



EUPHORIA SAILING

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Gower SOS - A fight for Gower and its Beautiful sandy beaches SELL IT TODAY . . . OR . . . ENJOY IT FOREVER

Simply imagine driving to work, passing huge diggers daily removing sand from your local beach, this is happening out of sight only half a mile offshore with open cast dredging. We've all dug holes in the sand at the beach and we know it backfills rapidly. What would you think about the diggers? How long have we got left? Imagine the egg timer

Lets set the record straight - Gower is still a beautiful peninsula with Golden sandy beaches and a complete range of fantastic accommodation and activities on water and land, it is well and truly breathtaking and open to everyone.

The argument simply outlined is about a valuable Welsh commodity called sand, sand is our heritage and a finite relic of the Ice Age, so once taken there is no more. Sand, which I call Welsh Gold is mainly used as aggregate for the construction industry, this commodity is being open cast dredged by Corporate Giants. They are licensed by the Crown Estates and endorsed by the Welsh Assembly to dredge sand banks within miles of Golden beaches. Tens of thousands of people have petitioned and given valuable anecdotal evidence via Gower SOS and its supporting infrastructure to the Welsh Assembly concerning sand erosion on Gower. The Corporate dredging companies have funded reports for the WAG, provided scientists and complex monitoring evidence of their own to counter these claims. Similarities have been drawn between this issue and the tactics of Tobacco companies proving that smoking did not cause lung cancer.

The Welsh Assembly has asked the public, organisations and Gower SOS to provide scientific evidence to the contrary, this is being done but is extremely expensive and difficult. The WAG are holding back their results until May or June after major local elections, to dictate whether our sand can be plundered for the next 15 years. There should be no delay.

A moratorium or cessation must happen and the cautionary principle must be applied.

My argument is similar to thousands, if not millions of people - lets call them witnesses and here's my evidence.

We used to swim every day in the school holidays at a local cove East of Caswell Bay. At high tide we used to dive into the waves sometimes scuffing the sandy bottom and snorkelled with the fish and eels. Now, some twenty years plus later, we would risk smashing our heads open on rocks and pebbles, the sand eels are scarce and the sand has receded to expose the rocks.

We have run a Water sports company at Oxwich Bay for the last 5 years, at low tide the small patch of rocks that is exposed due to the reduction of sand has doubled in size. If this continues it would be a huge negative for business, Gower and the public.

I recently walked to Pobbles Bay and noticed a huge reduction in sand where the beach meets the Dunes since the same time last year, this was confirmed by numerous locals. My 7-year-old daughter crossed the dunes to the pebbles normally at the top of the beach. She was then faced with a full assault of shiny freshly exposed rocks to reach the golden beach. I believe a calm winter last year and a rough winter this year exposed the effects of two years worth of dredging almost overnight. Pobbles is adjacent to the highly acclaimed and most beautiful beach of Three Cliffs.

The previous day we found masses of clams strewn across the beach at Oxwich, torn from their weakened beds during the earlier storm. I have regularly seen Razor fish and other molluscs discarded by an angry sea on a receding tide but never Clams in this abundance. The cockle bed was thin with sand and the cockles were severely depleted. Since the seagull's time began they have cleaned up the discarded sea life left stranded after a storm, that day the Gulls left the clams alone possibly not recognising the feast that lay before them.

So much of this I've never seen before. As a sailing and powerboat instructor I understand the seasonal weather changes and tidal flows more than many, I understand that beaches can recede or move in the winter or possibly just disappear over time. I consciously watch the beaches and sea, probably more than anyone. But something more powerful is taking the sand from our beaches. We know the open cast sand dredgers have taken over 100 million Tons. Think of the damage to breeding grounds and the sand bank structure when huge



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furrows are sucked through them. If we stop dredging today sand will still relocate from beaches to backfill the sand banks, which act as a natural defence for the coastline, particularly against storm surges and Atlantic swells.

I understand the implications to the dredging jobs and their employer's bankrolls. We need to dredge our shipping channels, but mining our sand for profits is a finite rape of our most beautiful natural resource. In parts of Europe where our local dredging companies are based, sand dredging is banned up to 25K offshore so they import it from the UK. Tourism employs many thousands of people and pumps £850Million into Welsh coastline areas alone, fishing is a huge sport, it will be ruined forever.

Sand only costs £30 a ton delivered locally, without tourism, property prices will drop, when the sand runs out, what will construction do then. It's economically viable to get sand elsewhere, it's happened with coal and now natural Gas. We didn't want open cast coal mines, we ship it in from around the world, therefore we can ship unwanted sand from say Morocco into Port Talbot, Swansea or Milford Haven docks.

1. When our sand runs out will the Welsh Assembly import new beaches for us?
2. What control measures do the Welsh Assembly and councils put in place themselves, independently, on beach sand levels through their resources? The Environment Agency frequently visit beaches to check water quality and what a superb job has been done there. Will the Assembly use this as a delaying tactic? It's too late for delays.
3. After encouraging and supporting tourism business, will the Welsh Assembly compensate us, for pulling the rug from under us?

The answer to all three is probably no, but they do want us to provide scientific evidence to prove our stand on sand levels. They really need to rethink this strategy. My evidence has been recorded electronically.

The dredging companies use revenue obtained from Welsh sand to counter the very Welsh people who are fighting to keep their sand. When the sand has gone the corporate dredgers will be long gone trading elsewhere. Maybe we can find real Welsh Gold to pay them to ship new beaches from Africa to Gower. As absurd as it sounds, if we just wait and see, we won't be disappointed and neither will the shareholders.

It doesn't effect me. Oh yes it does. Tell Rhodri E-mail rhodri.morgan@wales.gsi.gov.uk

Do you have family or friends who enjoy the beach? Does your local pub, neighbour, Hotel, shop, business, employer, and builder enjoy the benefits of the tourism trade directly or indirectly from its impact on the Welsh economy as a whole? Consider property prices, taxable income, where does a much-valued tourist go for a hay fever drug, tyre puncture, petrol, a pint, and food? They come to South Wales to visit beaches.

The Welsh Assembly needs to action this today. Please put pen to paper to your MP or AM, please internet surf the Gower SOS website <http://www.gower-sos.com> and blog <http://gower-sos.blogspot.com>, visit the supporting sites on this issue, just leave an electronic protest, it's a permanent record of your support. The Corporate giants leave electronic evidence of scouring the Gower SOS Blog, possibly looking for weakness and counter arguments. This proves the internet is an effective way of recording and sending your message. Gower SOS has worked tirelessly over the years to increase public awareness and create change for the good of the community and the environment. What they need now is your support and encouragement to finish the job, raise the bar still further and create the change they have so rightly and energetically fought for. Taking on the Welsh Assembly and Corporate Multi Nationals is an extremely wearing process and a simple e-mail leaving encouragement and your name boosts morale hugely. Many people have already done a fantastic job, but this isn't just their job, it's yours and my job as well, we have to pull our heads out of the sand.

. Many thanks for getting this far and Gower SOS look forward to your support