

**NORTH DEVON COUNCIL**

Minutes of a meeting of Harbour Board held in the Ilfracombe Centre - Ilfracombe on Tuesday, 7th May, 2024 at 2.00 pm

PRESENT: Members:

Councillor Wilkinson (Chair)

Councillors Williams and Wilson

Co-opted Members:

Bert Gear, Martin Cleary, Tim Gibbs and Nigel Thomas

Officers:

Director of Resources and Deputy Chief Executive, Ilfracombe  
Harbour Master and Head of Place, Property and Regeneration

**1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received during the meeting for Councillor Turton.

**2. TO APPROVE AS A CORRECT RECORD THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 6 FEBRUARY 2024 (ATTACHED)**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 6 February 2024 (circulated previously), be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

**3. ITEMS BROUGHT FORWARD WHICH IN THE OPINION OF THE CHAIR, SHOULD BE CONSIDERED BY THE MEETING AS A MATTER OF URGENCY**

There were no items, which in the opinion of the Chair, to be considered by the meeting as a matter of urgency.

**4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest made.

**5. QUARTERLY DESIGNATED PERSON PORT MARINE SAFETY CODE AUDIT REPORT - ILFRACOMBE AND LYNMOUTH HARBOURS**

The Director of Resources and Deputy Chief Executive introduced The Head of Place, Property, and Regeneration to the Board.

The Board then considered a report by the Health and Safety Advisor (circulated previously), regarding the Quarterly Designated Person Port Marine Safety Code Audit of Ilfracombe and Lynmouth Harbours.

The Designated Person highlighted the following:

- The quarterly audit visits were carried out at both, Ilfracombe and Lynmouth harbours on 15 April 2024.

Actions completed since last audit – Ilfracombe

- Consultant Engineers had undertaken a survey of the Harbour and made an assessment of the condition of structural elements on The Pier, Stone Bench, Lower Landings and East Face. The report found the concerns were not as bad as first thought.
- The Consultant engineers had provided a bid document for further funding from the Environment Agency to enable more substantial investigations to be carried out to inform a medium/long term maintenance study for the Harbour.
- The tree and vegetation removal on the Cove Cliff had been completed. Works to install the netting were due to commence 22 April 2024.
- Safety wording and yellow lines had been painted along the working edge of Old Quay Head – these were to advise the public of the no public access areas on the Harbour with signage yet to be installed.
- The working area along the Cove was now distinct.
- A larger, more prominent sign had been erected on the Verity statue plinth advising of no climbing. No further incidents had been recorded.
- Trinity House had visited the Harbour to assess the Aids to Navigation on 26 February 2024, they were signed off as compliant.
- A line of yellow buoys had been placed in the harbour marking Larkstone Cove designated recreational areas to enable an area for swimmers and the use of non-powered craft.
- The Pier car park pot holes had been patch repaired on 8 April 2024, this would suffice for the short term.
- A pedestrian crossing and traffic stop sign had been reinstated near the Water Sports Centre on the upper Cove roadway.

Risk Management – Ilfracombe

- Internal audits were carried out on the following topics:
  - (i) Drink and Drugs
  - (ii) Dangerous Vessels and Substances
  - (iii) Licensing Work – Tugs (works/tugs/craft), Permitting (Diving/Hot works)
  - (iv) Auditing Internal/External, Plans and Reporting
  - (v) Open Port Duty and Setting Dues
  - (vi) Enforcement
  - (vii) Consultation and Consensus
  - (viii) Piloting, Towage, Bunkering
- The only non-conformity was found in item (vii) above, as there was no formal Harbour Advisory Committee set up.

In response to a question on whether a Face Book group could be used as an advisory committee. The Harbour Master replied that a formal adoption of a constitution and at least two face-to-face meetings had to be in place for a committee

to be considered. A Face Book user group could be a useful means of communication.

- The Devon Audit Partnership had carried out an internal audit in December 2023 the findings of which could be seen at Agenda item 8.
- The bulge at Stone Bench was still being monitored, the netting was working well and funding was in place should further works be required.
- The Senior Management Team would be considering a report from the Royal Life Saving Society regarding the use of the Sea Pool.

In response to a question of when the sea pool could be open for use. The Harbour Master advised it was hoped to be Autumn 2024.

