

Beach Liaison Group Meeting

Tuesday 7th November 2023

10am

Venue - Wembury Marine Centre

Minutes

Attendees:

Coral Smith (CS) (Chair)	DWT Wembury Marine Centre
Sarah Brown (SB)	Local Sea swimmers
Emma Gatehouse (EG)	National Trust
Jess Tatton-Brown (JTB)	National Trust
James Hart (JH)	Bovisand Holiday Park
Rob Price (RP)	Environment Agency
Peter Bromley (PB)	Wembury Sailing Club
Paul Naylor (PN)	Wembury Marine Conservation Area Advisory Group
Jennifer Parkin (JP)	Old Mill Café

1. Apologies:

Belinda Kemp - St Werburgh Church
Andy Brown – Wembury Sailing Club
John Stansell – Churchwood Valley/Wembury Parish Council

2. Actions arising from last meeting:

- Mewstone Sign – NT will erect this season. **CARRY FORWARD**
- **ACTION CS** to try to seek a response and invite someone from SWW at next meeting. **CARRY FORWARD**
- **ACTION DB** to contact planning officer re: Fort Bovisand/SWW works. Dan Brown no longer a SHDC/WPC Cllr so **Action CLOSED**

3. Updates from Stakeholders:

National Trust – Area Ranger Update (JTB)

Planning - application hopefully to be submitted prior to Christmas it will include:

- upgrade to path surface through mill meadow and widening to 2m

- renovations of existing toilet block to incorporate a disabled toilet.

If successful we would hope to commence works after Easter 2024.

Wall repairs: still waiting for quotes but this will be completed with some urgency, and the brief to contractors is now to include 1 new concrete step for access to the beach with new handrails.

Dog Bins - Still waiting on an update from Cllr Nix regarding the Dog Poo bins – **ACTION JTB** to follow up.

Natural Solutions - National Trust have shown Jo Neville our Water Advisor around Mill Meadow with a view to creating a low impact scheme using natural processes to slow the water down and clean it before it arrives at the beach/sea. This is work that has been recommended by the EA following water monitoring of the stream which found pollution from the village and agriculture. We are awaiting this report to submit to the Environment Agency: Rob Price for his approval.

National Trust - Visitor Operations and Experience Update (EG)

Access lane to the beach:

- Following the incident in half-term, the large vehicles brought up to do the repairs by South West Water caused severe cracks in the road which belongs to Devon County Council
- About a decade ago, Highways carried out work to underpin the lane and there's potential that a similar work will have to be done again
- Highways are bringing in an external company to make another assessment and to complete the works; this could be some time.
- For now, the lane has been opened to light vehicles (vehicles no bigger than a transit van)
- A big thank you to the church for kindly allowing the use of the church car park when not in use

Welcome Manager:

- Tim, Welcome Manager, retired at the end of October after 10 years with the National Trust.
- Matt Voller has been appointed as the new Welcome Manager. Matt's been working seasonally at the Marine Centre for the past few years and will be starting with the team at the end of November.

Car Park updates:

- The car park team now have a wireless card machine and a till which will enable them to do membership again from next year. The car park vehicle counter has also been replaced as data has not been consistent over the past couple of years.
- We'll also in the very early stages of talks with a CIC (community interest company) about potentially doing some community paddles and are hoping to do some work around paddle safety next year. There are no plans to hire out paddle boards or kayaks at Wembury Beach.
- Also working with British Canoeing to produce a paddle trail for Wembury and the Yealm which will be available on the British Canoeing website

Seasonal dog ban:

- Would the other stakeholders be open to reviewing the dog ban in the summer at Wembury? It's a contentious subject and the NT can understand the arguments on both sides particularly when there are already issues with dog waste. They would propose trialling changing the dog ban to 7am-7pm from 1 May to 30 September which would allow local dog walkers to have use of the beach. Any changes will need public consultation as there are strong arguments for and against.

Wembury Marine Conservation Area (PN)

- PN Introduces WAG and its aim: Promote and support the conservation and study of the Wembury MCA
- Priorities are supporting WMC, enhancing protection of the MCA, raising funds
- **AGM is Thursday 23rd November 1830 Wembury Village Hall – all invited, please register here:** [Wembury MCA Advisory Group Annual General Meeting Tickets, Thu 23 Nov 2023 at 18:30 | Eventbrite](#)
- While much of the MCA protection is voluntary, there is some statutory protection and it's very important that any illegal fishing is reported to Devon and Severn IFCA, who are keen to receive such notification, especially with photos:
 - for example, the top of a net must be at least 3 metres below surface at all states of the tide (meaning any net close to the coast around Wembury is likely to be illegal) and potting can only be done under a permit, with pots marked by a buoy bearing permit/boat number
- Spearfishing discussion in terms of a safety issue as well as an unregulated fishing activity within the conservation area (IFCA are yet to bring in hand gathering byelaw) and popularity keeps increasing
- WAG/WMC need to start data gathering in terms of how often, when and where
- Important to remember the MCA extends from Gara Point all the way to (and including) Bovisand – not just 'Wembury Bay'
- Please see attached flyer for reporting suspected illegal fishing. Please do share. Here you can find all the current legislation around potting and netting around the Yealm and Plymouth Sound: [Current Permit Byelaws & Permit Conditions - Devon & Severn IFCA | Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority \(devonandsevernifca.gov.uk\)](#)

Wembury Sailing Club (PB)

- Another good season
- Brilliant talk from Paul Naylor at this year's AGM
- Waiting list for kayak spots - still very popular

