



Dart Harbour & Navigation Authority

Annual Report 2019



Divers Inspect Main Stream Mooring Chains

## Chairman's Introduction

This report primarily covers the Dart Harbour Authority's activities during 2019 but also includes an outline of the areas of focus for 2020 based on the Authority's Marine Safety Plan and budgeting activity. In 2017, a number of changes were made to our processes and routines and many of these required input from stakeholders. The prime focus of the then new HM was to ensure Dart Harbour's compliance with the Port Marine Safety Code. By contrast, 2018 and 2019 has seen less focus on change and allowed consolidation to ensure consistent implementation of policy and the bedding in of new processes. Building on the restructuring of the operational management structure, a new post of Assistant Harbour Master 2 was introduced along with the employment of 3 river assistants on part time casual contracts. This gave the Authority increased resilience from a management perspective and the ability to surge operations staff at peak times.

Dart Harbour continues to operate with a healthy cash reserve (see financial report online) allowing prices to be adjusted by no more than the Consumer Price Index (CPI) to the benefit of our customers. In finalising of 2019 accounts the Authority has reviewed the financial risk of the coronavirus outbreak and the impact is well within the limitations of risk modelling. There is minimal risk to the ability of the Authority to continue as an ongoing concern from the impact of coronavirus but reduced income for 2020 is likely to delay some of the capital work that had been planned for 2020 and 2021.

Mooring optimisation continues to improve our income although the potential for improvement in our mooring design is limited by the availability of space in deep water and our desire to avoid over development on the river. This report captures the key events and activities of 2019 measured against the Objectives from the Authority's Strategic Plan as translated by the CEO/Harbour Master.

### **Objective 1 - A safe, effective and efficient operation that meets legislative requirements.**

**1.1 Safety Introduction.** The 'Port Marine Safety Code' sets out a national standard for every aspect of port marine safety. Its aim is to enhance safety for everyone who uses or works in the port marine environment. It applies to all harbour authorities, marine facilities, berths and terminals in the UK. Dart Harbour committed to compliance with the code several years ago and is constantly looking at ways to enhance and improve safety within the harbour. This requires everyone using the harbour to be aware of their actions and how they affect other harbour users whilst always looking to improve their safety. This has to be a collective effort and is a joined-up approach.

**1.2 Safety Audits and Hazard Identification.** In 2019, Mr Andi Lloyd (ex MCA) took over as the Designated Person and oversaw a number of external audits including a safety review by Marico in late spring and then a full review of the Authority's Safety Management System in preparation for a Marine and Coast Guard Agency (MCA) visit in December. Marico highlighted the need to check that all hazards were properly identified and that risks had been mitigated through the risk assessment process. Consequently, stakeholders were invited to attend and input as part of a hazard identification process. This highlighted a risk that had not been fully considered (pontoon loading), risks that could be included in other risk assessments (overcrowding, use of drones, speeding and storm surges) as well as highlighting areas where there was a need for continued emphasis to maintain a high level of safety awareness.

**1.3 MCA Health Check.** The Marico safety review and the Hazard ID process was very good preparation for the MCA Health Check which was conducted with relatively small notice. The visit included a check of safety procedures, risk assessments and documentation related to compliance with the Port Marine Safety Code (PMSC) from our policies to our routine operating documentation. The MCA Health Check was generally positive and found that Dart Harbour was setting best practice in regard to stakeholder consultation. Actions were assigned for any area of recommended improvement and these were completed by staff subsequent to the visit.

**1.4 Incidents Logged** 180 incidents were reported providing a good base of information to support the collection of lessons identified and trend analysis. Key trends were identified and then the Authority was able to take actions to reduce the risks for those on the water. Trends included:

- Occurrences of speeding remain high (20)
- Largest concern is people falling in the river (10)
- Less reports of mechanical failure
- Near-miss reports down (encourage customers to report in)

**1.5 Trend Analysis.** Whilst there were no major incidents in the Dart in 2019, the Authority did have to assist the RNLI and owners of a number of vessels, with people onboard, that were taking on water. The Authority also dealt with a number of vessels that took on water but did not have people onboard. There continues to be a relatively steady level of incidents (14 in 2019) where there has been a threat to the life of river users. Five of these appeared to be isolated incidents or near misses such as the incident of the yacht that ran aground on the Anchorstone (below).



