

# BEMBRIDGE PARISH COUNCIL

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## Clerk's Report to Environment & Neighbourhood Committee 14<sup>th</sup> January 2025

### Agenda items:

#### **7. Embankment Footpath**

Latest correspondence the Parish Office have had from Darrel Clarke at IOW Rights of Way is as follows:

*'As you are probably aware, steps have been installed in the bank of the new link path (photo in papers). I will now proceed to get the new road-end signposts and signs in place. You will be able to fix the dog waste bin to the signpost at the end of the new link path on Malcolm's land. I will let you know when the posts are in place.'*

There has also been a request from a Mr Jeff Doolan to investigate extending the path further North.

*'Are you willing to help in obtaining the supporting evidence for, and preparing an application to the Local Authority for a 'Definitive Map Modification Order' for the remainder of the path right up to the rear of the Chandlery?*

*I know a number of people in Bembridge who will be able to help with this, but I wanted to get your agreement to help in principle first before discussing details.'*

I followed this up with Darrel Clarke at IoW Rights of Way and the response is as follows:

*'Regarding a path heading further northeast, I attach a Land Registry screen shot (See papers). I believe the land highlighted green (IW24133) is owned by Malcolm and it would be up to him whether he allowed this to be used as a public right of way. However, it would also be necessary to survey this land to check on its actual existence and suitability for a public footpath. I am concerned that this land may have been lost to the lagoon and there is no longer any physical land to walk over (and if there is, what state this will be in i.e. is it very wet and boggy, or at risk of regular flooding). If this land is not available, then I consider a through route would be very challenging due to the development over the actual railway track-bed over the decades.*

*There is also the issue of access over the land at the end of Malcom's land (i.e. the block of land between his land and Harbour Strand and Station Road (IW55699)). I attach Land Registry entries confirming ownership of this land (see Papers). From memory, I believe there is some form of informal/permissive path across this land (very approx. location shown*

*by an orange line on the attached map (see Papers)). Either way, this landowner would also need to agree to public access to form a through route.*

*Harbour Strand and Station Road have no recorded public rights of way along them and do not form part of the adopted highway network. However, as far as Station Road is concerned, I believe that this has long been used by the public and it would be extremely difficult for anyone to object to or stop such use.*

*There is also the environmental issues to consider. The land is very heavily protected and within SSSI, SAC, SAP and Ramsar. I believe there would be very strong opposition from Natural England to a path being formed and SSSI assent would be needed before allowing public access.*

*RoW will struggle to lead on any proposal to investigate a path at this location at the present time. We have limited resource at the best of times, and at present we are being stretched to the limit on England Coast Path and Green Link work.*

*Perhaps the PC would like to carry out an initial inspection (with landowner permission) and if Malcolm's land exists, then instruct consultants to carry out a feasibility study? If all landowner permissions and other consents were in place the PC could enter into deeds of dedication with the landowners under section 30 Highway Act 1980.*

*I am very happy to provide support and guidance.*

*With regard to the possibility of a definitive map modification application to record a path, it has to be borne in mind that this would only be successful if there was sufficient historical documentary evidence showing that the path was in use and "public" in 1952 and/or evidence of public use for 20 years or more without permission, dispute, objection or obstruction. I doubt very much whether this evidence exists as, unlike the track-bed on the RSPB land, the route has been blocked and not used for many decades.'*

Malcom Thorpe has since followed up with:

*'As far as my businesses are concerned, we are prepared to back a more formal right of way along the north-east line as far as we can.*

*To us, this would be a further huge step forwards for both the community and also visitors to the Island.*

**Liz / Mark:** *over to you but we will be 100% behind such a project.'*

**The Committee will need to discuss the proposal that the Parish Council carry out an initial assessment of the land in question and whether any further evidence of use over the past 20 year or more can be gathered to aid a 'definitive map modification application'.**

Please note that this path forms part of the Parish Council's LCWIP.

See below:

Route number: EWC5

Working name: St Helens to Bembridge

Route length: 3.12km

Indicative cost: £1,224,200

Route overview: Route ECW5 connects St Helens and Bembridge, with one spur to Bembridge village centre and another to Lane End Rd, the beach and housing in the south east of the village. Key to connecting the two villages is access over the old railway alignment to the south of Embankment Rd. The section between the Pilot Boat Inn and Love Lane/Lane End Rd benefits from existing rights of way and could stand alone as a scheme that benefits “internal” cycling withing Bembridge village.

