

Salcombe Harbour Board – 4 October 2005**TOPICAL HARBOUR ISSUES****Report of the Salcombe Harbour Master**

Statutory Powers: The Pier and Harbour Order (Salcombe) Confirmation Act 1954

Financial Implications: None

Purpose

This report informs members of any interesting current, or future issues, that may affect Salcombe Harbour Board and Salcombe Harbour Kingsbridge Estuary. This report links to the Council's Aim which is 'to improve the well being of the people of the South Hams'.

Recommendation

That the Board notes the Report

The Issues**Municipal Ports Review**

1. A draft document from the Department for Transport has been circulated to Port Managers for their comment. At the annual British Ports Association conference to be held this year in Shoreham from 4th – 8th October 2005, a meeting is scheduled between the DFT and Members of the BPA Municipal Ports Working Party to discuss the draft document. It is anticipated that following this meeting and agreement by the LGA and the ODPM's office, that a final document may at last emerge.
2. The Harbour Master will be attending the BPA conference and the proposed meeting and hopefully, will be in an informed position to advise the Board with regard to any further developments at the November meeting.

Harbour Guide

3. The Harbour Master is delighted to inform the Board that English Nature, have agreed to provide £10,000 towards the development of next year's Harbour Guide and an enhanced Salcombe Harbour website. Additional external £1000 European funding is also being sourced through the AONB Unit and next year's Harbour Guide will be more comprehensive in its content, with a significant new environmental section based on the grant funding. This is an exciting opportunity not only to provide the resident and visitor with more information about the estuary, but after several years of aspiring to a new "on the water" estuary leaflet, we now hope to be able to enrich the Harbour Guide with the additional information, ranging from visitor management, to encouraging a greater environmental awareness and proactive conservation of the Estuary.

4. If any Members of the Board wish to contribute any articles, or in any other way towards the publication of next year's Harbour Guide, the Harbour Master would be delighted to hear from any interested volunteers.

Visitor Statistics

5. For the period 1st April to 31st August 2005, a total of 9,014 yacht nights has been recorded. Last year over 1,000 yacht nights were recorded for the months of September and October, but this cannot be guaranteed on an annual basis due to the unpredictable weather patterns.
6. Although the arrival rate of visiting yachts to the Salcombe Kingsbridge Estuary by 31st March 2006 should reach 10,000 yacht nights, it will not be close to levels achieved in previous years. The Harbour Master has consulted other leading leisure ports in the South-West who report mixed fortunes so far this year.
7. In Salcombe's case, the Harbour Master considers the main factors are six fold:-
 - Market Trend – down turn in foreign traffic
 - Weather Patterns
 - Visitor charges – upper end of market sustainability
 - Level of night-time anti-social behaviour in close proximity to the main landing points, eg Whitestrand
 - Lack of facilities ashore for visiting yachtsmen that now includes the purchasing of general provisions
 - Fuel Costs
 - Larger visiting boats, especially motor boats that are more self-sufficient are spending longer periods in the Harbour.

Estuary Users Community Safety Survey 2005

8. The Board approved a Survey to be conducted seeking views and comments from estuary users on their experiences and perceptions of marine crime, marine safety and anti-social behaviour on and around the Salcombe Harbour Kingsbridge Estuary. The survey form was designed to gain views on measures in place and comments on their effectiveness (SH.45/04).
9. The Board instructed the Harbour Master to progress the arrangements. The survey form was compiled in consultation with the Police Research Officer, the Council's Community Safety and Emergency Planning Officer and the Chairman of the Salcombe Kingsbridge Estuary Association. Forms were distributed to all resident contract holders by post, whilst visitors have received forms distributed from the Harbour Office, staff afloat and from the Boat Park at Batson.
10. The deadline for the survey forms was 16th September 2005 and at the time of writing this report, 1,200 returns have been received. All forms arriving before the deadline will be part of the analysis that will be undertaken by the Police Research Officer, for the Board's consideration at the November meeting.

11. Early indications from the survey indicate that users would like to see more resources put towards the three key themes of marine crime, marine safety and initiatives to combat anti-social behaviour.

Port Marine Safety Code

12. The Salcombe Harbour Board Safe Management System in compliance with the Port Marine Safety Code, has been reviewed and audited by the Harbour Master and the Board's designated person, Peter Nicholson Consultants. A letter of compliance has been received.
13. The Maritime Coastguard Agency (MCA) as from this year, has taken over the responsibility from the DFT for monitoring compliance with the code. The MCA have invited all duty holders to make a declaration advising the MCA that they are compliant. The deadline for this declaration was 1st September 2005, and the Chairman of the Board has written to the MCA acknowledging our compliance.

