

Salcombe Harbour Board – 3 November 2008**SALCOMBE YACHT TAXI****Report of Head of Service Salcombe Harbour****Statutory Powers: Pier and Harbour Order (Salcombe) Confirmation Act 1954**

Financial Implications: There are no direct financial implications.

Purpose

To appraise Members of the cost of operating a Yacht Taxi Service.

The Harbour Board's activities support the South Hams objectives for good jobs (CP2), retention of the district's character (CP3), an accessible council (CP5) and value for money (CP6).

Recommendations**That the Harbour Board resolves to:**

- a. **continue to operate the yacht taxi service;**
- b. **continue to provide an evening service to East Portlemouth from May to September, but noting that the service is dependent on suitable operating conditions; and**
- c. **Improve the level of service provided by the yacht taxi during the shoulder months of March, April, September and October by increasing the operating budget and seeking a partner.**

Background

1. Salcombe Harbour operates a yacht taxi service, and has done so for many years. The yacht taxi vessels are licensed by the District Council to carry up to 12 passengers and the helms require a District Council Boatman's Licence.
2. This service was introduced to improve the access to and from the town for yachtsmen and to improve safety. Tender journeys in the dark with strong tidal flows represent a high risk of drowning, providing a regular, reliable and affordable yacht taxi service mitigates this risk to an acceptable level. An efficient yacht taxi service also reduces the reliance on tenders and therefore reduces the requirement for tenders to be parked on the town pontoons. Finally, without a yacht taxi service, many visitors would not visit Salcombe.
3. During the development of the Strategic Business Plan in 2006/07 it was acknowledged that, because Salcombe has no alongside berthing, access to and from moorings needs to be efficient and that the water/yacht taxi has a fundamental role to play in this task. It was also highlighted under Objective "To provide a first class service to residents and visitors" the operation of the Water Taxi Service would be reviewed.

4. **Taxi Operating Hours, Manning and level of Service.**

Time period	Operating Hours	Manning	Level of Service
Mid September to Easter	Weekdays from 0900 to 1615 Weekends from 0900 to 1100	Duty Boatman	Taxi on call, schedule trips at 0900, 1100, 1400 and 1600
Easter Weekend	0830 to 2200	Permanent Staff Overtime	One taxi with capability to provide 2 for short periods
Easter to Early May Bank Holiday	Weekdays from 0900 to 1615 Weekends from 0900 to 1100	Duty Boatman	One taxi on call
May Bank Holiday July	0800 to 2300	Three Seasonal Staff augmented by permanent staff	One taxi with capability to provide 2 at busy periods
July to Day after August Bank Holiday	0800 to 2300	Four Seasonal Staff augmented by Seasonal Patrol and permanent staff	One taxi from 0800 to 1600 and two taxis from 1600 to 2300 with capability to surge to 2 during the day and 3 during the evening
Day after August Bank Holiday to Mid September	0800-2200	Three Seasonal Staff and duty Boatman	One taxi with capability to provide 2 at busy periods

5. The provision of the taxi service is fragile in the early and late season between Easter and the early May Bank Holiday and after mid September, particularly at weekends if the weather is fine. Improving the service at these times, within existing resources, would not be possible.
6. The staff have been directed to strive to keep waiting times for a taxi to fifteen minutes or less. There are times when this is difficult to achieve, usually because of surges in demand combined with a requirement to service a fare north of Tosnos Point or to the top of Southpool Creek. During these occasions it is necessary to flex other staff into taxi service. Changes to staff working patterns during 2008 improved the taxi flexibility but with some further changes to permanent and seasonal staff shift patterns, additional taxi capacity could be generated.

7. **Taxi Fares.** The Taxi charges are set as follows:

Zone	Single Fare	Concession Fare when sold in Books of 20 Tickets
Off the Town	£1.50	£20 - £1.00/fare
The Bag and Southpool Creek	£2.00	£30 - £1.50/fare
Above Tosnos Point	£3.00	£40 - £2.00/fare

8. The concession fares were introduced in 2007 and have proved to be popular with residents and visiting yachts with large crews. The Board introduced the concession tickets in an attempt to address the overall value for money for a yacht visiting Salcombe, to encourage residents to use the taxi in preference to a tender, thus reducing the tender berthing problem at Whitestrand, and to generally encourage more use of the taxi. The taxi fares have been at their current level for the past four years and have been kept at the same level for 2009/10.

