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# THE SENTINEL

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## Newsletter of the Bembridge and St Helens Harbour Association

No. 41 March 2010

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### Chairman's Letter

Dear Member,

I am delighted to inform you that Peter Hunt has kindly offered to become our new Editor of the Sentinel. We thank him and wish him well in his new task.

Several important events have taken place since the October 2009 Sentinel. BASHHA's 20th Anniversary Celebration was held on Sat 14th November 2009. A retrospective Exhibition was mounted in the Cloisters and the Bembridge Heritage Society supported us by opening the Heritage Centre. Many display boards designed by the late Perry Kuhns traced the Association's development from its inauguration in November 1989 in response to public opposition to a London Property Company's plan to build 80 dwellings around Bembridge Harbour and a Marina at Bembridge Point. Thankfully, the Planning Application was refused in 1991.

Other boards featured the seven different groups that contributed to the Association's Rural Action Project - An Appraisal of the Environment of Bembridge Harbour. The Report, published as "Bembridge Harbour" in 1995, was well received and was sent to many local authority and environmental organisations. Maps and other archive materials were on display. Unfortunately appalling weather conditions prevented many members from attending. However we were pleased to welcome Mrs Marian Kuhns and her son Duncan who braved the elements to attend.

The afternoon Forum featured contributions from Founder members and others tracing significant aspects of BASHHA's history up to the present, including the adoption of our sub committee the Bembridge Harbour Users Group ( BHUG ) in 2006, concluding with a presentation on the Eastern Yar Strategy. Mrs Mary Steane, wife of the late John Steane, BASHHA's first Chairman and President, cut the celebratory cake followed by toasts to the Association and its members. Much has been achieved by BASHHA during the past 20 years and we need to continue monitoring activities in and around Bembridge Harbour for the foreseeable future.

The Eastern Yar Strategy reached its final stages last autumn, and 4 Options were presented to the IWC for decision prior

to the Draft Strategy going out to Public Consultation for 3 months. There is a statutory obligation to maintain Embankment Road as the Brading Marshes Nature Reserve benefits from European Habitat protection legislation (see article in Sentinel 40). "Maintain the sea wall for 50 years" is the EYS recommended Option D. Impressive attendance at the two Public Exhibitions mounted and staffed by the Environment Agency demonstrated the depth of local concern. Many senior members of EA staff, representatives of IWC and IW Councillors also attended. Comments need to be submitted to the EA by Friday 5th March. Please ensure your views are heard and support Option D.

The saga of BASHA's Objection to the level of Harbour Dues being imposed by the Harbour Company in 2006 finally resulted in the Dept for Transport holding a Public Inquiry in January this year (see account elsewhere). A surprise announcement that the water in Bembridge Harbour was up for sale for around £3 million, but essential buildings were for lease only, did not impress. Developments awaited!

Members responded generously to my letter concerning BASHHA's diminishing income, soliciting donations from members who joined during the first 10 years. Our grateful thanks to all who kindly contributed. As agreed at the March 2009 AGM, each category of annual subscription has been raised by £2 this year with Life subscriptions 10 times the annual amount. Annual subs. were due on 1st January 2010 so the Hon. Treasurer would be pleased to receive them either by post or at the AGM on 13th March. Once again I make a plea to members to volunteer to join the Committee. We are a friendly group and perform a worthwhile task which is important for our two communities. If you or someone you know would be willing to stand for election, we would welcome you. Any queries, please contact any Committee member or ring me on 873213. After the AGM we are delighted that Mr Vince Whelan will give a presentation on the RNLI including local developments. We look forward to seeing you there.

Yours sincerely,  
*Barbara Clough, Chairman*

## Initial Confusion!

The number of organisations associated with Bembridge Harbour can be confusing. What purpose do they serve and what are the reasons for their existence?

**BHIC** – Bembridge Harbour Improvements Company owns the Harbour, authorised by the Pier and Harbour Order ( Bembridge Harbour) Confirmation Act 1963. The Harbour Authority has many rights and responsibilities. Among its powers it can construct, maintain and improve works. However, as the Harbour is multi designated (SSSI, SPA,} and is a European Marine Site of conservation importance, any proposal for development which may have a significant effect on the condition of the site requires the approval of Natural England (NE) It may refuse or require provision of compensatory habitat. BHIC is a commercial business needing to produce an income for its shareholders.

