

Purbeck Watercraft Byelaw 2027 Consultation

Consultation response analysis report produced by the
Consultation and Engagement Team – Dorset Council

Report produced May 2026

Consultation Response Report

<p>What was the consultation about?</p>	<p>This consultation sought views on Dorset Council's proposed update to the Seaside Pleasure Boats Byelaws 2013, which would be renamed the Dorset Council Purbeck Watercraft Byelaw 2027. The changes aim to modernise and clarify the rules governing the use of Purbeck's coastal waters by expanding the definition of watercraft, improving the clarity of language, and updating how and when speed restrictions apply. Key proposals included extending the seasonal deployment of speed marker buoys, repositioning them closer to shore at Swanage and Studland to better reflect coastal use, and aligning them with environmental protections such as Voluntary No Anchor Zones.</p> <p>The consultation invited feedback to ensure the updated byelaw improves safety, protects sensitive marine environments, and supports fair and practical use of shared coastal spaces by residents, visitors and businesses.</p>
<p>Over what period did the consultation run?</p>	<p>The consultation ran from 18/02/26 to 15/04/26.</p>
<p>What consultation methods were used?</p>	<p>This consultation was available through an online survey and a paper version of the survey.</p>
<p>How many responses were received overall?</p>	<p>437 responses were received.</p>
<p>How representative is the response to the wider population?</p>	<p>78.3% (342) of responses were from residents of Swanage, 3.0% (13) were visitors to Swanage or Studland. 4.6% (20) on behalf of an organisation and 4.1% (3) from Other.</p> <p>48.0% (206) of respondents were female, compared to 45.7% (196) that were male.</p> <p>1.4% (6) of respondents were aged 24 and under, 14.7% (63) aged 25-49, 40.4% (173) aged 50-64 and 35.5% (152) were 65 plus.</p> <p>7.9% (34) declared they had a disability.</p>
<p>Where will the results be published?</p>	<p>Results will be published on the council's website www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk and on Dorset Council's consultation platform</p>
<p>How will the results be used?</p>	<p>Results from this survey will be used to inform the next steps of the process.</p>
<p>Who has produced this report?</p>	<p>Consultation and Engagement Team, Dorset Council, May 2026</p>

Background

The existing byelaw requires amendment following a formal request from the Studland Bay Marine Partnership to review and change the positioning of the 5-knot speed marker buoys. The current alignment of the buoys passes through the voluntary marine no-anchor zone, where more than 75 eco-moorings are now in place at Studland, creating potential conflict with the purpose of that zone.

This request provided an opportunity to undertake a wider review of the byelaw considering changing patterns of recreational use within the bay. Recreational activity has increased significantly in recent years, including sea swimming, paddleboarding, motorised and non-motorised boating. In addition, the language of the existing byelaw has been identified as confusing and unclear, with many users unaware that it applies to them or that they fall within its scope. There has also been longstanding debate about whether the current buoy positions, located at approximately 300 - 400 metres offshore, remain appropriate.

The proposed amendments aim to modernise and simplify the byelaw by clarifying terminology, providing clearer definitions of areas and activities, and ensuring it applies consistently. The proposed changes included updated wording, revised buoy positioning, extension of the seasonal period of operation from 15 March to 30 October, and a clear, enforceable requirement that no watercraft exceeds 5 knots through water within the specified areas during this period.

The Consultation

The consultation survey was aimed at Dorset Council residents and organisations. It asked for their thoughts on the changes on the proposed policy or the policy in general.

Analysis Method

Responses to closed questions were reviewed and summarised, with the source of each dataset clearly shown in the report's base notes. All consultation questions and their results are included. For open-ended comments, they have been coded and themed. Where responses to questions are limited, they have listed verbatim due to the low number of responses.

Note: Figures may not always total precisely due to rounding.

Executive Summary

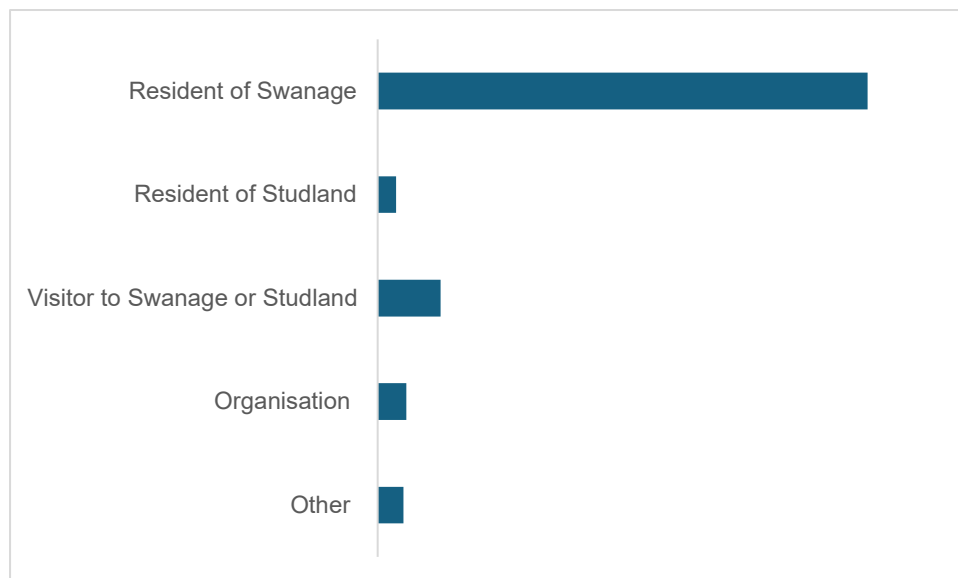
- Strong local engagement: The consultation attracted substantial local interest with 437 responses, the majority from Swanage residents (78.3%, 342), showing high community engagement in the proposals.
- Mixed views on byelaw wording: Opinion on the proposed wording changes was divided, with half of respondents opposing them (50.0%, 215) compared with 42.6% in support (183), indicating unresolved concerns about clarity or scope
- Clear support for proposed deployment period: A strong majority supported extending the deployment period for speed restrictions, with 60.8% agreeing (265) and 30.1% disagreeing (131), suggesting acceptance of the proposed change.
- Strong opposition in Swanage Bay: There was overwhelming opposition to the proposed repositioning of speed marker buoys in Swanage Bay, with 85.7% disagreeing (371) and only 11.3% agreeing (49).
- Substantial opposition in Studland Bay: Most respondents also opposed proposed buoy changes in Studland Bay, with 73.0% disagreeing (306), 12.4% agreeing (52) and a higher level of uncertainty (14.6%, 61).
- Safety and accessibility concerns: Opposition to Studland Bay changes was stronger among women (77.4%, 151), suggesting heightened concerns amongst that demographic.
- Strong representation from water user groups: A significant proportion of responses came from organised sailing, rowing and swimming clubs, highlighting the importance of the proposals to regular and active coastal users.

Overall, while parts of the proposals, such as the deployment period, attracted majority support, the location specific changes to speed marker buoys emerged as the most contentious element of the consultation overall.

Data Analysis

Q1. Are you responding as a:

Base: n-437



Option	Total	Percent
Resident of Swanage	342	78.3%
Resident of Studland	13	3.0%
Visitor to Swanage or Studland	44	10.1%
Organisation (please specify)	20	4.6%
Other (please specify)	18	4.1%

The majority of responses, 78.3% (342), were from residents of Swanage, demonstrating that the consultation primarily engaged the local community most directly affected by the issues under consideration. Visitors to Swanage or Studland formed the second largest group at 10.1% (44), indicating a meaningful level of interest from those who use the area but do not live there permanently. Smaller proportions of responses came from organisations at 4.6% (20) and those selecting 'Other' at 4.1% (18), while residents of Studland accounted for 3.0% (13) of responses. Overall, the data suggests that the consultation was most effective in reaching Swanage residents, while still capturing a range of perspectives from visitors and organisational stakeholders.

Organisation:

Respondent type	If Organisation, please specify here:
Organisation (please specify)	Merchant Navy Association Boat Club
Organisation (please specify)	Poole Harbour Canoe Club
Organisation (please specify)	Swanage Swim group
Resident of Swanage	Swim Group (currently 170 members)

Resident of Swanage	Planet Purbeck
Resident of Swanage	sea rower
Resident of Swanage	Ssrc
Resident of Swanage	Swanage Sea Rowing Club
Resident of Studland	Members of Swanage sea rowing club
Resident of Swanage	Swanage Rowing
Resident of Swanage	Swanage rowing club
Resident of Swanage	SSRC
Organisation (please specify)	Chair of Swanage Sea Rowing Club
Organisation (please specify)	Swanage Sailing Club Member
Resident of Swanage	Swanage yacht club
Resident of Studland	Swanage Sailing club
Organisation (please specify)	Swanage Sea Rowing Club
Resident of Swanage	Ssrc
Resident of Swanage	Member SSC since 1955
Organisation (please specify)	Swanage Sea Rowing Club
Organisation (please specify)	National Trust
Organisation (please specify)	Studland Parish council
Organisation (please specify)	Dorset National Landscape Team
Resident of Swanage	Yacht mooring owner and Member Swanage Sailing Club
Organisation (please specify)	Swanage Sailing Club
Organisation (please specify)	Swanage sailing club
Resident of Swanage	Also a member of Swanage Sailing Club
Resident of Swanage	And Swanage Sailing Club
Organisation (please specify)	The Purbeck Society
Resident of Swanage	Swanage sailing club
Resident of Swanage	Member Swanage Sailing Club
Resident of Swanage	I am responding as both a resident of Swanage since 1948 and racing dinghy owner and sailor since 1955
Organisation (please specify)	Swanage sailing club
Organisation (please specify)	Swanage sailing club
Resident of Swanage	Swanage sailing club
Other (please specify)	Dorset Councillor
Organisation (please specify)	Swanage sailing club
Organisation (please specify)	Corfe Castle Parish Council
Organisation (please specify)	Swanage Sailing Club
Resident of Swanage	Member of Swanage Sailing Club and parent of a junior sailor
Organisation (please specify)	Swanage sailing club
Resident of Swanage	Sea swimmers
Resident of Swanage	Swim club
Resident of Swanage	Swanage Bay Swim Club

