

SALCOMBE HARBOUR BOARD - 8 November 2005**REPLACEMENT OF HOUSEBOATS****Report of The Salcombe Harbour Master****Statutory Powers: The Pier and Harbour Order (Salcombe) Confirmation Act 1954****Financial Implications: None****Purpose**

The purpose of the report is to inform Members that the Harbour Master has received from the Salcombe Houseboat Company a proposal to replace the current fleet of houseboats located in the Bag. In compliance with the Salcombe Harbour Board Policy document (LR.86 and SH.48/81a) a Board decision is requested.

The content of this report links to the Councils' Aim which is - 'to improve the well being of the people of the South Hams'.

RECOMMENDATION**That the Board RESOLVES to:-**

- 1. approve the replacement of the Houseboat Fleet with the type of vessel requested**
- 2. that in future the maximum number of houseboats owned by the Salcombe Houseboat Company moored in the Estuary is seven**
- 3. to amend the Salcombe Harbour Board Policy Document accordingly**

Background

1. Houseboats first appeared on the Estuary in 1924 with a vessel named 'Iverna'. Prior to the Second World War, the popularity of houseboats began to grow with thirteen vessels appearing in total. Post Second World War, any number of houseboats was moored on the Estuary and some of the existing fleet date back to this era. Some sixty years ago, the Salcombe Houseboat Company began trading and in the 1980's, the future of houseboats on the Salcombe Kingsbridge Estuary was considered in detail by the Salcombe Harbour Board. The Board agreed a number of conditions for houseboats that are set out in the Salcombe Harbour Policy Document.

2. With regard to a maximum number and any upgrade or replacement of houseboats, the following conditions apply:-
 - “Whilst there shall be no increase allowed in the number of houseboats in Salcombe Harbour, replacements be permitted as hulls become uneconomic to maintain, or obsolete – subject to the design of replacements being first approved by the Harbour Board”
 - “The number of houseboats shall not exceed ten”

The Issues

3. The Houseboats have offered many visitors to the estuary a unique holiday experience, and this has benefited the economy of Salcombe. Most visitors holidaying on the houseboats return year on year to enjoy the peace and tranquillity of The Bag.
4. The condition of the houseboats on the whole has now reached the point where replacement is essential for the company to remain economically viable. Over the last year or so the Harbour Master has been approached by the Houseboat Company with a number of options for replacement vessels and it is only now with this recent proposal does the Harbour Master believe that the Board may consider the style of replacement acceptable in such a sensitive location.
5. The current fleet of houseboats is eight in number that are moored fore and aft on Council owned moorings. The company would like replacement craft larger than the average length of the current fleet therefore the Board may, if they wish to give approval, consider reducing the maximum number of moorings down to seven so that the status quo in terms of allocated mooring space is retained. The Board can therefore delete one mooring allocated to the Houseboat Company whilst retaining the same length overall originally assigned to the Company.
6. The Chairman of the Board and the Harbour Master met with the owner of the Houseboat Company to further understand his requirements and to impress on the owner the Board’s feelings following this year’s annual inspection. The houseboat company heard that the Board was reluctant to support the type of replacement vessel as it appeared to offer users the opportunity to disturb the peace and tranquillity in The Bag. The owner confirmed that users will be required to enter into a contract with the houseboat company which will include a clause stating that should users cause disturbance then the company will take appropriate action. Furthermore the Council can manage a potential situation through the Salcombe Harbour Kingsbridge Estuary bye law No. 33 which states:-

‘No person shall within the harbour commit a nuisance of any kind on or against any property of the council or write or display or cause to be written or displayed in the harbour, obscene or offensive words or material on any vessel, houseboat, notice-board, building, property or goods’.
7. The Houseboat Company were asked to submit a project brief to further advise the Board of the preferred vessel that they wish the Board to consider to replace their fleet. The brief has been distributed to members by post prior to today’s meeting.

8. The houseboats are constructed out of aluminium, built in America, with the average length overall of 15 metres. The proposal has a significant environmental benefit to the estuary as the houseboat company has agreed to fit sewage holding tanks to any new vessel. Unlike now, where effluent is discharged directly into the estuary, the waste will be collected using the Harbour Authorities waste reception facilities.
9. During the annual inspection, Members were reminded by the Harbour Master that the houseboat fleet was repositioned last year in anticipation of the re-organisation of the Residents pontoons that was approved by the Board at the last meeting. The ground tackle is already in place to meet the requirements of this proposal and therefore it has no financial implication to the Board.
10. A Board decision is required so that, if approval is given the houseboat company may place their first order in time for the first new houseboats to arrive and be in place for spring next year. The Company wish to replace the vessels as part of a rolling programme over an 18 month, to two-year period.

Risk Assessment

Risk	Mitigation
Non-replacement of craft means loss of houseboat business	Board approval to replace houseboat fleet
Un-seaworthy vessels on Council-owned moorings	Replacement of craft before they become un-seaworthy
Noise from houseboats	Enforce Byelaws

Conclusion

11. The Salcombe Houseboat Company have a long history of providing a unique holiday experience in The Bag and should the Board agree their replacement with their preferred vessel, then this will secure this experience for many years to come.

Stephen Tooke
Harbour Master

Salcombe Harbour Board
8th November 2005

Paula Brooks
Strategic Director (Operations)

Background Documents:

Salcombe Harbour Board Policy Document
LR. 86/76 and SH. 48/81(a)