

# DART HARBOUR COMMERCIAL USERS GROUP

Minutes of Meeting held at Dartmouth Yacht Club on 23 September 2013

<p><b>Present:</b> J Holman (Chair), M Holman, P Sheardown, A Pooley, B Hollis, N Hockaday (Chairman, DHNA), J Scott (Vice-Chairman, DHNA), J Smith, G Morgan, S Norvill, L Fleming, M Fry, B Taylor, T Hoile, H Meacock, N Brown, I Noble, P Sheardown, P Smith, M Strudwick, J Distin, S Kilpatrick, J Robinson, M Smallwood (Minutes)</p>	ACTION
<p><b>1. Apologies</b> R Giles (Harbourmaster), C Lambert, A Harbord, T Morris, C Horton</p>	
<p><b>2. Minutes of the previous meeting</b> These were proposed by B Hollis, seconded by P Sheardown, approved and signed.</p>	
<p><b>3. Matters Arising</b> None.</p>	
<p><b>4. Chairman's Report</b></p>	All
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• New slipways had proven to be most successful, although it was a pity they had overrun their completion time</li><li>• It was hoped the Higher Ferry Slipway would also be improved asap. Letters urging this from DHCUG members to SHDC might help <b>Action please advise John if you are prepared to write a letter. Contact address can be provided</b></li></ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Funding for 'Visit South Devon' had been allocated again which was good news as this will encourage tourism in the South West</li></ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Pilots National Pension Fund Fees. There is a perception that this will cause big increases in harbour fees</li></ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <u>Local Business News</u></li></ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Atlantic Spars had gone into Receivership; a new company had been started by Charlie Hutton and Dan Thurlesfield called Petersen Custom Rigging with a site at Galmpton</li></ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Pedro's appears to be closed and may be changing its name</li></ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Baltic Wharf's Phase 1 Development is likely to start next month</li></ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Noss Development is on-plan with no definite start date as yet</li></ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Marine leisure industry in general had a disastrous May and June due to the weather; however the season changed round completely for July and August</li><li>- Dart Marina have had a very good summer with regard to visitors and expect to be full next year</li></ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Darthaven Marina had 102 visiting boats for Regatta; up from 80 boats in 2011 and 80+ in 2012.</li></ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Ferry companies have reported a good season as have Blackness Marine and Baltic Wharf; Galmpton's business remained stable and similar to last year</li></ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Fuel Barge had a very poor year and has started its winter closing early and will not be opening every other weekend.</li></ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Boat Brokerages had reported a very good summer selling boats</li></ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Rib Eye sales had been very weather orientated but felt they had had a good year</li></ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <u>Southampton Boat Show</u> Ancasta had sold 10 boats (used to sell 30+). Clipper Marine sold 10 boats. Sun Seeker had done well with a large purchaser. Banks are apparently lending again on the purchase of boats. In summary, some green shoots in place, but total confidence not returned as yet</li></ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Another concern is the Rates issue.</li></ul>	

## 5. Treasurer's Report

Barry Hollis reported that that the bank balance remained the same and 8 members had still to pay their membership fees.

## 6. Harbour Update

Neil Hockaday reported:

- On the Pilots National Pension Fund. Dart Harbour Board is now in final negotiations with the Trustees of the Fund and is aware that the Trustees are making arrangements with other ports. Neil would be attending a meeting with the Minister of Shipping on 8<sup>th</sup> October, which had been kindly arranged by Dr Sarah Wollaston, MP. As yet, the Board does not know how long they will get to pay back the amount. It was clear, however, that the Fund had not been well-managed and apparently harbour authorities are looking at 10% increases in their fees nationally
- Visitor levels were now back up to 2011 figures, after a torrid 2012
- 18 more pontoon spaces had been made available
- Regatta had gone very well and the good-natured atmosphere had been noted
- Crime in the Exe and Torbay had gone up rapidly in the last 2 weeks (mostly related to the theft of ancillary boat equipment)
- SHDC have ash bins for the Passenger Ferry Pontoons in hand
- Three new Board Members had been appointed: Tim Dewing, Marcus Taylor and Richard Eccleston
- Mike Clarke had been awarded Apprentice of the Year which was excellent news and he had now been hired by Dart Harbour
- The Dart Harbour AGM would take place on 9<sup>th</sup> December
- The old Res Nova mooring is available and Dart Harbour would be contacting the Stakeholders for their response with regard to the setting up of a different style of operation on this mooring

## 7. AOB

A member queried the speed limit on the river. Neil confirmed the 6 knot speed limit is in operation, however all agreed that patrols in the river seem to be markedly less.

*Dr Sarah Wollaston MP joined the Meeting*

### Items covered in the informal talk with Sarah:

- Sarah understood the huge concern about the Pilots National Pension Fund and had met with Simon Burns and also the Ministry of Works and Pensions on the matter. She wished to represent the views of the Commercial User Group and noted that a positive result would be if Dart Harbour were granted plenty of time to pay its share of the liability to the Trustees of the Fund
- The commercial river users had experienced a long period of tough trading this year. Sarah noted this and asked if she might receive trading figures data from members – this would be treated in total confidence. She gave her two personal email addresses and these can be obtained from the DHCUG Secretary, Melinda.
- Concern was expressed on how a large increase in fees would affect both commercial and leisure users on the river
- Parking issues in Dartmouth were raised and discussed
- The lack of launching facilities was raised. Sarah's support was requested to push

for the Higher Ferry slipway to be widened to take trailer sailing which would be an advantage to the whole town.

- Concern was raised that no organisation was promoting Dartmouth. The town, and the South Hams, needs to be promoted in order to encourage visitors and groups who might invest in the town and area. This needs to be an item on the SHDC agenda as the Council seemed to concentrate on agricultural rather than coastal issues. Sarah asked if examples could be given to her of the best ways of promoting South Devon. "Bed Stays" was suggested and also employing someone to market the area. Dartmouth relies on the tourist industry which will dwindle if not promoted. Raising the profile of the town was vital. The TIC does a marvellous job but does not have the manpower to promote the town at trade events nor does it have enough funds. Sarah suggested the DHCUG arrange a meeting with SHDC Councillors to discuss these concerns. John Holman would follow this through.
- The high cost of Rates was also raised. Concern was expressed that shops and businesses will apply to become second homes as running their business will become unaffordable. Rates could be scaled to the turnover of the business rather than the size of the business area.
- Sarah would like to receive input from the CUG members on what they feel needs marketing within the town and area and the best ways of doing this. One example given was that the Park and Ride should be operational for 12 months of the year, not just 6 months
- Maintenance Dredging Licences. These licences cost circa £4K from the MMO and take about 4 months to be granted. It was suggested that these powers could be delegated and licensing could come back under the control of the Harbour Authority.
- Also touched on briefly: Fuel duty; Marine Conservation Zones.

JH/Sec

All

There being no other business, John Holman thanked everyone for coming and particularly Dr Sarah Wollaston, MP for her ongoing support of Dartmouth and the DHCUG Stakeholder Group which was very much valued and appreciated.

**Date of next Meeting:** To be held in January 2014. Date TBA

Chairman ..... Date .....