



Dart Harbour Newsletter

Newsletter April 2017

Dittisham Pontoon and Visiting Boats - Captain Mark Cooper (Harbour Master/CEO)

Over the last couple of months it has become apparent to me that there are a number of stakeholder tensions surrounding the use of the pontoon at Dittisham. So I wanted to make you, as users (commercial and leisure (including visitors)) aware of the approach I am trying to take and to ask for your help in making this work.

Dittisham, like many spots on the river, provides reasonable access to the water in a beautiful setting. Also, like many other places on the river, the access becomes difficult at peak times such as holidays, weekends and during festivals and events. However, my impression is that the facilities in Dittisham provided by DHNA would most likely be overstretched, if not insufficient, simply to cover the demand of local users, let alone those with commercial needs and then when there is a glut of visitors at peak periods. Even in the early Spring, I was beginning to see signs of tension over right of use and who gets to use which bit of the pontoon.

I addressed the local parish council and explained to them that despite my efforts, driven by local leisure users and berth holders, I would not be able to meet demand with the current facilities. So, in the longer term I will be looking to address the DHNA infrastructure in Dittisham and might even test out some ideas this season using temporary equipment to gauge the success of seasonally positioned pontoons and/or moorings.

But this is very early, in my time in office, to make decisions about infrastructure and I will not do this without analysis of demand for DHNA facilities for all users since my capital expenditure is limited. I do have historic data that will help with

this, but you may be surprised to know that some of this is extremely complicated owing to the historic way in which the information has been compiled. For example, the waiting lists often do not give an accurate picture of demand, since an amount of the information contained in the list is out of date. I will be addressing this separately in a letter to users, asking for help to update the lists to make sure I have an accurate picture. I then hope to incentivise users to try to help, in making sure those on the lists, are those who actually want a mooring. This should help me to focus any capital investment to the areas of most demand.



Since joining, I have continued with the unrecorded policy that many of our signs and rules for berth usage are for the purpose of maintaining safety and priority of use of facilities and written specifically for busy periods. This means that in quiet periods you are unlikely to be moved off a pontoon by the river staff if your vessel is tied up with consideration of other users and with a view to likely loading during the time you are berthed. Examples of this are those who use vessels over 4.3m which are light and do not overstress the infrastructure and are parked on long lines to allow other users to berth. However, if your craft is too big and heavy for the pontoon and/or is moored blocking other users then you are likely to be moved on. At busy periods, vessels greater than 4.3m should be berthed on visitors' buoys after dropping off passengers (this keeps ferry costs to the minimum). I need to address the policy for escalating from warnings to potential prosecutions for those who are repeated offenders.

This brings me to the role of the river staff and why I need your help in continuing this approach. Clearly the emphasis I have outlined above is not easy for the river staff to police and enforce without your help and understanding. The staff are nervous about this approach for obvious reasons but I do want to continue with this, so that I don't restrict the use of facilities in quiet periods. I have also explained to them that the discretion applied by me, my deputy and the river staff will require careful consideration and that they are not to compromise safety which is my first priority.

Please be polite to the staff and follow their guidance and instructions. There are bound to be occasions when they might appear to be overbearing but generally their judgment will be based on safety and/or on expected or anticipated usage later in the day.

If we can make this work, then those who use the river in the quieter times should benefit and if it doesn't work then I will have no opportunity but to have the staff enforce rigid rules even if the rules don't exactly fit the busy and quiet periods. My judgement on this will be made based on feedback from the river staff so please be nice to them – they are there to help.

Thank you



Safety

Spring has well and truly arrived with several events already held. The Head of the Dart and the Stand Up Paddle Challenge were very well organised and attended. Conditions proved challenging for some participants and the events highlighted the fact that the river can be taxing and safety should be a key consideration for all users with Dart lifeboat tasked to help five rowers stuck on the mud at Flat Owers, Dittisham.

With many of you keen to take to the water after the winter, it's important to remember that the temperature of the river is less than 10 degrees and it doesn't take long for hypothermia to set in if you get into difficulties.

Please do take care and remember to take sufficient safety precautions, wear suitable clothing and take the correct safety equipment with you. Remember to be safe on the water and if you see anything of concern report it to the harbour office or if you think it's an emergency, report it to the emergency services on 999.

Churston Ferrers Grammar School - Peru Project - Old Sails Wanted

In July 2017, students from Churston Ferrers Grammar School will travel to the Cusco region of Peru, on a 3 week expedition working in 10 schools linked to Torbay schools. These educational links began 11 years ago, when the school set up links in 2004.

In 2014 shadow catchers were installed in 10 Peruvian schools, which provided sheltered outside space from the sun, which is incredibly strong at the altitude of 3000m. Some of these need repairing and updating, and so the school need **unwanted dinghy sails** to be donated from the local South Devon community. If you have an old sail lying in a garage or a loft and want a good home for it they can help take it off your hands!

The school has a target of 10-15 sails, which will be rigged in their playgrounds as shade canopies. They are happy to come and talk to you about the project and how you could be involved.

If you think you can help by donating a sail please contact David Lewis on either: 01803 842289 (school) or 01803 607030 (home) or email david.lewis@churston.torbay.sch.uk



Dart Harbour & Navigation Authority (DHNA) 6 Oxford Street, Dartmouth, Devon, TQ6 9AL
Telephone: 01803 832337 | **Fax:** 01803 833631

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