

Marine Director's Annual Report 2017

Good evening everyone and thank you for coming to this year's Annual Forum. In my second report as your Harbour Master, I would like to begin by thanking River Users for the way in which we have been supported over the past year. The new team has bedded in well with David Shakespeare picking up the duties of Deputy Harbour Master. Our Environment and Development Manager Alison Fowler has been driving a number of key initiatives including our sediment management study. The office and afloat team of Donna Taylor and Charon Baggaley, as well as our regular core patrol officers Andy Melhuish, Brett Winslade and Peter Jennings remains unchanged, although Jane Paull, our Moorings Officer, has left to take up a new role on the Beaulieu River. We are in the course of recruiting her replacement. Our additional seasonal patrol officers for the coming summer season, Nick McKinnon and Bob Clowes, will join us at the end of the week. This core of experienced and passionate officers is central to the effective delivery of the safety service we offer.

From a safety perspective, the key development this year has been the initiation of formally recorded quarterly Operational and Safety Meetings to analyse incidents in the River and those recorded by authorities elsewhere. This allows me to check that our Safety Management System (SMS) reflects our needs and put in place any additional control measure that may be required. Our latest check by our Designated Person ensured that our SMS remains appropriately robust.

In Governance terms, there have been no changes to either the Management Committee or the Harbour Board.

Our financial position has allowed the Harbour Board to maintain a zero per cent increase to Harbour Dues for the second year in succession. Of course, similar freezes in the future cannot be guaranteed. We must be confident that we are accumulating revenue at a rate that ensures that we have sufficient capital to match our needs when our operational and supporting assets require maintenance or fall due for replacement. To that end, I have commissioned Opus Engineering to survey our major structures and provide a professional assessment of their condition, the work that might be required to optimise their lifespan and an indication, at current rates, of their replacement cost. This report will be brought before the board on an annual basis in March, so that we can continue to pass sound judgement on whether or not Harbour Dues require adjustment. Our income streams have been as expected and, in response to River Users' call for more tender billets, we have delivered within budget the much needed connecting pontoon here at Warsash. This modification has more than doubled our capacity at Warsash and also allowed us to put in place wider tender moorings for those less physically able. Councillor Woodward will be drawing the names for those berths and our berths at Hamble at the end of this meeting. On the financial front, a small surplus is anticipated for the current financial year (FY15/16).

In terms of developments within the River, this year has been reasonably light. The old High Level Jetty at Universal Marina has been removed.

There have been numerous applications to install pontoons on pile and fore-and aft moorings at various locations throughout the River. Each of these also requires planning permission and each

is considered on its merits from the navigational safety point of view before Harbour Works Consent is granted by the Harbour Authority.

The Harbour Authority continues to provide one-to-one advice for prospective developers and this service has been used extensively again this year. The Harbour Authority also runs the Consents Advice Panel and, although demand has not required a meeting this year, this service, which is recognised nationally as an example of best practice, is still available. The Panel is a chance for people wishing to undertake works in the marine environment on the River to meet informally with consenting organisations prior to an application being submitted and marine consents sought.

Smart Water continues to help with deterring crime on the River and the affect has been very noticeable. Kits are still available from the Harbour Office. Anyone selling Smartwater-marked boats or equipment is reminded to advise Smartwater accordingly.

Following the tragic RIB accident in Padstow, the Harbour Authority has continued to be proactive in campaigning for greater use of kill cords on any boats with an outboard engine. As part of the campaign, floating keyrings have been issued to anyone who wants one, with the words 'Think Kill Cord'.

Harbour Authority staff have, as usual, been broadly involved in supporting many River-wide activities, including the third River Hamble Games, the Bursledon Regatta, the Annual Harbour Master's Charity Pursuit Race for dinghies and the Hamble River Raid. The imagination and

efforts of all our Clubs in driving a wonderful array of sailing and afloat activity is one of those things that makes this River so special. September's inaugural Hamble Classics Regatta was a resounding success with a repeat event taking place over the weekend of 16/17 September. The Harbour Master's Pursuit Race, in support of Parkinson's UK, will take place on Saturday 10th June. Bursledon Regatta will take place over the Bank Holiday weekend of 26th and 27th August.

Once again, staff have worked with the Hamble River Combined Clubs on the preparation of the latest edition of the River Hamble Handbook and Directory which was published in February. In addition, our own Visitor Guide provides specific information for visiting yachtsmen.

