

Beach Liaison Group Meeting

Thursday 18th April 2024

10am

Venue - Wembury Marine Centre

Minutes

Attendees:

Coral Smith (CS) (Chair)	DWT Wembury Marine Centre
Jake Taylor-Bruce (JT)	DWT Wembury Marine Centre
Sarah Brown (SB)	Local Sea swimmers
Emma Gatehouse (EG)	National Trust
Jess Tatton-Brown (JTB)	National Trust
Jonathan Fisher (JF)	National Trust
Rob Price (RP)	Environment Agency
Peter Bromley (PB)	Wembury Sailing Club
Paul Naylor (PN)	Wembury Marine Conservation Area Advisory Group
Andy Brown (AB)	Wembury Sailing Club
Tom Stansell (TS)	Churchwood Valley Holiday Park
Tom Higgins (TH)	Churchwood Valley Holiday Park
Belinda Kemp (BK)	St Werburgh Church

1. Apologies:

John Stansell – Churchwood Valley/Wembury Parish Council
Cllr Alison Rix – SHDC/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**
- Dog bins - Still waiting on an update from Cllr Nix regarding the Dog Poo bins – **ACTION CS** to contact Cllr Rix. **ACTION DONE - EMAIL SENT April 24.**
- **ACTION CS** to ask WPC to invite someone from Fort Bovisand/SWW to present to WPC and/or BLG. **CARRY FORWARD**

3. Updates from Stakeholders:

National Trust – Area Ranger Update (JTB)

Wall repairs: Contractor removed top part of wall over Easter and stones piled at base to protect and support for short-term. Working with a coastal expert for a longer-term solution. In the interim, maybe rock armour to protect the soft bank. Something to buy time that can be removed when a permanent fix comes into place. Will be a year or two. Still in early days.

NT also looking at repair to concrete cracks below steps from café down onto beach

Mill Meadow Accessible Path: Successful application to widen path by a few inches to enable more people to get down. Bird surveys to make sure there were no nesting birds in the scrub. Water management in the culvert/stream. RP (EA): What can we do upstream to slow the flow? What can we do to encourage people in Wembury to manage their water? What plants can be planted in gardens to control water flow? Water management is important, and the general consensus is to work with the community.

Mill Meadow Natural Solutions Project – NT have employed a consultant (geomorphologist) about feasibility of water management in mill meadow. Trout in the stream, so fish passes need to be put in but could be good because this can allow them to get further upriver than currently. This requires co-operation with Churchwood Valley who are keen to do something similar. CS mentioned European eel a critically endangered species who use the stream. RP pointed out that eels are better at winding around obstacles than other fish, so as long as reedbeds are put in and special eel steps then they can get up river. CS and EG keen to work on awareness/signage/interpretation of these importance species and important work taking place.

Tree Planting – NT planting lots of trees, 2km of hedgerows and wood pasture on NB farm. Planning application for new footpath at top of village in Knighton area. Tennant farmer who lives at Plympton with highland cows on an annual rolling contract.

National Trust - Visitor Operations and Experience Update (EG)

New Senior Volunteering and Community Officer will be starting early May and will be based at Saltram but working with community on Wembury on various projects.

Dogs – No changes to dog restrictions on beach this year. NT are not looking at possibility of temporal changes in future, e.g., allowing dogs in early morning and late evening. Emma is the person to direct dog related enquiries to.

Dog poo bins: NT still waiting to hear from SHDC about moving dog bin into meadow. ACTION CS to chase Cllr Rix to ask for an update. **ACTION CS DONE.**

CS: CLEAN OUR PATCH ambassador Rachael Bailey and co. have been doing regular beach cleans, Matt Voller (NT) is planning some community beach cleans too. It's a local issue too, not just visitors as the dog poo fouling in Wembury village is also at an all-time high.

Beach Access Road Re-surfacing – Once repaired, there will most likely be a weight limit of 7.5 tonnes. May cause an issue for SWW tankers. Devon highways are paying for works.

Water Quality Update from Environment Agency (RP)

Mill Meadow Natural Solutions - Delighted that progress in feasibility study with NT has been good. Funded through TECF (Tamar Estuaries Consultative Forum). Has his ear to the ground for additional funding. This is the cornerstone of a fourfold approach to tackling water quality issues: misconnections, water behaviour, landowner management/catchment sensitive farming approach and natural solutions. Using nature-based solutions like reedbeds down here to strip nutrients from water approaching the sea and marine conservation area.

