



Dibden Bay Update

Our last two newsletters have described ABP's proposals for Dibden Container Terminal and the Society's role as one of the 40 principal objectors in the long Public Inquiry. The Inquiry has now finished, and the two inspectors are busy completing their report for which the target date is October 2003.

At the Society's recent AGM Gerald Smart, a member of Council and our witness at the Inquiry, gave his impressions of how things have gone for the objectors. Dividing the Inquiry's 23 topics into 7 main issues, he said:

*'ABP made a detailed case on the national need for container ports, insisting that their proposals are essential for Southampton, are financially viable and would be so even if a capital dredge is required. They played down the significance of alternative sites in the Thames, Medway and Haven Ports. Objectors, however, attach much importance to these: unlike Dibden, they are largely 'brownfield' and fit in well with planning strategy. Hampshire County Council's witness spoke convincingly of the opportunities emerging, and we backed them up with our own evidence. The sites show much promise, but are not completely free of problems, for example, some local opposition and possible impacts on nature conservation. **

As to access, surprisingly ABP and Hampshire came to terms over widening the A326 Marchwood bypass to meet an additional 5000 trips per day (over 3000 HGV's). Although ABP say that 35% of containers would go by rail, there are difficult problems: the impact of 48 trains per 24 hours worries local people, and the Strategic Rail Authority may be unable to finance major improvements to capacity north of Basingstoke within ABP's timescale. This would put more pressure on roads, with serious repercussions.

The effects on wildlife sited (the Dibden reclaim itself and nearby coast) was another main issue. English Nature, RSPB and the Wildlife Trust did well at the inquiry, and our evidence supported them. The general opinion amongst objectors is that ABP's proposals for mitigation fell short of satisfying European Habitats Regulations.

The question of visual impact also took much inquiry time, and New Forest District Council's witness was convincing, vividly describing the impact on coastal and Forest landscapes, their quality and national and local importance. Again, we gave evidence to back up their case.

Equally, dealing with countryside and recreation, objectors, including the Countryside Agency, New Forest Committee, National Trust, CPRE and ourselves, made strong representations, especially about the effect on the Forest. Dibden Bay is within the proposed National Park boundary, and this, if confirmed, could cause very serious difficulties for ABP's proposals.

The effects on Navigation were not a major issue compared with some.

However, in partnership with the Cruising Association and along with others, we gave evidence about the effect on sailing, its enjoyment and safety, of an increase of 50% to 60% in the number of large ships moving in the Solent and Southampton Water, especially during the tidal window.

As to impacts on communities, local authorities and the residents association RADBP gave very telling evidence, and the many short statements by individual objectors at a special session of the Inquiry held near Hythe, were heart-rending. RADBP will present a petition with several thousand signatures at the end of the Inquiry. Undoubtedly the proposals will have a disastrous effect on the waterside communities, not properly appreciated by ABP nor Southampton City Council.

It would be rash to forecast the result. Things seem evenly balanced, but the environmental case has grown in stature during the Inquiry and I am now more optimistic than at the beginning of the Inquiry.

Continued overleaf



Hythe Waterfront current view



Potential view of container port

Dibden Bay Update

Continued from overleaf

*I am sure the inspectors will back their recommendations with sound technical analysis, and my guess is that the decision at political level, probably in 2004, will involve several Ministers, including the Deputy Prime Minister. They should take into account two uncertainties that were not really within the Inspectors' brief: the extent to which national need might be met by the alternative sites, and whether the New Forest National Park Inquiry, due to finish in March, will recommend that Dibden Bay be within the Park boundary. In our barrister Trevor Ward's closing address we say that the Government must take full account of both.**

** Towards the end of the Inquiry the Port of Felixtowe announced plans for extra container berths on land within the existing port hitherto used for roll-on roll-off operations. This would increase the capacity of the port by about 40%. The likelihood of some redevelopment at Felixtowe had already been anticipated in evidence to the Inquiry, and this important announcement provides re-assurance.*

Council Retirements

There have been a number of changes to your twenty-one member Council this Autumn as some long serving 'Watch Keepers' take their well-deserved retirement.