**BASHHA** – Bembridge and St Helens Harbour Association was founded in 1989 in response to a major Planning application opposed by most local residents. Our Aims and Objectives are attached. Currently BASHHA has over 400 members. In 2006 and 2007 BASHHA submitted an Objection to the level of Harbour Dues being imposed by BHIC to the Sec.of State for the DfT. Newsletters and meetings provide a forum for the dissemination of information.

**BHUG** – Bembridge Harbour Users Group became a sub committee of BASHHA in 2006 and since 2007 has been managing the conduct of the Harbour Dues Appeal culminating in the recent Public Inquiry. Many BHUG

members have businesses or work around the harbour and are well placed to observe activities as they happen. The BHUG committee tends to focus on potentially damaging water based planning applications while the BASHHA committee concentrates on land based planning applications and environmental concerns.

**BHT** – Bembridge Harbour Trust was founded as a Charitable Trust in 2007. BASHHA became a Founder Member. The BHT have similar aims to BASHHA concerning the preservation of the harbour but their main purpose is to purchase the Harbour if/when it becomes available and run it for the benefit of the communities of Bembridge and St Helens. There are now 157 Founder members and BHT are concentrating on raising funds to enable them to achieve their aim.

**BHLG** – Bembridge Harbour Liaison Group was set up in late 2007 and consists of representatives of different interest groups invited by BHIC. A Bembridge Harbour Management Plan has been produced. A representative of the Bembridge Sailing Club and of BASHHA were invited to comment on the Plan, but our comments were largely ignored.

Further information on the above and on Statutory bodies EA - Environment Agency, IWC (especially the Planning Dept.), NE - Natural England, and non statutory bodies RSPB - Royal Society for the Protection of Birds who own the Brading Marshes Nature Reserve and NT - National Trust who own the Duver, can be found on the Links page of [www.bashha.org.uk](http://www.bashha.org.uk).

### AIMS & OBJECTIVES

- To collate information regarding Bembridge Harbour and the surrounding areas and reflect the information and independent views of local residents, visitors and harbour users.
- To propose, facilitate and update long-term policy for the harbour and surrounding areas including, but not limited to: dredging, funding, maintenance, management and ownership.
- To encourage a balance between the natural environment of the Harbour and its commercial, environmental and recreational uses.
- To encourage, within statutory and other appropriate authorities, positive initiatives which improve that appearance and use of the harbour and surrounding areas and are compatible with the agreed structure, policies and views of the community.
- To encourage the community to cooperate effectively in response to any proposals concerning the Harbour and surrounding areas.

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Published by Bembridge & St Helens Harbour Association [www.bashha.org.uk](http://www.bashha.org.uk)

Produced by Desktop Studio, Unit 1a Weavers Yard, Lane End Road, Bembridge. PO35 5US (Tel: 01983 874874)

Opinions expressed in The Sentinel are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the Association.

## Snippets of Harbour News compiled by Mike Samuelson

**Sale of the Harbour:** Deadline for initial bids was 26th Feb 10. BHT have put in a bid. It appears that the Agents (Chesterton Humbert's) are being "very economical with the truth" as far as the pooh traps go!

**Harbour Dues:** The two-day Public Inquiry into the level of the Bembridge Harbour Dues (2006-2009) finished on Wednesday 20th January. As those who attended will testify, the Users Group case was extremely well presented and the many and numerous shortcomings of the Harbour Company as far as harbour dues go during the period under review were well exposed. The Inspector's report to the Secretary of State for Transport is expected within a month, however we have no idea how long it is likely to be until the final decision is then announced. In the meantime, many, many thanks to those of you who have supported the annual appeals – it has been a long and tortuous exercise!

**Yar Quay Hotel:** No news although a 50-year lease on the site (albeit with a "get out" clause) is currently included in the Harbour Sale.

**Channel Maintenance Dredging:** NE/IWC are pressing the Harbour Company to produce the "operational management plan" that they are required to do if dredging is to continue.

**Fore & Aft Moorings:** Except for the outer line which like the previous year were left as markers, all the buoys were removed in early December (as required under the 106 Agreement). The anchors and chain-weights remain a danger to navigation at marginal states of the tide. A maximum of 40 (out of 108) moorings were in use last summer.

**Houseboats:** No news of any movement to re-submit the planning application for the piles etc for the 6 additional houseboats that the Harbour Company/M&L are after.

**Wades and Fisherman's pontoons:** Provision of water and power to Wades Pontoon (renamed Selwyn Marina) still has yet to be completed. The FEPA Licence application for the extension to Fisherman's Pontoon has been refused and a new application will have to be submitted if they wish to proceed.

