



The purpose of this Report is to propose that the Town Council endorses the attached Agreement as the basis for a newly formed Ventnor Haven Group.

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**No. DETAILS**

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**1) BACKGROUND**

- a) The current contract between the Isle of Wight Council and Cheetah Marine for the clearance of seaweed from the Haven ends on 31 March 2022.
- b) If it is to be extended, the boat and its pump that removes the seaweed will need replacing at a very significant capital cost.
- c) The Isle of Wight Council's recent strategy has consisted of offering both Ryde Harbour and Ventnor Haven as a pair to private developers on the grounds that the profitable and much more attractive for development Ryde Harbour would enable a buyer to take on both.
- d) The Cabinet Meeting decision at its meeting of 11 March to agree the sale of Ryde Harbour to Ryde Town Council has undermined that strategy leaving Ventnor Haven with an average annual loss of £110,000 and its rotting seaweed producing hydrogen sulphide as the biggest single threat to the town's future.
- e) The latest edition of the Isle of Wight Council's Forward Plan, covering the period 1 April to 31 July does not include Ventnor Haven.

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**2) VENTNOR HAVEN GROUP**

- a) At the Assets and Services Working Group meeting of 16 March the situation was discussed and the meeting asked Councillor James Toogood to arrange a meeting with Sean Strevens of Cheetah Marine and Geoff Blake of Ventnor Haven Fisheries with the Mayor, Clerk and him.
- b) The meeting took place on the evening of 23 March at which, following discussion of the threat to both businesses and the town, it was agreed to form a pressure group named Ventnor Haven Group for which the Clerk was asked to draft an Agreement.
- c) That draft has been agreed by the Assets and Services Working Group and both businesses and is attached to this Report.

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**3) RECOMMENDATION**

The Town Council is recommended to endorse the agreement and support its implementation with immediate effect.

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# VENTNOR HAVEN GROUP



## THE AGREEMENT

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## **1) PURPOSE**

- a) The purpose of the Ventnor Haven Group is to work with the Isle of Wight Council to develop and implement a sustainable future for the Haven and to remove its current threat to the town's future posed by its rotting seaweed.
- b) This always desirable objective is now under serious threat as identified in the Appendix to this Agreement.

## **2) MEMBERSHIP**

- a) The Membership of the Ventnor Haven Group consists of its three partners: Ventnor Town Council, Cheetah Marine LLP and Ventnor Haven Fisheries.
- b) They will be represented at meetings of the Group by the Managing Directors of Cheetah Marine LLP and Blakes Fisheries and the Mayor of Ventnor Town Council.
- c) Also in attendance will be the Town Clerk and Councillor James Toogood.

## **3) RESOURCES**

There are no financial commitments from the partners at this time but the Group will be active in identifying and applying for funding related to its purpose.

## **4) ADMINISTRATION**

Ventnor Town Council will provide the administration for the Group free of charge.

## **5) DECISION MAKING**

Decisions will be agreed at the Group's regular meetings and must be unanimously endorsed by all three partners.

## **6) ADVISORS**

The Group will invite contributions to its analysis of the issues and its development of proposals to address them from appropriately qualified and experienced individuals and organizations.

## **7) AMENDMENTS TO THE AGREEMENT**

This agreement may be extended or amended only through unanimous agreement by all the partners. The decision to amend or extend the agreement, shall be documented in writing, including the date of the amendment/ extension, and the signatures of the representatives of each participating organisation.

## **8) TERMINATION OF THE AGREEMENT**

Each participating organisation retains the right to withdraw from the collaboration by giving the other participants at least 30 days' notice of its decision to withdraw. The withdrawal of any participating organisation from the collaboration shall result in termination of this agreement.

## **9) AUTHORITY**

This agreement was unanimously adopted by designated representatives of the partners representing the full commitment of their organisation to participate actively in the collaboration and implement fully all elements in this agreement.

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## APPENDIX TO THE AGREEMENT

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- 1) Opened in 2003, in 2010 the Haven revealed its full capacity to produce large quantities of Hydrogen Sulphide through the rotting of the estimated 10,000 tonnes of seaweed it collects annually.
  - 2) The impact on both residents and tourists that year established the Haven as the single most serious threat to the town's future.
  - 3) A solution was found in a contract between the Isle of Wight Council and Cheetah Marine to provide, maintain and operate a boat carrying a pump powerful enough to capture most of the seaweed – mixed with sand – and remove it over the southern wall.
  - 4) Although this has proved effective in protecting the town, the Isle of Wight Council is finding the cost of the work unacceptable as the major contribution to its average annual loss in recent years on the Haven of around £110k.
  - 5) The current contract expires on 31 March 2022 and in addition to the doubt about its renewal, Cheetah Marine has informed the Isle of Wight Council that the current boat and pump need replacing at considerable capital cost.
  - 6) The Isle of Wight Council's preferred solution is to sell the Haven on the private market and it had originally intended to achieve that by pairing it with the sale of the much more attractive and profitable Ryde Harbour.
  - 7) That approach is no longer available to it following the Cabinet decision at its meeting of 11 March to sell Ryde Harbour to Ryde Town Council, leaving the loss making and limited Haven on its own.
  - 8) The partners to this agreement share the view that the most effective solution is a reconfiguration of the Haven's shape but the guide prices for achieving that provided by two major companies have ranged from £5million to £10million.
  - 9) Even if the funding for that can be accessed it would be at least a five year project from design through permissions to implementation and the issue is urgent
  - 10) Other solutions are under discussion but none would be quick or without cost.
  - 11) Unless an at least temporary solution is arrived at within the next 12 months, the 2022 season will be a disaster.
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