We thank John Pipe for his nineteen years service acting as our professional advisor on Power Generation, Water Supply and Effluent Disposal throughout the Solent area. These were the fields of his working lifetime together with his involvement with Government Agencies such as the National River Authority and the statutory water boards. As a result of his endeavours, we have had excellent and informed collaboration with Southern Water as the many schemes to improve the Solent water quality have been implemented, 'Wight Clean' being just one of the successes.

We thank Stan Greenen for his sixteen years with us for his knowledge and experience as IOW County Planning Officer together with that of the old Borough Councils. As a retired Island resident we benefited from his contacts, networking and involvement with many IOW trusts and Preservation Societies.

We thank Ruth Evans for her fifteen years with us following on after her husband's long service as a Council Member on his death. She gave invaluable service to us as Press and Archive collator and advising us on New Forest and Calshot to Marchwood developments. A tireless fighter for landscape quality and aware of its fragility under modern development.

We thank Keith Brewer for his thirteen years service as Vice-Chairman and representing the interests of Portsmouth Harbour, its creeks and upper reaches to Fareham. He gave lots of his time and expertise to its problems and remedies in collaboration with the Fareham Society and as Commodore of FS&MBC.

Chairman and Council Members

Joining us to replace those retiring, we welcome Tessa Webb from Bembridge IOW drawing on her knowledge as an IOW County Councillor and past Chairman of Planning and her ten years experience working for the IOW MP Barry Field, a previous vice-president of SPS. She is a member of Bembridge Parish Council since 1978 and a BSC and RNSA club member.

We are delighted to announce that, despite her existing responsibilities, Tessa has agreed to take on the Chairmanship of your Council and was elected as such at the Council's December meeting. Her very considerable experience will be a great asset as the Society adds its new Marketing and PR programme to the ongoing environmental work.

We also welcome Thomas Young of Hamstead Grange IOW whose in-laws, the Kindersley's played such a vital role in protecting Newtown from the possibility of a Nuclear Power Station being sited there in 1957, the outcry creating the formation of our Society under its first chairman, Sir Hugh Casson. Tom is a member of the National Trust Harbour Advisory Committee and replaces Stan Greenen on the Western Yar Estuary Advisory Committee. He has lifetime experience in shipping matters and is a RYS and R Solent YC member. Our latest recruit is Dr Chris Willard, a Keyhaven resident retired as the local GP but very interested in New Forest affairs as a Commoner and also as a yacht owner, RLYC and KYC member, a keen bird watcher RSPB and BTO member.

Your Council is always on the look-out for new members of Council to ensure we always have local coverage of the Solent mainland from Hurst to Chichester and the North coast of the IOW. Council meets at the Royal Southampton Yacht Club on the First Monday of each month except August.

If you would like to help as a Council 'Guardian' reporting on your own Bailiwick, please let the Secretary know by letter, phone or E-mail.



Tessa Webb



Thomas Young



Dr Chris Willard

RENEWABLE ENERGY; ISLE OF WIGHT

The Isle of Wight, as part of the European Commission's ALTENER programme together with other small Islands, commissioned a report on various means of renewable energy projects, which included wind power and tidal power.

There was great concern that this would mean that a number of wind farms would be created on downland in designated 'Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty'. This sparked the formation of 'ThWART' (The Wight Against inappropriately sited Rural Turbines).

Much of the concern was fuelled by the fact that the Danish company NEG, the major manufacturer of wind turbine blades had relocated to the Island, and there was a presumption that they wanted to have a local test area. Planning permission already existed for 3 turbines to be built on Cheverton Down, which was renewed in January 2001. An amended application



to increase the size of the blades, which attracted a large number of objectors, including the SPS, which had earlier in the year given financial backing to ThWART. The Isle of Wight Council granted planning permission on 19 November 2002.

Solent Protection Society will continue to oppose further wind farms if they have a visual impact on the Solent and considers these should be offshore in appropriate areas and wait with interest the outcome of research on tidal power as a suitable source of renewable energy.