#### Actions completed since last audit – Lynmouth

- The issue with some of the Solar Aid to Navigation lights not receiving enough sun light during the winter months had been resolved. It was found that there had been an error during the set up and now that this was resolved the batteries were charging sufficiently without repositioning required.
- Trinity House had inspected the Aids to Navigation during their visit on 26 February 2024 and found them to be compliant.
- A public meeting was held in Lynmouth for members of the public to attend and discuss their concerns regarding the recent Harbour Empowerment Order submission. The Harbour Master, Designated Person, Harbour Board Chair and ward member, Councillor Patrinos were able to listen to the concerns the public had and as a result numerous objections were withdrawn. The remaining objection was reduced from 10 pages to one.
- The Rhenish tower was temporarily closed off to the public. Loose stonework had created trip hazards.
- The Slipway and harbour entrance channels had been dredged.

#### Risk Management – Lynmouth

- The Lynmouth Harbour Safety Management System document still did not contain Key Performance Indicators as picked up by the three yearly external harbour audit carried out by ABPmer in June 2023. Following the recent internal audit carried out by Devon Audit Partnership, it was agreed that the Harbour Master will formulate a Business Plan for Ilfracombe Harbour and then the Lynton Town Clerk will create a similar document for Lynmouth reflecting the aspirations of harbour users.
- The outstanding training policy, also picked up during the ABPmer audit was now in place.
- The same internal areas of audit were carried out at Lynmouth which included the following topics:
  - (i) Drink and Drugs
  - (ii) Dangerous Vessels and Substances
  - (iii) Licensing Work – Tugs (works/tugs/craft), Permitting (Diving/Hot works)
  - (iv) Auditing Internal/External, Plans and Reporting
  - (v) Open Port Duty and Setting Dues

- (vi) Enforcement
- (vii) Consultation and Consensus
- (viii) Piloting, Towage, Bunkering

- There were no non-conformities or non-compliances given that Lynmouth was not currently a Statutory Harbour Authority.
- The switch in the new Solar Aid to Navigation Lights had now been set to steady rather than flashing.
- After complaints received regarding algal growth causing slippery conditions along the slipway it had been agreed to ensure the works to remove the growth was carried out every six weeks.
- The remedial work to the stone steps near the Rising Sun pub, was still outstanding.
- The Lynmouth Study was underway and the topographical survey had been completed. The Senior Engineer was going to set up a stakeholder workshop to discuss the interim findings.
- Sea water was getting through joints between stones on the sea wall during extreme weather conditions. The issue to be raised with Devon County Council and the Environment Agency.

The Designated person confirmed that both harbours were being proactively managed and the status of Lynmouth Harbour was still outstanding and being progressed.

In response to a question about what the Lynmouth Study was, the Harbour Master replied that this was funded by the Environment Agency after a successful bid submitted by the Senior Engineer and was being carried out to assess coastal erosion along the Lynmouth Coast line.

RESOLVED that the findings of the Quarterly Designated Person Port Marine Safety Code Audit report be noted.

## **6. ILFRACOMBE AND LYNMOUTH HARBOUR'S BUDGET TRADING ACCOUNTS**

The Board considered the Ilfracombe and Lynmouth Harbour's Budget Trading Accounts (circulated previously) from the Finance Manager.

The Director of Resources and Deputy Chief Executive highlighted the following:

- The final outturn figures for 2023/24 had yet to be audited but prior year figures had been provided for comparison.
- Under budget overall, however, the operating net spend figure being higher this year compared with last year.
- Income was down by £113,000 but operating expenditure was also down which was linked to fuel prices and sale of fuel.
- There were additional infrastructure works included in the 2023/24 budget.
- The reduction in income was from the Sale of fuel sold at the harbour.
- The underspend on expenditure was due to only spending an additional £18,000 on fuel not the £58,000 anticipated.

- Lynton and Lynmouth had a smaller operating income and the lower expenditure figure of £1,640 in 2023/24 was lower than the expenditure figure of £11,667 in 2022/23.
- Both harbours were operating within their approved budgets.

In response to a question about any major expenses expected in the future. The Director of Resources and Deputy Chief Executive advised that recent infrastructure costs had been covered up to 75% by successful grant funding bids put in by the Harbour Master which had helped. The resurfacing of the Pier carpark was estimated to cost around £195,000, with the annual income received from the carpark at £165,000. Another big cost would be the replacement of the fuel tank and pump, again a funding bid was hoped to help towards this.