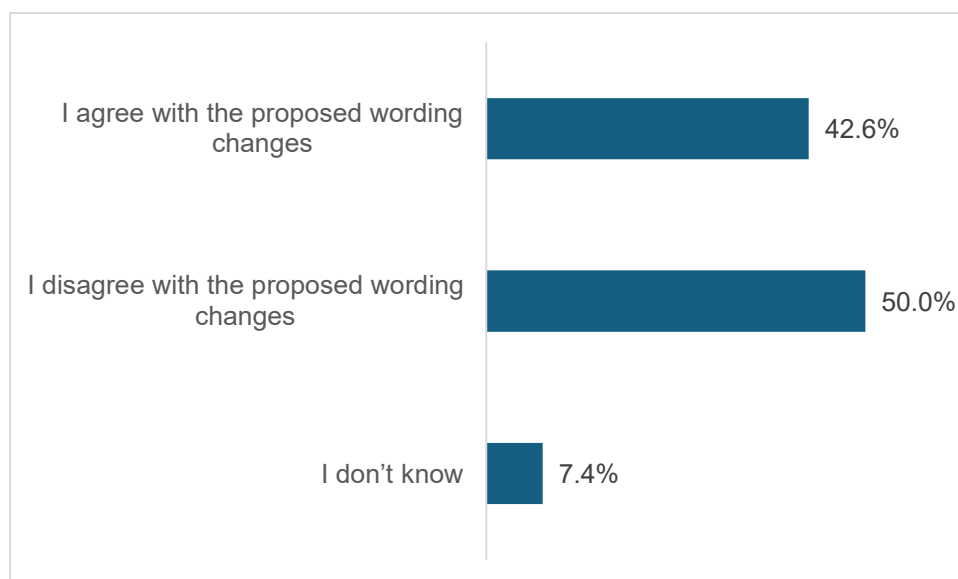
Other:

Respondent type	If Other, please specify here:
Other (please specify)	Motor boater who uses the bay.
Resident of Swanage	Year round swimmer in Swanage bay
Visitor to Swanage or Studland	Resident of Langton Matravers
Resident of Swanage	Resident
Visitor to Swanage or Studland	Local resident and occasional Kayaker
Resident of Swanage	Householder and Beach hut owner
Organisation (please specify)	Independently swim at north & Central beaches. Mental Health Swim. Now Swanage Friendship
Resident of Swanage	All year round swimmer
Other (please specify)	Resident of Purbeck and sea swimmer at all 3 sites
Resident of Swanage	Swimmer
Resident of Swanage	Regular year round sea swimmer
Other (please specify)	Local resident in Purbeck
Other (please specify)	Resident of Rempstone
Other (please specify)	Beach hut owner
Other (please specify)	Member of sea rowing club
Other (please specify)	Weekly visitor
Resident of Swanage	Resident of Swanage, also member of Swanage Sea Rowing Club
Visitor to Swanage or Studland	Regular visitor
Resident of Swanage	Sailor and swimmer
Resident of Swanage	Sailor and swimmer
Other (please specify)	Weekly visitor and member of Swanage Sailing Club - reside in Wareham
Other (please specify)	resident of Dorset and member of Swanage sailing club for over 20 years
Organisation (please specify)	Dorset Resident
Other (please specify)	Swimmer, and sailor with Swanage Sailing Club.
Resident of Swanage	Regular bay swimmer
Resident of Swanage	Also a private beach owner
Resident of Swanage	And sea rower SSRC
Other (please specify)	member of Swanage Sailing Club
Organisation (please specify)	Also a Swanage resident and all she swimmer
Resident of Swanage	Member of swanage sailing club
Resident of Swanage	Also I sail a dinghy in the bay And am a member of Swanage sailing club, although these are my personal views
Other (please specify)	Resident of Kingston and Purbeck
Other (please specify)	Resident of Corfe Castle so a local. Not a visitor
Resident of Swanage	Swanage resident
Other (please specify)	Ward Member South East Purbeck

Resident of Swanage	Year round sea swimmer
Other (please specify)	Live locally and swim regularly through the year at Swanage
Other (please specify)	I am a resident of Wareham, and my daughter and I are members of Swanage Sailing Club.
Other (please specify)	Previous (and possible future) resident whose parents live in Swanage. Regular visitor (6+ times per year)

Q2. What is your view on the proposed wording changes to the Dorset Council Purbeck Watercraft Byelaw 2026?

Base: n-430



Option	Total	Percent
I agree with the proposed wording changes	183	42.6%
I disagree with the proposed wording changes	215	50.0%
I don't know	32	7.4%

The responses show a mixed but slightly negative overall view of the proposed wording changes to the Dorset Council Purbeck Watercraft Byelaw 2026. Half of respondents, 50.0% (215), disagreed with the proposed wording changes, indicating a level of concern or opposition among consultees. By comparison, 42.6% (183) agreed with the proposed changes, demonstrating a substantial proportion of support. A smaller group, 7.4% (32), indicated that they did not know, suggesting that some respondents may not have felt sufficiently informed to offer an opinion. Overall, the findings point to differing perspectives, with disagreement more prominent than agreement, indicating an opportunity to explore respondents' concerns in more detail.

Views on the proposed wording changes differed by gender. 47.0% (95) of women were more likely to support the changes than men (38.3%, 74), while men were more likely to oppose the changes (55.4%, (107) disagreement compared with 44.6% (90) of women).

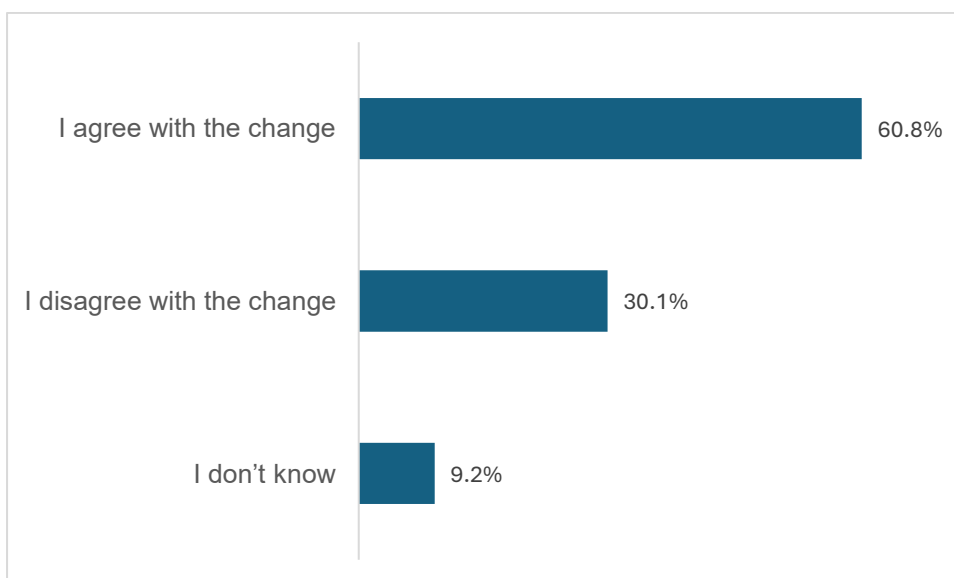
Q3. Do you have any comments on the proposed wording changes?

The responses have been coded and themed, which can be seen in the table below.

Comments/theme	Total
Buoys - oppose moving in	66
Jet skis - main issue	48
Safety concerns -negative	41
Sailing - oppose inclusion	35
Overall - Oppose changes	25
Speed concerns	24
Powered craft	20
Non powered craft	14
Noise/amenity concerns	14
No strong view/no comment	14
Buoys - support moving in	8
Wording amendments	8
Consultation - concerns	4
Overall - Support changes	4
Safety concerns - positive	2
Other	10

Q4. What is your view on this proposed change to the deployment period?

Base: n-436



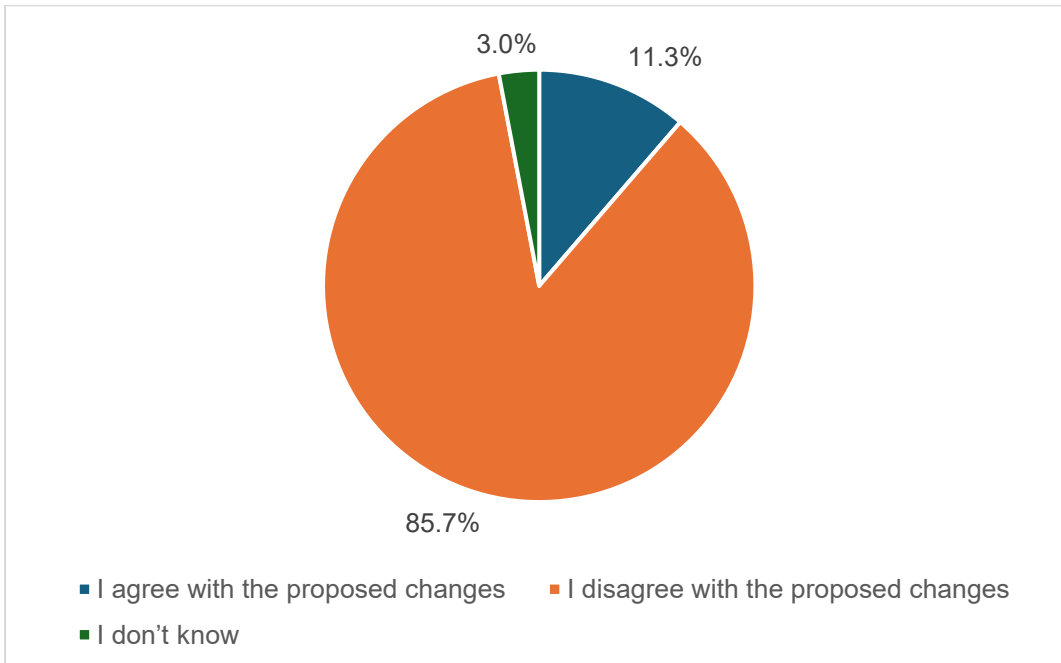
Option	Total	Percent
I agree with the change	265	60.8%
I disagree with the change	131	30.1%
I don't know	40	9.2%

The findings indicate a generally positive response to the proposed change to the deployment period. A clear majority of respondents, 60.8% (265), agreed with the change, suggesting broad support and acceptance of the proposed approach. In contrast, 30.1% (131) disagreed, indicating that a notable minority have concerns or objections. A smaller proportion, 9.2% (40), selected 'I don't know', reflecting some uncertainty or a need for further clarification. Overall, the findings show strong support for the proposed change, with some reservations noted.

Swanage Bay

Q5. What is your opinion of the proposed changes to the speed marker buoys in Swanage Bay?

Base: n-433



Option	Total	Percent
I agree with the proposed changes	49	11.3%
I disagree with the proposed changes	371	85.7%
I don't know	13	3.0%

The responses show a strong overall opposition to the proposed changes to the speed marker buoys in Swanage Bay. A significant majority of respondents, 85.7% (371), disagreed with the proposed changes, indicating widespread concern or dissatisfaction among consultees. In contrast, a relatively small proportion, 11.3% (49), agreed with the changes, suggesting limited support. A further 3.0% (13) selected 'I don't know', reflecting a small degree of uncertainty. Overall, the findings demonstrate clear opposition to the proposed changes, highlighting the need to carefully consider respondents' concerns before proceeding.

