

Minutes of the fifty third meeting of the Bembridge Harbour Advisory Group (BHAG) held on Wednesday 20th March 2024 at 0930 at the Bembridge Harbour Office

In attendance: Malcolm Thorpe (MT - BHA - Chairman), Fiona Thorpe (FT - BHA), Jack Miskin (JM - BHA), Mike Samuelson (MS -BHUG), Laurence Blackburn (LB - BSC), Alan Doe (AD - RNLI), Martin Groom (MG - BPC), Chris Adams (CA - BPC)

Prior to the meeting Gary Crouch from the Marine Support Unit (Netley) gave a talk, highlighting the importance of community awareness and support in helping to tackle criminality on the Island and south coast shores. Being “eyes and ears” and reporting unusual or suspicious behaviour to enable the authorities to take action or gather intelligence/evidence as necessary, giving location and description of any vessel(s) involved. Gary appealed to the group to promote his message to their respective organisations.

Currently, criminality on the Island is on the increase. Drugs importation and human trafficking are areas where the Island is deemed to be vulnerable due to limited law enforcement resources. It is not uncommon for large commercial vessels to act as couriers for drugs importation, supported by smaller vessels who are believed to intercept and bring controlled substances ashore.

GC is keen to hear from anyone with any information they think might be relevant - contact details are appended to these Minutes. Alternatively, dialling 999 and asking for Marine Police will connect you with the Hants Control Room which has a 24/7 365 capability.

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Robin Lobb (BHYC), Dave Geddes (DG -BAC), Jim Robinson (JR - local boatyards), Charlie Daish (BSC) and post the meeting from Charles Hewitt (CH - St Helens PC).

2. Minutes of the meeting held on 24th January 2024 and Matters Arising

Para 7 Events: LB has contacted all parties and confirmed that the Village Regatta will be held on Saturday 3rd August and included as part of the Bembridge Harbour Family Fun Weekend.

Expired flare disposal: Agenda item 6 – deferred to next meeting in CH absence

RNLI Members’ Reports - correction - final para: “... James Pink is currently the only Deputy Coxswain (ideally 2 are needed) and Ron Elliot has recently become a Deputy Launch Authority ...”

BHAG minutes: an amended version had been sent separately by BHUG to their members. Agreed that any amendments put forward under MA are considered at the subsequent BHAG meeting and are not altered elsewhere.

Bembridge Groyne Marker: LNTM 4 (issued 5.2.24), was updated and reissued, with images, on 15.3.24 to the effect that a red marker has been reinstated towards the end of the groyne. LNTM 4 is therefore cancelled.

3. Harbour Report from Jack Miskin, Deputy Harbour Master

1. Safety & PMSC Compliance

- 1.1 During the period of 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 team and the BBS team are continuing with the maintenance in priority order.
- 1.3 The Port Marine Safety Code external audit was completed 23rd of February, and a certificate of compliance was issued.

2. Channel Navigation and Safety

- 2.1 There are still a couple of buoy markers that require their routine annual maintenance that is due to be completed by the Easter weekend.
- 2.2 The groyne marker has been repaired and reinstated.

3. Incidents

- 3.1 On the 14th of February an incident occurred where the vessel, The Stan, located on the east side of the Fisherman's pontoon had a breach on the port side causing her to founder. This actioned our MOU protocol with Cowes and Yarmouth and booms provided by Yarmouth Harbour were put in place as a precautionary measure. Since the initial incident the vessel has been relocated to a safe location for disposal. There were no injuries or damage to 3rd party infrastructure as a result of the incident.

A container has now been installed within the Fisherman's car parking area, housing equipment that had been previously stored in The Stan, allowing the fishing vessels to continue working.

A special thank you goes to Bembridge Marine for lending additional equipment.

4. Rallies and visitors

- 4.1 Rally bookings are still being received for this season.
- 4.2 The online bookings for individual visiting boats are now open from 1st April onwards - some of the event weekends are nearly full.
- 4.3 Annual mooring licences have now been sent (the early bird offer has expired) and new customers are taking up berths - there is still some availability on Fisherman's and Selwyn pontoons.

5. Improvement and maintenance

- 5.1 A & B pontoon at Bembridge Marina are going to be redecked in GRP grating.

6. Staffing

- 6.1 Members of staff from both the harbour team and BBS team, have completed level 2 oil spill training with Adler and Allen in February.
- 6.2 Jack has also now completed the level 4 oil spill training with Adler and Allen.
- 6.3 Applications for the new staff have gone well and job offers have been made, staff training/induction is due to take place 21st / 22nd of March, followed by a start date by Easter.

AOB: AD asked if Rally Organisers could be notified that the RNLI Sea Safety Team are available to run bespoke lifejacket clinics for rallies. **Action: JM**

Deputy Harbour Master report ends

4. Dredging

As a follow on from the last meeting, MT confirmed that dredging is under review for October at Bembridge Marina.

