

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE SALCOMBE HARBOUR BOARD
HELD AT THE MAIN HALL, CLIFF HOUSE, SALCOMBE ON
MONDAY, 26 JANUARY 2009**

MEMBERS

* Cllr J Brazil – Chairman

* Dr C C Harling – Vice-Chairman

* Cllr J H Baverstock

* Cllr R D Gilbert

∅ Cllr M J Hicks

* Mr J Barrett

* Mr T Bass

* Mr H Marriage

∅ Mr M O'Brien

* Mr P Waring

* Denotes attendance

∅ Denotes apologies for absence

Members in attendance and participating:
Cllr P Coulson

Officers in attendance:

All Agenda Items: Head of Service (Salcombe Harbour), South Devon AONB
Estuaries Officer and Member Support Services Manager

Also in attendance:

3 members of the public

SH.37/08 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Salcombe Harbour Board held on 3 November 2008 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

SH.38/08 URGENT BUSINESS

The Chairman advised that he had agreed for two items of urgent business to be raised at the meeting. These were recorded as follows:

The Chairman made reference to the recent tragic and fatal accident on the Fish Quay, and on behalf of the Harbour Board, wished to officially send his condolences to the friends and family of Mr Nick Atfield.

Secondly, the Chairman wished to remind those present that two public meetings, as part of the consultation process on the Batson Pontoon Replacement project, were taking place on:-

- Wednesday, 28 January 2009 at 7.00pm in Quay House, Kingsbridge;
and
- Thursday, 29 January 2009 at 7.00pm in Cliff House, Salcombe.

SH.39/08 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Members were invited to declare any interests in the items of business to be considered during the course of the meeting, but none were made.

SH.40/08 **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

One member of the public wished to utilise the public question time session. His comments were recorded as follows:-

Mr Ian Drinkwater, Kingsbridge Estuary Boat Club

Mr Drinkwater highlighted the success of the boat marking sessions which the Kingsbridge Estuary Boat Club had previously run and advised that two further sessions had been arranged for Saturday, 2 May 2009 and Saturday, 16 May 2009 on the Visitors' Pontoon at Kingsbridge. The Club wished to encourage boat users to increase the security of their property and Mr Drinkwater advised that it was intended that both Wills Marine and Burfords Locksmiths would be in attendance at these upcoming sessions. Moreover, it was noted that the Police were looking at the processes undertaken by the Club to gauge whether they could be replicated elsewhere.

In reply, the Chairman of the Board wished to extend his appreciation to the work of the Club and its willing volunteers.

SH.41/08 **FEEDBACK FROM HARBOUR COMMUNITY FORUMS**

The Board received verbal update reports from the Board Members who attended the Harbour Community Forums, during which reference was made to:-

Salcombe Kingsbridge Estuary Association (SKEA)

A Board Member (who was not the representative but was in attendance at the last SKEA meeting) advised that a number of items had been raised at the last meeting and made particular reference to:

- (a) the levels of consultation being welcomed on the replacement of the Batson pontoons. In addition, members had expressed unanimous support for the retention of the two metre berth width policy and a general support for the use of piles;
- (b) support for the establishment of a working group to review the issues surrounding commercial moorings;
- (c) the view being expressed by the Forum that the RNLI contributions towards maintenance dredging were lower than desired. In reply, the Harbour Master advised that the arrangement with the RNLI was on a pro-rata basis for the quantity of additional volume of dredging to their required level of two metres below chart datum;
- (d) the request was made for dredging works to be undertaken around the new slipway pontoon;
- (e) the apparent lack of progress on the winter storage arrangements at the Creek Car Park was considered to be regrettable;
- (f) the feasibility of creating a water-skiing area in the Harbour. The Board noted that no strong favour either for or against such an area was indicated at the Forum. The Board concluded that this issue was particularly contentious and wished to be consulted with as and when the contents of the Draft Navigation Bill (which was currently being considered by Parliament) were known.

Kingsbridge Estuary Boat Club

The representative commented on the concerns of the Club with regard to the shabby state of some of the boats around the Kingsbridge area. On this issue, the Harbour Master commented that a request for removal of a boat was issued if a vessel was not deemed seaworthy. However, it was very difficult to implement any actions if a vessel was still considered to be seaworthy.