**Harbour Liaison Group/Harbour Management Plan:** Responses to earlier questions on the issued Management Plan are still awaited. The poor staffing of the Plan was highlighted during the Public Inquiry.

**Bembridge Harbour Trust:** Primarily concentrating on the sale of the harbour. A very interesting and hopefully useful paper was published in early January on "Water Levels in the Harbour". Copies are available from Donald Biddle.

**Bembridge Lifeboat Station:** Planning Permission for the new inshore boathouse was approved just before Christmas. In the meantime the offshore boathouse build is going well. The new walkway is complete and the framework for the main building was in place by mid-February. Although thus far its been a quiet (in terms of callouts) winter, the Silver Beach facility continues to work well.

**Eastern Yar River & Coastal Strategy:** The 3-month consultation period on final report began with the Public Exhibition on 9th Dec 09 in the Village Hall. It concluded with a similar session on the 13th of February. The two principal recommendations are that the Embankment Road has to be maintained as a sea defence to protect

Brading Marshes, and that IWC are stuck with maintaining the Duver Wall for the next 50 years. Feedback on attempts by the Working Group to extend the maintenance options for the latter (i.e., not just the wall itself) and to clarify whether there are any EYS restrictions on repairing Bembridge Groyne will be provided at the meeting.

**BSC** has at last received its FEPA Licence for dredging the area of the One-Design Pool and we are hopeful that ML Dredging are going to have a window of opportunity to do it in mid-March.



*Work in progress! Bembridge Lifeboat Station – walkway to Offshore Boathouse  
(Photo by Paul Rainford)*

## Review of the Public Inquiry into Bembridge Harbour Dues

The Public Inquiry into Harbour Dues on the 19th and 20th January was well attended particularly on the first day. We obviously do not know what Alan Boyland - the Inspector who conducted the Inquiry- is going to conclude but it was felt that he conducted a very fair "hearing"

We also felt that he well understood the key issues and that he would have been unimpressed that some of the evidence from the Harbour Company was not produced until after the Inquiry started. He is required to submit his report and recommendations to the Secretary of State for Transport within a month of the Inquiry although it is probable that the DfT may well not publicise the outcome for several months!

In essence we believe we demonstrated that the Harbour Company were charging the cost of a number of items to the Harbour Dues account that they were not entitled to do. We presented a deal of evidence which we believe

showed that a reasonable level of Dues should be around 54% of the amount that has been charged since 2006.

We are extremely grateful for the magnificent response to our appeal for funds from all the individuals, Clubs & businesses who so generously contributed towards the cost of the legal support and advice that we received. It was very apparent that the involvement of Bircham Dyson Bell was invaluable, and we are greatly indebted both to them and Colin Samuelson from Glanvilles who so brilliantly represented us at the Inquiry itself. Colin's cross examination of the Harbour Master (the Harbour Company's only witness) and his final submission were master pieces.

We now await the findings of the Secretary of State.

*Robin Powell (Chairman, BHUG)*

### DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

#### Annual General Meeting

Saturday 13 March 2010 2.30pm at St Helens Community Centre

Speaker: Mr Vince Whelan – "An insight into the RNLI"

#### Spring Beach Clean

Saturday 8 May 10am

Meet at Bembridge Point or Hovertravel Works, St Helens. Gloves and stout shoes essential.

At your own risk please.

#### Bembridge Festival Street Fair

Monday 24 May 2pm - 4.30pm

BASHHA Publicity stall. Offers of help in manning the stall gratefully received.

### Bembridge & St Helens Harbour Association 2010 Membership Application/Renewal

I/We wish to apply/reapply for membership of the Association and enclose a remittance as follows:

|                     |        |    |      |     |
|---------------------|--------|----|------|-----|
| ORDINARY MEMBERSHIP | Annual | £5 | Life | £50 |
| FAMILY MEMBERSHIP   |        | £6 |      | £60 |
| REDUCED MEMBERSHIP  |        | £4 |      | £40 |
| DONATIONS           |        | £  |      |     |

*Please circle  
amount enclosed*

Names .....

Address .....

..... Telephone No. ....

E-mail: .....

Signature ..... Date .....

Subscriptions may be paid direct to your Sentinel deliverer or to the Hon Treasurer, Rod Bowman, 1 The Brambles, Foreland Farm Lane, Bembridge. PO35 5QH Personal information supplied by you will be treated in confidence and will not be supplied to any third party.