Q6. Do you have any comments on the proposed changes to the speed marker buoys?

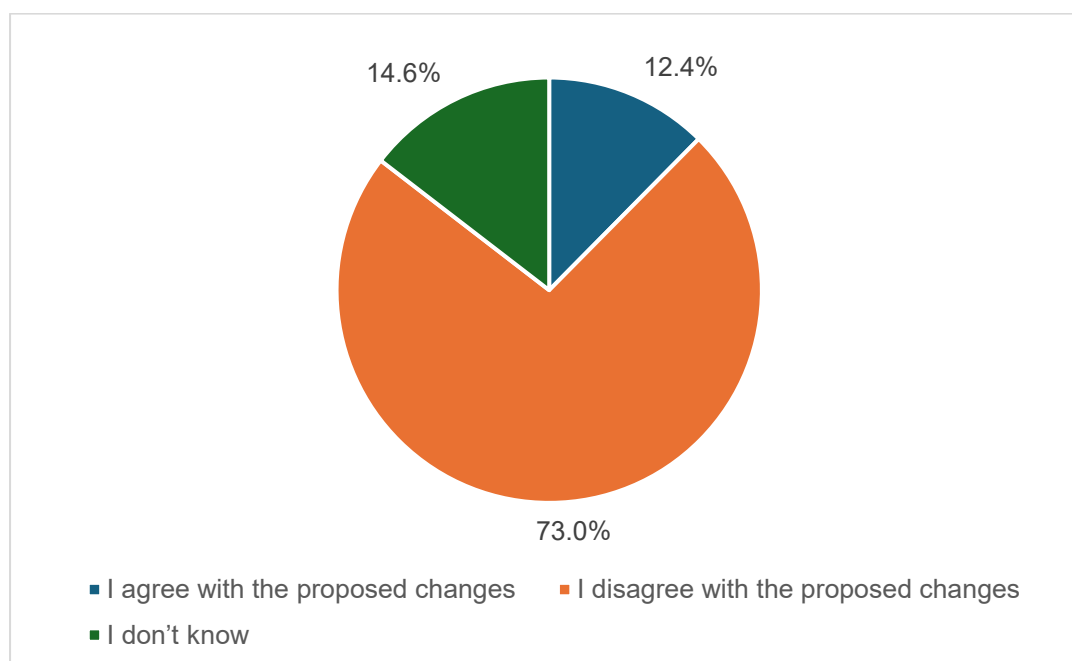
The responses have been coded and themed, which can be seen in the table below.

Theme - Swanage	Total
Safety concern- negative/ scared	267
Buoys - oppose moving in/negative	213
Swimming/ swimmers/ Lifeguard	142
Jet skis - main issue/ need to be banned	139
Noise/amenity concerns/noise pollution	115
Speed concerns/enforcement	108
Powered craft/motorised/yachts/speed craft concerns	90
Recreational/family impacted/summer/tourism	84
Swanage residents impacted/Swanage mentioned/Swanage location impacted or negative	76
Rowing/kayaking/paddle	74
Environment & wildlife concerns/oil pollution/dogs	42
Enforcement/police/actually enforce the bylaws - weak	37
Waves/tides/water users	34
Buoys - justification required	31
Asked a question	22
No strong view/no comment	18
Buoys - support moving in	10
Sailing - oppose inclusion/sailing club	10
Dinghy	9
Non powered craft	8
Consultation - concerns	6
Safety concern- positive	5
Overall - Oppose changes	5
PWC	5
Other	4
Extend swim zone - e.g. Mowlem	3
Exemptions needed	2
Wording amendments	2
Other	5

Studland Bay

Q7. What is your opinion of the proposed changes to the speed marker buoys in Studland Bay?

Base: n-419



Option	Total	Percent
I agree with the proposed changes	52	12.4%
I disagree with the proposed changes	306	73.0%
I don't know	61	14.6%

The consultation responses indicate that most participants were opposed to the proposed changes to the speed marker buoys in Studland Bay. A large majority of respondents, 73.0% (306), disagreed with the proposed changes, suggesting widespread concern or dissatisfaction among those who took part in the consultation. In contrast, 12.4% (52) agreed with the changes, indicating relatively limited support. A notable minority, 14.6% (61), selected 'I don't know', which may reflect uncertainty or a need for further clarification about the proposals. Overall, the findings demonstrate clear opposition to the proposed changes, alongside a higher level of uncertainty than seen in other questions.

77.4% (151) of female respondents showed notably stronger opposition to the proposed changes in Studland Bay compared to 66.7% (126) of male respondents, suggesting differing perceptions of impact or risk. By age group, while opposition remained the majority view among those aged 25–49, the level of disagreement (62.3%; 38) was lower than that seen across the consultation overall. In contrast,

opposition among disabled respondents was higher than the overall consultation response, with 81.8% (27) disagreeing with the proposed changes.

Q8. Do you have any comments on the proposed changes to the speed marker buoys?

The responses have been coded and themed, which can be seen in the table below.

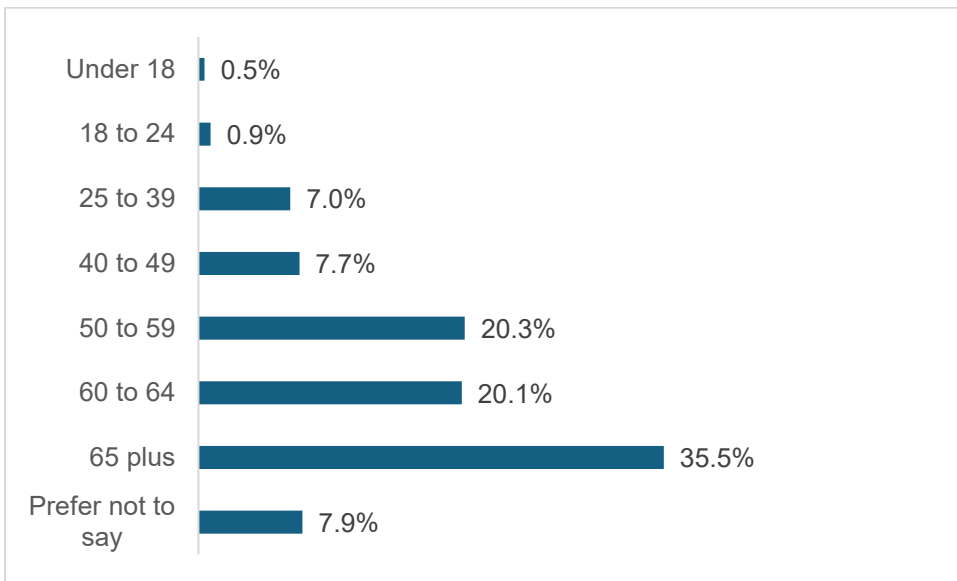
Theme - Studland	Total
Buoys - oppose moving in	118
Safety concern- negative	96
should stay at 300 metres	71
Swimmers/swimming/divers	63
Jet skis - main issue	58
Refer/directs to Swanage comments/only care for swanage	58
Powered craft/motorised vehicles/boats	58
Studland Beach/summer	54
Noise/amenity concerns/noise pollution	47
Speed concerns/speeding problem	40
Marine environment/ Environment & wildlife concerns/ jet fuel smell	34
Safety	29
Kayaking/paddle	25
Buoys - justification required	17
Watercraft/specific area for water craft	17
Enforcement/police - weak	13
Sea horses/sea animals	11
Recreational/family impact	10
Marine noise/marine ecology	7
No strong view/no comment	7
Asked a question	7
Old Harry Rock	6
Peace/tranquillity on the beach	5
Buoys - support moving in	4
Non powered craft	4
shallow water	4
Ecological heritage site	3
sailing dinghies	3
Safety concern- positive	2
Consultation - concerns	2
Wording amendments/wording clarification	2

Toilet issue	2
ecological concern	2
wind surfers/noise/wind borders	2
no anchor zones	2
Other	56

Demographics

Q9. Please select your age group.

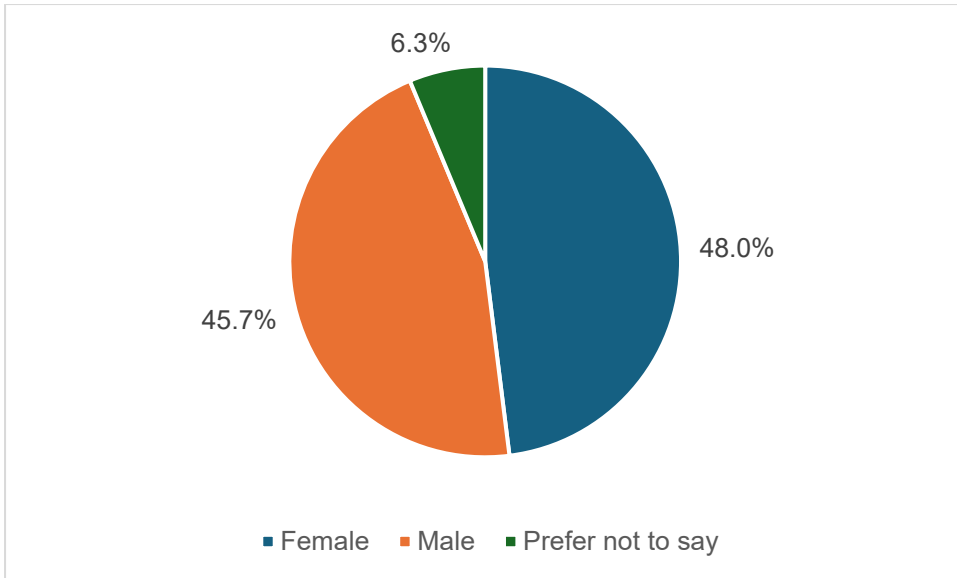
Base: n-428



Option	Total	Percent
Under 18	2	0.5%
18 to 24	4	0.9%
25 to 39	30	7.0%
40 to 49	33	7.7%
50 to 59	87	20.3%
60 to 64	86	20.1%
65 plus	152	35.5%
Prefer not to say	34	7.9%

Q10. What is your sex?