**Fig 1 & 2 - Yacht aground on Anchorstone and recovered by Hercules at Hoodown**

The most significant safety concern remains the risk to those who fall into the river. Nine of the 15 events that were judged to include a risk to life were people in the water normally as a result of falling in off a yacht, pontoon or more commonly from tenders, dinghies and other small craft. Over the last three years the statistics are quite stark:

- There has been 1 death from a river user falling into the river whilst alone and not wearing a lifejacket.
- 13 people have been rescued who were unable to climb out of the river unassisted.
- It is assessed that 9 of the people in the water only survived because they were wearing a lifejacket

**1.6 Routine Safety Related Activities.** Other routine safety related activities in 2019 include:

**1.6.1 Hosting a Port Security Exercise.** As part of the harbour's commitment to Port Marine Safety Code compliance, an annual table top exercise was held with the other emergency services and stakeholders in May 2019 in order for the harbour authority to meet the International Ship and Port Facility Security arrangements. The meeting was attended by 4 other harbours, all blue light services and a number of local specialists who might be asked to contribute to incidents that occur on or near the river. In addition to testing emergency scenarios and plans, the event was used to train the Assistant Harbour Master and Deputy Mooring Manager in incident command and control, prior to them assuming the Duty Harbour Master role. The annual event is proving to be very popular and other harbours were considering acting as host in 2020.

**1.6.2 Annual Oil Spill Exercise** Dart Harbour held a practical oil spill exercise in spring. The purpose of the exercise was to ensure that Dart Harbour is prepared to deal with a tier two level pollution incident through integration with their tier 2 provider (Ambipar) and with the support of external actors including MCA advisors. The scenario involved the arrival of a 20m, 60 tonne fishing vessel (FV Robin) with water integrity issues. The duty HM was contacted by the Coast Guard and after discussion with the MCA Counter Pollution and Salvage Officer (West) ascertained that the vessel would need to receive assistance, including berthing in the harbour. The exercise was successful and provided ample opportunity for Dart Harbour Staff (including the new managers) to integrate with the tier 2 contractor staff and demonstrate their ability to deploy tier one and tier two equipment. Record keeping was carried out using digital devices and it was demonstrated that the timeline could be rebuilt from use of What's App and photographic records.



**Fig 3 - Oil spill boom deployed around Hercules**

**1.6.3 Competent Harbour Authority Update.** In November 2019, the Harbour Board adopted a revised Pilotage Policy under the provisions of the Pilotage Act 1987. Dart Harbour began consultation on pilotage directions with the aim of ensuring that they remain fit for purpose. Stakeholder groups and the general public were asked to comment on the proposed changes and suggest other relevant changes. It is recognised that ship movement and pilotage operations remain a relatively high-risk activity and for this reason special attention is required to ensure that safety standards are maintained.

**1.6.4 Local Lighthouse Duties Update.** After replacements of the major sectored lights used for entry and the improvements to navigation marks in Bow Creek made during 2018/18, 2019 has been a relatively quiet year. Darthaven Marina had some temporary works to replace pontoons and Noss have continued to progress their development and began dredging and installing some test piles for their new marina. Navigation marks were inspected on 18/09/2019 by an Officer of Trinity House and found to be in good and efficient order. Discussion with river users identified potential improvements and three additional navigation marks (lateral) have been purchased and have been installed for improved navigational safety in the higher reaches of the harbour. These will include one mark in Bow Creek and two marks in the vicinity of Duncannon.

**1.6.5 Improving Bathymetric Harbour Survey Information.** A full bathymetric survey of the main harbour area, including the entrance, private marinas and Old Mill Creek has been conducted. This survey was part funded by a number of the commercial operators. The Authority now has a very good set of baseline data and is beginning to understand the bathymetric trends that will help with decision making for maintenance of navigation and future developments. Dart Harbour continues to work with the United Kingdom Hydrographic Office to maintain the safety of navigation for mariners using the harbour.

**1.6.6 Improvements to Yacht Taxi Driver and Passenger Safety.** Two meetings were held with staff and Yacht Taxi drivers, one in spring and the second in autumn. These were used to discuss Yacht Taxi operations, to review the current risk assessment and to discuss potential safety improvements. Based on incidents that relate to Yacht Taxi operations, it appears that changes, put in place in previous years, have improved the level of safety for staff and passengers. The Yacht Taxi drivers also provided input to the requirement gathering process for the new Yacht Taxi vessel which was ordered in autumn and is due for delivery in 2020. It is assessed that the Yacht Taxi reduces the risk to personnel transferring to and from their vessels in the harbour (as opposed to the use of personal tenders) but owing to the nature of the business, including operations in hours of darkness, the service does continue to carry some risk.

**1.6.7 Improving relationships with other Authorities.** Dart Harbour's relationship with councils and other bodies is essential to meeting our primary objective since these stakeholders often have responsibilities that relate to safety. In some cases, these responsibilities relate to their safety duties and in other cases Dart Harbour relies upon their infrastructure and organisation in order to maintain safety standards. In 2019, the Authority has continued to work hard to maintain close relationships with councils, clubs and commercial entities. In some cases, this has led to the Authority taking more responsibility in order to reduce the risk to river users, whilst making other bodies aware of their responsibilities. Despite a determined effort to progress the development of a SHDC/DH management agreement and leases for the Dart Harbour Facilities, progress has been slow.

This remains a concern as SHDC do not wish to improve the safety and quality of facilities on the embankment until the agreements are in place. Progress was made with the Dart Harbour Premier agreement and this was signed in March 2019.

