

**To The Patrons of Bembridge Harbour Trust. ( received by BHT 14.09.2020)**

Dear Patrons

We have received an 'Open Letter' dated 28/08/2020 from BHT trustees and note its contents.

Please allow me to refer you to our letter addressed to BHT patrons and copied to BHT trustees dated 01/05/2020 [as attached] that has only received two brief acknowledgements from Patrons and a more detailed letter from one trustee – the latter totally ignoring the main purpose of our letter.

As we have stated before, we believe that BHT does have a function to play within Bembridge Harbour and hence the purpose of our stated proposal is to bring harmony into the Harbour as opposed to the non-existent working relationship between us and the present trustees. To remind you, our proposal [slightly refined] is that all existing trustees stand down from their positions within BHT and for the Patrons to request the BHT Advisory Board to promote a replacement interview process for four new trustees to be individually appointed for a period of three years maximum.

In return we give our assurance that the Harbour management will abide by this selection process and work with the newly appointed trustees.

From our perspective, we are hugely disappointed that the proposal in our previous letter was not given a fully reasoned and detailed response..

During the first four months of lockdown, the Harbour haemorrhaged financially like every other business as a result of covid19; following this difficult trading period for the first part of the summer we carried out various improvements and changes within the business and we believe that our decisions have put the Harbour in a stronger position for the future.

With no knowledge of the forthcoming Covid-19 in Autumn 2019, we commenced improvements within the Harbour for our customers' benefit that has since been extended to include further works relating to social distancing and current Government guidelines, such as:

**Duver Marina Facilities:** Due to the extended delays we have encountered in the planning process for the new administration and facilities complex, we decided last autumn to completely refurbish the existing shower and toilet facilities, which had deteriorated to well below an acceptable level. Most of the work was carried out by our own staff during the winter period with the finished installation being welcomed by all our customers. It is a great improvement to our product offer. However this is only a temporary solution until our planning process gains approval and the new complex can be constructed.

**Duver Marina pontoons:** Post lockdown being announced on 23/03/2020, we took the decision that for the future, we could not continue with a policy of rafting out visiting boats as a result of Covid-19. Various finger pontoon packages were bought, and subsequently installed along the entire length of this pontoon on both sides. This has proved a valuable improvement for the benefit of our customers and staff in the current circumstances. We are also looking to install a further phase in the autumn that will be suitable for drying out boats utilising walk-ashore pontoons.

**Bembridge Marina dredging:** Originally delayed due to lockdown / Covid-19, it was not until the end of May 2020 that the hopper barge finally arrived and the dredging programme then ran through to the start of August after a break in the middle of the programme. This dredge within the marina was to re-establish and gain additional depth and was effectively accomplished with the Harbour's own dredger which proved efficient and mechanically reliable throughout the whole programme at a very economical cost.

The Harbour has all the required long term permissions needed for dredging works using its own dredger on an effective basis.

**Entrance Channel:** As a result of Nigel Bennett's retirement in Spring 2020, we have had many discussions with various companies to retain the required depth in the channel. This has proved to be an extended evaluation process, so in the meanwhile we have used our own dredger to deal with a few high spots. We do want to conclude these discussions for a replacement dredging company as soon as possible.

**Bembridge Groyne:** The Harbour is fully committed to and supports this project, although based on sound professional advice, does not necessarily agree with all the benefits that can accrue from such works on a long term basis. The Harbour is facilitating this project through our permitted development rights, whilst agreeing to be the contracting party with the nominated builders so enabling the project to benefit from reclaimed VAT and also contributing to its cost.

**Management Plan:** The last management plan organised by the previous management team expired in September 2013. Many of the subjects contained in the same have been adopted and would have included the new Duver administration and facilities complex, new houseboat plots, together with the Bembridge groyne project. All these initiatives have succumbed to direct or indirect local intervention. The importance of completing both the groyne project and the new admin complex should not be underestimated – both are urgently required.

**Houseboats Association:** Post a change in management in January 2020 within the Houseboats Association, a positive working relationship has been the outcome where thoughts and ideas for the future are now openly discussed. Post the nomination by the Association of two houseboats, and as part of the Harbour's commitment to reducing sewerage within the Harbour, we now have the first biodigester system installed and working with the second installation scheduled for October. All this work is being carried out at the Harbour's expense. We will then be able to commence the next phase.

Since 2012, all new houseboats arriving in the Harbour have needed to demonstrate prior to their arrival the installation of suitable plant to treat their out-going sewerage. We believe this to be a sound policy along with our installation programme.

In summary, the 2020 summer season has been hugely compressed from seven to four months as a result of Covid-19 – hence we are hopeful that boat owners will continue to make use of their boats well into October.

An unresolved issue that is relevant to the whole of the Solent and elsewhere is the general lack of availability for dining out for visiting boats and crews; we understand the issues that restaurants and clubs need to go through to enable their businesses to trade on a restricted customer basis and are fully supportive where we can be. This is a constantly changing aspect that we follow very carefully to enable Harbour visiting customers to gain the best impression of visiting Bembridge and to return again.

In closing I would again ask the patrons and trustees to give their serious thought to our proposal as detailed in the attachment – we have proved that such a management change has been effective within the houseboat association and there is no reason that it would not work with a change of management within BHT. We would yet again give our assurances that we will abide with the patrons' selection and work with all new trustees.

Finally we would like to request a meeting with all Patrons in the near future please.

Kind regards,

Malcolm

**Malcolm P Thorpe**

**Bembridge Harbour Authority - Bembridge Boat Storage Ltd - Bembridge Investments Ltd**

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