

THE NATIONAL COASTWATCH INSTITUTION LAUNCHES THE NEW NCI LYME BAY STATION AT BURTON BRADSTOCK

At long last, after two years of negotiations, and thanks to the support provided by Burton Bradstock Parish Council for their planning application on the NCI's behalf, the National Coastwatch Institution have now opened their new NCI Lyme Bay station at Burton Cliff, the first NCI station in West Dorset.



You might perhaps ask “why is there a need for a Coastwatch Station for Lyme Bay?”

Lyme Bay is the area of the English Channel situated between Portland Bill in the East and Torbay in the West. It includes over 80 miles of coastline, all of which is very popular with holidaymakers, and a significant proportion of the coast is known as The Jurassic Coast, now designated as a World Heritage Site. There is a Coastwatch station at Portland Bill and another at Exmouth, but there is no visual coverage of the 65 miles of coastline, two harbours (at West Bay & Lyme Regis),

several anchorages, the hugely popular Dorset Coast Path, tourist beaches and Jurassic cliffs that lie between these extremities.

Small scale surveys over a two-week period during April 2009 revealed that there were almost 200 separate small boat sightings from the car park on the beach at West Bexington, and over the past two years there have been 15 serious incidents on the 6 mile stretch of the Chesil Beach itself between West Bexington and West Bay harbour.

According to both the West Bay Harbourmaster and the RNLI, maritime activity by small boats, windsurfers, and personal watercraft has been increasing significantly over the past few years, as have other potentially hazardous activities along the cliffs and beaches. This has become particularly so since the area became a designated World Heritage Site. The number of launches by the Lyme Regis ILB has risen accordingly.

Local encouragement for the proposal to establish a Coastwatch station for Lyme Bay in the vicinity of Burton Bradstock has been huge, and includes support from the local parish council chairmen, the local Tourism Association and from individuals locally such as Mary-Lou Sturridge who has provided a plot of land at Burton Cliff for the new look out. Billy Bragg and Sir Christopher Coville (Chairman of Westlands) have both offered help with local fund-raising to cover the operational costs of the new station. There are many others locally who are providing help in various ways, including serving on the local Steering Committee.

Those who are not able or do not wish to assist in a practical way can still support the NCI generally, and the NCI Lyme Bay station in particular, by becoming a member of the NCI Shorewatch scheme, by logging on to www.nci.org.uk/shorewatch

Given that the NCI is a charitable organisation relying on voluntary funding and donations, and that individual stations such as the new NCI Lyme Bay look out, depend almost entirely on locally raised funds to cover their operational and maintenance costs, we are always delighted to hear of any ideas or suggestions as

regards possible fund-raising events, or from anyone or any organisation willing to help in some way in respect to fund-raising, donations or sponsorship. If you are interested please contact William Knapman on 01308 897808 or e-mail william.knapman@nci.org.uk.

Clive Edwards

Station Manager, NCI Lyme Bay 09/11/2010