9. **East Portlemouth.** As a service to the public, the Taxi Service has run to and from East Portlemouth on the hour after the East Portlemouth Ferry has finished for the evening, providing bookings have been made in advance for fares from the East Portlemouth side of the Estuary. There have been problems maintaining this service for the following reasons:

- Strong winds, wind over tide results in a short steep wave which makes approaching ferry landing dangerous
- The Harbour launches are not designed to land on the ferry slip. With High freeboard and a bilge keel it is difficult to get close enough to the slip for passengers to step safely on and off
- At night there is inadequate lighting to see the landing safely
- The passengers are invariably not maritime orientated and struggle to embark and disembark from the taxi, particularly when they are returning after an evening out
- There are no cleats to secure too
- Leaving the ferry slip is more dangerous than when approaching. The stern has a tendency to be swept over the slipway by the strong tides causing damage to propellers, propeller shafts and gear box drive couplings
- Strong tides, even in fair weather conditions there can be up to four knots of tide running perpendicular to the slipway which makes the approach and departure extremely hazardous

Yacht Taxi Operating Costs

10. The following costs are taken for a twelve month period, based on actual costs incurred in financial year 2008/09 from April to September for two dedicated taxi launches, augmented by a third vessel.

Item	Cost	Remarks
Permanent Staff time	2,640	Maintenance and Administration
Seasonal Staff	15,163	4 dedicated seasonal taxi drivers
Launch Maintenance	1,649	Parts and materials
Fuel	3,411	2 dedicated launches plus 50% of third launches fuel consumption
Depreciation of Launches	2,000	For 2 launches, launch life 20 years
Depreciation of Launch Engines	2,000	Engine life 5 years
Staff Training	500	Recruiting medicals and induction
Boatman's Licence	320	4 dedicated seasonal taxi drivers
Boat Licensing	54	2 launches
Harbour Dues	90	2 launches
Mooring	844	2 launches
Whitestrand Landing Fee	3,067	2 launches
Security Charge	101	2 launches
Staff Personal Protective Equipment, clothing and waterproofs	400	For 4 seasonal staff
Insurance	2,995	2 launches
Boat Winter Storage	762	2 launches
Printing and Stationary	500	Tickets
Taxi Mobile Telephone	100	
Total	36,596	

Yacht Taxi Income

11. The Yacht Taxi income in Pounds over the last three years, broken down by month was:

	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
2006	1,373	3,875	7,107	7,967	11,329	2,148	247	95				
2007	1,981	4,738	4,865	8,378	12,290	3,496	637	17	0	16	60	353
2008	185	5,255	6,640	9,067	12,255	2,058	Estimate 1,000					

	Total	Projection
2006	£34,141	
2007	£36,831	
2008		£36,460

12. Taxi income fluctuates throughout the year and closely aligns to the holiday seasons. This seasonality is clearly evident by April 2008 income being adversely affected by the fact that Easter was in March. The last two weeks in July and August, the tourist high season, is clearly the busiest period for the taxi service.

Proposals

13. The efficient operation of the Yacht Taxi Service in Salcombe is fundamental to the safety of visiting yachtsmen and for the viability of the harbour. It is therefore considered essential that the Harbour Authority continue to ensure a service is provided at a cost¹ that delivers value for money.
14. The future of the taxi service to East Portlemouth after the East Portlemouth ferry has finished for the evenings should be considered.
15. Change permanent and Seasonal staff shift patterns to generate additional taxi capacity to cope with surges in demand throughout the main season.
16. Increase resources to provide an improved taxi service in the early and late season, the shoulder months of March, April, September and October. This could be achieved by one, all or a combination of the following:
 - Increased operating budget
 - to enable permanent staff to operate the taxi in the evenings and or at weekends
 - to Increase staff levels, maintaining a bank of casual staff who could work if and when required
 - Partner with another operator

Risk Assessment

Risk/Opportunity	Issues / Obstacles	Benefits
The Harbour Authority Operates the Yacht Taxi Service.	The level of service is could be improved. The service should be cost effective.	Having control of the service enables level of service and end to end value for money to be maintained.
There are no human rights issues within this report.		

Conclusion

17. The Salcombe Harbour Yacht Taxi service is:
 - fundamental to the operation and viability of the Harbour
 - cost neutral to operate
 - and could be improved with additional resources

Ian Gibson
Head of Service Salcombe Harbour

Salcombe Harbour Board
3 November 2008

¹ One night for a 10 metre boat in a Marina with walk ashore access in Dartmouth £23.50 + £6.50 Harbour Dues (Total cost £30.00). Cost of a deep water mooring in Salcombe £18.00. If a crew of 4 off the town go ashore once the cost of the night visit rises to £30.00 or £34.00 in the Bag.