

Salcombe Harbour Board – 21 March 2006**TOPICAL HARBOUR ISSUES****Report of the Acting Harbour Manager**

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

Financial Implications: All project work can be accommodated within existing Harbour budgets to date.

Purpose

This report informs Members of current and future projects that may affect Salcombe Harbour Board and Salcombe Harbour Kingsbridge Estuary. This report links to the Council's overall Aim – 'to improve the well being of the people of the South Hams'.

Recommendation

That the Board notes the Report.

1. **Strategic Business Plan** – it is anticipated that further work on this important document will be undertaken during March and April 2006 in order for the Board to undertake full public consultation on its content once the new Harbour Board has been established from July 2006. The Harbour team is currently developing a Service Plan which will inform that actions within the future longer term Business Plan. When adopted, the Strategic Business Plan will form the basis of moving forward on all aspects of the Harbour's water-based and business activities. Clearly the new Harbour Board will need to have ownership of this Strategic Business Plan and the work projects it sets out in line with DfT guidance.
2. **Improvements to Pontoons** - Members will recall that the Board considered and approved in principle three major capital improvement projects on 5 October 2005 (Min. SH.04/05) for the Harbour. The highest priority of these three projects was the replacement of the Residents' Pontoons in the Bag. Development for replacement of the Residents' Pontoons in the Bag is now progressing. It is envisaged that the project management paperwork, work scheduling and design assessment will be completed during March and April 2006 to enable the Senior Management Team to sign off the project. The anticipated cost of piling works is £140,000 and initial quotations for the actual pontoons have also been received in preparation. All things being well, we hope to move towards ordering the works over the next quarter to enable manufacture to commence during the summer season off site in readiness for early deployment in the autumn. The anticipated start date for the piling work would be early November 2006.

3. The remaining two capital projects which the Board approved in principle namely; improvements to the Visitors' Pontoon and Whitestrand Pontoon will not be progressed during 2006/07.
4. **Options for Provisioning Afloat** - The Board considered an outline report on this topic at its meeting on 11 November 2005 when it resolved to instruct the Harbour Master to explore further the options and potential extent of services to provide provisioning services to vessels afloat and report back with greater detail at a future meeting (Min. SH.14/05). Unfortunately no work has yet taken place to progress this item. On reflection it is now felt prudent to make a decision to hold this matter for the present time until the new Head of Service – Harbour Master arrives and the Strategic Business Plan has been adopted. It was obvious at the Board meeting in November that this is potentially quite a contentious issue within the town itself. In order to support local prosperity in the interim one way of helping to ease the situation would be to concentrate on providing better information to visiting craft covering such things as the types of shopping available locally and further afar, opening hours and location of the local grocers, butcher and baker etc. in association with the Salcombe Traders Association and the Kingsbridge Chamber of Trade and as well as the wider local trading community.
5. **Harbour Guide** - The environmental enhancements of the current Salcombe Harbour Guide, previously presented to Salcombe Harbour Board Members, has been very well received particularly by other Harbour Authorities and we await visitors' comments with some optimism. Unfortunately, the new format of guide falls foul of the new postage pricing structure and we would be prudent to investigate the pricing to revert to the original sizing; and may also need to revise our use of water-proof pages within the guide.
6. **The Salcombe Harbour Authority website** - http://www.southhams.gov.uk/index/enjoying_index/ksp-harbours/sp-harbours-salcombe.htm , (part of the SHDC website) has also been updated to include an adapted and further enhanced version of the Salcombe Harbour Guide environmental information as well as the revised Salcombe-Kingsbridge Estuary Environmental Management Plan.
7. Grants towards the enhancements of the guide and website have been received from English Nature.
8. **Provision of Recycling Facilities Afloat** - Over the winter months Rob Wheeler, working as an employee of the Harbour Authority, has been working very hard to enable a level of waste recycling facilities for both the Authority itself and also our boating customers. With the additional help of the Council's Waste Management under the Head of Business Development, we shall now have at least glass bottle, paper and card recycling on the main Harbour waste pontoon, the Visitors' Pontoon and at the Batson Boat Park operational for the start of this year's season. There is every intention to enhance this to the further recycling of aluminium and steel cans and also food wastes at the earliest opportunity.
9. Grants towards the costs involved in this scheme have been received from South Devon Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

