised over Blackpool Council's oversight of the concession prior to the company's failure.

As part of this report alternative proposals have been presented by the Stanley Park Golf Course Community Benefit Society, outlining the successes of other similar projects across the United Kingdom. The society was the second placed bidder in the procurement process and since a decision was taken on the authority's preferred partner has continued its work to strengthen its bid.

The concerns over HIP and its suitability as a preferred bidder are varied and have been highlighted, in recent weeks, by local media reports. You will, I am sure, have been made aware of the 'track record' of senior figures and their involvement in a number of previous failed ventures, including the insolvency of Glasgow Rangers Football Club. Beyond these fears lie a number of related issues which should be considered before any final decision is taken.

- HIP has only recently been established and has no record of delivering a development on the scale of what is proposed at East Park Drive.
- The company has no experience in design and build projects such has been proposed for Blackpool.
- The Adrenaline World concept, which has been promoted as part of the HIP package, is at this stage merely a concept. There are no active sites and as such we understand there is a degree of risk attached.
- Public scrutiny of HIP's accounts suggest that, presently, the company does not have the £40m funding required to deliver the Blackpool site for David Lloyd.
- Should the venture fall through at any stage, HIP has no experience in running and maintaining golfing facilities, placing doubt over the agreement reached that the course should remain open as normal during the pre-construction phase.
- A reduction to nine holes would significantly impact the viability of the Stanley Park Golf Club as a business.
- Failure of HIP to deliver the development may reduce in the land falling out of use.
- An alternative, locally led proposal is available, based on the retention of public amenity and open space.

As you will, I'm sure be aware, the course at Stanley Park has, in recent years, suffered as a result of ongoing drainage issues, a reduction in pay and play patronage and in the number of golf contracts sold. It remains our view that every effort should be made to maintain and improve the current course, which is of historic value to the town as part of the broader Stanley Park estate.

We recognise that Blackpool Council has a duty to ensure public funds are best spent. Equally there is a duty upon the authority to carry out all appropriate due diligence over major schemes such as this. Failure to secure the right partner could result in the loss of the golfing facility altogether and result in the site lying unused in the future. We would ask that Blackpool Council fully address all outstanding public concerns and ensure HIP is adequately resourced to develop the site or maintain the course as a going concern before any formal contract for the land is signed. We would also ask that final consideration be given to the updated Community Benefit Society proposals, involving RM Estates, ahead of the transfer of assets.

Thank you for taking the time to consider this matter, we look forward to your response or would be happy to meet with you to discuss the matter further.



Paul Maynard  
MP for Blackpool North & Cleveleys



Scott Benton  
MP for Blackpool South