

BEMBRIDGE HARBOUR TRUST

NEWS LETTER No. 1

16th May 2008

To Trustees, Patrons, Advisory Board Members and Founder Members of the Bembridge Harbour Trust.

Dear Friends,

I want to bring you up to date with the progress the Trustees have been making with the Bembridge Harbour Trust (BHT) over the past few months, we have been busy over the winter, working on a number of initiatives to set us on a course to achieve our objectives.

Let me remind you of these declared objectives:

“To preserve and enhance Bembridge Harbour, its approaches and setting for the benefit of the public including the users of the harbour and the communities of Bembridge and St Helens on the Isle of Wight”.

Our principal aim, with the formation of our charitable Trust last year, is to purchase, for the local communities, the harbour from the current owner should the opportunity arise.

In this way we aim to provide access for all members of the community and for visitors to the amenities and enjoyment that this beautiful ‘working’ harbour can offer and to be vigilant in seeing that it is neither over exploited nor neglected.

We intend to give you a detailed report of our activities at our Annual General Meeting, which will take place at 6 pm on Friday, 29th August at the Brading Haven Yacht Club to which you will be warmly welcomed. You will receive a formal notice of the meeting nearer the date.

In the meantime, let me give you a short progress report on our recent activities.

Valuation of the harbour: A formal and detailed independent valuation of the harbour has been obtained.

Water Quality: The community continues to worry about the quality of the water in the harbour. We have therefore commissioned Environmental Experts to conduct tests; these have started and will be completed over the next 6 months.

Planning applications: We have monitored in conjunction with other interested parties such as the National Trust and RSPB, planning applications that might impact the harbour.

Let me give you an overview of our current concerns about these plans;

We are opposed to the building of a hotel on the South West shore of the harbour. In addition to commercial and aesthetic objections our greatest concern is that it would remove the only substantial car park on the water's edge.

The lack of car parking and the desire of the Harbour Company to increase the number of boats using the harbour are, in our view, irreconcilable.

We have supported the National Trust in their objection to the application to erect a permanent canopy/shelter providing a hospitality area behind the Duver Marina. Whilst this would be a useful amenity, it will cause additional car parking pressure on the Duver, a fragile area owned by the National Trust immediately adjacent to the proposed shelter.

An application to increase the number of houseboats moored on the Embankment Road has been made. There are a number of local concerns. To achieve the greater number, the existing houseboats will be moved closer together with risks to local amenity and safety. The limited access and parking problems along the busy Embankment Road are already a problem for the existing houseboats even without an increase in numbers. The visual impact of an increased number of possibly even larger houseboats also needs considering.

As part of the application to increase the number of houseboats to 33, the Harbour Company is offering to install a proper sewerage system for all the houseboats. We would greatly support this move. However, it is our view that the proposal to install this sewage system should not be tied to an increase in the number of Houseboats. It should be noted that a new sewage system has been on offer from the Harbour Company before and has not been installed; it should certainly be a prerequisite that the sewage system is completed before any permission is given for any new house boats.

Administration of the harbour. We view the lack of publication of last year's Report and Accounts, the resignation of the auditors and the recent court cases as a sign of increasing problems within the harbour company. Also it seems that the harbour owner may not be retaining adequate funds to maintain and dredge the harbour as required by the Harbour Act of 1963.

The new fore and aft trots were laid at the end of last year. To date they have not generally been used and so their full problems have not become apparent. There seemed to be uncertainty about the planning status of these trots; it was understood that the Harbour Company was meant to remove these moorings leaving only the ground tackle for a period each winter. This did not happen this year. Also concern has been expressed about the ground tackle as the large weights used have not sunk into the mud and constitute a danger to navigation.

We shall be pursuing all these points and more and will I hope be able to give you a fuller picture at the AGM.

The number of Founder Members of Bembridge Harbour Trust today stands at more than 150, and our Deposit Account at £61,000.

Despite all the hard work that I summarise above, I feel that the most important factor to remember is that, thanks to your support, we now have this charitable vehicle in place through which, should the opportunity occur, we will have the best chance of raising funds to purchase the harbour. Also, through this Trust we will be able to set up the correct structure to own and run the harbour for the benefit of our communities and the users of the harbour.

Remember that when the harbour last came on the market, there was no such vehicle in place and so, despite huge local efforts, it again fell into outside commercial hands. We are prepared to wait but are hopeful that our time will come.

Looking forward to seeing you all on the 29th August 2008

Donald Biddle
CHAIRMAN