**1.7 Other Safety Improvements.** In addition to issues reported through the incident reporting system there were a number of other areas where it was judged there was potential for reducing the risk to river users. Changes made in 2019 include:

- Replacement of Dittisham Pontoon decking (2 slip incidents reported in 2018)
- A light was fitted to No1 Mainstream buoy (There were no reported incidents but identified during ship movements in hours of darkness)
- Review and standardisation of safety signage for all facilities (signs include postcodes for 999 calls)
- Replacement of SG beacon light (defective light)
- Replacement of DA pontoons



**Fig 3 – Dittisham Pontoon Decking Replacement**



**Fig 3 – Replacement DA Pontoon**



**Fig 4 – No1 Mainstream Buoy removable light**

## Objective 2 - A Port that attracts river users and benefits the community

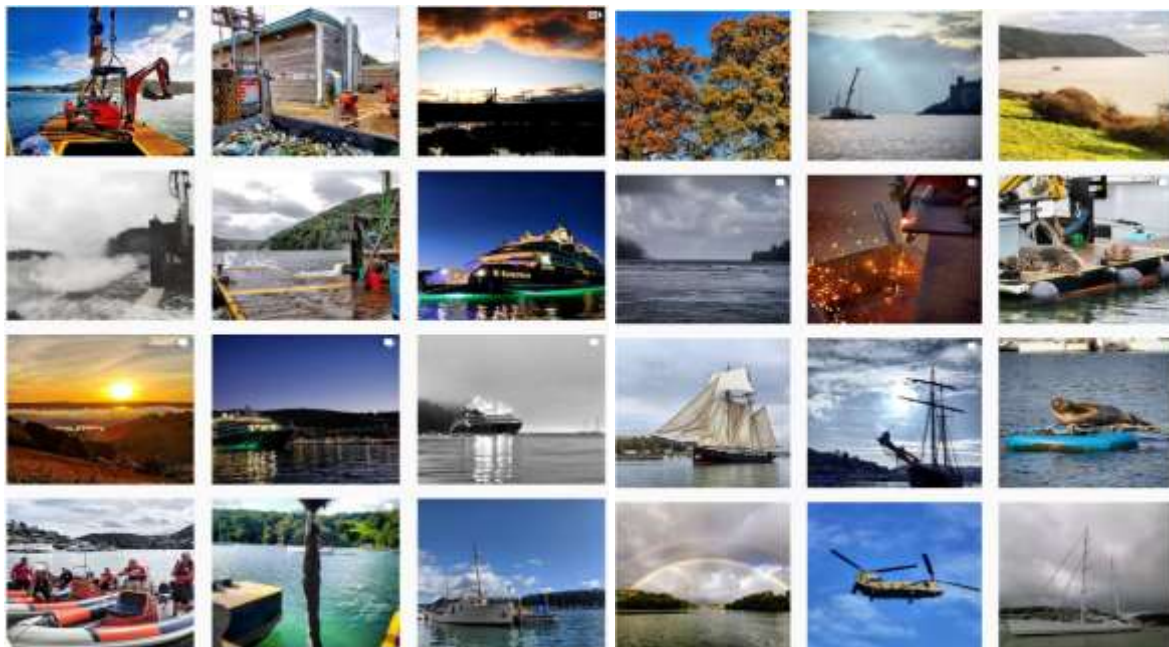
**2.1 Customer Communications.** Dart Harbour has been putting the website at the centre of its communication strategy during 2019 to promulgate important messages to customers while ensuring we are compliant with General Data Protection Regulations. Dart Harbour continues to have an “Open Door” policy to ensure that customers can benefit from all methods of making contact.

The website communications encompass the following areas:

- Operational updates
- Local notices to mariners
- News and Events
- Revised Harbour Guide, host digital copy locally so we can understand reach and usage

**2.2 Website.** Dart Harbour appointed a web design company to create a new website for Dart Harbour. Following extensive internal consultation, the new site was launched in August 2019. The new site included improved website navigation, mapping and more concise visitor information, information for annual customers, harbour team information and a library for key Dart Harbour documentation.

- An 18% uplift in visitors to the site was achieved between August 2019 and December 2019.
- The most visited pages are weather, port notices, visiting ships, news & notices, annual moorings, visitor moorings
- Top Countries - UK, France, Germany, Netherlands
- Top Cities - London, Exeter, Bristol, Dartmouth/Torbay, Plymouth



**Fig 5 - Instagram Imagery**

**2.3 Social Media.** Dart Harbour has worked hard during 2019 to improve its social media presence, to increase the reach and to ensure that social media posts are effective and relevant for all our customers. The following statistics were measured in 2019:

- Facebook 1200 followers
- Instagram 1300 followers
- Twitter 2000 followers Social reach this year
  - Instagram 10000
  - Facebook 9000

