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# THE SENTINEL

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## Newsletter of the Bembridge and St Helens Harbour Association No. 44 October 2011

### Chairman's Letter

*Dear Member,*

Since the AGM in March several significant events have occurred:

In April **Bembridge Harbour Improvements Co. (BHIC)** and **Maritime and Leisure Investments Ltd (MLI)**, went into Administration. BASHHA has always had the ambition that the Harbour would be bought for the benefit of our communities rather than private industry, and we were involved in an unsuccessful attempt to do this in 1994. More recently, **Bembridge Harbour Trust (BHT)** was set up for this purpose, and BHT Chairman Michael MacInnes brings us up to date (page 2)

In June we were very pleased that our website [www.bashha.org.uk](http://www.bashha.org.uk) was relaunched with improved layout and content and is more user friendly. We are very grateful to Janet Shuter, Editor, and to David Groom of Vectis Web Design who now hosts the site for us.

Our sincere congratulations to the **RNLI** on all that has been achieved this year. Their continuous fund raising activities contributed to major building operations, the new Walkway and completion of the **Lifeboat Station** and splendid Sip Our Soup Open day. These culminated in the visit of HRH Princess Anne on 10th August to dedicate the new £7M Lifeboat Station and officially name the new £2.8M **Tamar class Lifeboat Alfred Albert Williams**. It was a moving experience recognised and felt by those present - a truly memorable occasion.

After two years work and 57 consultations by the **Balanced Seas Project** team based at Kent University, their recommendations for establishing **Marine Conservation Zones (MCZ)** have been sent to Government bodies, Defra, Natural England and the Joint Nature Conservation Committee for consideration. The Science Advisory Panel (SAP) will also examine the data, prior to a public consultation period next year. Fortunately several people from our area have represented different interests at the Local Group level. Important

recommendations have been made with implications for Bembridge, which will be of interest and concern to members and others (page 4).

Very successful **Beach Cleans** took place on May 8<sup>th</sup> at St Helens Duver and Beach and at Bembridge Point, Silver and Point Beaches. A total of 28 volunteers removed 21 bags of rubbish. Discarded items included twisted iron bench supports, hessian rubble sack large tyre and heavy duty spade. The local environment was much improved! **CPRE** generously considered we were worthy to receive **another Anti-Litter Award and £100 cheque**. As the money can only be awarded to a registered Charitable Trust we will again donate the money to the Bembridge Harbour Trust. Presentation is still pending, as we suffered adverse weather conditions at the Beach Clean and MCS Litter Survey carried out by 8 intrepid loyal volunteers at Point Beach on 17<sup>th</sup> Sept. Our grateful thanks to all who take part. We do make a difference!

Our next **Know Your Harbour** meeting is Tuesday 1 Nov. at Brading Haven Yacht Club at 7pm. I am delighted that Sue Wells has kindly agreed to talk to us about the process of the project. See below for details.

*Yours sincerely,  
Barbara Clough Chairman*

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## The Balanced Seas Project

Tuesday 1 November 7pm, Brading Haven  
Yacht Club, Embankment Rd

**Speaker: Sue Wells, Project  
Manager**

**plus: stakeholder representatives of local  
business & recreation**

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# Bembridge Harbour Trust Update

The Administrators finally put the Harbour up for sale on Friday, 23 September.

The BHT bid team are now reviewing the information provided with a view to preparing a bid and organising a bid structure and the appropriate due diligence process..

The Administrators are seeking expressions of interest for the acquisition of the entirety of Bembridge Harbour Improvements Company Limited, the owner of the Harbour itself, together with the majority of the Bembridge freehold and long leasehold interests of Maritime & Leisure Investments Limited, the parent company. These do not include the houseboat long leasehold interests which are to be retained by MLI.

In order to pave the way for the sale, the Administrators needed to give formal notice of a meeting of creditors for a "voluntary arrangement". The meeting took place on 30th September. The arrangement was approved resulting in an estimate of no dividend for the unsecured creditors. The only secured creditor is Handelsbanken, Portsmouth branch which is owed £3.15 million and they only expect to receive part of this from the sale.

