

**MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL MEETING OF THE RIVER YEALM HARBOUR  
AUTHORITY HELD AT WI HALL, NEWTON FERRERS 15th APRIL 2025 AT 1800**

**Members and Officers in attendance:**

Dominic Crawley – Chairman	Stephen Maltby – Vice Chairman (by zoom)
Nicky Tewson	John Endicott
Peter Hinchliffe	Kevin Thomas
Ian Kennedy	Tom Edie
Martyn Oates	
Jez Spring – Harbour Master	Debbie Rhead – Office Manager

**Apologies for Absence:**

Mark Steggles, John Stansell and Peter Franklin (Franklins Accountants Ltd).

**Members of the public attending:**

Andrew Matthews, Robin Forrester, Nigel Edwards, Rob Cross and Graham Antcliffe.

**01/25 MINUTES**

The minutes of the annual meeting held on 18th April 2024 were proposed by Peter Hinchliffe to be a true reflection of what was discussed, seconded by Ian Kennedy and unanimously agreed by relevant Authority members who were present at the meeting.

**02/25 2024 CHAIRMAN’S REPORT**

I am pleased to present the Chairman’s report for the River Yealm Harbour Authority for 2024. I will also take the opportunity to comment on certain recent developments, including the decision by the Marine Management Organisation to approve the issue of an access licence to effect remediation of historic pollution in the river caused by International Paint Limited Amsterdam, part of the AkzoNobel group.

As it was in 2023, again last year’s summer season was one of significant contrasts, with relatively short periods of settled sunny weather, but, as it felt at the time, far longer periods of unsettled weather. The visitor boat nights reflected this, with significant fluctuations from week-to-week. 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. For the full year, visitor boat nights reached 4,774, compared to 5,394 in 2023 and 5,669 in 2022. Although the numbers were down, we still experienced many very busy periods, largely weather driven.

Jez Spring, Debbie Rhead, Toby Dowling and the entire on-the-water team worked tirelessly to accommodate the needs of users of the harbour. I am always deliberate to highlighting that the expectations placed on the team 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 2024, which are worthy of comment.

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.

A total of 26 Accidents / Incidents were recorded in the harbour during 2024 (compared to 26 recorded in 2023) and were classified as 10 resulting in vessel damage, one resulting in serious injury to a local resident whilst using their outhaul and then various near-misses, entanglements, engine problems and so on requiring HM staff intervention, towing, etc. We also had one incident of a drunken visiting sailor falling in the water at night at the

Yealm Steps pontoon. The Authority have reviewed all risk assessments and are considering the installation of a new port hand channel buoy at the entrance to the main channel that leads upstream towards the Spit buoy.

Secondly, a few comments about how we manage the moorings allocation process. We vet and approve applications to join the waiting list for a mooring on the river, determining eligibility, reviewing documentation, confirmations, and so on. Then, we manage the subsequent allocation of moorings, consistently applying an objective allocation process, considering length of time on the waiting list, size and draught of vessel, available moorings, depth of water and so on. Applications to join the waiting list are raised at Authority meetings, as required by the circumstances, and allocation of moorings are also reported at Authority meetings and discussed as the circumstances may require.

We are continuing to address certain historic mooring allocation anomalies to ensure over time that these anomalies are addressed, following open and consistent application of our policies, rules and regulations to ensure all individuals are treated equally. During 2024, we allocated 64 moorings to people on the waiting list, as moorings were released by previous mooring holders. The waiting lists for various categories of mooring will fluctuate from time-to-time, as demand and supply change, but at the present time, the average waiting list times are approximately: D 1-2 years; C 2-4 years, B 5-10 years, and A 7-12 years.

Following requests raised at the last annual meeting, we successfully addressed the removal of one derelict vessel and have tidied up and removed other pieces of GRP scattered around the river. We have also established a partnership with a local company that can assist with such removals if needed in the future.

As I covered in my annual report last year, International Paint Limited Amsterdam (IPL), part of the AkzoNobel group, applied to the Marine Management Organisation (MMO) for a marine licence to carry out stipulated remediation works, removing historic pollution in the foreshore area of the now defunct International Paints Laboratory, to the east of the harbour office at the mouth of Newton Creek. On 7<sup>th</sup> April, the Authority received notification from the MMO stating that, after full consideration of the facts, the circumstances of the case and the views of all interested parties the application was approved, subject to conditions. The MMO is the regulating Authority and has the power to determine whether a remediation licence should be issued.

It is our current understanding that an access licence will need to be issued to IPL by the landowner, in-order to physically go on site to fulfil the requirements of the MMO licence. Here a small explanation may be helpful. The river fundus below mean high water springs, including the area that has been polluted, is owned by the Crown Estate, who hold the freehold interest. The Authority leases the fundus from the Crown Estate under a lease, so we are the Crown Estate's lessee. The Authority has responsibility to manage and operate the harbour as a trust port under powers granted to us under the Yealm Harbour Revision Order 1981. We are in close dialogue with the Crown Estate to determine whether we as lessee, or the Crown Estate as lessor (or possibly both of us) should issue the licence. Oversight and operational control of the remediation process is certain to involve the Authority in significant work and management time to ensure we can continue to fulfil our duties as manager and operator of the harbour facility.