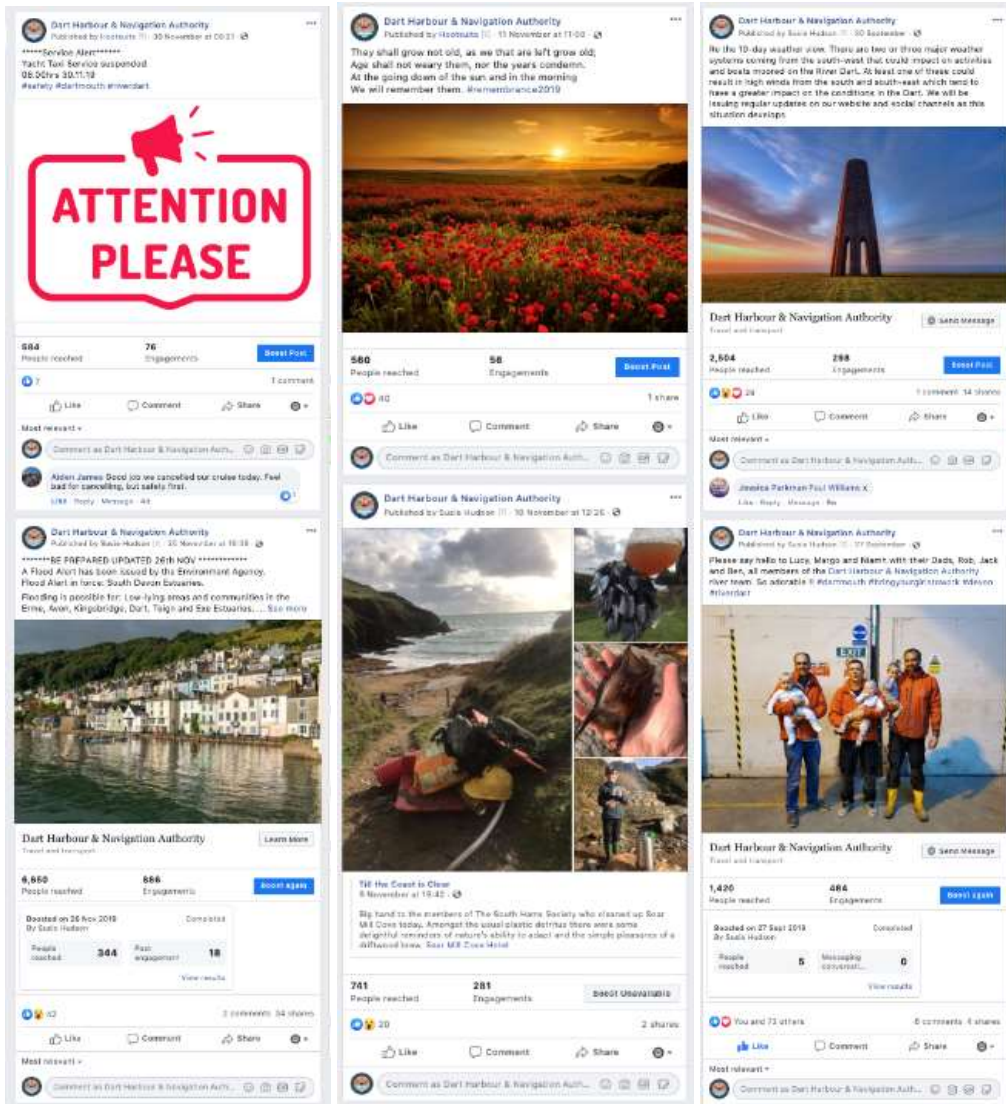


Fig 6 - Facebook Post Examples

**2.4 Stakeholder Engagement.** The Department for Transport’s “Ports Good Governance Guidance” for all statutory harbour authorities (SHAs), encourages effective engagement with stakeholders which is considered essential for all SHAs to maintain or improve understanding of the harbour by its stakeholders. Engagement is equally important to understand stakeholders’ views about the harbour and key issues from their perspective”. Engagement on issues of Safety and Navigation are covered against Objective One above. Our stakeholders include pretty much anyone who lives near and/or benefits from the section of the river under our jurisdiction. The board directed that this activity was one of their key priorities and nominated a board member to be the



key point of contact with each of the four stakeholder groups (Commercial User Group (CUG), Association of Dart River User Committee (ADRUC), the Communities Group and the Estuary Forum. The board member nominated for each of the groups helps maintain the link between the members of the group and the board. The level of activity within each of the groups varies enormously depending upon the issues that arise in addition to routine communications. A summary of the activity of each group follows:

**2.4.1 Leisure Users.** Dart Harbour Leisure Users are represented primarily through Clubs at the Association of Dart River Users Club (ADRUC) meetings with strong leadership from the Chair Anne Davis. River users belonging to any club on the Dart should approach ADRUC through their club representative if they have issues to raise. Unfortunately, for berth holders who do not belong to a local club the Dart Leisure Boat Owners' Association is not currently functioning; if owners on the river would like to redevelop this, Anne would be keen to revive and support it. It is also normal for leisure users to individually interface directly with Authority staff at all levels and this is positively encouraged.