Management of the mid-stream moorings and the moorings Waiting List, on behalf of the Crown Estate continues. The waiting list is still quite long for most sizes of boat but we continue to look for opportunities to promote movement. Looking at other adjacent harbours' rates, we do provide good value for money.

Members of staff have given a number of talks and presentations about the management of the harbour at a variety of venues including sailing clubs and at local Council fora.

Inter-agency co-operation aimed at improving mutual awareness and capability continues to be a relevant safety theme. We have seen much more frequent cooperation with the Police, UK Border Force and the Southern Inshore Fisheries Conservation Authority this year. In the latter case, SIFCA brought a successful prosecution against a fishing boat for £34000 for the landing

of undersize shellfish on the Hamble. We continue to assist both the Police and Border Force in the discharging of their responsibilities on a routine basis.

In training terms, in October, we completed successfully our three yearly practical Oil Spill Response Exercise. This exercise took place before the eyes of our Regulator at the Maritime and Coastguard Agency and will ensure that our plan remains as robust as it can be and also that our staff both afloat and ashore are able to deal with the workload placed upon them in a resilient way.

As ever, the Harbour Authority remains an active participant in the Solent European Marine Sites Management Group, ensuring that we, along with other Relevant Authorities, exercise our statutory functions in such a way as to ensure that the Solent European Marine Sites are managed appropriately.

Staff also continue to support the work of the Hamble Estuary Partnership (HEP), which continues to provide a valuable network for a wide variety of organisations with an interest in the River. Many and varied talks have been presented to the HEP to ensure all members and their representative organisations continue to learn and remain up to date.

Many of you will be aware that we commissioned a sediment management study last year to fill a gap in our collective knowledge about the changes in vital saltmarsh habitats over time and also to gain evidence on what use might be made of dredged sediment to safeguard their integrity. The historical pattern of decline of saltmarsh is clear and the report highlights the key role played in this process by the original construction of marinas. Other additional factors have

also contributed to continued decline. The study has provided empirical clarification of aspects often prone to assumptions. It provides much information which is of immediate application to the work of the RHHA, regulating authorities, landowners and those providing berthing facilities. Whilst it does not recommend a large scale project to reuse dredge arisings within the estuary, it outlines the potential for small scale options predominately involving sediment retention measures. The immediate utility of the project will include but not be limited to:

- informing future strategic and project-level decisions by the Harbour Board.
- Informing the RHHA's review of the River Hamble Baseline Document for maintenance dredging.
- providing information to support future internal and external applications for harbour works consents.
- providing information to support Marine Licence applications made by commercial operators, private developers, sailing clubs and RHHA.
- informing local and regional discussions relating to saltmarsh decline and restoration, sediment management and reuse of dredgings.
- informing, at local level, the Solent Forum initiative 'Beneficial Use of Dredgings in the Solent Project' (BUDS) - RHHA has a seat on the steering group.
- enabling the continuation of partnership engagement (regulators, commercial operators, landowners, sector specialists) with a view to facilitating any future schemes associated with protection of saltmarsh.
- contributing to the sustainment of a culture of nature conservation within the river in accordance with the RHHA Harbour Boards' Vision.

The full report is available on our website in PDF format for those who wish:

<http://documents.hants.gov.uk/Hamble/RiverHambleSaltmarshandSoftSedimentHabitatRetentionFeasibilityStudy2016.pdf>

The Harbour Board continues to part-sponsor a PhD student to evaluate the spatial variation in the dissolution of sacrificial anodes in the Solent.

The River Hamble Safeguarding Agreement (RHSA) is now closed, although any subsequent dredging activity in the same area will trigger its reinitiation.. Pour memoire, this contract between Associated British Ports (ABP) Southampton and the River Hamble Harbour Authority was designed to protect the Harbour Authority and other River Hamble stakeholders from any adverse effects of excess sedimentation relating to ABP's capital dredge of Southampton Water. The dredging and associated monitoring programme revealed that one area in particular suffered appreciably with increased deposition. The amount of remedial dredging work having been costed, it has been agreed that the owner of that area is eligible for compensation.

The Harbour Authority continues to engage in consultations associated with the Marine Management Organisation's emerging South Marine Plan, Natural England's proposed new Special Protection Area, and the Environment Agency's Seaview 2027 project.