Salcombe Kingsbridge Estuary Conservation Forum

The representative advised that the Forum had held an interesting meeting on 6 November 2008, which was attended by Natural England representatives, the Harbour Master and the South Devon AONB Estuaries Officer. In addition, a University of Plymouth student had also given an interesting presentation on eelgrass.

The Forum also noted at the meeting that the National Trust was giving consideration to creating more local public access to Halwell Wood, which was felt to be very beneficial to ramblers in the area.

South Devon & Channel Shellfishermen

The representative advised that Mr Chris Venmore had stood down from his position with the Shellfishermen and was to be replaced by Mr Brian Pawley. In wishing him well in the role, the representative stated that he had met with Mr Pawley and had fully briefed him on the Fish Quay activities. It was agreed that the Chairman, on behalf of the Board, would send a letter of thanks to Mr Venmore.

The Board noted that the Shellfishermen had met on a number of occasions recently and the next meeting was arranged to take place in February 2009. The representative also highlighted that the Shellfishermen would welcome dredging works being undertaken in the Fish Quay area. Currently, Shellfishermen were having great difficulty leaving the pontoon in dinghies which, it was felt, emphasised the desperate need for the commencement of dredging works.

SH.42/08 **COMMERCIAL MOORINGS**

The Board considered a report which sought to gain its approval to increase the number of moorings within the Harbour for the Financial Year 2009/10, in order to facilitate support to the commercial boatyards during difficult economic trading conditions.

The report stated that a flexible approach by the Board would enable a more effective utilisation of a mooring asset that was already assigned to commercial usage, whilst it was not being used for its assigned purpose. There were felt to be a number of issues surrounding the allocation, use and charging of commercial moorings, which it was felt would be best addressed by a small Harbour Board Working Group.

In discussion, the following points were raised:-

- (a) In expressing their support for this initiative, a number of Members emphasised the importance of the communication process. It was felt to be critical that the communication process reiterated that the proposal would be a one-off;
- (b) Due to the finite number of moorings available at the harbour, the view was expressed that any commercial enterprises who were factoring into their business plan a wish for increased moorings, would need to revisit their proposals as this would not be possible;
- (c) It was agreed that Cllr Baverstock and Messrs Barrett, Harling and Waring be appointed to the proposed Working Group.

RESOLVED

1. That a minor exception to the current moorings policy be approved to allow the creation of twelve additional moorings for 2009/10 and to allocate them for commercial purposes; and
2. That a Working Group (comprising of Cllr Baverstock and Messrs Barrett, Harling and Waring) be established to review the issues surrounding commercial moorings (as detailed in paragraph 6 of the presented agenda report) and, if so advised, make recommendations to the Board for changes in policy.

SH.43/08 CONSERVANCY DUTIES – MAINTENANCE DREDGING

The Board considered a report which sought to ultimately gain approval for the expenditure of Harbour Reserves to fulfil the Harbour Authority's conservancy responsibilities for maintaining the charted depth within Batson Creek.

The report advised that it was a statutory duty of the Harbour Authority to both maintain a safe harbour and not cause any environmental damage. Such associated duties included recording accurate survey data, maintaining the charted depth of the channel by maintenance dredging and responsibility for environmental stewardship.

It was noted that the cost of maintenance dredging by removing the silt from the estuary to a licensed disposal site outside the estuary had proven to be extremely expensive and unaffordable under the current harbour dues structure. Water Injection / Agitation Dredging offered an affordable and sustainable alternative, which did not require a disposal licence but did require the assent of Natural England. Natural England had stipulated within their assent that the process needed to be closely monitored to ensure there were minimal environmental implications.

In discussion, reference was made to:-

- (a) the involvement of Natural England. In light of the requirements prescribed by Natural England, some Members questioned whether the organisation was prepared to financially support these works. In reply, officers advised that the statutory obligation was on the Harbour Authority, due to the location being defined as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). Therefore, Natural England was not prepared to financially assist the project;
- (b) the importance of turbidity limits being set for both level and time span was stressed;

- (c) background information relating to Ecospan Environmental Ltd. Members were assured that Ecospan was an independent environmental advisor and had no associations or links with the University of Plymouth;
- (d) recognition of the risk involved with the project. If these works were not successful, the Board acknowledged that there was a risk involved, whereby the £34,000 Environmental Monitoring costs would still be incurred. However, Members realised that these works had to be undertaken and were assured that the Harbour Authority had done everything possible to minimise the risk. Furthermore, a Member had come into contact with representatives from Van Oord and was comforted that the works would constitute a low risk;
- (e) the Board wished to extend its gratitude to the Harbour Master for all his efforts in being able to reach this conclusion on what had been a difficult issue to resolve.