10. **Seaflex Moorings** - As reported with the current Salcombe-Kingsbridge Estuary Environmental Management Plan (SKEEMP), the present deep water chain mooring system probably causes over 100m² of scour per mooring or over four football pitches across the whole estuary; and obviously far more once the foreshore moorings are taken into account.
11. *SKEEMP Action SK71 – Seek to minimise the environmental impact of boat moorings, anchorages and storage areas.* To this end, the Marine Conservation Officer has been investigating alternative mooring systems for several years but only recently found one that has had any level of support from our Harbour team, namely Seaflex.
12. Seaflex grossly simplified, uses an 'elastic' mooring system and as the mooring is kept taught to the surface, there should be no scour of the seabed; this is presently being scientifically tested within Mylor Harbour and the Isle of Lundy. In Salcombe, there is a particular interest in how this system might work within the eelgrass beds and there is an offer on the table to carry out a trial of these moorings here in a foreshore situation. The company has made a two for one offer, and English Nature has offered a 50% grant towards the overall costs of purchase (ca. £850) and installation.
13. Mylor Harbour are also investigating the claim that these moorings have a much longer life than those of chains and a much reduced maintenance schedule and therefore costs. Part of the claim is that despite the higher capital cost of the moorings, there is a large long term saving. The Marine Conservation Officer and the Harbour Supervisor will continue to liaise closely with Mylor Harbour.
14. **Mitigation for Avian Flu** - At the time of preparing this report, the avian flu virus H5N1 has not reached the UK. However, with the high level of media reporting, the apparent geographical migration of the virus east and the anxieties of the virus evolving human-to-human virulence, SHDC has issued a risk assessment and measures to be taken. With thousands of water birds on the estuary, Harbour Authority staff are bound to come across dead, injured or sick water birds and although hugely unlikely at this time, every bird must be treated as a potentially infected bird as a matter of precaution. Whilst DEFRA remains the first point of contact for reporting all such birds and giving advice etc. Salcombe Harbour Authority may be expected to become involved in the removal of dead birds, and the health & safety procedures and personal protective equipment is given within the SHDC risk assessment.
15. The Harbour Office is also mistakenly the first point of call for many people reporting dead, injured or sick birds and all Harbour staff have been instructed to ask the caller to contact DEFRA in the first instance.
16. **Equality Impact Assessment Screening** - Along with all other services of the Council we have a legal obligation to carry out Equality Impact Assessments for all our policies, strategies and functions. There are six equality strands, Race, Disability, Gender, Age, Sexual Orientation, Religion and Belief. We have completed our initial screening which will determine which if any of our policies will need to proceed to full or partial assessment. This will be an ongoing commitment and all new items of policy, strategy and function will need to be assessed.

17. **Staffing** - The vacant part time Clerical Assistant Post (the other side of Jean Lyon's job share post) has been advertised and hopefully at the Harbour Board meeting it will be possible to report on the progress on this matter. An advert to fill the permanent Moorings Officer vacant post and other temporary seasonal staff positions has also been placed in the local press and again, a verbal report will be provided at the Board meeting itself regarding recruitment.

18. **Availability of Harbour Services** - Responding to customer feedback Harbour staff are currently considering ways of ensuring Harbour services are fully accessible throughout the working day for Harbour customers. One simple improvement would be to keep the Harbour Office at Whitestrand open throughout the day rather than close over the lunch period. The Acting Harbour Manager is currently looking at ways of achieving this at least cost. This may be through deployment of extra clerical assistance for the office at weekends during the season especially. Improvements to the telephony system are also being considered. Additionally and for health and safety reasons so as to avoid 'lone working', the Harbour Team will be supplemented this season with an extra Water Taxi Driver in the early season so that we do not have one person working alone on the water at night.

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Vanessa Tabb
Acting Harbour Manager

Salcombe Harbour Board
21 March 2006

Background Documents - none