

**Salcombe Harbour Board – 20 March 2007****SAFETY IMPROVEMENTS FOR WHITESTRAND PONTOON AND THE DINGHY RACING FREE FAIRWAY****Report of Head of Service Salcombe Harbour****Statutory Powers: Pier and Harbour Order (Salcombe) Confirmation Act 1954**

**Financial Implications:** The proposed changes to the operation of Whitestrand Pontoon will raise additional income which will finance the supervision of the Pontoon. There are no additional cost implications to the operation of the dinghy racing free fairway over the current arrangements.

**Purpose**

To report the results of the public consultation and agree revised arrangements for the operation of Whitestrand Pontoon and the Dinghy Racing Free Fairway for implementation during 2007.

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

- a. **Note stakeholders comments received during public consultation.**
- b. **Endorse the proposed revised arrangements for the operation of Whitestrand Pontoon and the Dinghy Racing Free Fairway.**

**Background**

1. In order to address safety issues raised during the annual Port Marine Safety Code Audit, the Harbour Board produced a number of proposals which were published for public consultation, with a closing date of 28 February 2007. The detailed comments from the consultation are at Appendix 1.

**Whitestrand Pontoon**

2. The proposals to improve safety and the operation of Whitestrand Pontoon were:
  - a. Charging for overnight berthing on Whitestrand Pontoon and the surrounding area of foreshore during the months of July and August. In addition to their harbour dues, craft berthed overnight (between 2359 and 0900) would be required, to pay a single standard mooring charge of £25 for the entire period (i.e. July and August) and to display clearly the sticker which will be issued to them.

- b. Improving the Harbour Authority's management of Whitestrand by increasing the staff presence. This would be financed by the overnight berthing charge.
  - c. Enforcing the £100 tow away and recovery charge for illegally berthed tenders and vessels not displaying an overnight charge sticker.
  - d. Discounting water taxi fares and improving the reliability of the service to provide a viable alternative to individual tenders. Water taxi fares will remain at 2006 rates for tickets purchased individually with a discount for tickets purchased in books of 20 trips. For example: 20 single trips to a mooring off the town would cost £30 but it is proposed that a book of 20 trips will be sold for a discounted rate of £20.
3. A total of 18 responses were received in respect of the proposals for the operation of Whitestrand. The feedback from the public consultation for the immediate changes to the operation of Whitestrand were generally supportive, although many thought that the measures would not reduce the number of boats and improve safety because the charge was set too low. It was pointed out that the Harbour Board endorsed setting the charges at £25/week for visitors and £25/month for residents (SH18/06). There was also concern that there were no alternatives to Whitestrand and, having paid for overnight berthing, customers would have an expectation of a place to berth.
4. All of the comments made are valid and the fact that one set of measures is not going to resolve the issue of overcrowding has been reinforced. Members will be aware that the published measures were much less restrictive than the original proposals, and that this was a conscious decision because of the problems that would arise from restricting numbers when there is no viable alternative and customers not having been made aware of the changes early enough to make alternative arrangements. Any changes made for the forthcoming season must be viewed as a first step and further measures will be introduced each year.
5. Having taken note of the public feedback it is recommended that the measures are introduced as detailed in the consultation document but with the charges increased to the level agreed on 24 October 2006 (SH 24/10), i.e. £25/week for visitors and £25/month for residents as opposed to £25 for the entire period (July and August).
4. Public feedback on longer term improvements to resolving the Whitestrand overcrowding included the following suggestions, which Members may wish to consider within the strategic planning process for future capital projects:
  - a. Restricting the size of vessels berthing to 3m.
  - b. An offshore pontoon serviced by a shuttle taxi.
  - c. Prohibiting vessels with all over covers.
  - d. Separate facilities for visitors and residents.
  - e. Increasing the length of Normandy Pontoon.
  - f. Additional pontoon facilities at Batson and Cliff House Gardens.
  - g. Restore and enhance the Ferry Pier for commercial operators.
  - h. Dredging to improve all states of the tide access.
  - i. Additional slipway at Batson.
  - j. Improved Water Taxi service.

- k. Pay and display from ticket machine.
- l. An additional commercial landing in Shadycombe.
- m. Utilise boatyards to manage tenders and collection of parking dues with incentives for efficient use of Whitestrand.
- n. Introduce a weekly ticket for Whitestrand.

