

## **ST HELIER BOAT OWNERS ASSOCIATION**

### **AUGUST NEWSLETTER**

Dear Members,

The Association is not normally very active during the height of the Summer season, and our members and indeed the Committee tend to be preoccupied with the much more important business of actually using our boats. However, this summer is turning out to be quite eventful, and the committee has recently had a very constructive meeting with the Harbourmaster and the Marine Leisure Manager to review many of the topics listed below. Hence, we are sending out this August Newsletter.

### **ST HELIER HARBOUR**

#### **St Helier Marina**

As many of you will already know the refurbishment of St Helier Marina is about to start in earnest, with PoJ planning to remove all vessels from the marina during the later part of September. Most berth-holders will already have received a request for information from PoJ about how they would like their boat handled over this winter (i.e. lifted ashore, or moved elsewhere in the harbour). This is going to involve quite a major logistical exercise and a good deal of abnormal activity in the harbour, with the waiting berths, the new berths on Albert Pier and any spare space in other marinas being filled up, and such holding areas as the boat park, South Pier, & La Folie providing temporary dry accommodation for many boats. This is also going to impact various harbour facilities such as craning services. In short, there is inevitably going to be a period of inconvenience for all concerned, but by the end of May 2022 the St Helier Marina residents should find that they are benefitting from a complete refit.

#### **Albert Pier**

This project is nearing completion during September, which in turn facilitates the commencement of the St Helier marina project.

#### **Marina Parking**

This is always a difficult topic as the harbour area suffers from limited space and the consequences of past decisions which limit PoJ's control over parking space for boat owners. A problem emerged recently when the number of parking spaces available to berth holders in the underground car park adjacent to Elizabeth Marina was unexpectedly reduced at short notice and this occurred during a spell of very good weather, so many of you noticed the impact immediately.

Something that we have learned, only comparatively recently, is that PoJ have to rent these spaces from the landlords who can command very high commercial rentals due to strong competitive demand from office commuters (who want to park every workday). Although the resulting annual parking charge may seem unduly expensive to the boat owner (who only uses the parking occasionally), PoJ is nevertheless incurring a loss by effectively subsidising the cost of parking. This is not a very satisfactory situation but it dates back to decisions made when Elizabeth Marina was constructed & is not one of PoJ's making.

PoJ recognises that limited parking space causes problems for marina users and will continue to do so if unaddressed. They tell us that they are looking at the feasibility of creating additional parking capacity as part of the reconfiguration of Albert Pier, but nothing is set in stone yet.

### **Elizabeth Marina Entrance**

The replacement of the storm gate (currently under repair on the New North Quay) is scheduled for October 2021. In the meantime, the reduced depth over the sill has resulted in one or two incidents and all boat owners are urged to use the entrance with special care and attention to detail. The electronic depth gauge indicator outside the marina has not been functioning recently, and the fixed depth gauge on the wall, which is adjusted for the reduced depth, can sometimes only be read when you are beyond the 'point of no return' due to the strong currents in the entrance. This is particularly true for sailing yachts which of course are the vessels most likely to suffer from the reduced depth.

PoJ are also looking at installing some additional red/green traffic light indicators so that boats at the north end of the marina will have a clearer view of what the traffic lights are indicating at a given moment.

### **Availability of Berths**

There continues to be higher demand for berths in the harbour than the supply can meet, especially with the upsurge in boating that has accompanied Covid, and this is only going to be aggravated by the St Helier marina project. However, after that phase is complete, the new berths for bigger boats on the Albert Pier will start to alleviate the situation. Your committee recently raised with PoJ the possibility of creating new berthing for smaller boats and RIBs in sheltered tidal areas with a firm sandy seabed (as opposed to mud) which would facilitate much easier access to boats during low tide periods, and we understand that this idea merits further consideration & development.

Excess demand over supply of berths does seem to be with us for the foreseeable future, and we are encouraging PoJ to develop a more transparent system covering the allocation of vacant spaces.

## VISITING FRANCE

Many of you have visited France in the last couple of months, and the vast majority seem to have been made to feel very welcome by French marina staff, French Customs, and by shops & restaurants, almost all of whom seem to be trying to be helpful. For example, the Jersey Covid Vaccination certificate does not meet EU requirements, which call for a QR code, but it seems that in practice the French are usually accepting this document as proof of vaccination.

There are some important messages that emerge from all this.

1. We are only allowed in EU countries for periods of 90 days, **so it really is important to have your departure from France properly recorded by French Immigration**. Bear in mind that even if your passport was not inspected on the way into France, you will have submitted forms online with your passport details prior to travelling. The last thing any of us need, is, on a later visit to France either by boat or on the ferry, is for your passport records to indicate that you may have been in the country for the last 100 days. This might result, for example, in an unexpected invitation from French Customs to pay the VAT now deemed due on your boat!

2. As some of you have pointed out, the need to have your passport stamped on the way home could give rise to a safety issue. Imagine that you plan to return to Jersey tomorrow, and to clock out with French Immigration before you leave. But the weather forecast has suddenly deteriorated and the Immigration office has closed for the rest of today – not at all unlikely in the smaller ports. In these circumstances the wise man will go home today while it is safe and sort out the passport problem later. We have asked the French Consulate in Jersey whether, in such circumstances, it would be acceptable for the returning sailor to attend the consulate to have his return recorded and so avoid any further complications. We have received a tentatively sympathetic response and they are consulting with colleagues in France.

3. Trips to France do seem to be viable provided that you are prepared to go through the formalities, but this is only likely to make sense if you go for a few days. Sadly, however, the traditional trip to Carteret for lunch and home for supper is probably not worth the complications.

4. It does seem that all this new red tape is causing as much inconvenience for the French authorities (who also have to deal with arrivals by ferry and airliner) as it does for us. For example, it seems that every time a Jersey boat needs to be clocked into or out of Carteret, a customs official from Cherbourg has to drive down to Carteret specially for this purpose! Some of you have detected suggestions that a simplified and more pragmatic system might be implemented for the Channel Island boat owner visiting France. Let us hope so!

## **VISITING GUERNSEY**

Guernsey did briefly allow relatively uncomplicated visits from Jersey for the vaccinated, but then the Covid numbers in Jersey rose and at the time of writing you can only enter if you have been recently tested. This can be quite expensive, especially for family groups, and as with France, a simple day trip is probably not really worth the effort.

There has recently been some confusion about where you can be tested, and a number of arrivals from Jersey have apparently been turned away because they thought they could be tested after sailing over to St Peter Port. Please note that as things currently stand, you need to be tested in Jersey prior to departure to be granted entry to Guernsey.

STOP PRESS. With effect from Monday 23 August Guernsey is apparently dropping the stricter rules for Jersey visitors, who will no longer need to be tested prior to arrival

## **BOAT JUMBLE SALE**

We reluctantly took the decision, at a time when there were still many restrictions in place, to defer the proposed Boat Jumble Sale until Spring 2022.

Bon Vent & Best wishes

Will

**Will Simpson**  
**Chairman, St Helier Boat Owners Association**

*The St Helier Boat Owners Association makes every effort to verify the accuracy of information contained in this newsletter, but nevertheless is only sharing it on an informal basis and readers should not rely on this.*