Grateful thanks to Professor Gerald Smart



Professor Gerald Smart

An appreciation of the Work of Professor Gerald Smart in conducting the Solent Protection Society opposition case against ABP's proposed plans for a container terminal at Dibden Bay throughout the year long public inquiry of 2002.

We owe to Professor Gerald Smart, the Solent Protection Society's principal spokesman, inquiry witness, Case Co-ordinator and attendee throughout the year long proceedings a tremendous vote of thanks for firstly, his outstanding detailed written critique of aspects of ABP's proposals and for the time, effort and professional expertise he has given to obtaining and assembling the necessary evidence. Secondly, for verbally putting across to the inquiry panel as our professional witness under examination by the Society's engaged barrister, Mr Trevor Ward, his assessment of the impact such a development would have on nature conservation, navigation, countryside, tourism, recreation and visual impairment. He furthermore gave his views on alternative Port solutions available in the Thames Estuary, a singular achievement following his research and visits to this area in his capacity as a former County Planning Officer for Hampshire and Professor of Town Planning, University of London. Gerald, ably assisted by Terry Gerald and John Groom, devoted an enormous amount of time to assembling then analysing a virtual mountain of case documents as well as assessing the resultant flood of planning and research papers arising from the major objectors circulated by the inquiry secretariat. The daily proceedings of the inquiry became his compulsory reading via the internet to keep pace with case arguments. His last task has been to help draft out Barrister's final statement to the Inspector. The Society sincerely hopes the views Gerald has expressed on our behalf will help persuade the Government not to give permission for ABP to create a new port on the New Forest side of Southampton Water.

Whatever the outcome, the Society can be proud that our opinion could not have been better expressed. It has been a job very well done and through it we have gained stature, friends and collaborators.

Thank you Gerald.

Portsmouth Harbour – Millennium Tower Update

The Gunwharf saga continues. The council have at last signed a contract with Mowlems to build the Spinnaker Tower and more millions are needed to get it any further. I believe that the new hotel complex has been sacrificed for its benefit and we are to have more high rise flats instead.

Priddy's Hard is in a similar state despite the museum winning a major award for excellence this year. The South East Development Agency have withdrawn the promised cash for the Explosion Museum of Naval Fire Power and this has placed its future in jeopardy. The Trust is to hand it back to the local authority who will have to finance it to stay open. While the only operating bit is in trouble there is no progress on the other listed buildings.

We need to ask how any of this contributes to "The Renaissance of Portsmouth Harbour" which was a major feature of the original plan.



The Vulcan Building, Gunwharf



Building the Spinnaker Tower

Langstone Harbour - Development and Trust Ports

Langstone Harbour is the quiet expanse of alternating water and mud that lies between the bustle of Portsmouth Harbour and the natural beauty of the yachting centre of Chichester Harbour. History has passed it by but it has been intensively studied by scientists and although not favourable for boat moorings, those sailors who use its waters are passionate about maintaining its serenity.

Langstone is a large Harbour (over 18Km²) and at low tide only 1/5th of this is water and travel is restricted to the three main channels. It is therefore difficult to monitor and patrol, particularly with the small staff that can be afforded. It is one of the few Solent Harbours in which the number of moored boats has declined over the last 20 years so that the income of the Harbour Board has decreased, whilst the demands of both maritime and environmental regulations has increased. The original act setting up the Harbour Board recognised the financial problems when it set up the Board to act under the regulations governing local authorities and gave it the right to have any deficits made up by a precept from the local councils. To ensure that the demands would be legitimate, the Board has a majority of councillors from Havant & Portsmouth and a complex set of rules to ensure neither authority could become dominant. This system has worked and up to a half of the income comes from the precept. The problem now arises as to how to adjust this system to fit in with the Trust Port Review.

