

Mevagissey Harbour Resilience Project

(Update October 2025)



Storm Emma, Mevagissey (2018)

Protecting livelihoods. Preserving heritage. Securing economic futures

The problem: a harbour on borrowed time

Mevagissey is one of Cornwall's most iconic fishing villages – a living harbour, home to a proud fishing fleet, thriving tourism, and a community whose livelihoods depend on the sea. But the very **sea that sustains Mevagissey now threatens to destroy it**. The two breakwaters that shield the harbour were built in the 18th and 19th centuries. They have done their job for over 250 years – holding back storms, protecting homes, businesses, and boats – but they are failing.

- **Sea level rise:** predictions are as high as 1 metre by 2100
- **Storm waves:** 4–5 metres high, hitting the harbour from the southeast
- **Flood risk:** c.170 properties at risk today, rising to c.500 by 2125*

The outer north breakwater is already in critical condition. Engineers warn of a *progressive unravelling failure mechanism* – small cracks and voids that storms will exploit, tearing the structure apart from the inside out. Once it breaches, the harbour's inner walls will follow – leaving the quayside, access roads, harbour walls, and much of the village defenceless. This is not hypothetical. Storm Emma showed how vulnerable (see photo) Mevagissey becomes without the breakwaters' protection.

* Figures from high level assessment based on FCERM methodologies in Single Stage Business case for Grant in Aid funding '24/'25.

The Cornwall Harbours Study (2012) **gave the breakwater just 5–10 years of life** in some sections. That time has now expired. If we wait, the result will be catastrophic:

- **Harbour unusable**
- **Homes and businesses flooded**
- **Fishing and tourism economies crippled**
- **Heritage and livelihoods lost**
- **Threat to ecology and biodiversity**

What is needed: action now!

The Harbour Trust (Registered Charity) is doing everything possible – repointing, patch repairs, and monitoring – but this only buys time. The window for prevention is closing fast. This is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to protect 250 years of maritime heritage, safeguard a working harbour and its economy and future-proof the community against climate change

Investment is needed today – and let Mevagissey stand as one of Britain’s great coastal resilience success stories.

The solution: rock armour – proven, cost-effective, future-proof

The answer is clear and achievable. A detailed design solution has already been prepared by engineering experts, and all permissions are in place. The solution involves placement of up to 20,160 tonnes of rock armour, of 6-10te grading, against the outer north breakwater to absorb wave energy and stop progressive failure in its tracks. This is a climate-resilient solution with a low carbon footprint, technically feasible, and deliverable by experienced local marine contractors. The cost of the scheme has been estimated at c£4m.

The returns: a resilient Mevagissey

The Harbour Trust has previously expended a great deal of effort to obtain grant funding in 2023/4. While this was unsuccessful the scheme is now fully designed and consent-ready. The Harbour Trust along with the commitment and support of the EA has created a prime opportunity to unlock a fully designed and ready, high-impact project with exceptional community benefit.

Action now will be considerably cheaper than a response at a later time.

- Excellent value for money given the cost of works – a strong return on every pound invested.
- Keeping Mevagissey's character and economy alive
- c.170 homes and 50+ listed buildings protected, rising to c.500 by 2125
- c.£60m in total avoided damages to homes, property, infrastructure, and health over the 100-year appraisal period
- + £millions more in terms of fishing and tourism safeguarded, avoided environmental damage, sustaining jobs and businesses, and heritage preserved which have not been costed



Easterly storm waves on Northern Breakwater, Mevagissey