

Beach Liaison Group Meeting

Thursday 21st November 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
Jess Tatton-Brown (JTB)	National Trust
Rob Price (RP)	Environment Agency
Paul Naylor (PN)	Wembury Marine Conservation Area Advisory Group
Andy Brown (AB)	Wembury Sailing Club
John Stansell (TS)	Churchwood Valley Holiday Park
Tom Higgins (TH)	Churchwood Valley Holiday Park
Belinda Kemp (BK)	St Werburgh Church
James Hart (JH)	Bovisand Holiday Park
Samantha Barnes (SB)	National Trust
Matt Voller	National Trust

1. Apologies:

- Cllr Alison Nix (SHDC/WPC)
- Peter Bromley (WSC)

2. Actions arising from last meeting:

- Mewstone Sign – NT will erect this season. **DONE**
- **ACTION CS** to try to seek a response and invite someone from SWW at next meeting. **REMOVE ACTION**
- 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 VIA CLLR STANSELL**

3. Updates from Stakeholders:

Wembury Marine Conservation Area (PN)

- AGM this evening at WMC 6:30pm
- John Hepburn standing down as secretary next year
- Keen to update Code of Conduct which has been in place since 2021 – too much info, people aren't reading it and needs to be more succinct and clear
 - RP mentioned in chat - can the code of conduct for Wembury be expanded to include awareness of good dog owner behaviour?
- PN wanted to remind members that there are also legal restrictions around fishing in particular – please report to IFCA – photographs/evidence required. **ACTION CS** to attach enforcement poster - <https://images.app.goo.gl/dAFoitKZbcMW9ADR8>
- Some potential support from PCC/TECF to promote and publicise
- Recreational disturbance log has been going on this year, but difficult to monitor alongside other daily tasks – important for all partners to be aware and report any kind of removal/disturbance within the Marine Conservation Area to info@wemburymarinecentre.org
- Question about seaweed collection – **ACTION CS** to insert response based on CoC and NT
- JP mentioned jet skis – report to Long Room but feel often little action taken – PN and CS continue to feed back to TECF and PPMLC
- Mention of Giant gobies – protected species and people using intertidal fish as bait could be deterred from doing so in light of GG status
- Consultation open on water bathing quality – see EA update below with link to consultation.

Wembury Sailing Club (AB)

- Really good season apart from the weather
- No kayak thefts or damage etc. thanks to Churchwood for continued support with locking gate etc.
- Waiting list of people wanting racking for kayaks.

Churchwood Valley (TH & JS)

- Fencing – stables will be re-doing a lot of the fencing along the bottom of the path
- Claudia Booth is taking over from Laura as the tenant at the stables and has some interesting plans
- Good season – quite a niche destination so haven't suffered downturn which other areas have. Return visitors are common. New demographics etc.

St Werburgh Church (BK)

- A few weddings this year, lots of funerals
- 7-8 weddings planned for next year
- Historical 'weddings and gowns' event was really well received

- Vandalism of donation box in car park earlier in the summer – has been replaced and electronic card donation point inside church, so people can pay that way when church is open
- Bells are completed but fundraising still ongoing to pay for maintenance
- Sunday school room crack in wall has been replaced, but more work required
- BK asked NT to clear back vegetation on back wall of church. **ACTION JTB** to organise rangers to clear scrub
- Next major refurb is south wall and bell tower which need fixing – experts will be sought to advise

Bovisand Holiday Park (JH)

- Safety buoys at Bovi are effective at deterring speedboats, jet skis etc.
- Bovisand Bay is well fished commercially
- Rising sewer main from Fort Bovisand still not complete – attempts to liaise with SWW over this are dreadful
- Ongoing concern around additional pressure on Wembury sewage works with Fort Bovisand apartments
- SWW contractor (Nighus Mission Water) is sampling Bovisand on a daily basis as part of a suite of sites around Plymouth – all a bit confusing – struggling to make contact repeatedly – potential negative implications and feel put upon with little explanation – sampling isn't taking place at Wembury though!?
- Bovisand is lowest point of sewage line (100m rise in between) extreme concerns about area of highest pressure right in front of the beach if something goes wrong
- Digging of trench will remove a significant number of trees from alongside footpath
- **ACTION CS** to urge WPC to seek meeting with SWW and EA to clarify all of the above
- **ACTION CS** to urge WPC to seek answer as to why Wembury isn't being tested (is it because of treatment works) and if not, then can daily SWW testing take place and results shared?
- 'Yealm Catchment Plan' is hoping to combine citizen science water quality data from various sources – Diane Castle from Yealm Estuary to Moor is taking the lead and will be attending Wembury MCA AGM tonight. **ACTION CS AND PN** to liaise with Diane.

Devon Wildlife Trust/Wembury Marine Centre (JTB & CS)

- Very good, busy season with schools and public engagement events
- Record # of events cancelled due to the weather in summer holidays, which has a knock on effect to charitable income
- Main change is that we are now open year-round, thanks to DWT investing in year-long assistant role (instead of seasonal) and new partnership with NT, with both NGOs now sharing office
- Centre potentially busier in autumn compared to summer when everyone heads to the beach – largely thanks to 'History of Wembury Beach' exhibition which NT ran in October
- Starlink wi-fi just installed which appears to be working well – everything else, including landline, has been ineffective so far
- DWT and NT co-locating/sharing office space – working really well allowing 7 day/week opening throughout year

- Winter plans – continue citizen science surveys including monthly Shoresearch and Seaquest SW surveys at Wembury Point.

