

## **MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL MEETING OF THE RIVER YEALM HARBOUR AUTHORITY HELD AT NOSS VILLAGE HALL 18th APRIL 2024 AT 1800**

### **Members and Officers in attendance:**

Dominic Crawley – Chairman	Rodney Carter – Vice Chairman
John Stansell	John Endicott
Peter Hinchliffe	Stephen Maltby (by zoom)
Ian Kennedy	Jez Spring – Harbour Master
Debbie Rhead – Office Manager	Peter Franklin - Accountant

### **Apologies for Absence:**

Nicky Tewson, Mark Steggles, Tom Edie and Martyn Oates

### **Members of the public attending:**

Laurie Wilson, Andrew Matthews, Chris Wilcox, Mark Pinney, Phil Belsham, Robin Forrester, Simon Thompson, Andy Sharp and Peter Hall.

### **01/24 MINUTES**

The minutes of the annual meeting held on 20th April 2023 were proposed by John Endicott to be a true reflection of what was discussed, seconded by Rodney Carter and unanimously agreed by relevant Authority members who were present at the meeting.

### **02/24 2023 CHAIRMAN'S REPORT**

I am pleased to present the Chairman's report for the River Yealm Harbour Authority for 2023 and will also take the opportunity to comment on the recent elections process and resulting changes in Authority membership.

Looking back on last year, I believe 2023 could be described as a satisfactory, positive and more settled year for the Authority, following a period of disruptions caused by Covid lockdowns, staffing changes, and so on.

Last year's summer season was one of contrasting periods of weather – a wonderful warm, sunny May, June and beginning of July, followed by wet and unseasonably cold weather in August, before becoming more settled again in September. Nonetheless, across our 'summer season' from April to the end of September, the harbour was generally very busy as all user groups were able to enjoy the facilities provided. Visitor boat nights reached 5,394 compared to 5,669 in 2022, so another extremely active year. As ever, Jez Spring, Debbie Rhead, Toby Dowling and the entire on-the-water team worked tirelessly to accommodate the needs of users of the harbour. The expectations placed on them are significant and wide ranging, and their diplomatic, positive approach throughout the year has been of immense benefit to the Authority, mooring holders and all harbour users.

As is normal, I would like to mention a few specific areas of activity and engagement by the Authority in 2023 and over the winter period.

First, the Authority continued to maintain a high level of coverage on the water, directing visitor vessels to available moorings and minimising the risk of potentially dangerous situations developing. During the year a total of 27 reportable incidents were logged and included, 7 collisions, 2 groundings, 3 entanglements and a number of illegal fishing occurrences. In addition, as I am sure most of you will be aware, we had an incident at Bridgend involving a fatality and our sincere condolences have been passed to the family. The Authority has agreed to fund the installation of a defibrillator at Bridgend and our thanks to Pam Prosser for allowing it to be placed on the wall of her house and to provide

an electricity supply, for which we and the local boating community are extremely grateful.

Next, a few comments about work on the Yealm Steps Quay wall during winter. The Yealm Steps and the quayside are the responsibility of South Hams District Council (SHDC) and when it became apparent that a corner section of the stone facing was becoming detached, the Harbour Master quickly engaged with SHDC to review the problem and initiate repairs which were completed in January 2024.

There has been considerable local discussion and engagement following the court judgement in favour of the Environment Agency (EA) against International Paints Limited (IPL) concerning historic pollution in the foreshore area of the old Paint Station. IPL submitted an application to the Marine Management Organisation (MMO) for a Marine Licence for their proposed remediation works and a 28-day Public Consultation period began from 7 February 2024. We understand there have been a significant volume of submissions into the consultation process.

Generally, regarding incidents of pollution in the river, the Harbour Master and his team (on behalf of the Authority) remain vigilant to report any evidence of pollution in the river to the EA, which is the body responsible for enforcing laws that protect the environment.

The 3-yearly Mooring Holders' election process was held in February 2024. One existing representative (Andrew Mathews) decided not to stand again. Six individuals submitted nominations and a total of 56 mooring holders came to the Newton Ferrers WI Hall to cast their votes, which demonstrates great interest and engagement by the mooring holders. The election results saw two existing representatives (Nicky Tewson and Stephen Maltby) being re-elected and one new representative (Ian Kennedy) joining the Authority. My thanks to Andrew for the many years of support he has given, as well as the counsel and positive advice he has provided to me during my time as Chair of the Authority. At the same time, I take the opportunity to welcome John Stansell as the new Wembury Parish Council representative and thank Dermot Drought, who he has replaced. Similar to Andrew, Dermot was a member of the Authority for many years, and I thank him for his support and commitment.

I would now like to make a few general comments on our results for 2023 and current financial position. As I believe is generally understood, the Authority looks to balance its books over the medium term, whilst ensuring that adequate funds are retained (and if appropriate, increased) to cover both planned and unexpected expenditures, thereby ensuring the Authority does not need to assume potentially onerous financial liabilities. We seek to set annual charges at levels that meet this broad approach, however, there will always be an element of forecasting and subsequent year revisions.

Income for 2023 increased by £20,435 (+10%) to £233,740 for the year. The Authority reported a pre-tax profit for the year of £18,088, compared to a pre-tax loss of £17,614 in 2022. Staffing and manning costs were higher, reflecting the decision to increase on-the-water support in response to increased harbour user activity and the period of double manning felt appropriate to ensure that handover of responsibilities to the new team was achieved without disruption.

