

KING'S LYNN ST MARGARET'S WITH ST NICHOLAS' WARD FORUM

A local amenity society working with the Borough Council of King's Lynn & West Norfolk
for a better, brighter, safer King's Lynn

Please reply to: Sally Turff, secretary, 15 Queen Street, King's Lynn, PE30 1HT
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Cllr Alistair Beales
Cabinet Member for Corporate Projects and Assets
Borough Council of King's Lynn and West Norfolk
Chapel Street
King's Lynn
PE30 1EX

22nd November 2017

Dear Cllr Beales,

Re Waterfront Regeneration Project.

I am writing to you on behalf of members of the St Margaret's with St Nicholas Ward Forum – the ward into which the waterfront regeneration project falls.

Reading your report to council, (November 16, 2017) we find that the scheme has been named Nelson Quay 'in celebration of the great British naval hero born in the area and the town's maritime heritage.' While appreciating that the project is being promoted internationally and therefore will be deemed to require a 'name' that will be readily recognised, nonetheless we are asking you to reconsider. This is not least because we feel it will make those who know the area and its history question the borough council's erudition and knowledge of the town. As well call the project John Glenn Quay – he must have flown over the borough at some stage of his space exploration.

In no way can it be considered that Nelson was born in the King's Lynn area. He was born and brought up a considerable distance away at Burnham Thorpe and his name is uncontestedly linked to that village and its immediate area. At a much later stage in his life he made two visits to King's Lynn, the first to accept a presentation sword after the Battle of the Nile and the second when he was given the freedom of King's Lynn – as he was by many another town as his achievements and his fame spread. This will be endlessly pointed out as the Nelson Quay title becomes known and, regrettably, will inevitably lead to a degree of puzzlement, if not risibility. During his naval career he was rather more closely linked to Yarmouth, but this was for a short period and he visited King's Lynn on only a few occasions.

Indeed when he came here, far from striding along ‘Nelson’s Quay’ he would have found a muddy riverbank. After the cut had been made in 1855, fifty years after Nelson’s death, the newly-created quay became known locally as Marine Parade and remained such for many years, becoming South Quay in the 20th century. By jumping onto the Nelson bandwagon Lynn will be in direct competition with all those other schemes whose promoters are too indolent or lacking in inventiveness to devise a more compelling name, just another Nelson product, along with mugs, postcards, tea-towels and oven-gloves.

What will you do to make Lynn’s waterfront development stand out from the crowd and attract international finance? Well, why not instead employ the name Vancouver, who was born, bred and educated here, where his father was collector of import duties at the Custom House, and is perhaps rather better known throughout the globe having given his name to Vancouver Island?

Or if bravery and heroism are a requirement, who better than Samuel Cresswell? He was born right beside the quay in the Bank House on King Staithe Square and after being trapped in the ice for three winters led a party of sick seamen on foot across the uncharted wilds of Canada from the Pacific to the Atlantic to find the North West Passage. You might argue that no-one has ever heard of him – but wouldn’t Cresswell Quay make a superb opportunity to place him – and King’s Lynn – on the map?

You will probably argue that it is too late and Nelson Quay is already being promoted, which brings us to another criticism. Over and again the people of this ward have been assured that they will be playing their part in the waterfront development, that there will be endless opportunities for consultation and participation, yet the name Nelson’s Quay was decided and employed, according to your report to council, for the ‘launch at MIPIM UK on 18th October, the largest property development and investment event in the UK, as part of New Anglia LEP’s Invest East Prospectus.’

Moreover, the report further states, ‘Following a rigorous two stage appraisal process undertaken by the Department for International Trade (DIT), Nelson Quay has been included in the DIT’s UK Capital Investment Portfolio, which was launched at MIPIM as well. The portfolio will now be promoted to overseas investors.’

To remind inhabitants of the solid character of the British constitution and its champions, certain street names were changed in 1809 to include ‘King’, ‘Queen’, ‘Norfolk’ and ‘Nelson’. The then historian, William Richards, found this ludicrous, and wondered whether the very name of the town itself might be altered. We cannot repeat this in 2017 by naming South Quay ‘Nelson Quay’.

Perhaps there should have been consultation first with ward residents and businesses prior to the announcement?

Yours sincerely,

Dr Julian W S Litten
Chairman, St Margaret’s with St Nicholas’ Ward Forum