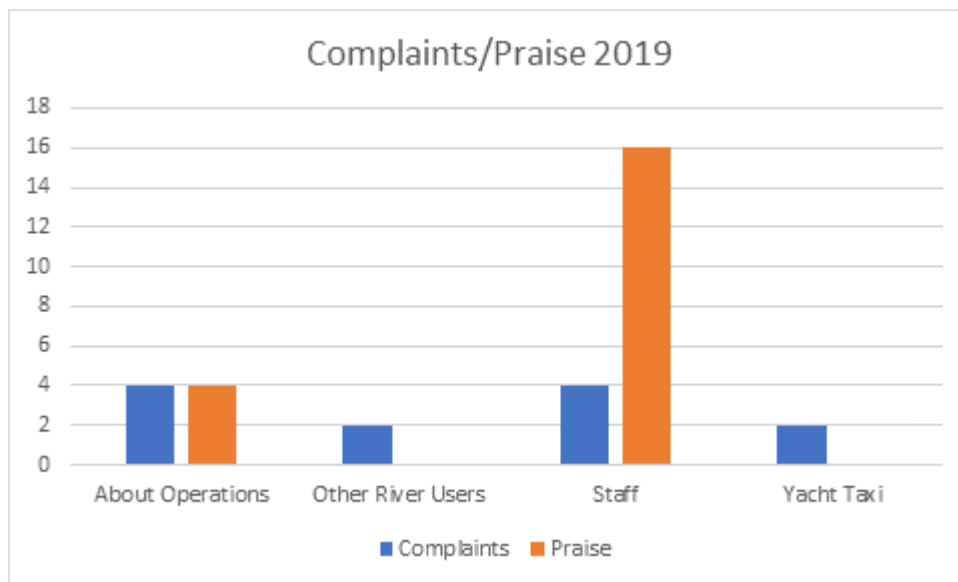
**2.4.2 Communities Group.** Mr Mike Pearey continues to provide strong leadership to the group supported by Sue Pudduck acting as secretary. The communities group continues to be very active with the majority of town and parish councils represented at each meeting. The focus of the group has been on the relationship between the various parishes and Harbour Authority. The Authority has invited the group to consider inputs to changes of the mooring policy when it comes up for review in 2020. The group has considered the inclusion of Marine related policies in local Neighbourhood Plans being generated by councils and how Dart Harbour activities are integrated into the areas of leisure, tourism, the environment, and employment in the riparian towns and parishes. The meetings also provide the opportunity for local issues between individual councils and the Authority to be discussed.

**2.4.3 Commercial User Group.** In 2019, Dart Harbour prioritised mooring allocation for commercial customers at the request of the CUG and this resulted in most of the companies on the waiting list being allocated moorings where suitable stock became available. The group continues to meet twice yearly to compare notes on marine activity and discuss issues that affect their businesses. Major concerns were raised by CUG members with regard to the establishment of the MCZ north of the Anchorstone. Commercial concerns were fully aligned with Dart Harbour majority stakeholder views, that there was no assessment of the socio-economic impact of establishing the zone. CUG concerns were submitted to DEFRA as part of the consultation process. The group remains vibrant and constructive, chaired by John Holman (Darthaven Marina)

**2.4.4 Dart Estuary Forum.** The output from Dart Estuary Forum is covered under objective 3 below.

**2.5 Dart Harbour Community Fund.** Dart Harbour launched a community fund to help support organisations working to tackle disadvantage and provide opportunity across the Dart River Estuary area with a particular focus on children and young adults. Projects that seek to make use of the natural environment of the Dart River Estuary will be given priority. The fund is administered by our partner the Devon Community Foundation. The fund is designed to consider applications from across Devon that seek to make use of the natural environment of the Dart River Estuary, priority will be given to groups that are based within the immediate vicinity of The Dart Estuary, South Hams District Council & Torbay Council Area. There were no successful applications in 2019.

**2.6 Customer Satisfaction and Feedback.** During 2019, Dart Harbour continued to update the complaints and praise log. The graph below shows the figures that were reported to the board for their review of customer satisfaction. There were only a low level of complaints and praise reports with received praise outweighing complaints (19 vs 12). The large majority of praise was for staff and services provided by Dart Harbour (including water taxi staff). Complaints were less focussed with the only one or two complaints on the same subject (taxi waiting times (2) and the low quality of Dart Harbour facilities (bathrooms and showers). There was also a very small number of complaints surrounding our mooring optimisation work and connectivity on the river.