5. Safer Harbour Partnership

A second meeting was held on 9th February attended by BHA, BSC and Alan Doe for the RNLI (BHYC and BAC unable to attend). Club representatives were asked to present draft Risk Assessments for the Entrance Channel and Inner Harbour to their relevant club for consideration. FT has written to the Commodores of BSC and BHYC to explain the principle of the SHP initiative and asking for their support in taking it forward within their clubs and will be writing to BAC. **Action: FT**

6. Expired flare disposal

Charles Hewitt could not attend so this item was deferred to the next meeting.

7. Harbour Development

Gradual progress is being made, with a large amount of MME involved. The principle issue is getting all the services in. The outer cladding is in place and scaffolding is due to be taken down in the next week. Completion is now expected by the end of April.

Relocating the Duver Café and Steve's Bar to enable them to reopen will be done as soon as possible and promoted accordingly through FB and the Duver Café and Harbour websites.

8. Members' Reports

Brading Haven Yacht Club - no report as representative not present.

Bembridge Sailing Club (LB) - BSC racing marks are being put into position for the season, BODs are being launched, and there's a packed programme planned. New caterers are being trialled. The Village Regatta, on the Saturday of the Family Fun Weekend clashes with the Paper Boat Race, but noted that it's a full day of FFW events and happily they involve different groups. MT confirmed that visitor berths are already 80% booked for what is a very busy weekend – as always, communication between the Harbour and the clubs will be key.

Bembridge Angling Club - apologies sent with brief update: 2 boats have been lifted for maintenance, and a 3rd one planned shortly, subject to weather.

Bembridge RNLI (AD) - 2 recent shouts attended by the ILB including one at Wootton, and a mud rescue of 2 people near Nodes Point (the 4th in 2 years). This is becoming a serious issue as the designated footpath is non-existent in places and people are getting stuck in slipper clay. The rescue involved the RNLI, and two Coastguard teams, Hampshire & IW Fire Service and the IW Ambulance Service.

It is not clear who owns the land concerned (maybe Priory Bay Hotel, National Trust?) – St Helens Parish Council may have some knowledge on this. *Post meeting note: no action was agreed - FT will draw CH attention to this item.*

2024 is the RNLI's 200th anniversary with celebrations planned over the next few months (200 school children recently entertained at the Bembridge station). 4th March is the actual date of the inaugural meeting of the RNLI in London.

Bembridge Harbour Users Group, BHUG (MS Caretaker Chair) - the group continues to monitor, including the Island Rivers Partnership review of the operation of the sluice gates. MT anticipates a report will be issued by IRP at their next meeting on 24th June 2024 to consider this in more detail. MS noted that due to the closure of Embankment Road, the BHUG meeting usually held on the evening of BHAG meetings is postponed.

Bembridge Parish Council - CA chairs the BPC Resilience Working Group and MS the Planning and Environment Committee (as well as both sitting on other committees). Mark Rochell is the new PC Clerk. CA update on Bembridge Fire Station: the back of the station has been refurbished and re-roofed, but there is currently a freeze on recruitment during contract negotiations. The station is operating as a community hub managed by the RWG, which is working really well, currently with 6 volunteers.

"Speed Watch" monitoring has been running on Embankment Road and found a significant number of drivers doing 40mph in this 30mph zone. 4 volunteers have so far completed a required 1-hour induction with 4 more due shortly. Speed Watch has been trialled in 4 locations around the Village.

Minimum of 3 people needed to operate, with no powers of prosecution – a letter is sent by the Police with varying levels of seriousness and if necessary a home visit.

Equipment can be battery or solar powered to enable repositioning. Support from the House Boats could fund signage and funding may also be possible through the Police and Crime Commissioner (currently up for re-election).

A newly appointed Police Community Support Officer (PCSO) - Steve Hull - is very proactive and helpful.

Ref fire services, CA reported that Ryde Fire Station is increasing its number of retained fire fighters in order to operate 4 crew shifts and enable 24/7 cover.

Noted: JM and FT met recently with CA and MC regarding Emergency Planning.

St Helens Parish Council (CH) - no report as no representative present.

Local Boatyards (JR) - JR apologies sent due to workload, noting that he had seen a derelict 1970 Mercedes motorhome being towed into the Bembridge Point car park recently.

MT confirmed that the Village Green area and the issue of camper vans on what is private land, is currently under discussion between BPC and the Harbour.

9. Any other business

Non-maintained boats update: MT confirmed that 3 boats have now left the Harbour and 3 more are in the process of receiving attention.

Public footpath along old railway line: MT reported that a corrected plan has been signed and contract signed - this is now with the IoW Council. This formalises the existing public right of way along part of the old railway line.

Sea Buckthorn: agreed MG will clear small bits of new growth at the next Beach Clean (13th April) using hand tools only and with no impact on wildlife. The path is clear but will be tidied up if needed. FT will notify Mark Later. **Action FT and MG**

Embankment Road coastal defence: nothing to report.

Harbour Farm: Andrew Holman liaising with the EA on this, with no Bembridge PC or Harbour Authority involvement.

Houseboats: nothing to report.

Sale of Harbour businesses: MT had no comment.

10. Next Meeting

The meeting closed at 1110. The next meeting is scheduled for **Wednesday 5th June 2024 at 0930** at the Harbour Office.

Appendix 1 to BHAG Minutes 29th March 2024

Contact details for Gary Crouch:

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