

**To The Patrons of Bembridge Harbour Trust: (Received 1<sup>st</sup> May 2020)**

**The Rt. Hon. The Lord Brabazon of Tara DL  
Sir Robin Knox-Johnston CBE RD  
Mr Christopher D J Bland  
Mr Michael MacInnes**

Dear Sirs,

You are all recorded as being Patrons of the Bembridge Harbour Trust [BHT] and it is for this reason I have decided to write to you collectively in my capacity as a Director of the companies below and as joint owner of Bembridge Harbour and associated businesses.

As you are aware, the relationship between BHT and the Harbour businesses has not been at all cordial for several years; during the period when Michael MacInnes was chairman post 2011 when we purchased the Harbour, at least there was a level of respect and co-operation between the parties. However since Jeremy Gully became chairman in August 2015, the relationship has deepened into entrenched roots of hostility. This situation is now eroding and dismantling the Harbour's function to a level whereby its future existence could be put at risk.

From our point of view, BHT constantly operates as a personal vendetta against myself and my wife Fiona on all aspects of the business operation, undermining all our initiatives and the associated goodwill that we have built up within the local community. The most demonstrable public elements being their 'show us the books' campaign that is managed by Mrs Gully on several social media sites, their highly visible flag flying within the Harbour and public stickers and posters littered everywhere. The actions and statements made by BHT's chairman consistently and purposefully spreads misinformation and confusion that misleads Harbour users into thinking that BHT might actually manage the Harbour.

In summer 2018 Jeremy Gully on behalf of BHT, actively courted the GMB Union, with whose backing a representation was sent to the Dept for Transport requesting a full review of the Harbour company – a request subsequently turned down formally by Baroness Sugg. This action together with other unwarranted and unjustified claims promoted by BHT undermines our management of the Harbour.

Over the past year or so, your trustees have stepped up their campaign beyond the reasonable remit of what should be considered as a charitable trust - increased with greater public criticism of ourselves on a personal level and constant unwarranted publicity that started to erode by the start of 2020 the number of rally visitor bookings to the Harbour for this coming summer, long before Covid-19.

Far in excess of their registered aims and objectives is their determination to gain access to all our financial trading accounts and records, whilst they have acknowledged they have no legal rights to do so as the harbour and all associated companies are privately owned by myself and my wife.

During April 2020 your trustees have issued a newsletter [the second April newsletter] to their members which includes statements that bear absolutely no resemblance to the truth to a degree that is legally unacceptable, and yet again causes significant damage to our reputation both personally and in the context of Harbour management. It is for this reason that we have decided to make contact with you as Patrons in an attempt to bring some sensible and realistic thinking to the whole subject on behalf of BHT without us taking legal initiatives.

Attached to this email are the following statements:

1. BHT's second newsletter - April.
2. Our response to item 1 dated 30/04/2020.
3. Nigel Bennett's email dated 28/04/2020 + attachment.
4. Copy email to the local planning authority dated 14/04/2020
5. Copy email to the local planning authority dated 28/04/2020.
6. Houseboats investment statement dated 30/04/2020.
7. Bembridge groyne statement dated 30/04/2020.

It is plainly obvious that this latest April newsletter is portraying us in an unacceptable position due to its personal criticism and incorrect assumptions portrayed and statements made that cannot be substantiated by BHT.

Allow me to state the following:

- a. There is now no working relationship between us and the trustees; the likelihood of this changing for the good is non-existent.
- b. The trustees believe they hold the key to the future of the Harbour, whilst having no legal, moral or commercial rights to take any physical actions at all. BHT can only complain and criticise. This is an unjustifiable stance to adopt.
- c. The trustees regret BHT did not buy the Harbour in 2011; we cannot be held responsible for their decisions at that time or now.
- d. By the trustees making public statements against the Harbour, we are aware that several in-coming visiting rallies decided before Covid-19 not to visit the Harbour in 2020. BHT's actions harms the Harbour business, whilst also having a direct negative effect on the local community, stakeholders, both yacht clubs, shops, restaurants and pubs that also suffer as well.
- e. The trustees are essentially self-elected.
- f. The trustees do not abide by the registered aims and objectives of BHT and constantly use divisive methods to extend their vendetta against the Harbour management.

As an overview, we believe that a legally and properly functioning Harbour Trust using its present aims and objectives as originally envisaged does have a role to play within East Wight; we believe this can only be achieved where the managing trustees are openly selected by the villages of Bembridge, Brading and St Helens, are not self-appointed and hold a post for say three years maximum.

As a recent example of what can be achieved, attached is a detailed description [item 6 as above] relating to the houseboats moored within the Harbour; this explanation demonstrates that a change in management within the houseboats association has brought about very quickly further beneficial investment by the Harbour for the good of all harbour users. With a change in the management of BHT, similar improvements around the Harbour could and would be achieved, but such investment would be impossible whilst the existing trustees are in place.

Hence the purpose of this email; - I would like to promote a very straight forward proposal to the Patrons please that I would ask you to consider as below:

“For the good of Bembridge Harbour, its stakeholders and the local community, you as the Patrons of Bembridge Harbour Trust are asked to consider putting into action that all existing trustees stand down from their positions within BHT forthwith.

You subsequently instruct BHT’s Advisory Board to promote an application process for residents from Bembridge, St Helens and Brading to apply for the position of one of four trustee positions for a period of three years maximum – all applicants are to be permanent local residents and no existing trustees can apply. The final selection process and appointments are to be finally confirmed by you as Patrons”.

Should you accept this suggestion, we will assure you as the Harbour management that we will also abide by your selection and work with the newly appointed trustees.

[Please also note that we would consider inviting one of the newly appointed trustees to attend BHAG meetings.](#)

This proposal is so very important to the future of the Harbour and how it relates to the work and involvement by members of the Bembridge Harbour Advisory Group [BHAG] and their members – hence we will advise them of the contents of this proposition as well as copying in your trustees.

In conclusion, we apologise for the length of this email and thank you in anticipation for considering its proposal.

Yours sincerely,

Malcolm Thorpe **Malcolm P Thorpe**  
**Bembridge Harbour Authority - Bembridge Boat Storage Ltd - Bembridge Investments Ltd**  
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**The Duver St Helens**  
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