**Fig 7 - Complaints and Praise reviewed Jul 2019**

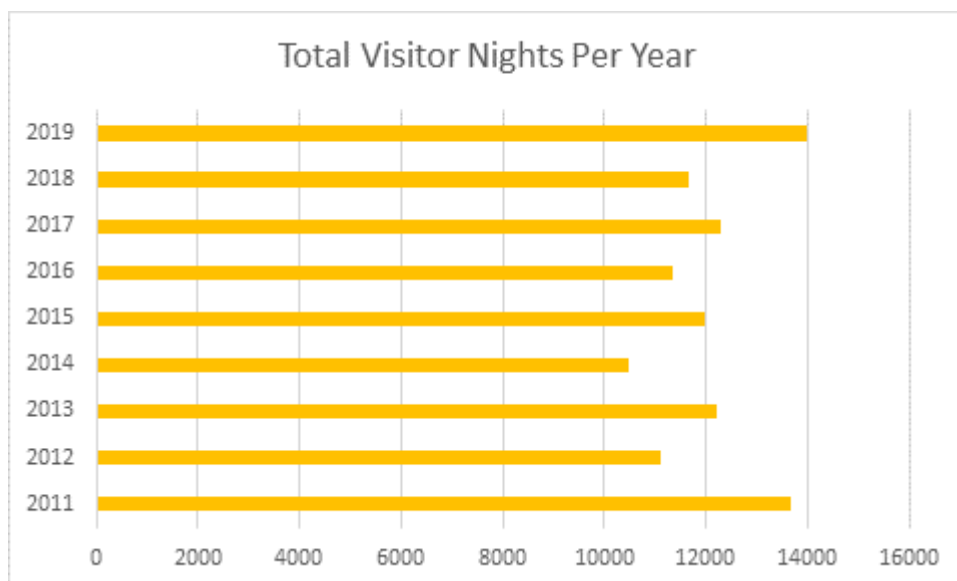
**2.7 Yacht Taxi, Tender/Dinghy Facilities and access to deep water moorings.** The Yacht Taxi remains critical to the safety of many berth holders and visitors as it provides a safe method of accessing moorings that are remote from the shore. The service remains popular and Dart Harbour have worked hard to ensure that it is properly resourced in response to feedback from users. Outside Dartmouth, temporary pontoons are particularly useful in areas where there is very high demand that is limited to specific periods of time such as regattas, concerts and sailing competitions. The Mill Point low water landing at Stoke Gabriel proved to be very popular and was left in place over winter. Other seasonal pontoons were also in demand although policing of the facilities outside Dartmouth has been challenging. The signage review discussed under objective 1 was initiated as a result of stakeholder feedback.

**2.8 Waiting lists.** Waiting list analysis was done in 2017 and is accessible by a link from our website. The analysis is useful in providing a snapshot of waiting times and the boat sizes on each list. The analysis is also used to inform our decision on mooring optimisation where we are looking to align mooring design to ensure that allocations from the lists run in order. In most cases the effect of the increase of boat length of our customers means that those with smaller boats are allocated ahead of those with larger vessels. In 2019, we have upgraded a number of swinging moorings and begun to adjust berth sizes on our pontoons to accommodate demand more accurately. A quick look at waiting lists in 2019 identified that the more attractive deep-water moorings and pontoons remain popular with steady numbers of customers waiting. But some of our more remote and shallow moorings are becoming less popular and in some cases are available on a first come first served basis. This is really important for customers considering purchasing a

vessel as factors like draft can be very significant in affecting waiting times. Waiting List analysis will be refreshed in 2020.

**2.5 Visitor numbers and trends.** Just less than 10% of Dart Harbour Income comes from visitors. Income is spread across the year, with some customers paying visitor rates for long stays without an annual mooring allocation, but by far the largest portion of this and most of this income comes from the busy summer season (particularly in July and August). Whilst the income for the Authority could be increased by turning more visitor berths over to residential moorings the Authority has been careful to ensure that all visitors can be accommodated as they provide a significant contribution towards the thriving communities around the river. A further limitation on the change of moorings to residential is the variation in the number of mooring holders who have to move to more sheltered waters in the winter months.

**2.5.1 Leisure Visitors.** Following the recession in 2008 the number of visitors per year (based on receipts from visitor berths and visitor nights) fell and in 2012 the number of visitor nights was around 11000. Between 2012 and 2017 the number of visitor nights has fluctuated between 12000 and 10500 and the numbers appeared to have settled out at 11000 per year before 2019. Dart Harbour has been working hard to attract more visitors and 2019 saw the highest level for 10 years. Interestingly the numbers at peak season were high but the increase in the shoulder seasons (spring and autumn) show that we are doing well to attract longer stay visitors out of season.



