

Dear Editor,

The Solent Protection Society (SPS), whose mission is “*to ensure the ecological and environmental well-being and wise management of the Solent area,*” has called for IoW planners and Natural England to “expedite procedures” in order to “help towards local economic recovery” - citing delays in approving property developments around Bembridge Harbour (IWCP 22nd May). Part of the mission of Bembridge Harbour Trust (BHT) is to ensure that the harbour retains its vital position in the local economy long into the future, recognising that the economic future of the community is inextricably linked to the environmental sustainability of its harbour.

We have raised substantial concerns about the environmental impact of the residential property development at issue. Major earthworks about 1.5 times the size of the pitch at Wembley Stadium have been proposed on a site next to internationally recognized protected areas, without going through the planning and consultation process. Southern Water have confirmed that nitrates from the effluent from the development will drain into Bembridge Harbour, not the Sandown treatment works. Natural England are continuing to discuss these issues with IoW Council and the developer.

We therefore suggest that SPS might clarify why it is calling for normal planning and environmental safeguards to be circumvented, when the residential property development it is supporting poses a significant potential threat not only to the environment but also, as a knock on effect, to the sustainability of the local economy.

Still on the topic of the environmental and economic health of the harbour, BHT was pleased to learn (IoW CP article 22nd May ) that Bembridge Harbour Improvements Company (BHIC - the authority charged by statute with harbour maintenance) has invested around £10,000 in two new houseboat sanitation systems - a small fraction of the £350,000 which BHIC has raised since 2012 by selling leases for houseboat plots. We will therefore be even more pleased when we hear that some of this money has been used to provide sanitation for *all* the remaining houseboats. The money left over might be used to fund the sorely needed renovation of Bembridge Groyne, which the owners of the harbour claim cannot go ahead until their separate property company can be sure it will secure the £1.2m they are anticipating from the property development supported by SPS. We would welcome SPS's opinion on this matter as well.

Yours sincerely

The Trustees, Bembridge Harbour Trust