RECOMMENDED

That Council be **RECOMMENDED** that:-

1. Maintenance dredging be conducted using the Water Agitation / Injection method; and
2. Up to £70,000 be allocated from reserves to conduct maintenance dredging and the associated environmental monitoring.

SH.44/08 **PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT**

The Board considered a report which highlighted the Harbour's performance against agreed Performance Indicators (PIs).

The PIs illustrated that visitor numbers, and the associated income derived from visiting yachtsman, continued to be a concern. To address this adverse trend, a range of promotions and discounts had been approved (minute SH.43/07 below refers) for the 2008/09 season. However, it was still too early to make any assessments of these promotions and their impact on visitor numbers. Furthermore, the affects of the removal of the derogation on red diesel and the economic downturn could have longer term implications on the future of Salcombe.

In discussion, reference was made to:-

- (a) the Visiting Yacht Nights. The significant increase in Visiting Yacht Nights in the third quarter (in comparison to 2007/08) was welcomed by the Board. Members felt that this illustrated that the concessionary charging policy was paying dividends and such an increase was of benefit to the local economy;
- (b) the increase in crime. In acknowledging that an increase in marine crime was a national phenomenon and further incidents were likely to be unreported, the Board felt that the trend was disappointing. A Member was requested, on behalf of the Board, to highlight the problem at an upcoming Police Liaison meeting. The view was also expressed that information regarding the actual number of offenders committing this crime would be a more useful indication of the scale of the problem, than the number of incidents reported. To increase awareness amongst harbour users, a Member also questioned whether reference to crime prevention could be included in the documentation sent out by the Harbour Office;
- (c) concern regarding the water quality indicator. Some Members expressed their disappointment at the apparent lack of progress made in respect of improving water quality. Moreover, it was felt to be paramount to the Harbour Authority that suitable local beaches were in possession of blue flags as a matter of course. Therefore, the Board requested that the Estuaries Officer compile a letter to the Environment Agency (for signature by the Chairman) outlining its concerns on this matter, with a progress report being presented to the next Board meeting;
- (d) litter pick up events. The Board was advised that a local resident had volunteered to be a Beach Clean Co-ordinator and it was hoped that she could encourage greater local support for such events.

RESOLVED

That the Harbour Performance against agreed Performance Indicators be noted.

SH.45/08 PORT MARINE SAFETY CODE

A report was considered which sought to appraise the Board on the Salcombe Harbour Authorities' compliance with the Port Marine Safety Code (PMSC).

The report highlighted that Salcombe Harbour was currently compliant with the requirements of the PMSC. Maintaining a safe harbour, operating an effective safety management system and ultimately compliance with the PMSC was essential if Salcombe Harbour was to continue to be a safe place for harbour users to enjoy and work from. Continuing to satisfy the requirements of the PMSC required constant work and attention from all Harbour Authority personnel and stakeholders.

With regard to the consumption of alcohol, some Members felt that it should be borne in mind that reference to this matter should be included in the next published Harbour Guide. As an aside, the Harbour Master advised that new signage had been ordered for the harbour which emphasised the 'Don't Drink and Sail' message.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

SH.46/08 **TOPICAL HARBOUR ISSUES**

Consideration was given to a report which updated the Board on the progress made against a number of operational projects within Salcombe Harbour.

During discussion, reference was made to:-

- (a) Duchy of Cornwall Lease Negotiations. The Harbour Master confirmed that the Duchy had now set up a direct leasing arrangement with Winters Marine. In reflection of previously raised concerns by the Board, the Chairman informed that he had been given assurances by the Duchy that this arrangement was a one-off;
- (b) the piling of pontoons. Board Members stated that the visual impact of all piles on the harbour should be minimised.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

(Meeting commenced at 2.30 pm and concluded at 4.15 pm).

Chairman