The financial resources of the Authority remain strong, with cash balances of £197,122 at the end of 2023, compared to £218,036 at the end of 2022. Despite the profit generated during 2023, the reduction in cash balances reflects the purchase of a new section of pontoon at the beginning of the year at a cost of £57,253 and the decision to replace the engine on the harbour launch after 16 years of continuous and extensive use.

We continue to review and refine our operational safety plans, processes and procedures, to fulfil the expectations of the Port Marine Safety Code. I commend the Harbour Master on this; his attitude of continuous improvement and learning is a significant positive for the Authority and our user stakeholder groups. We are grateful for the support we

continue to receive from our 'Designated Person' (Captain Keith Hart), who provides independent, objective assessment and guidance. Generally, the Authority seeks to take account of the Department for Transport's 2017 advisory guidance 'Ports Good Governance Guidance', wherever applicable to the River Yealm Harbour Authority, in conducting its affairs.

With the arrival of April, the river is slowly coming alive with increasing numbers of mooring holder vessels, day-users and visiting vessels, although the weather so far this month could best be described as awful! However, we keep our fingers crossed for reasonable summer weather ahead and we anticipate another busy season.

I would like to close by acknowledging the contribution of all the members of the Authority, all of whom provide their time and engagement on a voluntary basis. We have a good mix of different experiences, knowledge and skills that members are ready to share to support the Authority. My thanks to them.

### **03/24 OPEN FORUM**

The following questions were raised by members of the Public:

#### **Are there any plans for more capital expenditure?**

The Chairman confirmed that there were no plans for any immediate capital expenditure but as with the maintaining of all of the assets, unforeseen circumstance may lead to money being spent to ensure the safe running of the Harbour.

#### **Does The Authority do any water testing of its own to assess water quality in the Harbour?**

The Chairman advised that the Authority does not currently do any independent water testing but that there is an Environment Policy and is very vigilant in identifying any source of contamination and reporting this to the Environment Agency. The HM also confirmed that various external agencies such as SWW and Plymouth University also regularly conduct tests and research on areas of the river. Peter Hinchliffe also confirmed that South-West Water Quality also conduct testing.

#### **Can The Authority try to ensure that the Rules and Regulations on the length of painters of dinghies on the Yealm Steps pontoon are enforced?**

The HM explained that this is an on-going issue and the Authority continues to communicate and educate with many reminders, emails and phone calls to tender owners. The HM assured the attendees that reminders would be issued to the river users and the harbour staff would continue to police this in order to try to reduce the number of offenders.

#### **What are the plans for the derelict vessel by Bridgend Quay that has been in disrepair for a number of years?**

The HM sympathised with the attendees and advised them that we too, had also had many broken promises over a number of months that the vessel would be removed from the river, none of which have come to fruition. The Authority will look to find a resolution and investigate the removal options available.

#### **The Quay at Bridgend is very slippery after a high spring tide and a local resident has been sweeping it to try to make it safer. Can the Authority help with this?**

It was agreed that the Authority will endeavour to check and clear the quay after the high tides. The HM also requested that if ever an issue arises local residents should ring the Harbour Office to alert them so that it can be addressed and dealt with.

**There has been a parking problem on Bridgend Quay over the years, can this be addressed?**

It was agreed that this is less of a problem now than it has been in the past but efforts to more regularly police the quay by The Authority would help. The dinghy parking has now been marked out with bays and so this should also help with the managing available space on the quay.

**The was talk of discount for electric outboard users in the past, is this something that may be implemented?**

The Chairman confirmed that this was once discussed but that no further plans were in place to implement this.

**04/24 AUDIT REPORT AND SIGNING OF THE 2023 ACCOUNTS**

The Chairman handed over to Peter Franklin from Franklins Accountants Ltd to talk through the 2023 accounts. The audit has now been completed and confirmed that turnover for 2023 increased by £20,435 (+10%) to £233,740 for the year. The Authority reported a pre-tax profit of £14,024 for the year compared to a pre-tax loss of £17,614 in 2022.

The financial resources of the Authority remain strong with cash balances of £197,122 at 31<sup>st</sup> December, compared to £218,036 at 31<sup>st</sup> December 2022. Despite the profit generated during 2023, the reduction in cash balances reflects the purchase of a new section of pontoon at the beginning of the year at a cost of £57,253.

**05/24 ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN**

Dominic Crawley has offered to remain as Chairman for the next year. Rodney Carter proposed that Dominic continues in his post as Chairman of the Authority for another year. This was seconded by Stephen Maltby and unanimously agreed.

**06/24 ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIRMAN**

John Endicott proposed that Stephen Maltby should be appointed as Vice-Chairman of the Authority for the coming year. This was seconded by Ian Kennedy and unanimously agreed.

**07/24 APPOINTMENT OF BANKS**

Rodney Carter proposed that we continue to use Santander Bank, Barclays Bank and the Nationwide. This was seconded by Dominic Crawley and unanimously agreed.

**08/24 AUDITORS**

Dominic Crawley asked Peter Franklin from Franklins Accountants Ltd our auditors if he was happy to continue acting on our behalf. He confirmed that he was, and Dominic therefore proposed that we re-appoint Franklins Accountants Ltd. This was seconded by Peter Hinchliffe and unanimously agreed.

**09/24 DATE OF NEXT ANNUAL MEETING**

The next annual meeting is due to be held on the 17 April 2025, venue to be confirmed.

---

**Chairman**