Bathing Waters: all seven bays in Tamar Catchment are rated at excellent for 2023. However, this does not mean that water is good on every day. Use 'SWIMFO' network to check water quality.

SWW were fined a total of 2.5million last year, this money has not been put into the treasury but is being put into improving water catchment via the WATER RESTORATION FUND that can be applied for. There is only 8 weeks to put bids into this and money needs to be spent in the same financial year.

Tamar catchment meeting- Wembury and Yealm are most easterly parts of catchment. Representatives from numerous organisations. Set up a habitat banking vehicle that can take money from BNG (Biodiversity Net Gain) and put it into places where it is easier to improve biodiversity, this is a potential new source of funding.

Q for RP - is improving the water quality having an impact on the wading birds of the Plym? Some evidence that maybe yes.

SWW has been given a 2-star rating with a downgrade on their performance BUT they have also improved their monitoring which gives a much clearer picture. Monitors do not show how concentrated the sewage discharge is, it could be very concentrated and dangerous or highly dilute and not cause a problem.

International Paints Outcome- After long-term TBT release up the river Yealm, IP fined £750,000 for knowingly discharging. IP (company name now changed) Looking at options for remediation. They were prosecuted so money went straight to Treasury. No enforcement undertaking (them paying money to make good what they've done but not have a criminal record). Understanding is that they have volunteered to do some remediation however, and it is their responsibility to come up with a proposal. This was in December 2023. Views on what to do with the TBT now that it has stratified into sediment are mixed – scientists have been involved. Local community somewhat confused as to why they haven't had a say.

Wembury Marine Conservation Area (PN)

- Updates from AGM: Various discussions with TECF and IFCA. Very early discussions on strengthening the voluntary code of conduct for the MCA. Devon & Severn IFCA are one of the biggest but most poorly funded IFCA's.
- A Consultation on IFCA hosted by DEFRA that ends on Monday.
- IFCA and wrasse fishing, IFCA have not withdrawn a license for this, it's just not currently financially viable.
- [Current Permit Byelaws & Permit Conditions - Devon & Severn IFCA | Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority \(devonandsevernifca.gov.uk\)](https://www.devonandsevernifca.gov.uk)
- TS stated there were around 800-900 commercial crab/lobster pots in Wembury Bay last year from just two boats.
- CS mentioned DWT are also interested in strengthening protection at Wembury, possible links with NMP
- Copies of current Code of Conduct (CoC) are available from PN as A4/A3 posters or postcards.

Churchwood Valley (TS & TS) –

- Some work in their meadow to improve water quality. They will clear up debris.
- Possibly moving coastal path at some point.
- Improvements to Wembury SW coast path.
- JTB (NT) suggested possible joint application to improve SWCP.

Wembury Sailing Club (PB & AB)#

- Some issues with rubbish (ghost fishing gear) being left in the boat park.
- Till the Coast is Clear can be contacted to remove hard to reach or large ghost fishing gear, ropes, pots etc.
- 0 kayak thefts in last few years.

Sea swimming group (SB) –

- No update – weather terrible over winter making regular swimming hard.

St Werburgh Church (BK)

- Only 4 weddings booked so far this year, most bookings sadly for funerals.
- Last week of July Garlands and Gowns Festival (mini flower festival) to be held over three days.
- Bells returning at some point either the beginning of July or August.

- Firebreak to be cleared around church wall after nesting season.
- Sign goes out when funerals are going to take place the day before.
- Church wardens are still Jayne Richardson and Sue Lord (wemburywardens@gmail.com).

Devon Wildlife Trust/Wembury Marine Centre (CS)

- Focus this year on developing our citizen science projects
- Currently running monthly surveys for shoresearch on Blackstone reef and Sequest SW watches at Wembury Point
- Marine Strandings Network has been very busy over winter. Data contributes to understanding of causes of death in marine mammals, e.g., has revealed that bycatch is the biggest cause of death for common dolphins. (see flyer attached – please share).
- 30th anniversary of the marine centre this year. Potentially coincide with national marine week for some big events. Set up a birthday club.
- SAT 8th June for world oceans day.

Date of next meeting

- **Thursday November 21st, 2024, 10am** – **ACTION CS** to send date to members.