**Fig 8 Annual Visitor Nights per year 2011-2019**

**2.5.2 Cruise Ships, Super Yachts, Patrol Vessels and Large Classic Sailing Vessels.**

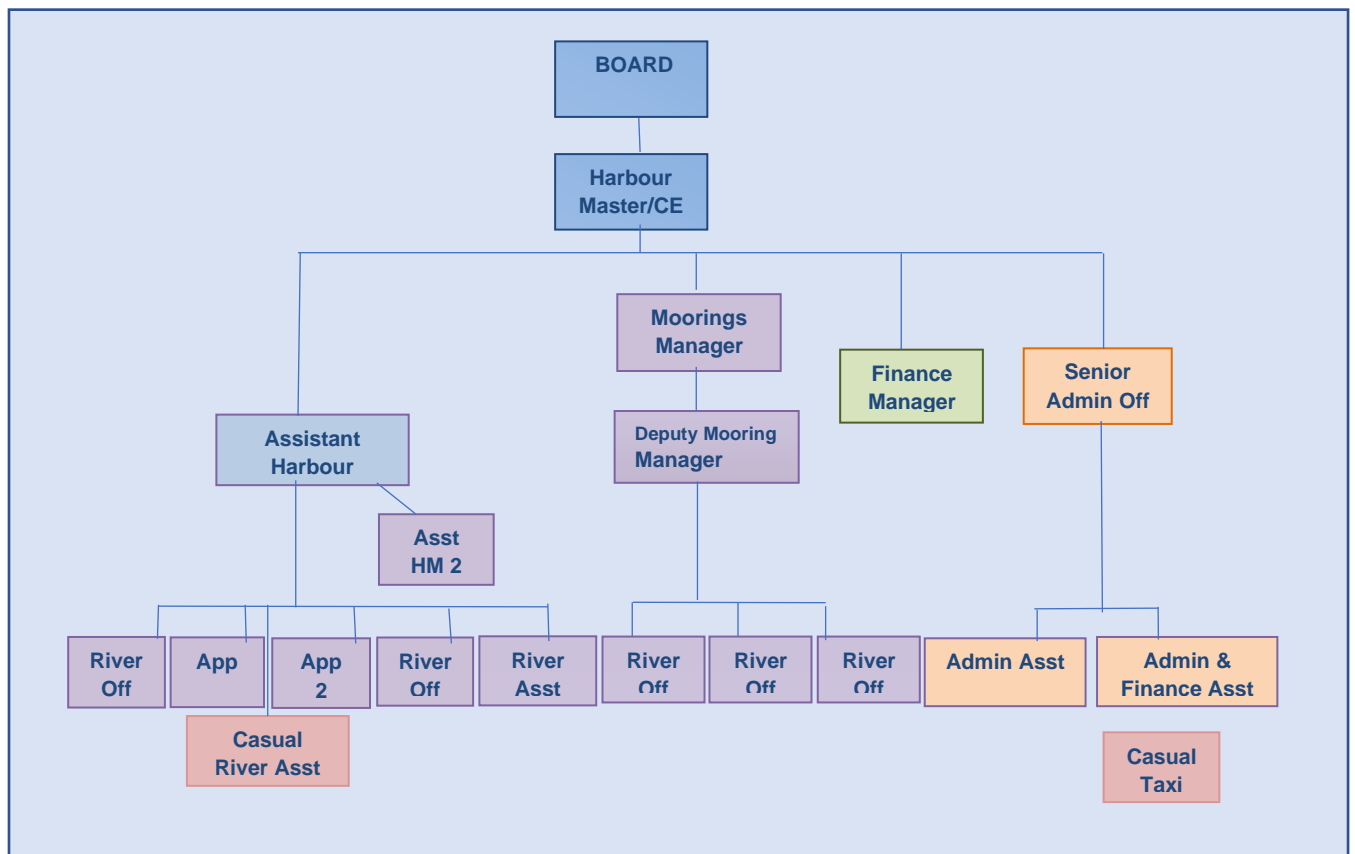
During 2019, Dart Harbour provided pilotage services for 5 cruise ships, 1 super yacht, 1 Warship and Trinity House Vessel Patricia. There were also a number of visits by smaller warships and patrol vessels (under 50m LOA) from the Royal Navy, French Navy and UK Border Force. The directly attributable costs of the service for these vessels (pilotage, berthing/mooring and security charges) is equal to the charges applied. However, taking account of staff time, vessel maintenance, fuel and overheads there is a cost to the Authority. It is, however, recognised that such visits benefit the community and contribute to the thriving communities around the river. Benefits include spending by passengers, victualing (normally restricted to superyachts and patrol vessels) and increases in visitors to the town who are keen

to see the vessels. As is normal a small number of cruise ships cancelled their visit to Dartmouth as they were unable to land visitors owing to the high winds and sea state. In 2019, Dart Harbour continued to offer Town Jetty berthing for free where vessels that might attract visitors to the town were opened for public tours. These included patrol vessels and classic sailing vessels.

**Objective 3 – Long Term management of the River Dart safeguarding the environment for the future.**

**3.1 Financial Stability.** Dart Harbour continues to operate with a healthy cash reserve which was set in 2018 (see financial report online) allowing prices to be adjusted by no more than the Consumer Price Index (CPI) to the benefit of our customers. Mooring optimisation continues to improve our income although the potential for improvement in our mooring design is limited by the availability of space in deep water and our desire to avoid over development on the river.