National Trust (SB & MV)

- NT now responsible for opening and staffing centre on Mondays and Tuesdays
- Have been running events at the centre – including ‘Wembury Beach History’ exhibition, which has been very well received
- The partnership event ‘Wembury Pirate Day’ was a great success for NT/DWT/WMC and it would be great to do it again next year with more partners. **Action partners** please get in touch if interested
- Winter talk series to take place this winter – focussed on coastal adaptation and coastal change – first talk from SW Coastal Monitoring, followed by University of Plymouth. Will be advertised soon
- NT have arranged with Jen at café to take on some of ice cream shop for storage
- Looking at installing a coast cam at the Beach (attached to the Mill Cottage so only points out towards the sea/reef) which will hopefully be a great benefit to local surfers, the Marine Centre, but also allow coastal change/storm damage etc. to be monitored more effectively.
- NT community drop-in sessions are taking place on Monday afternoons at WMC – 1pm-3pm. Will be advertised on social media today. Anyone can come and ask questions to NT
- CS mentioned difficulty in getting community event posters into WPC noticeboards. **ACTION Cllr Stansell** to take this back to WPC and ask for community event posters to be supported in noticeboards
- MV has been in post for 1 year – NT have managed to increase the capacity of car parking staff this year, allowing better support for visitors and thus, NT recruitment has re-commenced
- Landslip in car park on beach side – likely due to water run-off from car park and field above. Fence has been moved inward – still a bit of work to do. JP mentioned behind the shop is very soft and concerned that it may slip and/or safety hazard. **ACTION NT** to organise reccie of pipes at low tide

National Trust (JTB)

- Repairs to beach wall – a number of experts have been down to assess. Plan to rebuild what was there, plus concrete work under Mill – just waiting for confirmation from Natural England
- Funding from FIPL (Farming in a Protected Landscape) for accessibility – 7 new pedestrian gates will go in at Wembury Pt and 2 accessible picnic benches, with another planned for Mill Meadow
- The new path in lower mill meadow is being washed out again at the bottom of Church Road- culvert under road is tiny and stream height is higher than the road. NT un-blocked all culverts and will get a contractor in to create more space to bring water off the road. This issue is not a result of anything happening on NT land – simply too much water coming down with nowhere to go. **ACTION ALL** members please take photos and report to DCC Highways – it is their responsibility <https://www.devon.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/report-a-problem/report-a-pothole/>
- Dog bins – bin moved just around the corner inside the meadow. Sign in the place stating where it is, but café have experienced 1 or 2 people leaving bags on their doorstep. Generally people feel the amount of litter around it has decreased compared to previous location, especially over busy summer period
- NT additional investment in Wembury has allowed car park staff to do a weekly stroll to Wembury Pt and do some dog wardening/litter checks up there. NT looking at feasibility of dog poo bin at Wembury Pt but finding someone to service it is super tricky
- LOTE (Life on the Edge) is a really positive project for Wembury, which is a hotspot, due to the occurrence of incredibly rare invertebrates. LOTE is run by South Devon National Landscape but

DWT & NT are a partner and NT have an apprentice as part of this, who is learning countryside skills. Lots of free courses for local residents to get involved with. **ACTION CS** to insert link to project page - <https://www.southdevon-nl.org.uk/projects/life-on-the-edge/>

- AB asked about dogs on beach early mornings and late evenings and what NT decision is – at the moment, NT are keen to keep as it is to avoid blurring the lines. NT don't currently staff pinch points, e.g., early morning and late evening, so impossible to 'manage'. Community opinion is very much 50/50 at the moment as well. Point out places that people can take dogs, e.g., Langdon, coastpath etc.

Sea swimmers (SB) –

- Sarah was off for a few months after op, but back in the water as soon as possible
- Hasn't come across anyone with issues in the water/sickness etc.
- Amount of sea swimming has generally increased, but no major concerns
- Use the SAS app to check water quality
- Seal has been spotted a few times in the Bay – very close in
- TS asked about seal bites – generally very low, but always good to be aware.
- **ACTION CS** to include guidance from Cornwall Seal Group RT – 'Give Seals Space' - https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1oT390e4HIVrl7A0_q2uLChup49AI8ED3
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Old Mill Café (JP) -

- 2024 has been going ok and better on the whole than 2023
- Jen is managing the café herself now
- More school groups down this year which is good
- New road is great – but some loss of business during road closure
- JP would like to be copied in on events – what is happening and when. **ACTION CS and SB** to share 2025 events details with all partners
- **ACTION all partners** to send CS all 2025 events details please
- Nightmare with internet and phone lines this year – has affected all parts of the site
- New till system is app-based and if internet goes then they cannot operate
- Emergency phone – regularly reported as failing but when checked it is usually working. WPC are considering replacing handset. Salcombe Harbour are responsible for the line. WPC to consider whether it is necessary to keep the line, esp. given the issues with the line. Open Reach stated there are 2 lines in the box in café courtyard, - 1 is for café so the other must be for the emergency line. **ACTION CS** to seek update from WPC about replacement and whether WPC want to keep it going.
- CS remarked all phone lines have been down at different times – WMC, Old Mill & Emergency – needs to be properly addressed on site with Open Reach.

