

Minutes of the forty second meeting of the Bembridge Harbour Advisory Group (BHAG) held on Wednesday 6th October 2021 at the Bembridge Harbour Office

In attendance: Malcolm Thorpe (MT - BHA - Chairman), Fiona Thorpe (FT - BHA), Gordon Wight (GMW - BHA), Martin Groom (MG - Bembridge PC), Alan Deeming (AD - BAC), Michael Toulmin (GMT - BHUG), Jim Robinson (JR - Boatyards), Mike Samuelson (MS - Bembridge RNLI), Charles Abel Smith (CAS - Commodore BSC) Gemma Wall - standing in for Hazel Wilson (GW - BSC)

Minutes taken by FT, following discussion and with apology to MS.

Apologies and Welcome

Apologies received from John Maher (BHYC). No notification from St Helens PC (Ian Thomson). Brief introductions made around the table to welcome Charles Abel Smith as the new BSC Commodore and Martin Groom, Bembridge PC representative.

1. Briefing Notes of 26.10.20

Notes circulated during Covid-19 restrictions when meetings were not possible. Not considered in detail due to historical nature.

2. Harbour Report - GMW - comments in italics were made during presentation of the report

1. Safety & PMSC Compliance

1.0 During the period of October 2020 to date, the internal PMSC audit work tasks have been addressed and completed. All routine daily/weekly and monthly safety and compliance checks can again be reported to be in good order. Maintenance and repairs are forever ongoing.

Harbour staff are now currently addressing prioritised routine winter maintenance tasks between now and the end of March 2022. *Seasonal team finished but 4 retained for winter maintenance.*

In addition, during the same period, routine annual reviews will be conducted on the following:

- BHA Safety management plan and SOP's
- BHA Emergency plan and Fire Risk Assessment
- Oil spill contingency plan
- BHA Risk Register
- BHA Waste management plan
- COVID 19 Risk Assessment and SOP's completed and implemented in line with government guidance and legislation
- GDPR Policy revised and updated
- IOW Licencing reviews and applications completed / granted for harbour taxi's x 3 for period 2021-22

The next **PMSC External Audit** is planned for the 2nd week in December 2021

2. Channel Navigation and Safety

2.1 The **tide height measurement numbers** board affixed to St Helens Fort tide gauge was repaired and was re-sited in February 2021. The electronic "Live height of Tide" website display remains in good navigational order. *Agreed for BSC to include a link on their website. Same offer to be made to BHYC. RNLI included. BAC may include on new website currently in progress. Action: FT*

2.2 All navigational buoys Lat /Long locations were inspected and confirmed in April 2021.

All channel marker chains, and fittings have been inspected, and are in good order.

2.4 Following the theft of Navigation beacon light on the 17th July, a new Buoy beacon light and radar reflector was again replaced on No 1 buoy. LNTM/11 refers.

2.6 An external annual inspection of all channel markers and navigational aids was conducted on 21st September 2021 by Trinity House Inspector **Capt. Jonathan Kidd**. 1 routine maintenance item was recommended relating to the flash sequence of the beacon on No 1 buoy.

3. 2021 Operational summary

3.1 A very busy and successful spring / summer season leading to many praises for how the Harbour and its service facilities remain in a safe and good developing order. *GW shared a customer's letter of thanks.*

General discussion: *Visitor berths were full throughout July and August 7 days a week, plus a reserve list, resulting in comparable income to 2019. Over 100 rallies in 2019, 80 in 2021.*

Installation of the finger pontoons, better facilities, Steve's Bar, Duver Café - all had been very successful and a draw to visitors and locals. Bar hours were designed not to compete with local businesses. Strong emphasis on local island produce.

MT - the seasonal team has been fantastic. Berthing staff are often university students and this year's new intake have all said they want to return next year. There is a natural turn over as they enter the full time jobs market and we have been very lucky with the staff we get. GW confirmed that he was remaining in post.

End of Report by Gordon Wight, Operations & Safety Manager, BHA.

3. Dredging - Entrance Channel

Following Nigel Bennett's retirement in 2020 it has taken time to find a suitable contractor to fulfil the Harbour's needs. JMC Aggregates has taken on the aggregates yard using a weighbridge in Robin Hill where grading and washing takes place.

