

Report: Operational Services Manager
To: Bideford Harbour Board Working group
Subject: Harbour Masters Quarterly Report
Date: Thursday 26th January 2023

Confidential or Exempt Information - Not for Publication by virtue of Paragraph of Part 1 and Paragraph of Part 2 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

PURPOSE OF REPORT:

To report to members of the Bideford Harbour Board Working Group about the activities and commercial vessel movements in the port and estuary since the last meeting on Thursday 20th October 2022.

1. INTRODUCTION

Torrige District Council is the Statutory Harbour Authority for the Port of Bideford and the Competent Harbour Authority for the Taw and Torrige Pilotage District.

The Harbour Board provides strategic direction to the Harbour Authority. The Harbour Board reports to the Community and Resources Committee who are the Duty Holder for the Harbour Authority as described in the Port Marine Safety Code.

2. REPORT

This has been a very quiet quarter with 0 ship movements in the entire Estuary. Significant progress has been made with maintenance dredging in the river Torrige and with the annual reviews of port navigation and activity specific risk assessments as well as a complete review of Port policies.

Vessel Movements

Bideford

1. No ship movements to Bideford in this quarter.

Appledore

1. No planned ship movements to Appledore in this quarter.
2. The Crane barge "Bristol Giant" had been berthed alongside at Middle Dock for over 6 months, and her owners, Severn Seas Shipping, have always paid their mooring fees promptly. In the storms of early December, the barge pulled the Middle Dock moorings from their foundations, and she came adrift eventually coming to rest safely on the sand banks in the river – causing no other damage. The owners quickly appeared and laid a set of substantial mooring anchors in the mud bank to the south and west of the H&W shipyard. There the barge will remain until activated for commercial tasking. The vessel moorings lie on TDC leased fundus and as a part of the conditions of the lease TDC has explicit permission from the Crown Estate to charge a vessel to lie or moor on it. However, when or if we (TDC) decide to charge Severn Seas Ltd for mooring the crane barge on TDC fundus, we (TDC) should be prepared to be challenged to justify the reasons



why haven't applied this charge equally to all of the many other vessels mooring on TDC leased property.

It should also be noted that neither TDC or Bideford Port have any authority to "direct the movement of a vessel" in the traditional Section 52 of the 1847 Harbours Act sense of the word¹, because it lies outside of the Bideford SHA ("the prescribed limits") and so the only rights we might have to direct a vessel come from the limited rights derived as the leaseholder from the Crown Estate Lease or if she represented a danger to navigation. Again, if we (TDC) were to insist on the application of the leaseholder rights, we would need to be careful to demonstrate that we had applied them equally.

For Harbour Board Information

Yelland

1. There have been no shipping movements to either of the Yelland jetties in the reporting period. The dredger Deo Gloria is expected to return in May 2023 for her annual Bristol Chanel sand extraction campaign.

Other Items

Dredging – the dredger "Riparian" arrived in mid-December and once the parent company was suitably licenced by TDC, she began maintenance dredge work on the shipyard sand banks in the river Torridge. Progress was slow initially and the HM was careful to physically monitor and record progress using riverbed walks and drone filming. In December 185 tons of sand was extracted over 3 operating days and, at the time of writing (9th January), 140 tones has been extracted in 2 operating days in January.

Initial assessments are that even these minimal quantities of extraction are already causing the "gut" of the river to change course from the Instow side of the river to the Appledore side. This heightened rate of flow should help to keep the Appledore channel deep and scoured and stop banks from re-accumulating. A side bonus of this activity is to earn the Harbour £185 in December while fulfilling the core function of keeping the navigational channel to Bideford open.

The present campaign is licensed until the end of March whereby a 75m wide navigational channel, ideally at chart datum should be maintained all the way up to Bideford.

A river sonar survey will be commissioned at the end of this maintenance dredge campaign to benchmark progress.

For Harbour Board Information

Pike Ward & Sibelco – regular updates on the progress of the dredge campaign were given to Pike Ward, the shipping agents, and to Sibelco, the exporters of sand. The HM also communicated a willingness on the part of Bideford Port to negotiate favourable bespoke fixed annual shipping rates in return for a commitment to bringing no less than 6 clay ships a year to Bideford. The offer was acknowledged but so far, neither company has been able to deliver on this. We are expecting the first clay ship to arrive before the end of February 2023.

Other Shipping Agents – The HM has also approached other shipping companies and agents to try and generate more commercial shipping activity:

¹ 52. Powers of harbour, dock, or pier master. The harbour master may give directions for all or any of the following purposes; (that is to say) For regulating the time at which and the manner in which any vessel shall enter into, go out of, or lie in or at the harbour, dock, or pier, and within the **prescribed limits**, if any, and its position, mooring or unmooring, placing and removing, whilst therein:



Cory Brothers, having visited the port in late October with a view to starting imports of poultry litter ash, they were prompted for an update in December and January with no response so far.

Williams Shipping were also approached by email in December with no response.