**3.2 DHNA Staff and their roles.** The staff and their wellbeing is fundamental to the smooth operation of the Authority. Their attitude and approach to their work and to the general public and customers reflects the desire of the board to demonstrate the strength of the organisation and attract river users. Staff training included management and communications training conducted in 2019 with a focus on improving the links between operational staff, office staff and customers. Following Operational staff restructuring in 2018 an additional operational manager post of AHM2 was created in order to provide resilience in the outputs normally delivered by the AHM such as security officer duties, boat licensing and mooring allocation and optimisation.



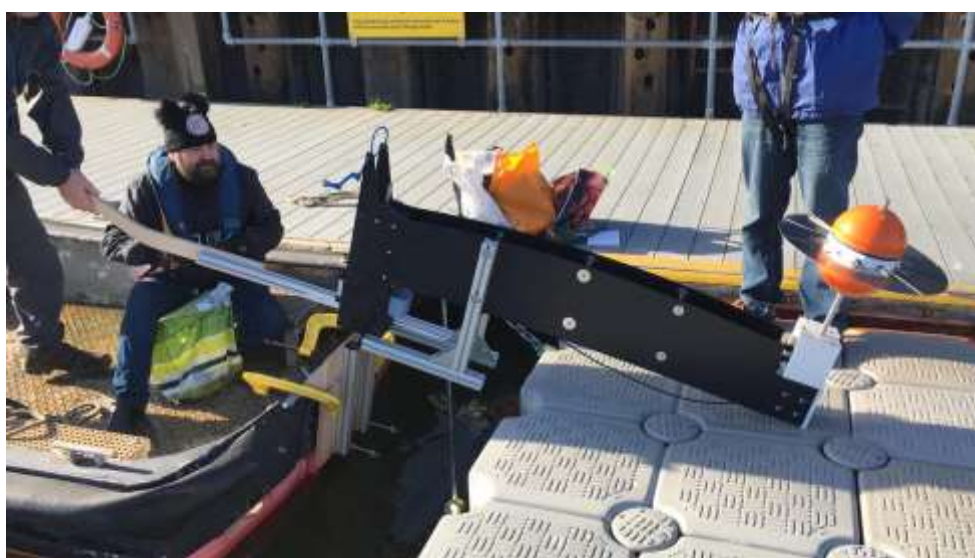
**Fig 9 - 2019 Structure including AHM2 position**

In 2019, it was recognised that there was a need to reorganise the Office Staff structure in order to adjust some job specifications to align with current working practices. The reorganisation was recognised as a relatively major piece of work and has been delayed pending the result of a more formal HR review.

**3.3 Environmental Opportunities and the Dart Estuary Forum.** One of the key changes for 2018 saw the introduction of a Dart Estuary Forum which attracted environmental experts as well as cross stakeholder group participation. It was most encouraging that the Forum created a positive opportunity for group discussion and the exchange of information across a wide range of organisations and individuals with a passion for the environment. The forum held two meetings in 2019 and discussed the potential for projects that would support the Authority's continuing commitment to safeguarding the environment of the river. One of the first projects will be to properly assess any change in the area around the Hole in the Wall separating Sharpham Marsh and the river. Other projects involving the University of Plymouth have been initiated including a 2019-2020 baseline survey of sediment metal residues in the estuary. Whilst Dart Harbour had offered money to support such projects, none was allocated in 2019.

**3.4 MCZ Establishment.** Despite almost unanimous objection by Dart Harbour Stakeholders (one town council was neutral and the AONB were supportive of the establishment of the zone) DEFRA announced that they intended to proceed with designation of the Dart above the Anchorstone. Although the principles and aims of conservation areas were generally supported DEFRA were unable to provide any detail or clarity on the socio-economic impact of establishment of the zone. Despite the zone being designated in August 2019, detail of the management arrangements and how these affect Dart Harbour and river users remains unclear.

**3.4 Support to other environmental projects.** In addition to projects that began life as a recommendation in the Estuary Forum, Dart Harbour also continued to support other activities that were seen to support Objective 3. Minor support was provided to the University of Plymouth immature sea bass tracking project and we also helped a team of scientists who were keen to test their tidal energy prototype.



**Fig 10 – Dart Harbour supporting a tidal stream energy experiment**

**3.5 Mandated responsibility for Oil Pollution Response including the Rose of Sharon and other vessels.** In 2019, after 2 years of negotiation with the Environment Agency approval was given for the disposal of the abandoned MFV Rose of Sharon from the Premier Marina site at Noss. The vessel was moved as far up the slipway as possible on a spring HW tide and then demolished in accordance with the approved method statement. Dart Harbour continues to closely monitor larger vessels that are resident on the river and is likely to adjust the limitations of residential facilities for vessels that cause concern owing to the inability for them to be lifted out when they have watertight integrity issues that might lead to pollution events.



**Fig 11 – Rose of Sharon on the slipway before disposal**