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Amanda Wallwork STATEMENT TO READ 14 December 2023

Amanda Wallwork, Artist, Curator, Artistic Director with b-side and a trustee of Portland Museum.

I lived in Dorset, in the Sherborne area, for forty years with no inclination to visit Portland believing what people said – that it was grim, bleak, industrial and why would I want to go there? How wrong they were and how much I regret believing them. And missing out on seeing so much of this beautiful and intriguing island.

I finally discovered Portland in 2008 when, as a founding Director of arts organisation b-side I started working here and was completely captivated. We moved our offices here from Dorchester and so began a relationship with the isle. I have worked on many projects that have explored the heritage of the island working with communities, the museum, bird observatory, Family History Centre, Island Community Action and many, many more. It is an extraordinary place with a very particular history based on its location and geology. It's quite unlike anywhere else in Dorset.

Yet this beauty is hidden behind a façade of industrialisation which to a certain extent serves to keep its attractions a well kept secret but also affords it less protection than it deserves. Not included in Dorset's AONB designation because of this industrial perception and largely overlooked for its incredible heritage assets the island has struggled to protect its special landscapes. Its natural environment and its heritage has not been respected in the way that it should have been and some poor decisions have been made in the past.

From the time Portland was used as a convict colony, Portland has been regarded as a dumping ground. A place for anything or anyone not wanted elsewhere. But that is no reason to continue to treat it that way.

Longstanding mineral extraction permissions for most of the island have both sustained the island economy but also led to a huge loss of land and natural habitat. Funded by a grant from Heritage Lottery I have been working with the This Land project looking closer at the islands natural and built heritage. The overwhelming learning is just how significant this environment is - both to nature but also the wellbeing of residents, and just how vulnerable these environments are.

Through this work I'm aware of the worries and concerns of residents for the future of the island and the huge amount of voluntary effort being put in by people that are working so hard to help protect and enhance it.

The Economic benefits to the island of this proposal are unclear for any party other than Powerfuel and Portland Port. Much has been made of the visitor spend from cruise ship passengers however it's well known that passengers

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are bused off the island on prearranged excursions. Few cruise passengers visit the island itself and the local economy of Portland does not benefit. Attempts by island organisations to encourage island visits and offer island tours have not been taken up.

However the potential economic damage that this proposal poses to Portland businesses is a risk that cannot be ignored.

The Portland Neighbourhood plan makes much of developing Portland as a distinctive destination making best use of its natural assets and encouraging nature friendly leisure pursuits investing in the health, wellbeing and leisure industry culture. This proposal is counter to those aims.

Within the setting of the Jurassic Coast world heritage site and with particular links with telling the story of biodiversity and with increased recognition of the islands historical and environmental assets Portland has a growing reputation as a visitor destination. Tourism, the arts, nature, and heritage all underpin visitor attraction and local business enterprise and development on Portland.

Many businesses rely on its unique environment and clean air. The obvious reputational damage to the island's image cannot be ignored. Regardless of any potential danger of emissions<sup>etc</sup> the perception and visual impact alone is highly likely to negatively impact on this growing visitor economy.

An economy that arguably will generate many more quality and sustainable jobs for residents than this proposal offers. Take Eden Portland for example (like Eden Cornwall) a proposal for the redundant mines which would be a huge potential contributor to the island economy in a way that celebrates and enhances the island rather than being detrimental.

Portland Port are holders of large tracts of aesthetically and environmentally significant land, formerly common land, and numerous heritage buildings. These hold huge potential for enhancement of the visitor offer and a business case for alternative approaches to economic regeneration. With true benefit to the health and wellbeing of residents. rather than supporting proposals such as this that offer nothing to the island yet threaten to take so much away.

This is quite simply the wrong thing for the wrong place - it's not needed and it's not wanted.

The risks are too high. The time to act is now and put a stop to this damaging development once and for all.