

The River Hamble Harbour Board's Strategic Vision

1. Introduction and Vision

1.1 The Harbour Board's Strategic Vision is:

“To conserve the natural beauty, character and history of the harbour, balanced with the needs of the many people who use it, whilst ensuring that it is safe to navigate and accessible to as many people as possible.”

1.2. The Strategic Vision seeks to meet the aspirations of all those users who have a stake in the future prosperity of the River Hamble, whether their interests are commercial, recreational or environmental.

2. Background

2.1. The River Hamble is a popular waterway and harbour with a unique history and a diverse range of uses. Hampshire County Council (HCC) is the statutory Harbour Authority (River Hamble Harbour Authority (RHHA)). The Harbour Board, advised and scrutinised by the Management Committee, is appointed by HCC as the governing body to ensure that the RHHA fulfils its statutory responsibilities. The relationship between the Harbour Board and the Management Committee is as set out in the County Council's Constitution. The Harbour Board wishes to provide clear leadership and direction for all interested parties, including the three riparian local authorities (Eastleigh, Fareham, and Winchester) to achieve a universally agreed approach to the evolution of the harbour and to influence developers to find a balance between contemporary design and conservation.

2.2. The role of the Harbour Authority is to manage, maintain and improve¹ the River Hamble harbour. Whilst the Harbour Authority is not the planning authority for the River Hamble – this role falls to the three riparian authorities – the Harbour Board nonetheless wishes to play a key role in defining the harbour's future, primarily by considering and determining consent for harbour works. Full enjoyment of the harbour is dependent on the relationship with adjoining land uses and its true non-statutory extent may be said to be all that land which supports and sustains the harbour activities and those of other interested parties – ie. the support infrastructure. For clarity, the Board has no desire to extend either its statutory jurisdiction or its statutory responsibilities.

3. Purpose

3.1. The Vision is not intended to be a plan or a statement of policies. It is a starting point and a statement of shared values. It aims to take a pro-active approach to the evolution of the harbour, as a centre for a wide range of

¹ Harbours Act 1964

recreation, as an economic hub and as a site of environmental importance. It seeks to avoid being over-prescriptive and, to that end, stops short of setting out detailed proposals for future development activity. It is intended, however, that this Vision will help to guide the Harbour Board when considering future applications for Harbour Works Consent. It is also intended to be a living document – comment and feedback are welcome and it will be subject to regular review. A measure of its success will be its adoption by a wide range of interested parties as the primary reference by which proposals for change can be fairly judged.

4. Scope

4.1. Although not within its statutory remit, the Harbour Board will seek to conserve the natural beauty, character and history of the harbour, balanced with the needs of the many people who use it. The Board has expressed a firm commitment that, within the Harbour Authority's jurisdiction, it will not permit any further marina or boatyard development north of the currently consented extent of Eastland's Boatyard.

4.2. The Harbour Board is alert to the cumulative effects of river development. Concerns about cumulative effects are due, in part, to the increasing diversity of harbour users and a perceived increase in congestion, but also stem from the lack of a vision to guide future development activity. There is a clear requirement for a process that is seen to be transparent in safeguarding the river and its amenities, and in balancing user needs and entitlements, be they environmental, recreational or commercial. As a finite resource, the harbour requires careful husbandry to ensure that it is sustainable as a thriving centre for a diverse range of marine activity.

4.3. This Vision should be read in conjunction with the Harbour Authority Strategic Plan. The Vision is underpinned by an inter-active multi-layer mapping system, known as Hamble Riverview, which depicts key aspects of the harbour and surrounding area to demonstrate how diverse marine activities currently co-exist, and could be used in the future as a tool to assist in highlighting areas of conflicting interest and identifying where opportunities may arise to improve the environment and facilities. It depicts the situation as it is today but can be easily updated as changes occur in the future.

5. Harbour Board objectives:

5.1. Maintain Safety

5.1.1. Safety within the harbour is the primary responsibility of the Harbour Board (as Duty Holder for the Port Marine Safety Code). The Board seeks to:

- ensure that all users feel safe, and are safe, on the water;
- ensure that all users understand and respect the needs of other users;
- accommodate the diverse range of craft currently found in the harbour;
- ensure that appropriate navigation channels are available to meet their

needs, whether in terms of depth, width, accessibility, shelter or crossing places, and;

- provide relevant information on safety which can be widely disseminated to harbour users.

The Board recognises the importance of safety for sailing dinghies and other small craft in the harbour and will seek to ensure the preservation of safe areas for these activities. The Board will also encourage the safe use of the harbour by children and, where possible, provide access for the disabled.

