

Dear Mooring Holder/Harbour User

Please find below a summary of all that has happened in the last year together with what we can look forward to in 2007.

Laid up Shipping

This has probably been the worst year for laid up shipping in the last thirty odd years. We have not had any new vessels laid up at all this year and have seen all the ones we had sail with the exception of the 'Windsor Castle', the ex- Northern Lights Buoy tender which used to be called 'Fingal'.

As mentioned in last years newsletter this is a very volatile market and there are more ports offering lay up berths. In addition, freight rates are high and ships are out there working. We tend to benefit when there is a slump in world trade or other catastrophic events such as severe oil price increases or wars!

Commercial Shipping

Looking back through the records not only have we lost the calcified seaweed but also the zinc and copper concentrate cargoes after tin mining ended in Cornwall.

Hopefully we seem to be coming out of the slump we had last year and have/will have other new or increased tonnages. Already we have one of our customers investing in building new storage silos on the quay to increase the import of cement from Germany and we have started the export of waste glass from Truro to Portugal. We continue to export scrap metal to Spain and have even had a cargo of bulk china clay imported from France.

We hope to be exporting building materials next year and maybe doing some aggregates together with possibly another ro/ro heavy lift. We have even had an enquiry for a small passenger vessel to do a cruise call up the river.

There is a cloud on the horizon though with the requirement to replace Lighterage Quay when it reaches the end of its life. However we hope to work closely with the Environment Agency regarding this as they will also need to look at the upgrading of their flood defences in the future.

Leisure Market

The Truro & District Boat Owners Association have now secured the lease of an area of quay at Newham in order to provide winter storage for their boats.

It has also been a successful year with another increase in people using the visitor's pontoon moorings. We will continue with the refurbishment of pontoon floats at Woodbury during the winter months and have tidied up a number of redundant mooring blocks in the Penryn River.

There have been three foreshore clean ups by the BTCV in Truro and Penryn and we will continue this for next year. If anyone wishes to undertake any clean ups of this type, either on beaches or in the estuary then we will supply bags, gloves etc. and organise the collection of the rubbish.

Municipal Ports Review

At long last the Municipal Ports Review has been completed – essentially the Government want municipal ports to consider five key findings:

1. Accountability and Decision making

As a direct result of the *'Modernising Local Government'* initiative many ports now report to a small committee, portfolio holder or cabinet member. This has led to concerns from some of the consultees about the capacity and capability of harbour management. There is a perception that in some cases authorities' management structures are failing to provide appropriate accountability, there is insufficient stakeholder involvement, and that some portfolio holders are not seen as accountable to the full council for the decisions they make.

2. Strategy and Business Planning

Concerns have been expressed that many local authorities are pitching dues at a level designed to maximise income from lucrative visitor leisure traffic. Such a policy could be in danger of excluding local stakeholders who have traditionally used the harbour facilities for business and domestic pleasure purposes.

Local Authorities need to have a clear idea of what they want to achieve from ownership of a commercial/industrial port as opposed to a leisure/tourist harbour.

3. Management and Performance Review

Like trust ports, municipal ports are operated for the benefit of stakeholders including the local community but, unlike trusts, they not in general governed by an independent, bespoke, expert and directly accountable body. Instead municipal ports generally form an integral part of the local authority and are treated the same way as any other service.

4. Municipal Port Finances

Some consultees felt that local authority accounting methods were not well suited to the needs of a commercial body. Failure to separate port accounts from those of the owning authorities has also hindered systematic provision for maintenance and development and prevented sensible commercial business planning.

5. The way forward

Canterbury City Council conducted a best value review of Whitstable. This was carried out by an independent consultant. This review concluded that a (new style trust) harbour management committee ('HMC') structure (incorporating some elements of the trust port management structure) was the best option. They consider that this has since been borne out in practice.

We have since had a study benchmarking our current position against the Municipal Ports Review together with the adoption of a number of recommendations which will soon feature on our website. It means that we will be doing some more work in updating our Sustainable strategy together with doing some business planning and more strategic thinking. There will then be a period when the new Harbour Management Committee (HMC) is formed which will then be more like a full committee of the Council in that it will have resolving powers provided that it works within the overall Council policy and budget.

What was the old Harbours Forum will then become an advisory group to the new HMC.

Ports Policy Review

One of the most significant results at the consultation stage of this review was that there seems to be a lot of interest in smaller ports now. Whilst they (we) suffer from a number of identifiable concerns i.e. visibility to policy makers, restricted resources and over regulation there is hope that a lot of these issues can be addressed in the very near future.

Marine Accident Investigation Branch

There have been two near fatal accidents caused whilst gybing and the MAIB have had seven similar accidents this year, one of them fatal. They advise that however experienced you are, be prepared for a gybe, and remember that sheets and blocks can be dangerous as well as the boom. In addition they also remind boat owners to use kill cords.

Harbours Forum

During the year the following items have been reported on, considered and recommendations given to the Cabinet:

- Marine Accident Investigation Branch (Undertaking recommendations following an accident involving loss of life at Milarrochy Bay, Loch Lomond & Carrie Kate/Kets, St Mawes).
- Security of Tenure – Residential Boats (Consultation Paper)
- Maintenance of lay up berth moorings
- Ponsharden- Access to foreshore
- British Ports Association – Election to Council
- Municipal Ports Review
- Report following visit to Whitstable Harbour
- Port Marine Safety Code

- Replacement Weighbridge
- Land at Lower Newham
- Draft Marine Bill
- Ports Policy Review
- Falmouth Harbour Commissioners – Draft Strategy
- Oil Spill Contingency Plan update
- Fees and Charges
- Water Quality – Upper Fal
- Abandoned Vessels
- Lighterage Quay – ALWC and Rebuild
- Municipal Ports Review – Special Meeting

We hope to update our web site next year but there is a great deal of information already on it which you may find of use.

Beach Safety

Again another successful year working with the RNLi who now provide the lifeguard cover for our beaches. We still undertake school talks aimed at all the children of primary school age as well as checking all the life saving equipment around the District.

Prince of Wales Pier

We continue to undertake maintenance work on the Pier and it is also used by most of the boat operators taking people for trips around the estuary. The park and float relocated to Custom House Quay this year.

That's about it for now – hope you all have a very Happy New Year and safe sailing for 2007.

Best Wishes

Andy Brigden