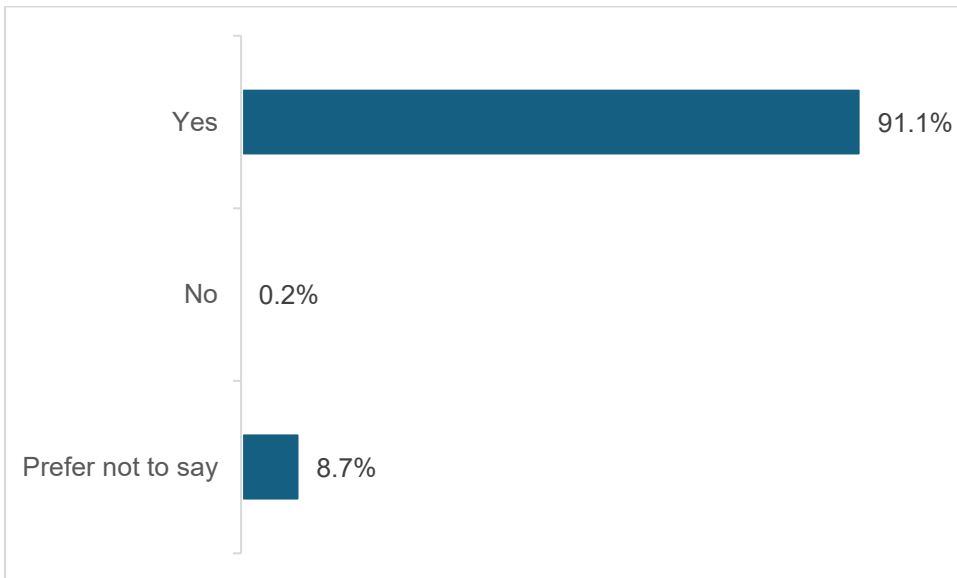
Base: n-429



Option	Total	Percent
Female	206	48.0%
Male	196	45.7%
Prefer not to say	27	6.3%

Q11. Is the gender you identify with the same as your sex registered at birth?

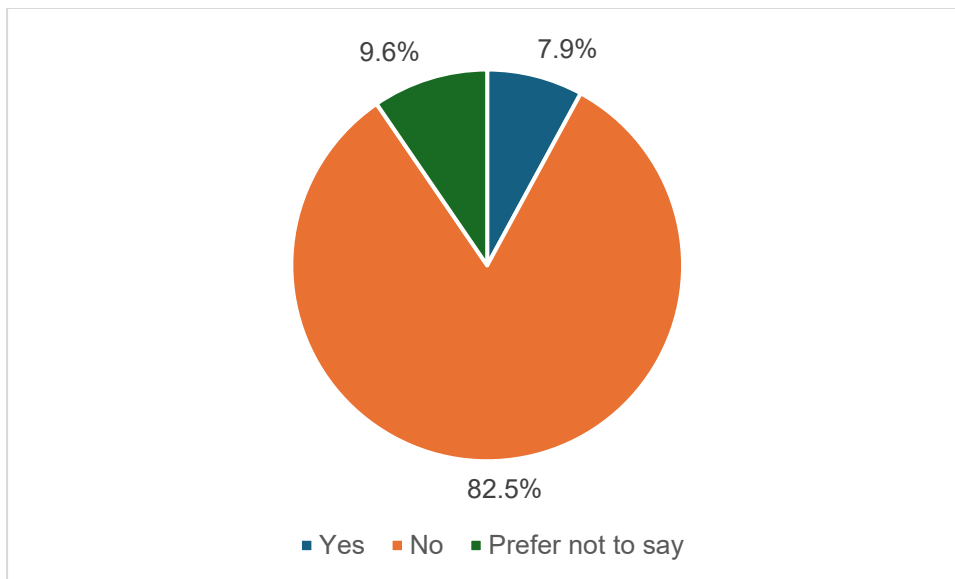
Base: n-425



Option	Total	Percent
Yes	387	91.1%
No	1	0.2%
Prefer not to say	37	8.7%

Q12. Do you consider yourself to be disabled as set out in the Equality Act 2010?

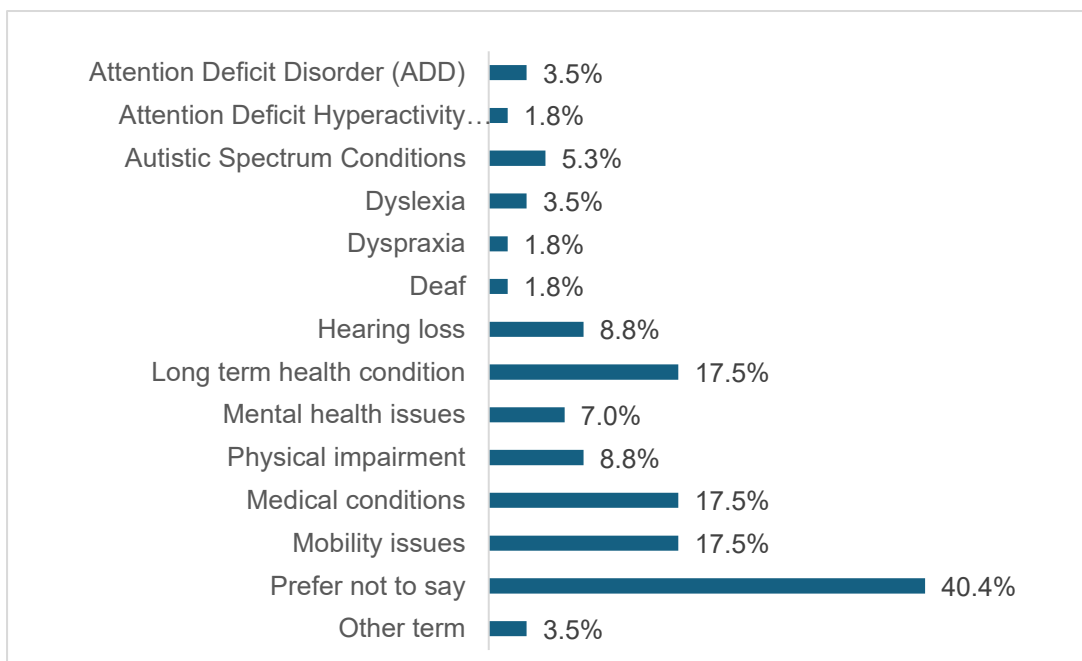
Base: n-429



Option	Total	Percent
Yes	34	7.9%
No	354	82.5%
Prefer not to say	41	9.6%

Q13. If at the previous question you stated you consider yourself to have a disability, please state the type of disability which applies to you.

Base: n-57



Option	Total	Percent
Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD)	2	3.5%
Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)	1	1.8%
Autistic Spectrum Conditions	3	5.3%
Blind	0	0.0%
Dyscalculia	0	0.0%
Dyslexia	2	3.5%
Dyspraxia	1	1.8%
Deaf	1	1.8%
Hearing loss	5	8.8%
Long term health condition	10	17.5%
Mental health issues	4	7.0%
Physical impairment	5	8.8%
Sign Language User	0	0.0%
Visually impaired	0	0.0%
Medical conditions	10	17.5%
Mobility issues	10	17.5%
Learning disability	0	0.0%
Specific learning differences	0	0.0%
Wheelchair user	0	0.0%
Prefer not to say	23	40.4%
If you prefer to use another term, please write in the box below	2	3.5%

Other - disability type
Spinal Stenosis. Arthritis knees back neck. Joints. So important for me to get in sea for movement, exercises and mental health
Cancer
I am unsure how these questions are seen to impact my answers
Rage & despair at jet skis - can't escape their endless noise in my house & garden
need for peace and quiet in Swanage
[redacted] has that got to do with the proposed changes
Why is stammering not on this list? it is covered by the Equality Act. A persons struggle to speak when under pressure is a relevant disability the it comes to safety between boats and swimmers.

Appendix A

Out of Format Responses - Organisations

Marine Management Organisation – letter

15/04/2026

Dear Bridget,

MMO Marine Planning response to Dorset Council Purbeck Watercraft Byelaw 2027 Consultation.

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to comment on the Watercraft Byelaw. The comments provided within this letter refer to the document entitled Dorset Council Purbeck Watercraft Byelaw 2027.

As the marine planning authority for England, the MMO is responsible for preparing marine plans for English inshore and offshore waters. All public authorities taking authorisation or enforcement decisions that affect or might affect the UK marine area must do so in accordance with the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 and any relevant adopted Marine Plan, in this case the South Inshore and Offshore Marine Plan, and the UK Marine Policy Statement (MPS) unless relevant considerations indicate otherwise. The South Marine Plan covers the area from the river Dart in Devon to Folkestone in Kent, including the tidal extent of any rivers within this area.

Under the Marine and Coastal Access Act, any authorisation or enforcement decisions must be made in accordance with the marine plan 58(1). Any other decisions which may impact the marine area must have regard to the marine plan 58(3).

Section 58(1) of the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 stipulates that a public authority must take an authorisation or enforcement decision in accordance with the appropriate

marine policy documents. An “authorisation or enforcement decision” includes the “determination of any application (whenever made) for authorisation of the doing of any act which affects or might affect the whole or any part of the UK marine area”. Confirmation of a byelaw by the Secretary of State would be considered as an authorisation or enforcement decision and therefore must be in accordance with the marine plan under section 58(1).

Decision-makers must make their own determination based upon the contents of the marine plan, seeking independent legal advice where appropriate. A decision to accept the byelaw would need to show that it is in accordance with the marine plan, therefore, a marine plan policy assessment may be required by the final decision maker. A proponent may demonstrate how their proposal is in accordance with marine plan policies.

The South Marine Plans and South Marine Plans Technical Annex should be considered when demonstrating whether the byelaw is in accordance with the South Marine Plans. The MMO has developed guidance and worked examples for using marine plans in accordance with S58(1), including a Marine Plan Policy Assessment example. A hypothetical example of marine plan use: Decisions in accordance with the South Marine Plans (section 58(1) of the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009) is of greatest relevance to this byelaw consultation. This guidance can be found on the Using Marine Plans page on GOV.UK.

Marine Licensing

The Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 states that a marine license is required for certain activities carried out within the UK marine area.

The MMO is responsible for marine licensing in English waters and for Northern Ireland offshore waters.

The marine licensing team are responsible for consenting and regulating any activity that occurs “below mean high water springs” level that would require a marine licence. These activities can range from mooring private jetties to nuclear power plants and offshore windfarms.

Although directly relevant to marine plan policy assessments within the marine licensing process, the MMO’s Common Issues with Marine Plan Policy Assessments guidance provides insights into where an application may be considered to not be “accurate or sufficient”. This guidance can be found on the Using Marine Plans page on GOV.UK.

Yours sincerely,

Eva Turley

Marine Planning Officer (South)

Swanage Sailing Club – letter

Swanage Sailing Club response to the consultation regarding the 5 knot buoys in Swanage Bay

As drafted the proposed new byelaw could jeopardise the future of the club, which would be a serious loss for the community.