5.2. Preservation and enhancement of the harbour's environment.

5.2.1. The Harbour Board will ensure its compliance with appropriate environmental legislation. In carrying out its statutory functions, it must have regard to nature conservation, water quality, waste management and heritage features. Thus, protection of the precious environment of the harbour is a key aspect of the Harbour Authority's statutory responsibilities. It is vital that the protected habitats such as salt marsh and intertidal mud be conserved in order to perform their natural functions such as sea defence and support of a range of species of flora and fauna. The rural aspect of the upper reaches of the River should remain as such to be enjoyed by future generations. The Board is aware of the possible impact of climate change and sea level rise, and will continue to recognise, monitor and raise awareness of the potential effects on the harbour. The Board also recognises that maintenance dredging and, occasionally, capital dredging is necessary to maintain navigable depths for access and to safeguard useable River space.

5.3. Ensuring commercial and recreational balance.

5.3.1. The Hamble is a busy recreational harbour and is widely recognised as an important boating and sailing centre, appealing to owners of vessels of all types including racing and cruising yachts, motor cruisers, kayaks, canoes, rowing boats and sailing dinghies; other, new, water-based activities may also become popular in the future. Furthermore, the river is popular for fishing, bird-watching, dog-walking, swimming and simply 'sitting and watching'. It is a vibrant and important commercial location, with businesses offering almost every boating service adding millions of pounds and many employment opportunities to the local economy. The harbour's recreational activity is vital for the survival of these businesses. Thus, it is imperative that a balance is maintained to ensure that businesses, investment and employment can thrive alongside the demands of all recreational activity.

5.3.2 The Board understands the great importance of the marine businesses around the harbour and will seek to provide support for the appropriate infrastructure so that economic and employment benefits are realised into the future. These businesses include large commercial marinas, smaller specialist boat yards, mooring providers/ maintainers, yacht clubs, specialist engineering and support businesses, and those services such as local shops, pubs & amenities, the water taxi, ferry and river bus which enable both boat owners/users and non-boat owners to have access to and experience the

water. The Board will encourage marine businesses around the harbour and anticipates that they will continue to be flexible, open to change and adaptable to the diverse demands of harbour users in the future.

5.3.3. The Board recognises the equal importance of the harbour as a recreational resource. The harbour has something to offer across a wide range of recreational activities. The Board believes that the harbour should continue to meet this recreational demand and will seek to ensure that such activities can take place safely and with the minimum of conflict between users or negative impact on the natural environment. Ensuring that there is sufficient space for recreational activity is important but the Board also recognises the need to balance this against demand for an appropriate distribution of moorings and berths so that the full range of activities may take place safely.

5.4. Ensuring our financial future

5.4.1. The Harbour Authority forms part of Hampshire County Council, but it is largely self funding (mainly through the collection of Harbour Dues, plus fees for services and consents). The Harbour Authority is a 'not-for-profit' organisation and the Board is committed to ensuring that any surplus is re-invested in the infrastructure of the harbour.

5.5. Responding to future demand

5.5.1. There are considerable pressures on the Harbour Authority and a great deal of competition for space on the harbour. In balancing future demand, the Board will seek to preserve public access to the harbour for all types of recreation (with appropriate restrictions to ensure safety of navigation and environmental protection). It will work with local planning authorities to maintain access to the shoreline for non-boat users, and seek to encourage the provision of facilities for non-boating visitors when appropriate.

5.5.2. The Board aspires to manage the space available for all categories of harbour users, and to give due consideration to 'zoning' of activities where practicable. Optimal use of space may involve the clearing of moorings from specific areas, but the Board accepts that moorings elsewhere will almost certainly need to be reconfigured to accommodate displaced boats. The Board will, where appropriate, seek the agreement of The Crown Estate to this. Competition for space is not limited to the water and the Board recognises the importance of adequate facilities for car and trailer parking, and will maintain a dialogue with local planning authorities to encourage the inclusion of parking issues on their agendas. The Board wishes to encourage access to the facilities of the River for boat owners of all means.

6. Engagement and consensus building

6.1. The Vision is for a harbour where there is a shared understanding between all the individuals and groups who use it. The Harbour Board is committed to working to build consensus between these individuals and

groups. The Harbour Management Committee will continue to lead on consultation with those whom Members represent, and will advise the Board accordingly when Members believe that consultation is required. Consultation and engagement will be open and accessible where possible. The Board will also work to disseminate information about the harbour, how it is managed and operates, its history and environment, so as to inform local communities and build ownership of this valuable resource. To this end, the Board seeks to encourage a more 'joined-up' approach to planning and development in the harbour, working in cooperation with the local planning authorities and other interested parties. Finally, it is fully intended that this Vision will be a living document, to be reviewed and amended on a regular basis.