Dredging in accordance with the Dredging Protocol agreed between the Harbour and IoW Council - boundaries temporarily marked with orange buoys. Current emphasis is on the eastern side, widening and increasing depth with Attrills Point to follow. A sand spur at No 6 buoy is being removed. The contractor can in-fill areas where commercial dredging has taken place with non-viable material such as silt. The Harbour dredger will also be used by the contractor in what is an on-going operation.

MS enquired about the financial arrangements with the contractor which MT declined to detail due to commercial sensitivity.

Attrills Point will be addressed next - MT's ideal would be to effectively remove the corner.

The Solent Forum has looked at the beneficial use of dredging. MT is meeting Paul Tosswell on 7.10.21 and this is one of the items to be discussed.

Use/removal of the rock piles on the beach discussed (contractor/beach architecture?)

Planning permission is in place for the aggregate yard with approx 3 years unexpired. See Appendix 1 attached electronically to cover email.

Dredging - Inner Harbour

ML Dredging vessels arriving Thursday and Friday (7th /8th Oct) having been delayed by bad weather. Both sides of the Duver pontoon and an area at BBS are being dredged - approx. timescale 3 weeks. No visitor facilities during October.

GMW also confirmed 5 lines of mid-harbour moorings being lifted, leaving final 2 next to Fishermans. Beneficial to the Illusion fleet - MT has made Bruce Huber of BSC aware. Mid-Harbour pontoons have been used this season for short stays and overflow.

5. Bembridge Point Groyne

MT: Macklays have confirmed a cost of £280,000 + VAT. Paul Tosswell has advised the Harbour over 25 years and is not convinced of a positive outcome from a refurbished groyne.

BHIC originally committed £25,000 to the project as well as management services, offsetting all VAT, and using permitted development rights. BHUG had previously instigated community fundraising and BSC had pledged £60,000 with a potential £10/20,000 from other sources. This would appear to have fallen away as a result of the extended delay to the Harbour's Planning Application.

BHIC is willing to increase its contribution, but will not fund the whole project, needing another body or bodies to stand with it such as BSC.

CAS outlined BSC's main concerns of navigability and long-term access to moorings. He is of the same opinion as his predecessor and helped draft the letter sent from the 3 clubs to the Harbour. He felt that encouraging contributions from members would depend on it making sense for both the Club and broader community. AD noted the ethos of the Angling Club and suggested a modest contribution could perhaps be contingent on a stay on harbour dues or similar.

MS felt that Paul Tosswell's reports focus on the stability of the Point and not the ingress of sand entering the Harbour, interpreting PT's view as being that the groyne serves no purpose in the defence of the point. MT view is that PT's specific report relates to an ongoing maintenance programme entailing the removal of sand that has overtopped the groyne. The contactor's preference is for the groyne to remain as it is so that he can commercially remove the sand build-up. AD observed that if the sand is of commercial value it somewhat negates the argument for the need for a refurbished groyne.

MT noted that Bennetts didn't touch the sand by the groyne - whereas JMC Aggregates has a different business model with their washing ability facilitating building trade usage. Over the past few months, approx. 14,500 / 15,000 tonnes have been removed.

CAS stated that the material within the BODA pool is of no commercial value so BSC are facing the prospect of dredging every 2 years as opposed to the current 5. North easterlies wash sand into the Harbour and the groyne is vital in halting this.

Total removal of groyne (query by MG) is not under consideration as it would necessitate planning approval to build a new groyne (rather than the current refurbishment proposal). Clarification on mid-Harbour sand bank - this is a protected area and cannot be dredged.

GMT asked what needs to happen to make progress on the groyne. The Harbour needs someone to stand alongside it.

An alternative entrance channel is on hold for the moment.

6. Legal Challenges

MT summarised: JR1 decision report now received. 10 items requested by BHT were all found in favour of IoW Council (with Harbour as an Interested Party). BHT has appealed on two items and it is now understood that only one may be considered by a Court of Appeal. The Court awarded IOWC and BIL costs to be paid by BHT which presently remain unpaid. No timescale.

2nd JR Challenge against MT/FT is still on-going. No timescale.

Legal costs are phenomenal. BHT has benefitted from being granted a restriction on costs under the Aarhus Convention, limiting their liability of losing JR1 to £10,000. This does not cover the costs to date of the IoW Council who have use of the public purse. In going for an Appeal, BHT have replaced their original barristers, presumably at significant expense.