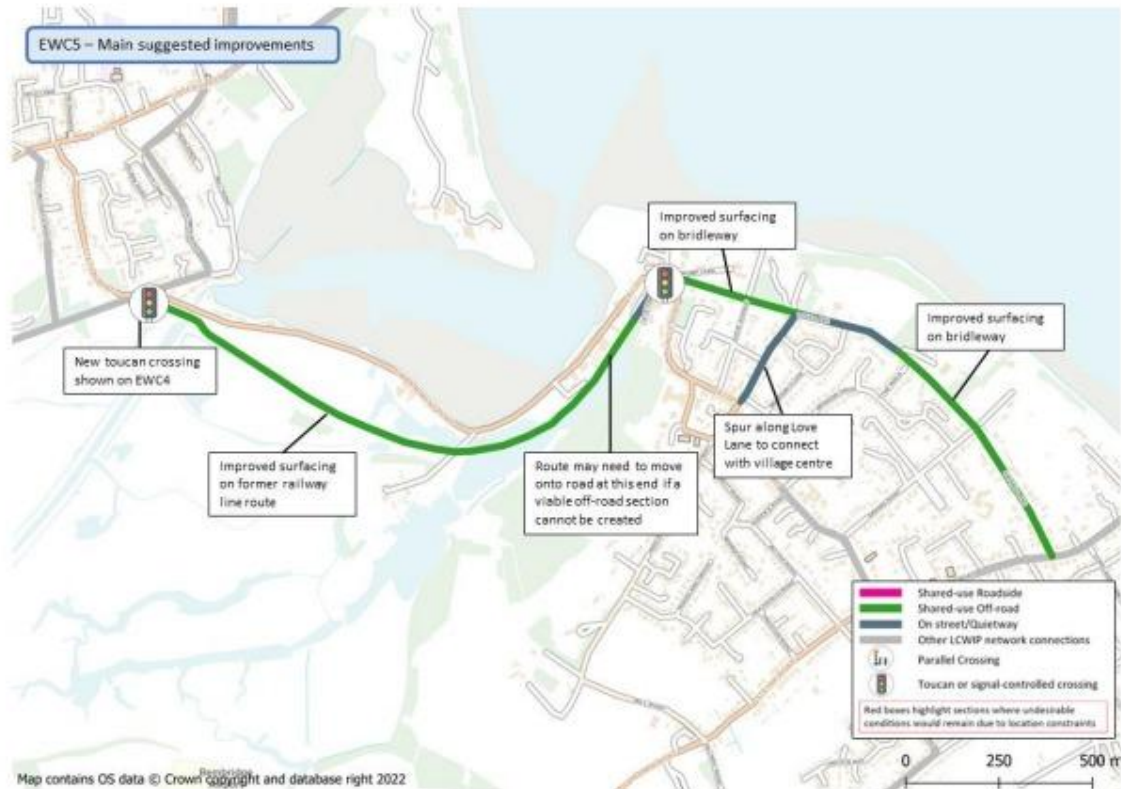


Figure 32 - Main suggested improvements EWC5

## 8. Community Energy – Solar Panels

Following initial discussions with Mrs A De Trey, Mr Stephen Cockett – General Manager of Wight Community Energy has agreed to attend the committee meeting to discuss details and the potential of the BPC including various assets as proposed sites for community solar panels.

Initially Mr Cockett was to attend to simply discuss and answer questions, however, further to the following email from Mr Cockett:

*'I received notification yesterday that the next round of 'redress' funding has opened – see more here: <https://fundraising.co.uk/2024/12/12/40mn-funding-through-the-ofgem-energy-redress-scheme/>*

*Within that funding there is provision to develop community owned renewable assets.*

*The funding that we would apply for is to produce detailed feasibility studies of a portfolio of half a dozen prospects.*

*The output from those studies will give a clear steer on the viability of each project enabling us to select the best cases before launching our third community share raise to fund the capital expense of the solar array itself.*

*Application for that grant funding closes on the 15<sup>th</sup> of Jan, as such I need to expedite my work on the bid and the proposed projects.*

*As well as the main body of work on the bid document I will include detail about each of the sites and **an agreement from the sites to be included in the project.***

*Given that the application needs to go in the day after we are scheduled to meet then it will be imperative that a decision to partner (or not) is given on the 14<sup>th</sup>.*

*To be honest the partnership agreement is not onerous nor binding in any legal way for the TC so I cannot imagine there will be any 'banana skins'.*

*But I do need to know that there will be the delegated powers to the committee available on the 14<sup>th</sup> to (hopefully) obtain a letter of support.*

*I have attached a sample LoS (see Papers) just so you can see what is typical.'*

**The Committee may wish to discuss and agree whether the Parish Council sign the attached Letter of Support (see Papers).**

## **9. Annual Report – Photo Competition**

The Annual Report has been produced and will be distributed via Royal Mail from the week commencing 20<sup>th</sup> January 2025.

As agreed at the previous committee meeting a competition was held for a cover photograph. This competition was won by 9-year-old Rasmus Dahlgren, a member of the local Scout group.

A framed copy of the winning picture and a certificate has been produced, and it is suggested that the Council agree a representative to attend the next convenient Scouts meeting (each Thursday at 5:15pm in the Scout Hut Mitten Rd) to present Rasmus with his award.

## **10. Potential new projects:**

### **10.1 Britain in Bloom**

Following on from the below correspondence from Mr Andrew Bennett – Head Gardener at the Bembridge Coast Hotel:

*'Good morning I'm the head gardener at the Bembridge coast hotel, we enter Britain's in bloom (south and south east in bloom) which gives us a huge amount of pride and allows us to display and advertise our rewards, I feel it would be brilliant to put Bembridge into this next year somehow (there's loads of category's from church yard to village) the grounds team and management here at the hotel would love to help make this happen and we can offer loads in the support of this from labour to production of plants to brighten areas up.'*

<https://www.rhs.org.uk/get-involved/britain-in-bloom>

A meeting was arranged between Andrew and Debbie and further discussion and ideas were proposed. Debbie will be able to update the Committee on these new ideas on Tuesday.

### **10.2 VE Day**

In addition to the meeting with Bembridge Coast Hotel, Debbie has also been in discussion with Hartford Care, regarding potential ways to improve engagement with the community. Both meetings have shown enthusiasm for a village wide celebratory event to mark VE Day.

This idea was brought to the last meeting of the Committee where a beacon lighting event did not gather support, (as it would be our third year in a row carrying out such an event). However, there are a number of alternatives suggested (see Papers) and ideas that Debbie would like to discuss with the Committee and potentially explore further.

### **10.3 Community Day**

Following the success of the Community Action Day in 2024, and a wish to hold events updating the community on latest Parish Council projects eg, Plastic Free, Steyne Park, Neighbourhood Plan etc, the Committee need to consider the potential to arrange a larger event in 2025 and begin putting in place a plan of action.

Thank you,

Mark Rochell, Clerk/RFO Bembridge Parish Council.