

# APPENDIX D

## Bembridge Parish Council – Full Council Meeting Report:

15/09/2017

### Our Future Harbour Plans

As an active trading Harbour, I believe that we must be doing something right in encouraging both resident and visiting boats to use our facilities. Allocated resident berth-holders have increased for the second year in succession, and visiting boat numbers up to the end of June show an increase of 10% on last year's equivalent figures.

#### Salient aspects:

**Employment:** Our prized asset is at all times our staff - from their initial employment we provide extensive training, with an emphasis on customer service. We pride ourselves on our approach to safety within the Harbour and in maintaining full compliance to the Port Marine Safety Code. Compared to 2011, we now employ double the number of staff, providing the first class service we have become recognised for and constantly seek to improve.

**Dredging:** This appears to be a constant concern for stakeholders and the single most significant aspect of the successful management of the Harbour. Bar one year since 2011 [to bolster our funds for a potential legal battle], we have maintained a rolling dredging programme within the inner Harbour and we will continue with this on-going yearly programme to retain depths in the Marina, fairway and Duver pontoon. We are considering plans to open up Attrills' Point with more depth, and although in the past we have held back from dredging the Fisherman's pontoon in order to keep berthing costs as low as possible, I do think we need to review this decision in discussion with berth-holders.

HJ Bennetts have dredged the entrance channel for several decades; their commercial marketing of the dredged material has led their decisions on what and where to dredge. We have a close relationship with the company and monitor their involvement in the interest of all Harbour users.

In the future, we do need to be in greater control of the inner Harbour dredging and want to acquire our own dredger, possibly in conjunction with another Harbour. We have limited periods when dredging can take place - from 1<sup>st</sup> December to 31<sup>st</sup> March we cannot dredge for ecology reasons - for commercial reasons we do not dredge over bank holidays or during the main months of July through to September. Hence there are small windows of opportunity (currently subject to the availability of commercial dredging companies) and it is these that we need to optimise for their associated benefits.

**Tourism:** Through our events programme, including a Jazz event, Family Fun Weekend and a new calendar fixture – Oktoberfest [23<sup>rd</sup> September 2017], together with encouraging rallies and individual visitors, we manage to bring over 30,000 tourists into the Harbour in a year. This brings into East Wight and especially Bembridge and St Helens substantial spending that helps the local economy.



Since 2011, our visitor numbers have essentially doubled, and I believe this is due to our winter marketing programme - visiting and giving presentations to mainland clubs about the Harbour and its locality, as well as general marketing, our raised profile and reputation.

Our investment into new and extended pontoons in 2012 was required to cope with our anticipated Harbour business – we had to increase the number of boats using the Harbour and improve its business income.

**Regeneration Planning Application:** Subsequent to the resolution to grant planning permission given in December 2015, and at the request of Bembridge Harbour Trust [BHT] to the local planning authority, we have supplied further detailed reports in ecology, sequential testing, and an independent financial viability assessment from the Valuation Office commissioned by the LPA. These have now all been accepted by the local planning authority and it is anticipated that a further overview report will be provided at the October planning committee to ratify the original approval.

The draft of a legally binding Section 106 agreement is in place setting out in detail that the benefits for the Harbour costing circa £950,000 will be completed prior to the relevant housing development and an overage clause obligation whereby further surplus profits will be reinvested back into the Harbour.

The initial impression given to new customers and visitors of our berthing and staff offices - 2 x ex-sea containers together with insufficient toilet facilities at both marinas is far from acceptable in the age we now live in; we need these facilities both upgrading in quality and quantum at the very earliest where both are long overdue. The Duver bio-treatment plant was deemed unfit for purpose, both by us and Southern Water back in 2012 and since then has been used as a holding tank, with pumping out, with its associated pervading aroma, necessary up to 3 times over busy summer weekends, and at extensive cost to the business [£5,000 per month in the summer period]. The power supply provided to visiting boats is now failing on a regular basis and is a constant source of frustration to our customers and again, cost to the business. We are constantly reminded by our customers of the present inadequacies of our facilities and it is now, without any doubt, starting to erode the reputation we have built up.

**Houseboats:** We are hopeful that in the near future our application for a Lawful Development Certificate will be granted that will enable us to re-submit our planning application for circa 6 x infill plots for new houseboats.

Post 2011, all new houseboats being moored within the Harbour have been required to install a sewage system or holding tank arrangement on arrival into the Harbour. Our planning application is very important to achieve as it will include the contractual obligation on the Harbour to design and install in all houseboats that have been moored in the Harbour pre-2011 a dedicated sewage system or plant at the Harbour's cost free to each houseboat. This has to be a major benefit to all Harbour users. Together with unrecoverable VAT the anticipated cost is estimated to be £180,000.

On the sale of these newly designated houseboat plots, we have given an undertaking to the local planning authority, which will be part of a legal agreement, that any deemed excessive surplus will be reinvested into the Harbour, such as for the groyne or additional dredging.

**Bembridge Groyne:** The newly independent Bembridge Harbour Users Group [BHUG] has initiated a refurbishment plan for the Bembridge groyne which we support. So far this project is at its initial stages but gaining traction locally – we are already establishing how the construction can be most effectively brought forwards relating to such issues as VAT and cost risk aversion.

**Nominated Annual Charity:** Each year we nominate an Island charity - for 2017 we are working with the Sophie Rolf Trust – Kissy Puppy, with fundraising throughout the year and with special emphasis within our events.

**Programme and Timing:** I am often asked why we have not progressed with constructing our new facilities that were granted approval in December 2015 - the answer is very simple.

BHT has claimed that the original reports provided to the local planning authority (LPA) were lacking in detail - hence as above they have been resubmitted in greater detail and accepted by the LPA.

There have been no changes or alterations to the scheme at all - it is exactly the same scheme granted consent in December 2015. We are now in need of being allowed to commence our programme of works of benefits to Harbour facilities within our regeneration project and also to move forwards with our investment into the houseboats.

Our investment since 2011 has been in excess of £1m - add to this our commitment within the regeneration scheme of a further £950,000 plus £180,000 towards the houseboats sewage problems means a huge financial commitment on our behalf. For the past 2 years or so, this investment programme has been on hold and frustrated for reasons outside of our control by BHT who represent a membership of just 179 people [less than 0.05% of the local population] - all our attempts to have a meaningful dialogue with them have proved fruitless.

Malcolm P Thorpe