Swanage Sailing Club has 420 members and is possibly the largest sports club in Swanage. We are an RYA Pathway club and RYA Training Centre, providing sailing facilities for racing and training for the local community from age 8 to age 80 years old. This is all done by volunteers with a very low cost to participate in order to make it accessible to many. We have very low membership fees. We provide club boats for members at a low cost. We do not charge members for training. We have been operating in the bay for over 90 years and have not been responsible for any serious incidents or harm to swimmers or other craft in the bay.

Being able to participate in sailing and social activities creates many health and social benefits for our members through physical activity, being out in the fresh air and participating in our extensive programme of social events.

Background

The Purbeck District Council (Seaside pleasure boats) byelaws 2013 provide (at 3(1)) that a speed limit applies to boats propelled by an engine, and includes a carve out for those taking part in authorised events, providing safety facilities for an event, or acting in a rescue operation. We believe this is proportionate.

The proposed new byelaws extend the operation of a speed limit to include a wider range of vessels, and would appear to now include sailing dinghies. It is not clear if this is intentional, however the application of a speed limit to both sailing dinghies and to powered vessels providing safety cover, coaching and support to sailing events causes us great concern and would make it impossible for our club to deliver the current range of racing and training activities for the local community.

Our concerns and responses

Our biggest concern is that extending the speed limit to include sailing dinghies could make our activities impossible to operate in a way that is safe for our sailors in windy weather. It creates safety issues for our sailors in our racing and training activities.

Extending the speed limit to include sailing dinghies is unnecessary and potentially jeopardises the viability and future of Swanage Sailing Club

There is no evidence to suggest that the speed of sailing dinghies has caused accidents or conflicts with other water users.

Sailing dinghies should be excluded from the byelaw restrictions. We have operated in the bay for over 90 years without causing any serious incidents or harm to swimmers or other craft.

- Sailing dinghies have no means to measure their speed.
- On windier days sailing members may break the 5-knot speed limit when sailing through the 5-knot zone to reach the main bay.
- During poor weather, when it is not appropriate to run sailing activities in the main bay our activity takes place in the safer sheltered 5 knot area, albeit some dinghies may exceed 5 knots in that area. Therefore, if sailing dinghies were excluded from using the 5 knot area it would limit the number of times they can sail in Swanage. It is noted that there have been no conflicts with other water users.

Bringing the buoys closer to the beach reduces safety for many bay users and creates a noise nuisance on the beach and in the town.

The buoys should remain at 300m distance.

- High speed watercraft such as powerboats and jet-skis would now be able to operate at high speed much closer to other water users such as swimmers,

paddleboarders and kayakers' increasing the risk to these users both directly and from their wakes.

- This also creates an increased noise nuisance on the beach and in the town. Revving engines will be much closer.

Safety boats should also be excluded from the speed limit.

Our concern is that the current wording of the byelaw is not as crystal clear as we would like.

SSC does think that it is proportionate to have to get written permission from the council to provide safety cover for its many activities as that would be inefficient for everyone. Paragraph 3 iii) “acting in a rescue operation or emergency” appears to cover the remainder, but in practice, safety boats do more than just rescue or respond to emergencies. Part of their role is to watch out for potential problems and “head them off” before they become emergencies (such as positioning themselves to avert potential near-misses between dinghies and motor-boats who may misjudge speed and distance).

In addition, the club delivers RYA training courses for its members in powerboat handling and safety boat operation, which includes elements of training focused on higher speed operation and as such need to train those needed to support the club’s activity should be excluded from the byelaw.

While a blanket written exemption from the council for “all club activities” may go some way to allay our concerns, we feel the better option would be to specifically exclude club activities, including sailing and associated rescue/ safety cover/ training from the byelaws.

We are very happy to meet with you to discuss these concerns and responses and find a constructive way forward.

Appendix 1

Background notes from our Senior Instructor in charge of training

These notes partially informed our response as detailed above, they explain some of the thinking behind our response.

- The measure is intended to improve safety for users of Swanage Bay. The club is probably the biggest single user of the bay and the measures will make safety much worse for all members.
- It will definitely make sailing much less safe especially for children for the reasons stated in the SSC response also because it will push the sailing areas further out where jet skis and powerboats operate at speed. From my

experience on Saturday mornings in 10+ years I've been doing juniors, without fail the highest risk to our children are jet skis and powerboats.

- We would not be able to put on an RNLI lifeboat week sailing race with this byelaw in place.
- The measures are designed to improve safety, but will directly contradict the RNLI's own advice, where e.g. they advise paddle-boarders on windy days to stay closer to the shore. Forcing sailors (particularly trainees) further out on windier days will put them at risk, where they may lose control of their boats and put themselves in danger. These are all risks that the sailing club has managed for decades without incident.
- For running training, it reduces options to manage safety and reduce risk. The scenario could be a normal day where the wind blows up (offshore), and we need to get sailors back to Buck Shore ASAP. In these circumstances (as SI running training) where we might have children who are cold and afraid - I would tell DIs to get their groups back to the club sailing closer to shore to a) have shelter from higher winds b) reduce the fear in children from being far out in windy conditions.
- We ensure safety for our sailors particularly in our organised sailing sessions. All instructors and safety boat drivers are RYA qualified. Our Saturday Safety Boat Team lead is Gavin Steeden, well known RNLI Lifeboat crew. I can't imagine a better partner for me as the SI to manage safety in the bay. Similarly, Pete Meteau (SSC Member and experienced cat sailor) runs the RNLI Beach Tower in the Summer. Similarly we have a couple of members who have the RNLI launch authority role. I mention names, not because we rely on individuals, but because this is an example of our mindset; safety first.

If the council has safety concerns, please come and see us and let us explain and demonstrate how we ensure the safety of our sailors and the wider community of bay users.

Swanage Town Council – Consultation Response

EXTRACT FROM:

Minutes of the Meeting of the **PLANNING AND CONSULTATION COMMITTEE** held at the Town Hall, Swanage on **MONDAY, 2nd MARCH 2026** at **7.00 p.m.**

Chairman: -

Councillor T Foster Swanage Town Council

Present: -

Councillor M Bonfield Swanage Town Council

Councillor P Burridge Swanage Town Council

Councillor J Lejeune Swanage Town Council

Councillor C Sutton Swanage Town Council

Councillor S Vile Swanage Town Council

Also in attendance: -

Dr M Ayres Town Clerk

Miss N Clark Planning and Community Engagement Manager

Mr C Milmer Visitor Services Manager

Eighteen members of the public attended the meeting in person.

Public Participation Time

The following matters were raised:

Agenda item 3 a) Purbeck Watercraft Byelaw 2027 Public Consultation – concerns were raised regarding the proposals and the consultation process, including the following:-

- Lack of consultation with local groups, including Swanage Sailing Club, and the Swanage Sea Rowing Club.
- The proposed relocation of buoys from 300m to 200m from the shore, which was felt to be a significant reduction, with a potential decrease in water safety for sea swimmers, rowing boats, and non-motorised watercraft.
- Potential conflict between beach users and water users, along with concerns about speeding motorised craft in the bay, particularly larger boats and jet skis, which would operate nearer to the safe bathing zone. It was noted that their wake could create difficulties for less confident swimmers.
- Comments highlighting the national increase in wild and sea swimming. It was noted that the local sea swimming group, established in 2020, now had 170 members.
- A potential increase in noise pollution.

1) Apologies

Apologies for his inability to attend the Meeting were received from Councillor Tomes.

2) Declarations of Interest

Members were invited to declare their interests and consider any requests for Grants of Dispensations in accordance with Section 9 and Appendix B of the Council's Code of Conduct.

There were no declarations on this occasion.

Further to Standing Order No. 12) a) viii, prior to commencement of the Meeting it was proposed by the Chairman and AGREED:-

That Item 5 a) on the agenda be brought forward to Item 3 a).

Consultation

3) To note receipt of the following consultation document, and to determine the Council's

preferred method of response, if any:

a) Dorset Council - Purbeck Watercraft Byelaw 2027 Public Consultation

It was noted that Dorset Council was consulting on proposed updates to the Seaside Pleasure Boats Byelaws 2013, which were intended to form the new Purbeck Watercraft Byelaw 2027. The proposed changes aimed to improve safety, protect the environment, and ensure that all users could enjoy Purbeck's coastal waters responsibly. Councillors had reviewed the consultation document and the online survey questions.

During Public Participation Time, residents raised several comments and concerns regarding the proposals, and the consultation process. Councillors noted that these included:

- Limited/lack of engagement with a number of local groups and users.
- The potential for increased noise pollution.
- Risks of conflict between beach users and watercraft users.
- Water safety concerns, particularly regarding the mix of motorised and non-motorised craft.
- The proposal to move the buoy line/operational zone closer to the beach, increasing perceived risks for swimmers and other non-motorised users.

Councillors were in agreement that the pre-consultation engagement process appeared to have been limited, lacking input from a number of stakeholders. In light of the concerns raised above, Councillors also felt that Dorset Council should give further consideration to the proposals and undertake wider pre-consultation engagement.

It was therefore proposed by Councillor Bonfield, seconded by Councillor Sutton and RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: -

That the Town Council submits a strong objection to the consultation document in its current form and recommends that it should be withdrawn and revised in light of comprehensive pre-consultation engagement with stakeholders.

The Chairman encouraged all residents to ensure they submitted their comments directly to Dorset Council, noting that this was a Dorset Council-led consultation and that public feedback was essential.

Swanage Sea Rowing Club – Consultation Response

Subject: Formal Response to Dorset Council Purbeck Watercraft Byelaw 2027

Dear Sir/Madam,

Re: Consultation on Dorset Council Purbeck Watercraft Byelaw 2027

I am writing on behalf of Swanage Sea Rowing Club (SSRC), representing our Trustees, Committee and wider membership, to formally respond to the proposed byelaw.

SSRC is a long-established club (25 years old in 2026) operating year-round within Swanage Bay, with a strong safety culture and extensive experience of local conditions. We support proportionate and enforceable measures to improve safety; however, we have significant concerns regarding the **definition of “watercraft”**, the **application of the 5-knot speed restriction**, the **proposed 200m buoy line**, and the **practicality of enforcement**.

1. Definition of “Watercraft” (Interpretation Section)

The byelaw defines “*watercraft*” as:

“any vessel that is designed to travel on or through water... including... kayaks, canoes, paddleboards, Gig rowers, sailboats.”

This explicitly includes non-powered, human-propelled vessels.

This definition is overly broad and fails to distinguish between powered and non-powered craft, which have fundamentally different risk profiles.

Applied as drafted, this restriction includes rowing gigs.

This presents clear issues:

- Impracticality:** No onboard speed measurement standard within gigs
- Normal activity exceeds limit:** Training speeds can sometimes exceed 5 knots during a high-speed training push.

