

Salcombe Harbour Board, 25 January 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 the Salcombe Harbour Board or Salcombe Harbour Kingsbridge Estuary.

Recommendation

That the Board notes the report.

Sewage Incidents

1. The Harbour Master drew the Marine Conservation Officer's attention to a sewage pollution incident at Whitestrand on Monday 13 December. An inspection hatch on the Whitestrand slipway was allegedly leaking and a South West Water contractor was pressure jetting the main Salcombe sewage pipe along the foreshore and sewage was pouring out of the manhole. The incident was reported to the Environment Agency emergency pollution hotline.
2. The ensuing events highlighted a number of failed working practices in our environmentally sensitive area. From different angles, both the Harbour Master and Marine Conservation Officer are requesting to inspect South West Water's codes of working practice, site sensitivity maps, etc. and if necessary request their update.
3. As the incidents occurred at the beginning of the scallop dredging season, the decision was made to test the scallops for human consumption and the outcome was that they marginally failed. A temporary prohibition order was imposed on the fishery on Monday 20 December - particularly bad timing for local fishermen. (The test is based on the number of *E. coli* bacteria found, being the presently accepted indicator for virus numbers - unfortunately, this test is controversial in some quarters as *E. coli* are also found in farm animals etc. but the precautionary principle must be taken when considering human health). Following investigation, the ban was lifted on 6 January 2005.

Devon Estuary Officers Forum

4. The Marine Conservation Officer attended a meeting of estuary officers from across Devon. Salcombe Harbour Authority were thanked by the Devon County Council Emergency Planning Officer for their role in making the Oil Booming exercise such a success. The chances of a major oil spill has in the South West has now been

reduced slightly due to a voluntary ban has been agreed for ship to ship oil transfer in Lyme Bay.

5. The Environment Agency announced that they will be writing to all Harbour Authorities shortly, warning them that enforcement action will be taken against Authorities that are negligent in their duty of the management of pollution prevention and in particular hull cleaning and boat maintenance activities. The Marine Conservation Officer has been encouraging the tightening up of these activities for some time, although, without properly built facilities on the slipway and quayside, it is difficult for boat owners and contractors to comply and the letter of the law has not been enforced.
6. The Marine Conservation Officer has requested a meeting with experts from the Environment Agency and Harbour staff to consider the issue in some detail and to agree a realistic way forward. It is envisaged there will be some costs involved in building the appropriate facilities and possible grant aid will be looked into once design and costs are known.

N Mortimer
Marine Conservation Officer

Salcombe Harbour Board
25 January 2005

S E Tooke
Harbour Master

Background Documents

None