Sea swimming group (SB)

- SB felt water quality was good this year, though currently very poor due to stormy weather
- Popularity increasing all the time – a significant number of swimmers visit regularly in the mornings

Bovisand Holiday Park (JH)

- Concern remains over Fort Bovisand. JH would like to encourage consideration of Fort Bovisand in terms of planning for high pressure sewer main which will pump to Down Thomas and then transferred to sewage treatment works. Approx another 80 properties worth of sewage on a station which is already at max capacity
- SWW - road closures and footpath closures still ongoing to get works completed. Logistics need joined up scrutiny

Devon Wildlife Trust/Wembury Marine Centre (CS)

- CS informed the group that she has now stepped down from Wembury Parish Council, but is happy to remain Chair of WBLG, unless anyone else would like to take it on?
- Please see attached infographic and annual report for seasonal achievements
- Abundance and diversity of INNS (Invasive Non-Native Species) increasing at Wembury, both algae and animals, including Pacific oyster, which is concerning
- CS will be on parental leave from **8th December – 25th March**.
Info@wemburymarinencetre.org will be monitored but any important/urgent correspondence should be sent to line manager at DWT, Dean Holland
dholland@devonwildlifetrust.org.

Old Mill Café (JP/JP)

- Difficult season in terms of weather affecting business, but a great team in place this year and all went as well as possible
- No plans to change anything for next year
- CS commented how valuable the business is for offering young residents the opportunity for their first paid job and all the skills and experience that goes along with it. Wembury BLG would like to see WPC acknowledge this in their minutes.

4. Water Quality Update from Environment Agency (RP)

Bathing Water Status: The overall bathing water status for the 2023 season should be available by January 2024.

- **Pollution Incident:** We are aware of a pollution incident involving sewage being discharged into the between the 23rd and 24th of October affecting bathing water at Wembury. The incident has been resolved and our Environment Officers continue to investigate. Thanks to all those who called in the incident using our hotline on 0800807060 or our email address incident_communication_service@environment-agency.gov.uk

State of Nature Report: The fourth [State of Nature](#) (SON) Report, a product of a collaboration of environmental NGOs, academic institutions and government agencies, was published in September. Its conclusions are based on millions of records collected by thousands of volunteer 'citizen scientists' spanning terrestrial, freshwater and marine species

- The report provides the most comprehensive overview ever of species trends across the UK, including specific assessments for England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, and for the UK's Overseas Territories
- Evidence from the State of Nature report and elsewhere points to four big on-the-ground changes that we can take to accelerate nature recovery:
 - Improve the quality of our protected sites on land and at sea.
 - Create more, bigger and messier places for wildlife.
 - Reducing pollution on land (notably pesticides and excess fertilisers) and reducing the pressure on marine environments.
 - Targeted species recovery action.

Water Company Business Plans: Last week, water companies published draft business plans which set out their proposed spending on infrastructure and improvements to the water system from 2025-2030. Final plans will be agreed by Ofwat in December 2024 with changes to bills taking effect from April 2025. The plans include how companies propose to invest in improving water supply resilience and the environment, helping to make rivers and beaches cleaner, reducing leaks and supply interruptions and tackling issues like storm overflows. Further information can be found at [Water company draft business plans published - Defra in the media \(blog.gov.uk\)](https://www.blog.gov.uk/2024/09/12/water-company-draft-business-plans-published/)

Natural Flood Management (NFM) Programme: In September the Environment Agency and Defra announced [£25 million funding](https://www.blog.gov.uk/2024/09/12/natural-flood-management-programme/) for improving flood resilience through a new NFM programme. Government has committed to double the number of government-funded projects that include nature-based solutions to reduce flooding and coastal erosion risk. NFM uses natural processes to reduce the risk of flooding. These processes protect, restore, and mimic the natural functions of catchments, floodplains and the coast to slow and store water. Measures can include management of soil and land, river and floodplain management, woodland, run-of, coast and estuary. NFM can also provide wider benefits including enhancing habitats and biodiversity, improving water quality and availability of drinking water, carbon capture as well as boosting health and wellbeing

Other useful resources

- Drainage and wastewater management plans: [yealm-erme_l2_dwmp.pdf](https://www.yealm-erme.l2.dwmp.pdf) (southwestwater.co.uk)
- Water fit Live: [Bathing water quality | WaterFit Live | South West Water](https://www.bathingwaterquality.co.uk/)
- Dogs on beaches example [Dog walking at Studland Bay | Dorset | National Trust](https://www.dogwalkingatstudlandbay.co.uk/) and if useful impact of dog faeces on bathing waters [Bag it and #binit4beaches - Marine developments \(blog.gov.uk\)](https://www.blog.gov.uk/2024/09/12/bag-it-and-binit4beaches-marine-developments/)
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- As always, please report pollution incidents or concerns to 0800 80 70 60.

5. AOB

- PN/CS/EG to review signage over code of conduct, spearfishing etc.

- In his absence AB asked group to re-visit the lack of NT bins at beach, whereas they are present at other NT beaches, e.g., South Milton. JTB responded to say that there are NO bins at any NT beach site. Bins at S.Milton may be linked to the café (independently run), but are not for general beach use. JTB happy for AB to contact her directly to discuss further
- **ACTION CS** to ask WPC to invite someone from Fort Bovisand/SWW to present to WPC and/or BLG.

6. Date of next meeting

- **Tuesday April 16th 2024 10am** – **ACTION CS** to send date to members.