- **Unenforceability:** No reliable means of monitoring compliance
- **Disproportionate restriction:** Impacts routine training and organised rowing which has been done safely in Swanage Bay for 25 years by SSRC

2. Application of the 5-Knot Speed Limit

The byelaw states:

“A navigator must not... exceed a speed faster than 5 knots...”

Applied as drafted, this restriction includes rowing gigs.

This creates clear issues of impracticality, unenforceability, and disproportionate impact on established sporting and recreational activity.

3. Specified Area – Swanage Bay (Schedule 1)

The byelaw applies within:

“Swanage Bay... within the... buoy line... placed 200m out from mean high water mark”

The reduction from 300m to 200m significantly increases restriction and collision risk non normal bay use and concentrates activity and engine noise closer to shore.

4. RNLI Lifeguard Operations and Offshore Wind Rescues

We recognise and respect the important role of RNLI lifeguards in maintaining seasonal safety within the bay.

It was reported at the recent community meeting that **70+ paddleboard rescues per season** occur where individuals are carried offshore by wind while heading towards the 300m buoy line.

Currently:

- Lifeguards conduct rescues using **manual paddleboards**
- This is **physically demanding and operationally challenging**, particularly in offshore wind conditions

However, we do not believe that **reducing the buoy line to 200m is an appropriate or proportionate solution** to this operational challenge.

Instead, this proposal effectively:

- Places the burden of adaptation on **all bay users**, and
 - Restricts long-established and safe activities,
- in order to compensate for **limitations in rescue capability**.

We recommend a more appropriate, targeted solution:

- The **RNLI should be equipped with a small powered rescue craft**, such as:
 - o A RIB (Rigid Inflatable Boat), or
 - o A jet ski / personal watercraft suitable for rapid response
- If storage is a constraint, **Swanage Town Council (STC)** should support provision of:
 - o A **seasonal beach-based storage unit** (e.g. small shipping container or similar),

This approach would:

- Significantly improve rescue response capability
- Directly address the identified safety issue
- Avoid unnecessary restriction on other water users

This represents a **more effective and proportionate solution** than altering the buoy line for all Bay users.

5. Enforcement and Practical Implementation

There is currently a lack of clarity regarding enforcement and reporting:

- No clearly defined or publicised mechanism for reporting breaches
- Reliance on informal channels (e.g. via local contacts such as Phil Palmer)
- No visible or communicated enforcement structure

Without clear enforcement, the byelaw risks being ineffective, particularly in addressing higher-risk behaviour from powered craft.

We recommend:

- A clearly defined enforcement authority
- A formal reporting process
- Clear communication to all bay users by beach notices

6. Constructive Alternative – Buoy Positioning and Bay Geometry

We support the principle of a controlled speed zone but propose a more effective approach:

- Retain a **300m 5-knot zone**, and
- Introduce a **refined buoy layout using an additional offshore control point (4-**

point alignment)

This would:

- Better reflect the **natural curvature of Swanage Bay**
- Improve navigation clarity
- Allow more appropriate zoning of activity
- Reduce unnecessary restriction on non-powered craft and compression into a smaller area created by the 200m offset

7. Impact on Organised Rowing Sport and Safety

The proposed byelaw would have a direct and adverse impact on established, safety managed rowing activity within Swanage Bay.

In particular, it would:

- Disrupt structured and well-managed rowing operations**
- Force activity further offshore into more exposed and less controlled**

conditions

- Reduce the effectiveness of safety oversight from shore and support craft**
- As currently drafted, the byelaw applies the 5-knot speed restriction to rowing gigs. This creates an immediate conflict with normal and safe rowing practice.

Swanage Sea Rowing Club organises two annual summer regattas (held in June), operating from Sandpit Field and utilising Banjo Pier as a start line marker. Racecourses are set running northeast into the bay.

During race starts and initial phases, it is entirely normal for competitive crews to exceed 5 knots as part of safe and controlled race execution. Under the proposed byelaw, crews would therefore be in **technical breach from the point of race start**.

These events are:

- Delivered in close collaboration with Swanage Town Council
- Supported by **comprehensive risk assessments and method statements**
- Communicated clearly to other bay users, including course layout and timings

They represent **well-established, responsibly managed sporting activity** within the bay.

- As illustrated in **Appendix A**, current regatta start lines are located within the controlled zone and would become non-compliant under the proposed

restrictions. This would necessitate relocating race infrastructure further offshore, where conditions are less predictable and safety management is more difficult. and reduce spectator enjoyment from Sandpit Field.

In summary, the byelaw as drafted would **undermine, rather than enhance, safety** in relation to organised rowing activity.

8. Recommended Amendments

We strongly recommend:

- Limiting the 5-knot speed restriction to:
 - o **Powered vessels (engine/electric)**
 - o Potentially **high-speed foil-based craft**
- Explicit exclusion of non-powered craft**, including:
 - o Rowing gigs
 - o Kayaks and canoes
 - o Paddleboards
 - o Conventional sailing vessels
- Introduction of:
 - o **A clear enforcement framework**
 - o **A formal reporting mechanism**
 - o **A revised 300m buoy layout aligned to bay geometry**
- Consideration of:
 - o **Enhanced RNLI rescue capability via powered craft and suitable storage provision**

9. Conclusion

Swanage Sea Rowing Club supports the objective of improving safety. However, the current proposals are:

- Overly broad in scope**
- Difficult to enforce**
- Disproportionate in their impact**

We believe the alternative measures outlined above provide a more practical, targeted,

and effective approach.

We would welcome the opportunity to engage constructively with Dorset Council to help

refine the byelaw.

Yours faithfully,

[REDACTED]

Chair, Swanage Sea Rowing Club

Appendix A – Summer Regatta Course Layout and Operational Impact



Swanage Swim – Consultation Response

To:

Councillor Bonfield, Chair of Coastal Change and Beach Management Advisory Committee

Councillor Tomes, Chair of Tourism and Local Economy Committee

Councillor Foster, Chair of Planning and Consultation Committee

Dear Councillors,

Re: Dorset Council Purbeck Watercraft Byelaw 2027

I am writing on behalf of the Swanage Swim community, following our attendance at the recent STC Planning & Consultation meeting and the specially convened focus meeting hosted by Bridget Betts. I thought it would be useful to summarise the position of the Swim community following these meetings.

At the meeting on 25th March, we noted a consensus building towards the following principles, which we would support:

- Buoys to be left out until the end of October, extending the current season by a month
- 5 knot speed limit to be operational all year round, even when the buoys are not present
- Buoys to be 300m from shore, based on 4 fixed points
- Buoys to be a maximum of 100m apart (we believe 27 buoys are available for Swanage Bay)
- We ask that 2 of these buoys are placed on the "return leg" at North Beach, to avoid accidental "side entry" by craft
- Datum Line = Mean Low Water Mark

We are pleased that the key "bay user stakeholders" (swimmers, sailors, rowers etc) have now been engaged on this issue, and look forward to continued engagement as the solution evolves. Once the content of the bye-law is agreed, we are happy to play a role in communicating any key messages, changes and incident reporting protocols to the organised swim communities in Swanage.

We left the last meeting (25th March) somewhat unclear on the next steps, and would welcome your thoughts on whether you expect the issue to be discussed again at each of the committees that you chair?

Kind regards

[Redacted]

On behalf of Swanage Swim

Royal Yachting Association – Consultation Response

Good afternoon Bridget,

Our attention was drawn to this consultation by Swanage Sailing Club, an RYA Affiliated Club and Recognised training centre. Swanage SC is understandably concerned that the proposed byelaw changes, specifically the introduction of a speed limit for sailing dinghies, will negatively impact its ability to carry out sailing, racing, and training activities in the manner it has successfully done for many years. This would affect not only the Club's ability to deliver its sailing programme, but also the associated health and social benefits it provides to the local community.

The current Purbeck District Council *Seaside Pleasure Boats* Byelaws 2013 restrict speed only for vessels propelled by an engine and include exemptions for craft taking part in Council-authorized events, providing safety cover, or engaged in rescue operations. Under the proposed new byelaws, the extension of speed restrictions to a wider range of craft appears to apply the same limits to sailing dinghies. It is unclear whether this is intentional. We believe that the existing exemptions should be retained (or explicitly clarified) for sailing dinghies and for safety/support boats, to enable Swanage SC to continue delivering its racing and training activities effectively.

Kind Regards,

[Redacted]

Boating Information Officer

Regulations & Policy team

Royal Yachting Association

E: consultations@rya.org.uk

Out of Format Responses – Email Responses

Email Response A

Dear Ms Betts,

Further to our recent conversation regarding the proposed 5 knot speed limit proposed for Swanage Bay.

What I was interested in was how were you proposing that the speed limit be monitored.

Motor vehicles travel on a road, that is fixed and doesn't move so the procedure is quite simple.

But on the open sea, it is a totally different matter. The sea is always moving, unlike a road, ebbing and flooding 24 hours a day.

So, for example, if a boat is travelling at 5 knots through the water, and the tidal flow is travelling at 3 knots in the same direction as the boat, the boat is therefore travelling at 8 knots over the seabed.