I would now like to make a few general comments on our financial performance for 2024 and our current financial position. The Authority looks to balance its books over the medium term, whilst ensuring that adequate funds are retained (and as 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 2024 increased by £5,540 (+2%) to £239,280 for the year. The Authority reported a pre-tax profit for the year of £19,685, compared to a pre-tax profit of £14,024 in 2023. This increase reflects a tight control of costs and higher interest income on our cash holdings.

The financial resources of the Authority remain healthy, with cash balances of £219,078 at the end of 2024, compared to £197,122 at the end of 2023.

Our lease from the Crown Estate is subject to 5-yearly rent reviews. The review for the 5-year period from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2023 was agreed finally at the end of the year, with no increase on the main lease of the fundus, or on the lease of the footprint of the harbour office. There was a small rental increase on the lease for Bridgend Quay. This was a very satisfactory outcome, and I would like to record our thanks to Ashleigh Philips at Sanderson Wetherall for his great assistance in the negotiations.

We continue to review and refine our operational safety plans, processes and procedures, to fulfil the expectations of the Port Marine Safety Code. 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.

The members of the Authority 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.

### **03/25 OPEN FORUM**

The following questions and observations were raised by members of the Public:

**Do we have any control over the layout of the Kitley Moorings, as with the current 'trot' moorings it restricts dinghy sailing in that area quite significantly ?**

The Chairman explained that these moorings do not come under the control of the RYHA, however we would be happy to speak to the manager of the Kitley Moorings and explain the concerns to see if there is any possibility of alleviating the restrictions.

**Outhauls and Mooring blocks seem to be getting overrun with Pacific Oysters. Who is responsible for the control of these?**

The Chairman explained that controlling invasive species, such as Pacific Oysters, was not within the Authority's scope of responsibility. Martyn Oates informed the attendees that in the past, the advice from Natural England was to smash them using a hammer to control the numbers. Any such measures need to be carried out at the correct time of year and when wearing the protective glasses and gloves. The Authority will contact Natural England to check that this advice is still up to date.

**When did The Authority change the Rules and Regulations on the length of painters of dinghies on the Yealm Steps to 1.5m as stated in the Annual Newsletter?**

The HM explained, as per last year, that the length of painters is an on-going issue and one that does cause him great concern. Continuous efforts are made throughout the season to check and alter the way that many dinghies are tied up and efforts to educate boat users is ongoing. There has been no official change in length and the reference to it in the Newsletter was an approximate length. The advisability of applying a round turn and 2 half hitches, which can be released under load was noted.

**Pleased to see that a licence has been approved by the MMO for the clean-up efforts by Akzo Nobel at the former International Paints Ltd site foreshore. Is there a way that the RYHA can get involved to help move this project moving forward?**

The Chairman explained that he and the HM are meeting with a representative of the Crown Estates later this week to discuss the proposed plan moving forward. Various issues will be addressed to ensure that all conditions can be met and are logistically practical for all parties involved.

**A licence has been issued to a commercial river user who is a non-resident. Why has this been approved, when in the past it has not been?**

The Committee informed the attendees that this had been granted on its individual merits, and they felt that approval of this licence would be helpful to other river users.

**04/25 AUDIT REPORT AND SIGNING OF THE 2024 ACCOUNTS**

On behalf the Peter Frankins Accountants Ltd, the Chairman read the report he had received from Peter Franklin. The report covered the audit process carried out on the 2024 financial statements. The audit has now been completed satisfactorily and confirmed that turnover for 2024 increased by £5,500 to £239,000 for the year. The Authority reported a pre-tax profit of £19,500 for the year compared to a pre-tax profit of £14,000 in 2023.

Overall, the Authority has £470,000 as reserves, an increase of £20,000 on last year. The accounts show a consistent, healthy position. Nothing has come to the auditors' attention that required additional mention, and the audit of accounts have not raised any concerns.

**05/25 ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN**

Dominic Crawley has offered to remain as Chairman for the next year. Nicky Tewson proposed that Dominic continues in his post as Chairman of the Authority for another year. This was seconded by John Endicott and unanimously agreed.

**06/25 ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIRMAN**

The Chairman 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.

**07/25 APPOINTMENT OF BANKS**

The Chairman proposed that we continue to maintain bank accounts with Santander Bank, Barclays Bank and the Nationwide. This was seconded by Nicky Tewson and unanimously agreed.

**08/25 AUDITORS**

The Chairman 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.

**09/25 DATE OF NEXT ANNUAL MEETING**

The next annual meeting is due to be held on the 16 April 2026 venue to be confirmed.

Minutes approved at a meeting of the Harbour Authority held on 21<sup>st</sup> April



2026 \_\_\_\_\_ Chairman