Hanson's were also contacted with regard to their cement / aggregates works site in Appledore. In recent memory, the quay at Bidna Yard at Appledore was used to import / export aggregates with at least one ship a week and now, the raw materials arrive and leave by road with approximately 2 - 4 trucks arriving each week. The HM approached them by email with the aim of starting a discussion on the relative merits of sea transport against the high cost of road haulage. In particular, with the emerging prospect of being able to dredge the berth to bring it back into commercial use. Again, no response has been received so far. Suggestions from the Board on better ways to make commercial contact with any of the agents above would be gratefully received!

For Harbour Board Information

Squirry Fountains – Despite persistent chasing, we are still periodically chasing and awaiting a quote for repair.

For Harbour Board Information (and assistance if possible)

Harbour Users Group – HM and DHM will be attending the inaugural meeting of the reinvigorated Taw and Torridge Estuary Forum (TTEF) on 16th January. The activity and scope of the TTEF will be examined to see if it might also act as the Bideford Harbour Users Group (HUG). However, because of the much wider geographical remit of the TTEF, it is felt likely that a separate Bideford HUG will be required. If so, the HM will inaugurate a HUG in February 2023 using the draft Terms of Reference below:

1. **Purpose** – to allow Harbour Stakeholders to have a voice in the affairs of Bideford Harbour (noting the small geographical area).
2. Chair initially to be the Bideford HM / but the first meeting will be used to decide on a HUG member as Chair going forward. Chair to change every year. It is important that the HUG is seen as a valid, useful and working platform for stakeholders to express their views and normally, it is much healthier if the HM is NOT the Chair. The Chair must be firm, otherwise the meetings tend to become hijacked by single issues and will lose authority if not seen to be completely unbiased and controlled properly.
3. HUG role is advisory only – no executive authority.
4. Each meeting should be attended by at least one Harbour Board member – to support HM and provide assurance of balance (and action!) to attendees.
5. HUG to meet quarterly and before each Board meeting – 90 mins absolute maximum – ensures focus.
6. Meeting to be a closed session – members of public to be granted access by written invitation only.
7. Agenda to be agreed and published in advance – normally:
 - a. Minutes and Actions - last meeting.
 - b. PMSC / Legal compliance report by HM.
 - c. Commercial vessels last quarter / next quarter / dredging / surveying / slipway clearance etc.
 - d. Upcoming public events.
 - e. Stakeholder Reports / Questions / Comments.
 - f. Written questions.
 - g. Election of Chair – first meeting of the year only.
 - h. AOB.
 - i. Date next meeting.
8. Each meeting to be formally minuted with agreed actions.
9. Minutes to be forwarded to Harbour Board either as part of HM report or separately.



10. Minutes to be published on the Harbour website.
11. Proposed membership as follows:
- a. Bideford Town Council – 1 person.
 - b. TDC – 1 person.
 - c. NDDC – 1 person.
 - d. Bideford Mooring Holders – 1 person who can be said to represent all berth holders.
 - e. Lundy Island Company – 1 person.
 - f. Commercial Fishermen – 1 person.
 - g. Skern Lodge Activity Centre / PGL – 1 person.
 - h. Bideford Rowing Clubs (Reds and Blues) – 1 person.
 - i. Environment Agency – 1 person.
 - j. Natural England – 1 person.
 - k. Devon Wildlife Trust – 1 person.
 - l. Fresh Spring Trust – 1 person.
 - m. TTEF – 1 person.
- + HM / DHM and Board Member = 16 people.

Request Harbour Board Approval

Round Britain eRIB – summer 2023 will see an eRIB attempt to circumnavigate Britain and despite the tidal challenges, they have chosen Bideford as one of the places to stop and recharge. As a consequence, TDC is in negotiation with one of the partner companies of the eRIB venture to install 2 x eVehicle charging points opposite the HM office on the Bideford town quay. These points will be used to charge the eRIB but also to generate revenue for charging electric cars in the longer term.

For Harbour Board Information

3. IMPLICATIONS

Legal Implications

Enforcement of the Mooring Policy as above will likely require legal support.

Financial Implications

None

Human Resources Implications

None

Sustainability/Biodiversity Implications

The Harbour Authority is committed to working with colleagues and Partner organisations in supporting all relevant environmental protection legislation.

Equality/Diversity

The Harbour Authority seeks to comply with all Equality and Diversity Legislation.

Risk Management

The Harbour Authority has a Safety Management system in compliance with the Port Marine Safety Code and all risk assessments were reviewed in December 2022.



Compliance with Policies and Strategies

Bideford Harbour Authority seeks to comply with all Torridge District council policies and Strategies.

Ward Member and Leader Member Views

Date of Consultation –

3. CONCLUSIONS

Bideford Harbour authority continue to work towards maintaining full compliance with all statutory legislation and government Policy on the Port Marine safety Code.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the report by noted and discussed by members.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Consultations:

Date of Consultation –
Officers Consulted –

Contact Officer:
Paul Brown,
Harbour Master
Bideford