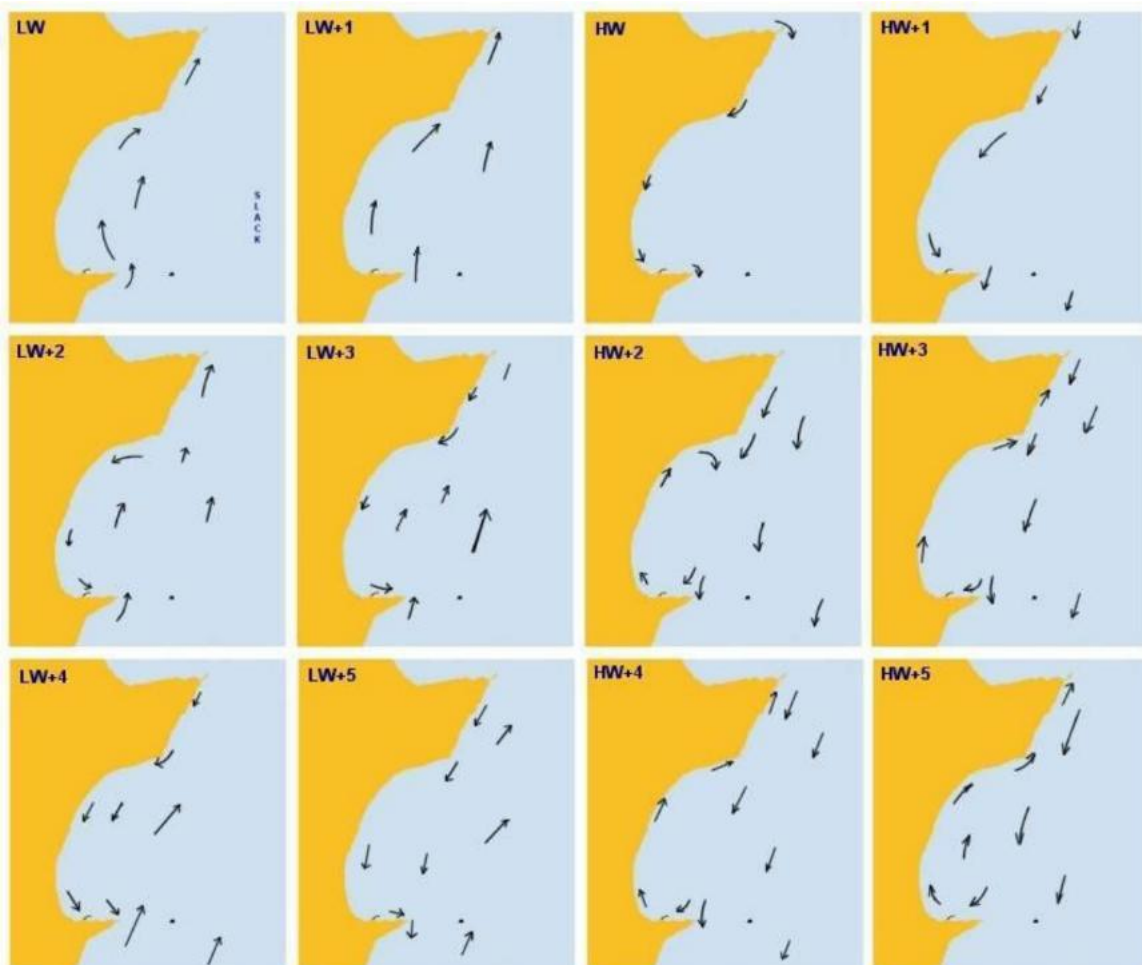
So, the monitoring equipment would show the boat travelling at 8 knots and therefore breaking the 5-knot rule, when it is only travelling through the water at 5-knots.

Would be most interested to know how you will deal with this conundrum and what the policy will be. And, to assist in your deliberations, I have attached a copy of the tidal Atlas for Swanage Bay.

Yours sincerely,

[Redacted]

Enclosure – Tidal Atlas Swanage Bay



Email Response B

I strongly object to the proposal to move the 5-knot buoys closer to the beach.

This change would significantly increase the danger to swimmers, paddleboarders, kayakers, children, and less confident bathers. The current buffer zone provides essential separation between powered craft and people in the water. Reducing that space increases the likelihood of near misses, propeller injury, and serious accidents.

In practice, many powered craft already exceed 5 knots within restricted areas. Enforcement is inconsistent. Moving the buoys closer to shore will not improve compliance — it will simply bring higher speeds closer to swimmers. That is an unacceptable risk.

There are additional impacts:

- Safety: Swimmers often move beyond the shallows. Open-water swimmers and clubs train further out. Shrinking the slow-speed zone compresses activity into an unsafe space.
- Noise: Increasing engine activity closer to shore will amplify noise pollution, affecting residents, holidaymakers, and wildlife.
- Water quality: More engine use nearer to bathing areas increases fuel residue, exhaust discharge, and general disturbance in waters used by families and children.
- Tourism impact: Purbeck's coastline is valued for its natural beauty and peaceful atmosphere. Increased high-speed vessel access near the shore risks driving away the very visitors who come for swimming, relaxation and tranquillity.
- Environmental disturbance: Coastal marine habitats, including sensitive seabed areas, are more vulnerable in nearshore zones.

The coastline is a shared space. Safety and public health must take precedence over convenience for powered craft. If anything, the protected low-speed zone should be strengthened, not reduced.

Before any changes are considered, there should be:

- Clear evidence of improved enforcement capability
- A published risk assessment
- Demonstrated consultation with swim groups and non-motorised water users
- Consideration of expanding, rather than shrinking, swimmer protection zones

This proposal appears to prioritise vessel access over swimmer safety and environmental protection. That is the wrong direction for a coastal area that promotes responsible enjoyment and family-friendly tourism.

I urge Dorset Council to reject this change.

Sincerely,

[Redacted]

Email Response C

I feel the 5 knot buoys after all the trouble we went through at the beach management committee meetings should remain as they are at 300 metres from the shore, It took along time to get the buoys moved out from 200 metres to 300 metres and lots of people were involved getting the bylaw changed at the time, it also probably cost a fair bit of money at the time to get this bylaw changed, if the council go back on it now what a waste of time and money it was.

I run the boat trips from the stone quay Swanage, since the 5 knot buoys have been moved out further , I have noticed the jet skis stay out side when at full speed, giving us boat operators plenty of breathing space and not buzzing us when going across the bay, (We can stay just inside the 5 knot limit)

Where as before we often got targeted and my passengers were soaked with spray from the odd few jet skies.

So I strongly recommend leave be.

[Redacted]

Email Response D

Hi Bridget

I raised the topic of bye law change and consultation at Studland Parish Council earlier this week. Thought I would share some feedback.

There does seem to be concern in Studland PC over bringing the 5kn speed buoys further in to shore in Studland where it runs parallel to the beach between middle beach and training bank.

Full support for blending the VNAZ markers with speed markers off old Harry and south beach per the original proposal.

Firstly, the water in Studland is very shallow and the tide goes out a long way on spring tides. I am not sure where the 200M is measured from so it would help to qualify that.

Swanage is a very different matter where we felt Studland PC isn't qualified to have a view.

I did stress that a consultation is a consultation and that this is a bye law issue not a free for all on every topic relating to activity on the water.

I hope to attend your meeting on 26th to address this, although it would be helpful to know where the 200M is measured from and maybe who put this forward for Studland so I can maybe discuss with them beforehand to understand more about the logic. Although my general preference is to support the safety group proposal it seems this will pass through smoothly on the 'if it ain't broke..... prnciple'

Kind regards

[Redacted]

Email Response E

Hi Bridget

Thank you for inviting me along to the meeting last Thursday at All Saints.

I thought you conducted the meeting very well.

Generally, I like to support the committee and the professional thought that was put into the proposed change. I think the constructive objections from various water user groups was also fair as part of the consultation.

My one observation of The Swanage meeting is that how is a novice sailor whose vision is partially blocked by sails, safer to speed in a speed restriction zone than a jet ski who can see all around. To mark out a sailing area during novice or junior sailing sessions within the zone could work well when other water users can be aware.....

On this occasion I am remiss for not attending Swanage and Studland Water Safety meetings more regularly on behalf of Studland Parish Council. I would like to remedy this going forward.

I had not paid enough attention to appreciate that the bye law change also included bringing the other buoys closer to shore.

I am on the steering committee of SBMP, as well as being Studland Parish Council Marine and Coastal Rep, so had assumed I knew what was happening without checking for any additions.

Having said all that, it feels as though the changes were almost entirely driven by Swanage based professionals and representatives of water users. Studland is very different terrain with very shallow run off and much more beach exposed at spring low tides. Equally we don't have lifeguards per se.

I should have made myself more aware but maybe should have been appraised more directly as Parish Councillor and as an SBMP member.

Anyhow, I am only hearing objection to buoys being moved from the Studland side, but, please do let me know if you are aware of any people or groups that are based in Studland and pro bringing buoys in closer as I am only reflecting the voices I have heard so far and views of the council.

I have completed questionnaire on behalf of SPC and myself.

I look forward to hearing back.

Thanks and regards

[Redacted]

Email Response F

Dear Bridget,

I write in connection with the consultation Dorset Council is currently carrying out in relation to the 5 knot speed limit buoys in the bay.

For the past 50 years I have operated all types of boats and craft in the bay. I taught waterskiing and windsurfing in the 1980's, have owned my own sailing boat and windsurfers for over 40 years. I am an active member of the Gig Rowing and Sailing clubs. I swim from the main beach and for over 30 years my father ran Pierhead Watersports, who was also responsible for enforcing the speed limit.

1. Moving the 5 knot buoys to 200m offshore.

This makes a lot of sense. Their current location is so far out to sea in some locations they are not visible from the shore. Craft (jet skis) launching from Ocean Bay therefore sometimes blast off unaware there is a speed limit. Equally boats coming into the bay find the buoys so far out to sea they seem irrelevant to protecting swimmers and moored boats which are some 200-300m away.

2. Inclusion of all types of sailing and rowing boats

Sorry, but this is unnecessary, impractical, or enforceable.

In 50 years I have never heard of an incident concerning a rowing or sailing boat. What is the basis for widening the scope of the speed limit?

Sailing craft are not like motorboats. Their speed is not controlled by a throttle. It's governed by wind, which close to shore is often variable and gusty. One minute you are doing 4 knots, then a gust hits you and you are doing 8 knots. It is also nearly impossible for windsurfers and kitesurfers to travel below 5 knots. How can you launch if the bay is ringed by a 5-knot speed limit?

Rowing boats would also be impacted. Throughout the year regattas are held from the main beach. The gigs can only reach 6-8 knots, but the sea rowing boats that race in the bay each year can reach 10 knots. Are they only allowed to race at 5 knots!!!!

Enforceability. Currently Phil Palmer (previously my father) has the thankless task of enforcing the speed limit. The main culprits are jet skis who can travel at 20-40 knots and are easily spotted. He does his best, but how does Dorset Council think Phil can track every sailing boat, gig, windsurfer that might be travelling at 5-10 knots? He can't, its impossible ! Yes, I know Dorset Police visit the bay for 30 minutes once a week, but they are here so infrequently they don't really add much to the equation.

I know most people who use the bay share these views and I look forward to you views on my comments.

Kind Regards

[Redacted]

Email Response G

Hi Bridget

Thank you for organising the meeting last Thursday. It was helpful for Russell and Andrew to hear how the draft byelaw was created and the various responses. After understanding the proposals and their rationale, we have major concerns.

We think there was a consensus that the 5-knot zone should be retained more or less the same, but with an extra fixed point in the curve of the bay to keep the line closer to 300m from MLW of the shoreline. Swanage Sailing Club would be happy with that change.

Our biggest concern is that extending the speed limit to include sailing boats could make our training activities impossible to operate in a way that is safe for our sailors. It also creates safety issues for the operation of our racing activities in windy weather.

We think sailing boats should be excluded from the byelaw restrictions. It was not possible at the meeting to explain why we think sailing boats should be excluded, and we would like to discuss this further with you. We have operated in the bay for over 90 years and have not been responsible for any serious incidents or harm to swimmers or other craft in the bay.