BHT have requested Aarhus for JR2 which the Harbour consider to be unacceptable, especially given that BHT claim to have raised over £100,000.

7. Events programme 2021 and 2022

FT summarised 2021 - some events cancelled due to Covid restrictions. The Duver Dash is now part of the Isle of Wight Festival of Running. In 2022 it's hoped that the main organisers will take the lead role and the local community will be involved (Parish Council and primary school - FT will be contacting).

The Bembridge Gig Fest (originally planned for 2019) was moved from June to July then was cancelled, but an informal gathering with 4 mainland rowing clubs and Yarmouth Gig Rowing Club (co-organisers) proved to be an excellent "dress rehearsal" for a larger event in 2022. 2 June weekends under consideration (4th/5th and 18th/19th) but the first is the start of ½ term and the second announced as IoW Music Festival, so issues with accommodation for mainland clubs and inflated ferry prices/availability for additional crew/club members. Dates TBC.

FT grateful thanks for extra high level of support from BSC, BHYC and BHA staff for FFW when FT was called away to a family emergency. A fantastic event and GMW recorded additional thanks for the attendance of a local samba band for Sunday's crabbing competition.

Proposed 2022 dates:

- **Duver Dash** - Sunday 29th May (note 4-day Bank Holiday, Thursday 2nd to Sunday 5th June, marking the Queen's 70 years of service. The ½ term holiday 30th May to 3rd June
- **Rock the Boat** - Saturday 4th June (TBC)
- **Bembridge Gig Fest** - proposed dates of Saturday 18th & Sunday 19th June but may change
- **Bembridge Harbour Family Fun Weekend** - Friday 12th - Sunday 14th August
Potential clashes with sailing events (Scows 70th, Mermaids 100th, Redwings 125th Anniversaries. BSC programme being finalised by end of October).

8. Members' Reports

GMT - all points already addressed

MG - abandoned car near Harbour View Café. GW had reported to and made several follow ups with IoW Council and Island Roads. It is owned by an unidentified Bembridge resident and out of MoT. Actions to allow it to be removed continue.

AD - siltation from the River Yar remains a concern for BAC members. MT reported that he was now in touch with a nominated local director for Southern Water with whom he was setting up a meeting. With regard to the sluice gates, MS mentioned that John Raymond has an EA contact who had been very helpful and would make enquiries as to their identity **(action: MS)**

AD noted that major water companies can now discharge greater quantities of raw sewerage due to the lack of availability of necessary chemicals. Since Brexit, money has been made available for improvements to infrastructure benefitting fishing - AD to send information to MT **(action AD)**

Unmarked speeding RIBs discussed - awareness is high and where identified, owners have been spoken to/contacted. MG - possible Parish Council funding for buoyage and inclusion of speed restrictions on their published map **(action MG)**

Dept of Trade Consultation on personal water craft (Hamble River LNTM - **action MS** (circulated to members separately).

JR - a great 2021 season, RIB hire fully booked from June to August. 2 new staff members. 7 new builds in progress plus RIB replacements. Seaview and Cowes being used as bases.

GW / CAS, Bembridge Sailing Club – very busy season. Difficulties in recruiting seasonal staff reported. An incidence of theft from the ladies changing rooms led to a man being charged - security measures being reviewed as a result.

MS, RNLI - a quiet year to date - 31 shouts involving 15 big boats, 16 small and assistance given to 57 people. Offshore boat house reopened to the public at the end of July and during Sept raised £2,000 in donations, plus £1,500 via a touch screen). Brian Jones has retired as full-time mechanic - John Attrill appointed as replacement.

9. AOB

MT - expressed condolences to the Angling Club at the recent passing of Dave Gawn.

GMW - flashing beacons will be installed on finger pontoons temporarily stacked together during dredging. AD asked to notify AC members accordingly.

GMW - attended a meeting on 5.10.21 with Island Harbour Masters and IoW Council regarding Covid support - to be reported on in more detail at the next meeting.

10. Next Meeting

Thursday 9th December 2021

Appendix 1: Planning Permission and OS map - reference Minute para 3 (pdf files sent as attachments to cover email - FT)