

Minutes of the fifty fifth meeting of the Bembridge Harbour Advisory Group (BHAG) held on Tuesday 13th August 2024 at 0930 at the Bembridge Harbour Office (rescheduled from 6th August)

In attendance: Malcolm Thorpe (MT - BHA - Chairman), Fiona Thorpe (FT - BHA), Thomas White (TW - BHA), Mike Samuelson (MS -BHUG), Martin Groom (MG - BPC), Dave Geddes (DG -BAC), John Keyworth (JK -RNLI)

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Robin Lobb (BHYC), Jim Robinson (local boatyards), Murray Clark (St Helens PC), Alan Doe (RNLI), Laurence Blackburn (BSC).

2. Minutes of the meeting held on 5th June 2024 and Matters Arising

No matters arising that are not included in Agenda items.

3. Harbour Report presented by Thomas White, Deputy Harbour Master

1. Safety and PMSC Compliance

1.1 During the period from the last meeting to date, it can be reported that BHA continues to demonstrate compliance with the PMSC and its associated guidance.

1.2 The harbour and BBS teams are continuing with maintenance in priority order.

1.3 During the coming weeks we are due to complete the internal audit which will contribute to the winter maintenance work.

2. Channel Navigation and Safety

2.1 The live tidal gauge was calibrated on the 12th of July and is accurate and working.

2.2 Discussions are ongoing regarding the addition of a new port hand marker to go opposite buoy number 11.

3. Incidents

3.1 On 5th August it was reported, via our out of hours emergency line, that a lady had gone missing from the Duver Pontoon for approximately 90 minutes. She was believed to have potentially been in the water. It turned out to be a false alarm and harbour staff were stood down.

3.2 We have had a few issues with speeding vessels within the channel and the inner harbour. Those that have been witnessed and identifiable, have been contacted and correspondence with the owners has been copied to the local clubs that they are affiliated to.

3.2b It goes without saying that we all need to keep reminding everybody to please watch their speed and more importantly to be aware of the impact of their wake. This especially goes to those in RIBs around the trot areas and near the Duver pontoon where unnecessary wake is causing rafted vessels to be thrown around, risking possible injury and damage.

MT confirmed that he is in touch with both clubs with regard to this. Speeding and/or excessive wake is a problem in most Harbours and several prosecutions have been brought with fines imposed and even vessel confiscation. See also main Agenda item 5 below.

4. Rallies and Visitors

- 4.1 There are a few rallies still to go this season and provisional dates are being booked for 2025.
- 4.3 With the weather more consistent, visitor numbers are increasing and we are fully booked for the forthcoming Bank Holiday weekend. Attention to safety on the water is ever more important.
- 4.4 We are now offering our winter deal on the Duver Pontoon from 1st October to 31st March, with the price kept the same as last year.

5. Improvement and Maintenance

- 5.1 GRP decking has been laid on A and B pontoons in Bembridge Marina with GRP set to replace the North Quay linkspan in the near future.
- 5.2 At the Duver Marina, railings will be installed along the sea wall between the Duver Café and the new harbour office, replacing the posts and rope.
- 5.3 General cleat and decking maintenance around the harbour is being reviewed.

6. Staffing

- 6.1 Harbour staff undertook basic oil spill training on 2nd July 2024, directed by Jack Miskin, to familiarise all staff with the oil spill equipment, and the deployment and recovery of booms. BHA equipment is now kept in a trailer adapted for the purpose which can be quickly deployed to wherever in the Harbour it is needed.
- 6.2 As we approach the end of the season, some seasonal staff members will be heading back to university and others may continue part-time work over the winter months. We've had a really strong team this year and greatly appreciate all their hard work.

Harbour Master report ends

5. Harbour Office update

The new office/facilities are in the process of being finished off. Wight Fibre connection should enable us to move into the building in September (with the Bank Holiday weekend imminent it will not be practical to move before then).

MT confirmed there is no timeline on the demolition of the existing building.

6. Dinghies sailing in the Fairway / Safer Harbour Partnership

There are no issues from the point of view of BSC because they principally use just the main Entrance Channel. There are on-going discussions with BHYC in regard to staying clear of the Fairway, sailing south of the red navigation / marker buoys and once at Attrill's Point crossing the Channel with care as appropriate.

The 2 draft Risk Assessments circulated to all 3 clubs have still to be agreed by BHYC (in progress) and BAC (FT will resend to Club Chair). [Action: FT](#)

7. Dredging

Dredging is planned at Bembridge Marina during September/October. Van Oord is the preferred contractor – although not 100% successful, it is 75-77% successful and is more cost effective taking into consideration the preparation, disruption, and rebuild costs of using a dredging barge and transporting to the Nab Tower.

MS queried what was happening to the dredger previously owned by the Harbour – MT's understanding is that it will be refurbished.

8. Harbour Events (FFW)

The Family Fun Weekend had been a great success and FT thanked everyone involved. The Harbour was full of visitors. A record 39 paper boats were built at the Duver Marina on Friday afternoon ahead of the Great Bembridge Paper Boat Race at BHYC on Saturday, to which BHYC members added a further 18 entries. BSC provided a small army of volunteers to help run the Beach Activities, the RNLI Lifeboat and one of the new Marine Police RIBs were on a mid-Harbour pontoon and welcoming visitors, with a free Harbour Water Taxi service running. BSC and BHYC Commodores were afloat in the Harbour launch to jointly judge the Best Decorated Boat Competition and the Village Regatta also took place on the Saturday.