In a White Paper on the future of Transport the government "recognises that ports are a vital link in the supply chain and the need to integrate their operations in the wider transport networks" and goes on to detail broad policies for the commercial success and competitiveness of Ports. Langstone Harbour is not a Port for the "commercial exchange of goods" as one dictionary definition goes and none of the Policies are relevant. However in a document entitled "Modernising Trust Ports, A guide to good governance" Langstone Harbour qualifies as a Trust Port, because it is controlled by an independent statutory body, with its own legislation and without shareholders or owners. It would appear all that is required is to replace elected members by independent appointed members, but this puts the precept in jeopardy. Why should Councils automatically cover the deficit of an organisation over which they will have no control and little knowledge?. A solution that satisfies both Councils and users is difficult to find without the arrangements for supervision becoming either more expensive and cumbersome (to the detriment of the actual running of the Harbour) or less in line with the dictates of the Trust Port review.

The archaeology and past landforms have recently been very well described in Our Changing Coast. A survey of the intertidal archaeology of Langstone Harbour, Hampshire. CBA Research Report 124. The final synopsis provides a fascinating glimpse of an early landscape with hunter gatherers camping on the dryer ground between small streams which fed into the Solent River until the rising sea gradually inundated the area.

For thousands of years the muds that accumulated after the area was flooded were the dominant feature of the harbour. Maps and charts from Elizabethan times down to the late 19th Century attest to this, the word "ooze" is to be found over most of the intertidal area. Then came the hybrid rice grass gradually covering the muds until the Harbour looked like a meadow dissected by deep, steep-sided channels. It came, and now it is gone and, as of yore, bare mud is revealed by the receding tide. In retrospect it is possible to recognise that the decline had started in the 1940's, long before there was concern about climatic change and sea level rise. This was documented in the 1970's and the consequences forecast.

The cause is unknown though over the years it has been attributed to a range of factors fashionable at the time. Elsewhere in Britain the plant can still cause concern by the rate in which it spreads and accumulates mud. Its absence increases the erosive power of the waves and in a Harbour with such a narrow strip of undeveloped hinterland this is a cause of concern. The west of the Harbour has a sea wall that will be maintained to protect the city of Portsmouth but the north and east lack development that would economically justify the maintenance of sea defences. Here, forming a thin strip round the coast, are the separate nature reserves maintained by the Hampshire Naturalist Trusts, Hampshire County Council, Havant Borough Council, the Langstone and District Wildfowling and the RSPB whose reserve also includes some low lying islands. These are the essential high tide roosting areas for the abundant bird life that feed on the muds. If industrial development were to be considered there is no land to offer in mitigation but for the present natural erosion there no land in mitigation. To complicate the position yet further, the mixed salt marshes that used to exist in sheltered embayments have been reclaimed, and this handsome vegetation type is only to be found as scattered remnants and is not reforming anywhere in the Harbour. Only the rapidly eroding islands retain, for a while, patches of this type of marshland.



Each reserve has its own warden and with such a concentration of observers it is not surprising that the Harbour continues to amass data on the bird numbers adding to the longest continuous set of observations in Britain. When in 1970 the Hampshire River Authority asked what effect an increase in sewage would have on the harbour it is not surprising that the effect on birds was taken into

consideration. Six years of interdisciplinary work produced a large report detailing, amongst other things, pioneering work on what was becoming known as eutrophication in the marine environment. The conclusion that the harbour was eutrophic, the vegetation was in decline and the bacterial count was high and that all this was detrimental, raised no public interest. The major recent development has been the public increasing awareness of the importance of environmental health. During the last decade a series of EU directives (shellfish, nutrient, bathing etc) have resulted in further research which reached the same conclusions as the earlier work and a massive investment in sewage treatment has meant a clean up in bacterial and ultimately nutrient discharges. One suspects that the visible effect of the nutrient enrichment will linger for many years because of the material incorporated in the mud and the nutrient richness of inshore waters. One may wonder how many decades will pass before some of the ecological questions posed in 1970's will receive research attention and how much marshland will be left to research.

Retirement of the Chairman



After three years in post, Lt Col David Jones, our Chairman, has stood down in order to prepare for impending surgical treatment. We wish him a speedy return to full health. He is however to remain a member of Council and thus the Society will continue to

have the benefit of his wide and detailed knowledge of the Solent and its' affairs.