As background Swanage Sailing Club has 420 members and is possibly the largest sports club in Swanage. We are an RYA Pathway club and RYA Training Centre, providing sailing facilities and training for the local community from age 8 to age 80 years old. This is all done by volunteers with a very low cost to participate in order to make it accessible to many. We have very low membership fees. We provide club boats for members at a low cost. We do not charge members for training. We have been operating in the bay for over 90 years and have not been responsible for any serious incidents or harm to swimmers or other craft in the bay.

As drafted the byelaw could jeopardise the future of the club, which would be a serious loss for the community. As a result we are now taking our own legal advice on the byelaw proposal.

Please suggest a meeting time and place so we can explain the problems that the byelaw could create and find a way forward together.

[Redacted]

Commodore Swanage Sailing Club

Email Response H

On the 2nd April I called Dorset Council to access a copy of the Risk Assessment Report that I presumed would have been prepared to support the proposed changes regarding safety. I failed because surprisingly, and worryingly, it seems that no risk assessment on these changes has been conducted. Certainly it is not referred to.

The proposal to move the positioning of the speed marker buoys does not appear to be soundly based, depends it seems on unsubstantiated contentions and assumptions, (none appear to be in the document)and makes conclusions which favour a small subset of the group of water and beach users, with a direct and associated increase in risk and discomfort to the vast majority of users. The only evidence recorded in the proposals relates to non compliant behaviour of jet skiers, the very set of users who benefit from the proposals. The very nature of the subject being addressed means that this is very worrying, and it begs the question whether, and how, such proposals can have been made responsibly. What evidence is given

supports in fact an opposite approach to that proposed. This change also takes place after

1) the proposed changed positioning is claimed to increase safety. There is no data, or evidence to support this contention. The basis appears to be anecdotal. As well as unfocused and arguably patronising.

2) Reference is made to the fact that the markers had previously been at 200 meters from the beach, which was changed to the current 400 meters, implying that that in some way justifies a reversal of the situation. No explanation is provided of the reason for the original change and relevance to current proposals. As it stands the comparison is random

3) Reference is made to the fact that Bournemouth and Weymouth have buoys at 200 metres hinting that this justifies a move to that positioning for Studland and Swanage as proposed. But no explanation is attempted at defining whether there are any supportive circumstance in those locations regarding prevailing winds, currents etc, which are replicated in Studland and Swanage. No link of relevancy is applied.

4) it is noted that in theory keeping the speed markers further from the shore should keep watercraft away from swimmers near the shoreline but in practise this doesn't work. This is confusing (and confused) to the point of being disingenuous. The document should record 'fast moving watercraft.' Jetskies for example are in any case allowed to approach (and sadly anchor and beach) on the shoreline. It is the speed at which they do so which is the point. So what is effectively meant by the wording is the positioning doesn't work because there are watercraft users infringing the prescribed limit. This has nothing to do with the speed markers position. It has to do with active decisions by jet skiers to be non-compliant. And the mentality of the perpetrators will not be changed by repositioning.

5) Having directly excused the non-compliant behaviour of, most obviously, jet skiers, the document then ascribes the reason for moving the speed markers for watercraft to the alleged behaviour of visiting Paddle Boarders. It is alleged that they go out too far, beckoned are they by the false sense of security of the positioning of the speed marker buoys. This is outrageous. The dangers of a speeding jet skier are to other people, and potentially life threatening to others, whereas a wayward Paddle Boarder is a risk only to himself. It is a non-reason for the position change. And apparently there have been 'many incidences' of such wayward behaviour by Paddle Boarders. This is misleading without data and logged incidences. In fact this section of the proposals effectively justifies moving the position of speed markers due to unquantified wayward behaviour of Paddle Boarders when everyone knows that the consequences of non-compliant behaviour are far greater by motorised watercraft, who will be allowed much closer to the shore, than from non-compliant behaviour by swimmers, kite, wind and surf boarders.

6) the proposal pronounces that it is hoped there will be better compliance by watercraft (jet skiers) as a result of this change. Why? Where is the evidence? Does the proposed change alter the type of person perhaps who uses Jet skis? It might be pretty obvious to an impartial observer that by moving the speed markers closer to the shore will increase the risk of watercraft to others, whilst in itself prescribing, or not advising other os dangers to their non motorised craft. Also, the proposal does not consider the effect on noise pollution of bringing the speed markers closer to shore. The noise of jet skis is not pleasant and would be significantly amplified for beach users by closer proximity to them. THIS should be considered.

7. The example regarding the 20 mph limit is fatuous, not applicable, illogical and wrong.

Nowhere in the proposal is there a sound basis for the change, or analysis of historic experiences which justify the changes. More worryingly there appears to be a built in bias of outright support for making things easier for the most dangerous water leisure users. And there is a massive lack of symmetry between motorised watercraft users and other users. Motorised watercraft, objectively the more dangerous, and noisiest, and beneficiaries of the proposed changes, are in a very significant minority compared to the combined group of wind, kite, and board surfers, swimmers and beach goers. The most dangerous and also noisiest minority perversely benefit, at an increased danger and increased nuisance to the others. This cannot be right. The proposals are unsound because they are not supported by proper risk assessment. They also appear to be biased.

The overall lack of risk assessment, analysis and use of historic data, and one sided nature of the cost benefit results, begs the question what is driving these proposals, as it looks, not only to favour the few, but at the expense of the many. Moreover on a subject regarding safety the proposal appears not to constitute a strategic approach. If specific arrangements were made to address the issues with Paddle Boarders through extra markers representing their needs, or daily education posted re currents, wind details, weather generally, and new dangers, and explanation on information boards, then that would be strategic. No such thoughts are apparent.

Perhaps most depressing is that we are told that most jet skiers come from Poole. That is understandable given the far more practical and easily used number of launching points in the harbour, whereas Swanage has only two. But, in the context of the trend to more wind driven watercraft, climate dynamics, and home vacations why not prioritise the majority, and the trend, and encourage, directly, more safety for the softer leisure activities and create a unique selling point for Swanage, rather than encouraging, and courting misery by, jet skiers who are completely differently motivated.

Until some fundamental issues are addressed, and responsibility demonstrated in the context of the enjoyment, and safety, of water users, these proposals regarding repositioning of speed marker buoys, should not proceed. A more consistent and serious approach should be expected from the council if there are not to be serious accidents, and associated litigation. Such an approach, perforce, needs to be founded on a proper risk assessment, objective analysis, and consideration of what is right for Swanage in the context of relevant trends. Indeed, a full analysis would also consider for how long the parking and anchoring of motorised craft in areas close to the beach where families use the sea will be permitted. There is obviously a case to logically restrict them to the areas where there is permitted access to the water. A thorough review of the needs of all users, and their safe and harmonious interaction, is required.

An approach that might be considered to be of benefit to all users might be the following.

Reduce speed marker position to 300 meters. Have two anchoring areas ONLY for jetskies. These anchoring zones would be adjacent to current launch spots. Between the new marker line and each of these two zones not only the speed, but also the direction of travel can be prescribed. Since there are only two zones, the direction can be prescribed by a buoy on the speed marker line (two required for two zones) that at the limited speed craft may proceed at 90 degrees to the shore only, with the signage positioned at that angle to the anchor zone. (in other words a straight line at right angles to the anchor zone, connecting with speed limit markers.) This would eliminate the danger/ risk of multi crossing angles. And multi crossing routes. This would also significantly reduce noise pollution to beach users.

[Redacted]

Email Response H

3 Apr 26

Comments on the Draft Purbeck Watercraft Byelaw 2027

1. Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the proposed Regulations for safety in the waters of Swanage Bay and other waters in Dorset. I am a long-term member of Swanage Sailing Club [SSC] and have participated in sailing races and other sailing activities in Swanage Bay for many years.
2. At the outset may I say that I do not think there can be any kind of meaningful Consultation unless two of the primary users of Swanage Bay – namely SSC and the Swanage Sea Rowing Club – are consulted. SSC normally operates sailing dinghies ranging from those for children up to dinghies 16ft long for adults as well as a motor Race Committee Boat and a fleet of Rigid Inflatable Boats [RIBs] for safety duties. The majority of activities ie races, instruction and general sailing take place in the

middle of Swanage Bay ie well to the South East and beyond the existing line of marker buoys.

3. The various SSC activities are generally covered by the various Royal Yachting Association [RYA] and International Yacht Racing Rules: also the International Rules for the Prevention of Collisions at Sea. These are oriented towards safety and in any particular circumstances make it clear which vessel has right of way.

4. The existing Regulations do not apply to sailing vessels (unless obviously when under power). I am not entirely convinced that sailing dinghies and sailing boats without engines really need to be included in the new draft Regulations. I understand that SSC has already made representations along these lines

5. I am aware that there are various categories of users of the waters of Swanage Bay and in particular the inshore waters from the Beach out to the line of marker buoys (currently 300 metres offshore). These include (but not exclusively) sailing dinghies and yachts, motorboats (all sizes) and speedboats, jet skis, board sailors, kite sailors, stand up paddleboarders etc. There is also a significant variation in the speeds of the various categories of user. I understand that SSC and individual Members are making separate representations to the Council.

6. In addition there are various categories of swimmers (beginners, long distance swimmers etc) using both the inshore and offshore waters all of whom require adequate protection.

7. I acknowledge that it is an almost impossible task to cover all these widely differing categories of user in one set of Regulations but safety in my view requires that this must be done. . It may be also that it is not possible for a universal set of Regulations to be made to apply equally to other areas outside Swanage Bay.

8. I am also well aware that there has been increasing conflict on safety grounds over the years between swimmers (both inshore and offshore) and with other users. It should be noted that some motorboats, speed boats and jet skis are capable of speeds in excess of 70mph. This means obviously that (unless there is some form of speed restriction) two boats could be travelling in opposite directions at a closing speed of 140mph.

9. I consider that the only way to separate swimmers and other boat users is by continuing the existing speed limit of 5 knots in the area on the landward side of the present line of buoys. Also I consider that the proposal to reduce this area to 200 meters out from the beach (down from the existing 300 metres) is unwise and dangerous and the existing limit of 300 metres should be preserved

10. An additional general problem has been the increasing number of jet skis in Swanage Bay and in particular the piercing noise made by their engines (especially when the boat leaps into the air from a wave and the motor screams). This noise

problem obviously affects the enjoyment of all users of the beach as well as residents since the noise can be heard several hundred metres well inland.

11. In summary:-

- a. I do not think it is necessary to include sailing vessels in the draft Regulations
- b. The views of Swanage Sailing Club and Swanage Sea Rowing Club should be obtained
- c. The positioning of buoys for the applicable area should be retained at 300 metres from Swanage Beach
- d. Consideration should be given to introducing noise restriction provisions on jet skis in Swanage Bay

12. Thank you for the opportunity to comment

[Redacted]