In response to how overheads were set, the Director of Resources and Deputy Chief Executive explained that these were set based on an estimate of officer time spent supporting front line services.

The Director of Resources and Deputy Chief Executive went on to explain that the revenue from the Sea School would feed back into the budget along with revenue from the Water Sports Centre. All harbour area related assets could be shown within the wider harbour budget, such as car park income, rental income etc and if a net surplus arose in the future from this activity then Board members could have this ring-fenced for future Harbour related spend.

RESOLVED that the budget accounts be agreed.

## **7. DAP HARBOUR AUDIT REPORT**

The Board considered a report by the Harbour Master (circulated previously) regarding the Devon Audit Partnership Harbour Audit Report.

The Harbour Master highlighted the following:

- The Ilfracombe Harbour Business page on the North Devon Council website was found to have two broken links (as detailed in the audit report at section 1.2 of Appendix A of the agenda) – this had now been rectified.
- The Business Strategy 2012-2026 had not had any revisions made to it since it had been published. The strategy covered the long term aims of the Harbour
- The Business Plan issued in November 2019 had covered the years 2020-2023 needed to be re-drafted.
- The Business Plan covered the Harbour's aims for the medium term and was refreshed regularly.

The Head of Place, Property and Regeneration advised that any projects identified that would take over five years to complete could sit within the Local Plan that was currently being refreshed.

- The Key Performance Indicators (KPI'S) were found to not be adding any value or to hold any useful information (as detailed in the audit report at section 4.1 of Appendix A of the agenda).

- The Harbour Master would draft some new KPI's and bring a report back to a future Board meeting.

The Director of Resources and Deputy Chief Executive explained the assurance rating system used within the audit report. The Harbour was found to be a Substantial Assurance level, which meant there was a sound system of governance, risk management and control measures in place and had internal controls operating effectively.

RESOLVED that the DAP Harbour Audit report findings be noted and the risk levels identified had been considered.

#### **8. MARINE SAFETY PLAN**

The Board received an update from the Harbour Master regarding the Marine Safety Plan.

The Harbour Master advised that the mooring chains replacement programme was ahead of schedule.

#### **9. AIDS TO NAVIGATION**

The Board received an update from the Harbour Master regarding Aids to Navigation.

The Harbour Master advised that the old set of lights removed from Stone Bench during the upgrade to solar lights had now been installed at Old Quay Head.

#### **10. INFRASTRUCTURE UPDATE**

The Board received an update from the Harbour Master in relation to Infrastructure.

The Harbour Master advised of the following:

- Additional bracing brackets were due to be fitted on the new ladders. The seller/manufacturer of the ladders flew from Copenhagen to visit Ilfracombe to see the issue in person and provided the additional braces free of charge.
- Small cracks had been found on First Landing, this had been reported to the Senior Engineer who would be looking into rectifying the issue.

#### **11. ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATION**

No update was given.

#### **12. FUTURE PROJECTS**

The Board received an update from the Harbour Master in relation to Future Projects.

The Harbour Master advised of the following:

- A Marine and Dive unit from Plympton were scheduled to revisit for a walk around the harbour with a view to using Ilfracombe as a base for their bigger boats to travel up and down the coast.

- The Sea School website was now live and the first online bookings had been made.
- Phase two of the Sea School was being looked at in conjunction with Petroc. A meeting held with Petroc highlighted the possibility for a fire fighting unit.
- The Seafish training supervisor based in Swansea were looking to add the Ilfracombe Sea School to their programme of approved training providers.
- The first Power boat course had been held with three attending.
- Exeter University had shown interest in what the Sea School could provide.

**13. LYNMOUTH HARBOUR SUB-COMMUNITY MINUTES**

The Board considered the Lynmouth Harbour Sub-Committee minutes (circulated previously).

The Harbour Master advised that she was in attendance at the meeting held on 24 April 2024. It had been agreed to arrange a visit to Lynmouth Harbour by the provider of the Ilfracombe CCTV system to look at the potential of a CCTV set up for Lynmouth.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Lynmouth Harbour Sub-Committee be noted.

Chair

The meeting ended at 3.25 pm

NOTE: These minutes will be confirmed as a correct record at the next meeting of the Committee.