Slipway Management

14. At the Harbour Board on 25th January 2005, an informal working group set up by the Board to review the management of the slipway at Batson reported their findings and the Harbour Board recommended a number of initiatives to improve safety (SH.28/04 and SH.36/04).
15. In general terms, the feedback from customers using the Boat Park, both residents and visitors has been generally good, with the feeling that the initiatives recommended by the Board have brought about improvements to customer service.
16. New guidelines imposing time limits and an exclusive area set aside for washing and preparation, has relieved congestion on the slipway. With specific reference to slipway management the sub-division of the slipway during peak periods, although effective to a point, needs a more substantial system to be designed and installed.
17. The Harbour Master recommends that the informal working party is re-convened to discuss general boat parking issues and the management of the slipway in more detail and report any findings back to a later Board.

South Pool

18. Earlier in the year the behaviour of harbour users using South Pool Creek was the subject of some concern and discussion by the Board. In general terms, the Harbour staff and Night Security Patrol can report an improvement in general behaviour and navigation, although there is still work to be done to ensure that peace and tranquility in that area is secured.

Lincombe Boatyard

19. The Harbour Office has been informed that the dredging and reclamation project at Lincombe Boatyard will commence towards the end of September 2005, having obtained all the necessary statutory consents and permissions.

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

Salcombe Kingsbridge Estuary Environmental Management Plan Review

20. The review process has now formally finished and the background information document was presented to the Salcombe Kingsbridge Estuary Conservation Forum at their last meeting. The actions and maps document is presently with the Membership of the Forum to allow the individual organisations time to consider and show their support in formally endorsing the plan. These organisations are listed within the front cover. It is envisaged that there will be a formal presentation of the action plan, to the Forum and local community in the autumn.

Salcombe Kingsbridge Estuary Underwater Film Project

21. Members of the Harbour Board were shown a pilot film snippet of the underwater film. Progress is not as swift as we would have hoped, but it must be remembered that the film is almost entirely dependant on both the weather and the availability of volunteer divers. In August the BBC's local Inside Out programme spent a day with the underwater film crew. They took footage of the underwater film crew filming one of the rich habitats of the estuary, namely the eel grass beds. They were investigating possible factors affecting the health and condition of the beds. The piece of footage is due to be broadcast on BBC1's Inside Out programme on Monday 19th September at 7.30.

English Nature Survey of Eel Grass Beds and Underwater Habitats

22. During the month of September and October, various underwater surveys of the estuary's habitats have been commissioned by English Nature. The surveys will involve some mapping of their extents and act as a health check for their condition.

Eel Grass Conservation

23. The extent of the eel grass beds will be re-mapped by the English Nature survey that has already been commissioned and it is hoped that this will identify areas of growth or erosion. The Marine Conservation Officer is very pleased to note that there is already a new spread of eel grass into the north of South Sands and east of North Sands. The Foreshore Owners Association have been contacted, to ask for their support in conserving both their areas of eel grass and the equally biologically rich foreshore above. Previous expectations that the seaflex mooring system will not be realised as we have recently learnt that the system will only work effectively in deeper waters and we are still looking for other options.

Estuary Gardening Cord Grass Control

24. There has been a recent spread of an alien species of cord grass within several of the estuary's areas of saltmarsh. The Marine Conservation Officer has researched the issue and consulted with English Nature about its control and we intend to remove areas of this grass in the autumn with the help of local volunteers. Further monitoring will be required and it is envisaged that several such gardening events will be required over the forthcoming years. Cord Grass is one of the many alien species found now within the estuary, but one of the very few that can be managed and controlled effectively or sustainably.

South Hams Area of Outstanding Nature Beauty Grant

25. We have applied for a grant from the South Devon AONB for several sustainability projects, namely, an interpretation plan, the enhancement of the Harbour Guide and an Estuary Enhancement of the Port Waste Management Plan. The interpretation plan would have involved a close look at the present quality and condition of all interpretation around the estuary, seeking where these may be enhanced. Part of this is investigating a new scheme of a self-discovery coded post scheme, a scheme that was mentioned to the Harbour Board some two years ago. The scheme proposal would need to be discussed and supported by the various parish and town councils. We will be investigating the further enhancement of the plan, by enabling on the water recycling of waterborne waste.
26. The AONB board met last Friday night to consider the grant applications received and Salcombe has been granted an amount of £9500.00 ex Vat towards the waste recycling scheme, but did not feel that the Interpretation Plan was the kind of project which they should be funding at this time. However we are to have further meetings to discuss other funding options with them.
27. The enhancement of the Harbour Guide will also receive some additional £1000.00 from another European fund.

Avon Estuary Siltation Study

28. It is worthy of note that the Avon Estuary community, have secured a significant sum of money to commission a series of siltation studies investigating the shallowing of the estuary, the source of the siltation and possible future mitigation management.

Stephen Tooke
Harbour Master

Salcombe Harbour Board
4 October 2005

Nigel Mortimer
Conservation Officer

Background Documents

SH.45/04, SH.28/04 and SH.36/04