We are very pleased with the support we have been receiving to our harbour restoration appeal and I would like to thank all those who have made a pledge. More pledges are still required and everyone's support is most welcome. If you would like to know more about this and help us, please contact us c/o H. Attrill & Sons (IW) Ltd, The Duver, St Helens, Isle of Wight PO33 1YB, or at

[www.bembridgeharbourtrust.org/](http://www.bembridgeharbourtrust.org/) :

We are also planning carefully for the future management of the Harbour if we succeed in our objective of acquiring it for the benefit of the Community in perpetuity.

We will be establishing a properly organised independent harbour management company that will have executives and staff with relevant skills and local knowledge to manage it efficiently and effectively. The existing staff will be transferred under TUPE requirements.

We are also assessing professionally the appreciable amount of immediate restoration work that will be needed to be carried out by the new owner to keep the Harbour going. This will require considerable financial resources. It includes maintenance dredging which has not been carried out for some eight years and in many places water levels are extremely low. This cost is even estimated in the sale particulars as likely to cost up to £426,000; so that itself could easily be more. It will include major repairs, upgrading and replacement to many of the pontoons. The marina harbour walls need surveying and the groyne at Bembridge Point needs review. There also needs money to be spent on upgrading the shore facilities for visitors.

We appreciate the enormous support that we are receiving from the Community and will keep you advised of progress.

*Michael MacInnes, Chairman of the Trustees,  
Bembridge Harbour Trust, October 2011*

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## Annual General Meeting 2011

**The 22<sup>nd</sup> AGM on 19<sup>th</sup> March** was attended by 45 members. The Chairman welcomed all present including several new members and thanked the Officers and Committee for their continuing support.

### Treasurer's Report

**Rod Bowman** presented the accounts previously circulated. As all categories of annual subscriptions had increased by £2 last year income had increased. Supplementary donations had been received from many Life Members which was very much appreciated. An extremely generous response of over £5000 was received from individuals and businesses towards legal representation at the Public Inquiry in Jan. 2010 promoted by BHUG. *Sentinel printing/ distribution costs have increased. Sending it by email would be beneficial.* The accounts were approved unanimously. Rod, who had been Hon Treasurer since 2006, was retiring. The Chairman thanked Rod warmly for all his hard work and efficiency and for updating our membership list and presented him with a token of our esteem. We are delighted that **Christine Grant** has kindly agreed to be our new Hon. Treasurer.

### Chairman's Report

Another fairly eventful year in which 2 long running concerns, were finally resolved.

**Eastern Yar Strategy(EYS):** after 10 years of determined effort by the St Helens and Bembridge Coastal and Harbour Working Group to raise the Project team's awareness of valuable local knowledge and concerns, the final outcome was satisfactory. The Duver Wall will be protected for 50 years and Embankment Road will be maintained and protected for 100 years.

Last AGM we were still hopeful of a positive outcome of the **Harbour Dues Public Inquiry** held at BSC in Jan.2010. The Final Decision of the Secretary of State that the Objection would not be upheld, was not received until mid October. We were shocked and dismayed at what seemed an unjust decision. BHUG had been conducting the Appeal since 2007 It has involved a tremendous amount of work, supported by individuals and organisations to whom we offer our grateful thanks.

There was a good response to the **Shoreline Management Plan** Consultation. **Bembridge Harbour Trust** has

continued to pursue its aims.

Our regular annual activities have continued successfully. New members were recruited at the Street Fair; the Beach Cleans were well supported and we were awarded £100 and a Certificate for Anti-Litter Clearance by CPRE. A fascinating presentation was given by **Martin Woodward** at Know Your Harbour 19.

We were sorry to report that **Marjorie Trimmer** died in Sept 2010. She had edited the Sentinel for 6 years and had a distinctive personal style admired by many.