We are conscious of the workload we place on the shoulders of our Chairman and are very grateful for his leadership and devotion to the task during his years in office.

Managing the Society

The Strategy and Marketing committee has been working since September with Susan Preston Davis, the Society's marketing and PR consultant, to develop and implement short and medium term programmes.

The short term programme includes creating a Society web site (solentprotection.org) due to go live in March; updating the Society's image through its' stationery and membership application form and to develop a more active and effective publicity programme.

In the medium term, one of the priorities is to increase membership, both Corporate and individual. There is the potential to work closer with the Corporate membership and to encourage a younger individual membership through schools and colleges. Another priority is to work closer with like minded organisations such as The Council for the Preservation of Rural England (CPRE) with whom we have just started to exchange information.

The cost of these programmes, which are essential if the Society is to maintain its influence in the Solent area and to focus on issues of importance for the future, plus financing representation at enquiries

such as Dibden Bay where it is important to be able to brief Counsel, means that, for the first time in twenty years, the membership subscriptions will have to be increased. The present individual membership of £5.00 pa is clearly unrealistic and out of line with similar organisations. Details of the new minimum subscriptions are shown below.

Your Council looks forward to having a Solent Protection Society web site with links to other similar organisations in order to improve communication and grow a wider based and informed membership of all ages amongst residents and recreational users of The Solent.

Solent Protection Society Membership - Minimum Subscriptions 2003

| | |
|---------------------------------------|------------------------|
| Personal Membership | £12.00 per year |
| Clubs & Associations | £25.00 per year |
| Other Commercial Organisations | £50.00 per year |

In the past some Members have given more than the minimum subscription and if you are able to do so again it would greatly help us.

How you can help us financially

In the past many of you have given more than the minimum subscription and if you are able to do so again, this would help us and be gratefully received.

We have been very fortunate over the years to have had the benefit of donations from members and others and we would like everyone who is able to bear this in mind.

From time to time there have been generous bequests to the Society from members and those who have had an interest in what we have been doing. If you are updating your Will and would be kind enough to think of the Society, this would be appreciated. Equally, if you already have a Will, you can make provision for a

bequest either by executing a formal Codicil to the Will or by leaving a Letter of Direction to your Executors.

If you have not already completed a Gift Aid form in respect of subscriptions and donations to the Society, we would be grateful if you could now do this as every little helps, particularly if it comes from the Inland Revenue! A Gift Aid form is attached to the letter enclosed with this newsletter. If you have already given us a Gift Aid letter, as many of you have already done, there is no need to complete another in respect of the increase in your subscription.



The River Hamble Mooring Plan

The creation of a carefully developed comprehensive plan for the River Hamble is an important and vital step forward in order to ensure that the River will be put to the best possible use for future generations while ensuring the quality of the environment is maintained.

Such a comprehensive plan will ensure, if developed satisfactorily, that the piecemeal development of the River Hamble which has caused so much damage to the environment and the successful use of the River over recent decades will not be replaced.

It is recognised that in order for the Comprehensive Plan to be successfully realised in practice it will be necessary to take into consideration many conflicting factors and this will need to be studied in great detail before implementation commences.

The principal objective must be to maintain and improve the quality of the environment and the wildlife while ensuring that the River Hamble is developed so that the water born activities are available and attractive to the widest range of age and income groups. In particular these facilities must continue to be made available to the young and those of modest means.

The document entitled "Towards a River Hamble Mooring Plan" sets down a basic concept which includes moving river moorings and putting these adjacent to existing marinas. Before the comprehensive plan can be shown to be capable of satisfactory implementation it will be necessary to demonstrate that the bringing together of public, club and commercial berths can be achieved successfully for the benefit of all those concerned, and this does not do unacceptable damage to wetlands and wildlife of the River.

The Solent Protection Society wish all those concerned every success in the development of the River Hamble Comprehensive Plan.



Preservation of Hacketts Marsh



Satchell Marsh and proposed extension of existing berths



Relocation of existing moorings