Water Quality Update – Rob Price – Environmental Agency

- RP sorry not to join in person, 1 ft of snow in N. Cornwall!
- **Defra consultation on Bathing Waters open until 23rd December and should only take half an hour to complete**
[Consultation on Reform of the Bathing Water Regulations 2013 - Defra - Citizen Space](#)

Key areas consultation focuses on:

- Assessing the need to be able to monitor bathing waters year-round due to the uptake in wild swimming and because water usage patterns and trends are changing. This is a great opportunity to make your opinions known and voice the need for increased monitoring
 - If there is a designated water body that is failing, it is given 5 years to get to a 'good' or 'excellent' status. Water courses take a long time to recover and so this consultation will ask for opinions on lifting the cap beyond 5 years. This is unlikely to 'ever' be an issue at Wembury due to continuing 'good' or 'excellent' status
 - Should we consider putting designated bathing waters, where they are never going to stand a chance of getting to 'excellent' status? Should we drive tighter water quality permitting or where recreational use is high, e.g., estuaries, when you are not ever going to achieve compliance? Should we instead direct people to enjoy bathing waters in a managed way, where we can provide information and we know there is a safer environment for them to use? All things for you to consider and give your opinions on
- BLG have been aware that water quality in Wembury Stream may have reduced in 2024 (currently has 'excellent' status) and CS wished to check this with RP and request an update:
 - RP made clear that we have to wait until the official designation is produced early 2025 (?), but in the meantime, it does appear that there were 2 isolated incidents in July 2024, which significantly increased the *E.coli* and *I. cocci* levels way above anything recorded in 2023 or 2022.
 - These are both bacteria and therefore could come from human or animal sources and were aligned with wet weather events and when pollution risk is forecast. History and current expertise suggests it may be human/result of sewer misconnections – but must await official results from 'microbial source tracing' – investigations ongoing and funding being sought to investigate
 - CS asked if it could be related to SWW burst pipe in boat park (?) but members didn't think the timings correlated
 - See below link to Wembury Bathing Water Profile (SWIMFO website) which is publicly available to anyone -
<https://environment.data.gov.uk/bwq/profiles/profile.html?site=ukk4305-26200>
 - Need to create awareness in the community of misconnections, only rain down the drain, only flush 3 Ps etc. and **need parish council and all of us to help spread the messaging** of good personal behaviour and responsibility; need to speak to our neighbours and reach out for help when required (lots available) – community effort to fix this 'man-made' problem
 - Natural solutions to improve water quality coming down Ford/Churchwood Stream – partnership project between the EA and NT
 - Feasibility study is now complete
 - 50k bid has been submitted and approved – currently finalising details
 - Hoping to start in January (2025) with NT framework contractor to reconnect the stream with its floodplain
 - New habitat will be created, a sustainable means of sequestering carbon, increased biodiversity and helping to reduce surface water run-off and therefore protecting the bathing water at Wembury Beach - this is a massive 'good news' story for Wembury and hats off to NT and EA for all their efforts!

- Really important to share all this good news and hard work with the community in due course and all partners to help share the messaging
 - EA and NT will plan a local consultation event where community can learn more get involved
- Link to Tamar Abstraction Licensing Strategy – which covers Wembury area. Water resources are a huge issue now, with climate change increasing strain on resource, and therefore it is important people engage with this. **ACTION partners to read and share** as appropriate
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/tamar-abstraction-licensing-strategy/tamar-abstraction-licensing-strategy>
- EA report on salmon stocks has been published – bad news for salmon – bycatch (at sea) is a huge issue. Factory Trawling going on in the Atlantic. Fisheries colleagues are working on this, not RP. **ACTION PN** to seek update from Matt Healy or share notes from TECF meeting where it was mentioned. CS has found this - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/assessment-of-salmon-stocks-and-fisheries-england-and-wales-2023>
- 22nd January 2025 is next Tamar Catchment Meeting at Princetown – closest rep to Wembury is Diane Castle from Yealm Estuary to Moor (YEM) Project who is creating a catchment plan for the Yealm. **ACTION CS** to engage with Diane and invite to join BLG
 - RP has been consulting on this through the ‘Yealm Working Group’ with a recent meeting at Follaton House
- Yealm Intertidal Restoration project led by SDNL – applying to ReMeMaRe for funding to assess current status of and recommendations for future saltmarsh and/or seagrass restoration. May be opportunities for Wembury to be involved.

AOB

- Large charity walk coming through Wembury on July 5th 2025. **ACTION** whoever has further details on this, please share with CS

Date of next meeting

- **ACTION CS** to send date to members - **THURSDAY 27th MARCH 10am**