**Ken Hicks**, one of our Founder Members with **John Steane** in 1989, retired after 21 years loyal service. We have benefitted greatly from his wisdom and local knowledge through the years. The Chairman thanked him most sincerely and declared him an Hon Life Member.

The Chairman thanked all members for their support with

BASHHA's many activities. Please help recruit new younger members.

### **Election of Officers and Committee**

Officers were proposed and seconded as follows: Chairman Barbara Clough, Vice Chairman John Askham, Hon. Treasurer Christine Grant. Other Officers: Secretary Mary Chappell, Minuting Secretary Helen Hunt, Editor Janet Shuter, and Committee: Rober Barnes, Barbara Blackburn, Jim Elliott, Felix Hetherington, Paul Traquair and Robin Powell and Mike Samuelson representing BHUG were elected en bloc.

We were delighted to welcome **Michael MacInnes** to update us on the current position re possible Purchase of the Harbour. Since the situation changes so rapidly, see his further update on page 2.

*Barbara Clough, Chairman*

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## **Balanced Seas Project: some notes on the final report**

The project covers the entire coast of southeast England. Final recommendations submitted on 6 September have gone to Defra, Natural England, Joint Nature Conservation Committee, and the Science Advisory Panel, and if accepted will form the basis of public consultation in 2012.

It is important to see the report as a basis for further investigation and negotiation, not as a set of cast-iron decisions. We think it is wise for anyone interested to read them now, rather than waiting until the beginning of the consultation process, as the information is so complex that one needs time to digest and consider. One should certainly not rely on press reports or summaries. It was impossible to produce an informative summary that would fit into space available, so what follows is just a brief guide to the documents you need to see, plus some comments from consultee organisations.

BASHHA is suggesting to Bembridge Library and local clubs which have premises that they print reference copies of these documents so that people without internet access can see them.

The report comprises a great number of documents, all downloadable. Go to:

[www.balancedseas.org/page/RSG%20Resources.html](http://www.balancedseas.org/page/RSG%20Resources.html).

You need four documents:

1. Balanced Seas Final Report: Recommended Marine Conservation Zones [the main report; first pdf in the list];
2. rMCZ 22 Bembridge;
3. rRA 15 Tyne Ledges;
4. rRA 21 Culver Spit.

The **main report** [70pp] sets the scene, terms of reference etc., then goes on to results and recommendations. The project team refers several times to lack of 'good' data for some areas, and the need for more work.

In **1.6 Stakeholder comments**..., the commercial side made some important points:

- The data/science may be best available but is often

inadequate for decision taking. Time/ money must be made available to rectify this before decisions are reached.

- The exclusion of socio-economics from the SAP remit was a mistake & will threaten the coherence of the network
- Coexistence of some activities put forward will not be appropriate and will not show as compatible in VAs, therefore from our perspective it would make more sense to exclude these than create extensive management issues for activities that have to continue for wider benefit of UK e.g. cannot stop port operations.
- Any areas that get put forward on 'poor' evidence will not have stakeholder support. Important those where evidence base is sound are only put forward first and evidence base for others to be worked on. It is not acceptable to restrict activities on poor data or to put onus of proof onto operators.
- Leaving sea bed areas undisturbed does not necessarily mean the area recovers to acceptable state. Predatory invasive species will flood into these areas as a result of no activity & these may well irrevocably alter these areas. This process is at best an experiment. It must be taken into account that coexistence (current) of features/species with activity, has still resulted in the current levels... With the reduction of [beam trawler] effort over the last decade, a level of "recovery" is already happening.

The wildlife conservation organisations said, for example:

- The locations of many sites are felt to be sound and do reflect area of particular habitat and species data. We do have concerns that the area boundaries and sizes have been significantly altered to reduce impacts, often at the expense of integrity of the sites and will reduce their value for ecological conservation.
- Similarly we have great concerns over the Conservation Objectives with some base on poor or insubstantial activity data. There are many maintain targets, some sites

are entirely maintain, in which case there will be a business as usual approach and conservation gain will be very limited.

