



Dear Mr. Grant

Thanks for your letter and your obvious commitment to the Harbour. I note that you see an opportunity for the SHRA to take a lead in campaigning 'passionately and hard for cleanliness on a Harbour wide basis'.

I can assure you that from my own experience on the SHRA committee over the last 6 years, SHRA has been campaigning hard on several issues that have been and remain critical to the Harbour. One of these has most certainly been the condition of the Harbour environment.

As you will be aware SHRA works essentially as a pressure group to influence those organisations with the responsibility and resources to improve the Harbour for its residents. It has no authority and with the effort you have personally put in I'm sure you are well aware of the difficulty and frustration of motivating organisations, both public and private that don't share residents' interests in establishing high standards, particularly when it costs them money. To try and break this problem a few years ago we actively applied and campaigned to get a Parish / Community Council established on the Harbour. Unlike Borough and County Councils this would be focussed on just our community, it would have had authority and funds to make things happen. There would have been a cost of less than £1 per week, per household. Unfortunately the majority of residents who voted in a referendum rejected the proposal, which gave EBC the opportunity to turn it down.

We were disappointed, but nevertheless we continue to campaign and have made every effort to keep residents abreast of what we have been doing over the years. We have frequently chased up the issues of cleanliness, weeds and material condition with the Council, companies and the trading community on the Retail Park and Waterfront. SHRA have objected to planning applications that would have had a negative impact on the Harbour and this has included new businesses on the Waterfront that promised to give rise to excessive litter and noise. Above all we have tried to build a community spirit and motivate residents to get actively involved and I found it very encouraging to hear what you have been doing personally.

Let's take the issue of 'dog mess' as an example of an ongoing issue. SHRA perceived this as a significant problem and 6 years ago Jan Weeks took the lead on behalf of the committee and later took it on as the Chairmanship of the Sovereign Harbour Neighbourhood Panel (SHNP). This has featured in Waterlines, but in case you haven't come across it before, the SHNP was formed over 3 years ago. It involves the Police, Borough and County Councillors and Council officers, who take actions from it. With the Panel in place it took on the subject of 'dogs' and with Jan as chairman it had good continuity. I mention these issues to illustrate that the subject has been a priority topic with a good level of focus and action for some years.

The problem essentially had three parts:

1. Are there enough disposal bins, which were in short supply 6 years ago?
2. A need to raise awareness and campaign against this form of antisocial behaviour
3. A need for Eastbourne Borough Council to actually enforce the requirement on owners to bag and dispose of any mess left by their dog(s)

On the first point, and given her work to increase disposal points on the harbour, Jan was surprised to be getting comments such as 'there are no dog bins on the Harbour', or 'there aren't enough bins on the harbour'. Last month she walked the whole area and we can

confirm that the Harbour has 21 dog, or dual use bins, which is significantly higher than any other neighbourhood of Eastbourne. It shouldn't be forgotten that irrespective of whether there is a bin nearby or not, a dog owner has the responsibility to clear up after their dog, even if this requires bags to be taken home and disposed of there.

On the second point SHRA has published this problem and the responsibility of dog owners in Waterlines and has in the past enclosed a DEFRA leaflet supplied by EBC called 'How to be a Responsible Dog Owner'. This reached every residence on the Harbour. There is currently a campaign running called the 'Dog Poo Fairy' campaign and you may have seen signs about the Harbour, there's certainly one on my fence. This is aimed at reminding owners of their responsibilities. Many dog walkers come onto the Harbour from the Bay View Camp and signs are in place warning its residents to pick up after their dogs.

On the third point, the EBC Dog Warden (Sue Criddle) and members of the enforcement team have walked the harbour, sometimes in the dark, to identify offending dog owners. Finding a culprit is rare, but action has been taken as a result. However, the Dog Warden is one person and Eastbourne is a big place, so practically speaking the only significant way of getting more pressure on is for residents to get actively involved. For example, displaying signs and, without any direct confrontation, to make a note of the dog / owner causing the problem, the time and date, etc and pass it on to the Dog Warden who will follow it up.

I think both SHRA and SHNP are doing all they can on this issue and in fairness to EBC they are also engaged and have tried to improve the situation. I believe the great majority of dog owners on the Harbour are responsible and care about their dogs and the health implications to children and others of leaving dog mess lying about. However, it doesn't need many irresponsible owners, whether local or visiting, to undermine what we are trying to achieve. Sadly there seems to be a group of dog owners, whether residents or visitors who don't seem to care. The number of dog bins and the number of campaigns and fears over health effects apparently have no impact on them. I've seen several instances of dog mess and even bagged dog mess being left immediately adjacent to disposal bins and warning notices. I find it difficult to comprehend this attitude. Other than taking more affective enforcement action and shaming the residents / visitors involved I don't see what more can be done. Options are limited when the community will not take supporting action on its own behalf.

It is disappointing that residents see this behaviour going on and still seem reticent to report instances to EBC. There are potentially over 7000 'unofficial dog wardens' living on the Harbour, so we should together be able to make a difference, but the SHRA committee as a small, active group of volunteers can't do it all on their own.

I have probably gone on too long, but I want to pick up your suggestion of SHRA publishing a list of public areas in the Harbour, identifying which body is responsible for maintenance and cleansing of them. I can assure you we thought hard about this some time ago, as it would have been a valuable reference when residents asked us for advice. However, we dropped the idea because the whole harbour was and essentially still is in a significant state of flux.

What areas are under public control, or are being controlled by developers, management companies and local residents' organisations have changed continually. Creeping adoption by the Council and changes to the companies who are contracted to carry out the work on behalf of land owners and / or resident lead management organisations lead to a confused position taken Harbour wide. We have the situation where walking a foot path, or an open space takes one through different management regimes in a relatively short distance. For example, if I walk on the North Harbour beach I am on ground under private ownership by the adjacent developments. They may have responsibility for cleaning it, but anyone can use it and frequently drop litter, light bonfires, etc. If I walk through Henley Park to the gardens adjacent to the Harbour I walk a public right of way across privately owned land. These are just two examples of many. It should also be recognised that interest from

SHRA is not universally welcomed by residential developments when we enquire into management responsibilities. We have in the past been told it's none of our business.

I hope that gives you some confidence that SHRA is working hard on your behalf, not only on the issues of remaining development, but also on trying to improve the Harbour environment. However, without radically changing the way the Harbour is represented and / or getting a lot more support from residents and local residents groups we will continue to be limited in what we can deliver.

Yours sincerely

Rick Runalls
Chairman, SHRA

August 2011