### **Dinghy Racing Free Fairway**

- 5. The proposals to improve safety and the operation of the Dinghy Racing Free Fairway were:
  - a. The Harbour Authority will in future control the establishment and disestablishment of an additional temporary fairway during dinghy racing along the western shore of the harbour. Dinghies which are racing will be prohibited from entering this channel from the moment of their 5-minute signal until the fairway has been taken out of use or they have finished their race.
  - b. The racing dinghy free fairway's limits will be from 50°14'.01N 003°46'.02W to 50°14'.2N 003°45'.8W. It is proposed to leave the southern coordinate of this fairway unchanged but move the northern limit to the north or the deep water channel into Batson Creek. This should improve safety by keeping racing dinghies east of the line of fairway buoys and therefore clear of the extremely busy section of water at the entrance to Batson Creek where vessels converge from all directions.
  - c. When the racing dinghy free fairway is in operation,
    - (i) It will be marked from its northern to southern limits by yellow buoys with a yellow X top mark at the northern and southern limits.
    - (ii) The Harbour Authority will broadcast the fact that the racing dinghy free fairway is in operation on VHF#14.
    - (iii) Salcombe Yacht Club will illuminate a yellow flashing light on their watch house.
  - d. The racing dinghy free fairway will normally be in operation from five minutes before the start of the first race start to five minutes after the start of the last race. Once all the races are underway and the racing dinghies have spread out across the estuary, there is no need to continue to separate racing dinghies from other vessels using the harbour and the racing dinghy free fairway will be discontinued.
  - e. Because it is not as deep as the centre of the channel and may not be deep enough at low water for some vessels wishing to use it, the racing dinghy free fairway will not be established two hours either side of low water when the predicted tidal height at low water is less than 1.5m. On such occasions when the harbour is busy and there are a large number of dinghies racing, Salcombe Yacht Club will either reschedule the race start or use a committee boat start.

- f. The racing dinghy free fairway will not be shortened in future since changing the limits introduces an element of doubt and uncertainty and so increases the risk of collision.
  - g. Throughout the season the operation of the racing dinghy free fairway will be monitored and the effectiveness of the new measures will be assessed. As part of that assessment, it would be appreciated if, in addition to reporting all collisions (Salcombe Harbour Bye-law 14, Notification of all collisions), mariners would report any near misses to the Harbour Office.
6. A total of 14 responses were received in respect of the proposals for a dinghy racing fairway. Feedback from the public consultation was extremely supportive of the proposals. Additional suggestions were to:
- a. Extend the Dinghy Racing Free Fairway south to the vicinity of the Blackstone.
  - b. Maintain the additional fairway throughout the duration of the race.
  - c. Limit the number of competitors.
  - e. Establish an exclusion zone around the East Portlemouth landing.
  - f. Impose sanctions on persistent offenders.
  - g. Educate participants in collision regulations.
7. Having reviewed the public feedback, it is proposed to implement the changes as published in the consultation document with some additional clarification to paragraph 5.d. above. The duration the additional fairway is in operation will normally be from 5 minutes before the first race until 5 minutes after the last race start unless the Harbour Master assess the density of racing dinghies warrants the Dinghy Racing Free Fairway remaining in force. The point is that it will be positively controlled.

## **Review**

8. It will be important to review the success or otherwise of any changes to current operating practices during the 2007 season which will allow further measures to be implemented prior to the 2008 season.

## **Value for Money**

9. There is a risk that some customers will perceive the introduction of berthing charges at Whitestrand as just another way to raise revenue. It is important to dispel this and emphasise the safety implications of doing nothing and that this is the first step in a strategy to improve access to Salcombe from the water.

## Risk Assessment

Risk	Mitigation
The Harbour Authority is not delivering a satisfactory service to harbour users.	The Harbour Board, through its contact with harbour Community Forums will monitor the stakeholders' reaction to the service provided and amend the Strategic Business Plan to remain relevant.
Customers will think that the changes to Whitestrand management are only to raise additional income.	It needs to be clarified that this is part of a long term strategy to improve safety and access to Salcombe.
The Harbour Board fails to comply with its statutory responsibilities.	Continuous monitoring will highlight potential issues early to enable corrective action to be taken.
Health and safety.	Harbour staff adheres to a training plan audited by the Harbour Board's Port Marine Safety Code independent advisor on an annual basis. All the proposals are ultimately designed to improve Safety for harbour users.

## Conclusion

5. The public consultation was supportive of the proposals and with a few minor adjustments the proposed changes to the operation of Whitestrand should provide a sound basis for starting the process of improving safety and enabling better access to Salcombe from the water. The Dinghy Racing Free Fairway should deliver a noticeable improvement in the safety management system of the harbour.

Ian Gibson  
Head of Service Salcombe Harbour

Salcombe Harbour Board  
20 March 2007

## Background Documents:

Consultation Document on proposals to improve safety within Salcombe Harbour by changing the management of Whitestrand Pontoon and the operation of a dinghy racing free fairway.

Appendix:

1. Results of Public Consultation.