• I am concerned that many compromises have already been made to accommodate socioeconomic interests at the expense of ecological integrity. There is little spare capacity in achieving the ENG targets so we cannot afford to lose more sites through the forthcoming stages in the process. There needs to be a mechanism to ensure that the final network is large and strong enough to function ecologically and restore the sea to health.

## 2. The MPA network in the Balanced Seas region

describes the network of existing protected areas and rMCZs within the Balanced Seas region.

**Bembridge rMCZ no 22** [20pp] defines the site area, from Seaview to Bonchurch, and the habitats and species requiring protection. Section 8 Site summary says:

"... The rMCZ is exceptionally rich in ENG habitats that are currently protected such as *Rossworm* (*Sabellaria spinulosa*) reef, mud habitats in deep water, sea pens and burrowing megafauna, seagrass beds and wild native oyster beds, as well as important regional nonENG features like *Spoon Worm* and *Ross Coral* beds. The Ledges to the south of Bembridge Harbour are home to large areas of the brown alga, *Peacock's Tail* (*Padina pavonica*), which acts as the seeding population for other populations around the Isle of Wight and so the northern part, Tyne Ledges, has been selected as a Reference Area (rRA 15).

The *Lagoon Sand Shrimp* (*Gammarus insensibilis*) and *Starlet Sea Anemone* (*Nematostella vectensis*) have been recorded in Bembridge Harbour and in adjacent areas above the MHW mark. There are records of both species of *seahorse* (*Hippocampus hippocampus* and *H. guttulatus*) and the site is considered to provide suitable habitat for breeding populations of these species. Recent Natural England survey work has identified the only location of *maerl* (*Phymatolithon calcareum*) beds in the Balanced Seas project area in the slightly deeper waters

around Culver Spit. As a result, this has been recommended as a Reference Area (rRA 21). Other, earlier surveys recorded one of only two occurrences of the *Kaleidoscope Jellyfish* (*Haliclystus auricula*) in the project area, in waters further from the shore, where the seabed becomes predominantly subtidal mixed sediments, sands and gravels. The northern part of the site, where there is no overlap with the South Wight Maritime SAC, has been identified as having particularly high biodiversity, in the form of benthic biotope richness and benthic species taxonomic distinctness.

The draft conservation objectives have implications for benthic trawling, anchoring, potting and shellfish harvesting ... The RSG has recommended more detailed assessment of this area."

Detailed descriptions, tables and maps follow, and the report ends with **17. Implications for Stakeholders**, which says among other things:

"The fisheries sector has been involved in discussions on this site, but further information needed and it is clear that there is likely to be limited or no support if there are restrictions on the potting sector or other local fisheries. There are a dozen static gear boats working from Bembridge, and local restaurants rely totally on local seafood to attract business. Most of the Ventnor fleet and beach based south coast boats rely on potting and netting in Sandown Bay during winter and prevailing SW gales."

The two other documents, **rRA 15 Tyne Ledge** and **rRA 21 Culver spit**, give similar detail for those two areas. We understand that discussions in late September have resulted in corrections to the Tyne Ledge area proposed for protection, so the coordinates in document rRA 15 are not those finally proposed.

Janet Shuter 14 October 2011

*The Sentinel No. 44 October 2011 Published by Bembridge & St Helens Harbour Association; Printed by Desktop Studio, Woodnutts, The Duver, St Helens PO33 1YB, tel. 874874 edited by Janet Shuter (janetshuter@btinternet.com)*

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## Bembridge & St Helens Harbour Association 2011 Membership Application/ Renewal

I/We wish to apply 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
Donation				

Name(s).....

Address.....

telephone.....

Email.....

Signature..... date.....

Please send cheques to Christine Grant, BASHHA Hon Treasurer, 3 King's Close, Bembridge PO35 5NX.

*Personal information supplied by you will be treated in confidence and will not be supplied to any third party.*