On Sunday the staff all dressed up as per the event theme of "Flying High!" for an early morning Wake-Up Walk along the Duver Pontoon before the Crabbing Competition, including a 3-person plane which "landed" at the Marina and "flew" down the length of the pontoon There are some great images on the Harbour Facebook page and also Bembridge and St Helens Community pages.

Charity fundraising over the weekend is from Paper Boat Race entry fees (100% donated - £2 per boat for under 15s and £5 for adults), and ticket sales from the Harbour Party (after associated costs). All other events are free and all event prizes are funded by BHA and FT. £1,600 was raised and adds to the £2,400 raised at Rock the Boat in June.

MT expressed his thanks to all the Harbour team and to Fiona in particular for organising the event.

9. Bembridge Village Green

The campervan users had originally agreed in April to move off privately owned land that includes the Village Green (which by law is accessible by pedestrians only). As had been explained to them, concrete blocks (weighing 2+ tonnes each) were then positioned to prevent further vehicle access, but 2 days later one was moved and some of the campervans returned.

More concrete blocks have since been added, with advance notice having been given to the campervans, some of whom left and some remained. Those remaining, now effectively blocked in, have been given the option of an exit being facilitated at no charge if they all move off at the same time, or otherwise a charge being made for individual departures for the hire of the necessary equipment.

Bembridge Parish Council are in full support of the action being taken and all agree that the treatment of the residents of the neighbouring flats by some of the campervan owners has been terrible.

JK confirmed that the RNLI, which has benefited since July 2021 from parking charges/donations in the car park off Embankment Road (next to the War Memorial) has raised £2,692.45 and thanked MT and the Harbour for facilitating this fundraising (they have now removed their signage).

10. Members' Reports

Brading Haven Yacht Club - Robin Lobb had given his apologies

Bembridge Sailing Club (LB) - LB could not attend the meeting but provided a report as below:

"BSC are having a hugely better summer season than last year, the weather has played its part perfectly. The Bembridge Village Regatta was well attended on 3rd August, as was the regatta last weekend. Cadet Weeks have been thriving and the keelboats have been enjoying their daily racing - thankfully we haven't had too many strong wind days, but a couple of light wind days have tested our patience.

Looking ahead to the winter, the Club is still very keen to know the harbour's plans regarding dredging in September/October, any updates on this would be greatly received." (Item 6 above)

MS added that there would be a Scow Parade on 14th August, with Scows from BHYC and BSC congregating at the Harbour Entrance at 18:30, then proceeding around St Helens Fort and back.

Bembridge Angling Club (DG) - All planned competitions have been held, but not very well attended. There are plenty of bass around but not many other fish, including mackerel. Long standing BAC member, Mark Rayment who founded Solent Cruises based in Cowes in 1969, died recently, with 500 attending his funeral.

MS mentioned that BSC has an active motorboat section, some of whom are interested in learning more about angling. DG confirmed that he is in touch with Alastair Gornall and either he or another BAC member is giving a talk and offering advice.

Bembridge RNLI (JK) - Bembridge lifeboat is currently off service, having grounded whilst recovering a person from a beach. A survey report is due and it is hoped that a return to service will be possible by the end of the week. Sandown and Shanklin is also off service and Ryde is mostly off. Selsey is being relied on in the meantime.

Bembridge has been just as busy as it was last year, with 56 taskings to date (24 for the inshore boat and 32 for the offshore). There are some repeat call-outs which are more a social services/care sector issue, that some emergency services have stopped responding to, one such case has recently involved a beach rescue by the RNLI (and other emergency services) on 4 separate occasions.

Bembridge Harbour Users Group, BHUG (MS Caretaker Chair) - MS stated that the group continues to "monitor" - MT asked what monitoring BHUG does? An AGM will be held on 30th August, venue to be confirmed.

Bembridge Parish Council (MG) - the brambles at Bembridge Point Beach have now been cleared and the path opened up again. Noted that there is a badger set amongst the dunes.

BPC recently received the IoW Planning Strategy from the IoW Council, for BPC to respond to, in which there are a number of inaccuracies. BPC has their Planning Sub-Committee meeting on 14.8.24, following which their submission back to the IoW Council is due.

The IoW Planning Department is now open 4 days a week. Planning for 130 houses locally has been given. Build a Better Bembridge remains very active.

BPC Resilience Group is very active, with several of its members from service backgrounds including fire, police and ambulance. To help to keep the momentum going they are involved with a similar group in Portsmouth.

St Helens Parish Council - MC had given his apologies.

Local Boatyards - JR had given his apologies.

11. Any other business

Public footpath along old railway line: the footpath is now been reopened and has been reclassified as a public right of way (the RSPB has yet to sign the Agreement). Fencing is being installed by the IoW Council. Huge thanks are due to Nippy Wade who began this process and never gave up! Andrew Holman has offered to organise a working party to help clear brambles and rubbish from the area.

Sale of Harbour businesses: MT had no comment.

12. Next Meeting

The meeting closed at 11:00. The next meeting is scheduled for **Tuesday 15th October 2024 at 09:30** at the Harbour Office.