

# River Yealm Harbour Authority

## Chairman's Report for 2025

I am pleased to present the annual report for the River Yealm Harbour Authority for 2025. As normal, the report will provide highlights and comment on certain recent activities, including the International Paint Ltd pollution remediation exercise carried out from November 2025 to January 2026.

Last year's summer season was, as ever, impacted with relatively short periods of settled sunny weather, but, as it felt at the time, far longer periods of unsettled conditions. The visitor boat nights reflected this, with significant fluctuations from week-to-week. For the full year, visitor boat nights were 4,537. These numbers compare with approximately 4,800 boat nights in 2024, 5,400 in 2023 and 5,700 in 2022. Whilst the 2022 and 2023 numbers probably represented a degree of what we could describe as 'post-covid-relief', the more recent downward trend no doubt reflects general economic uncertainties. Let's hope for good, settled weather to lift our spirits and harbour Authority revenues in 2026!

We are fortunate to have an experienced and highly competent harbour team. Jez Spring, Debbie Rhead, Alex Robson and the harbour master assistants deliver excellent service and support to harbour users. They are the public face of the Authority and do a great job receiving many praises and thanks from harbour users, particularly from visiting yachts.

I would like to mention a few specific areas, which are worthy of comment. Some of them may seem about internal administration, but highlight the range of engagements that the Authority undertakes every year.

First: Incidents. Boats, tidal water and varying levels of operator capability combine to produce the potential for risks and incidents. Last year recorded incidents were lower than in 2024, with a total of 15 compared to 26 during 2024. Eight were categorised as vessel damage, two, resulted in personal injury, four were fishing related and there was one incident of theft. The harbour team go out of their way to highlight the risks of tidal flows in the river.

Secondly: Waiting list and mooring allocations management. Over recent years, much has been achieved to enhance processes and to ensure eligibility criteria is adhered to in this important and potentially contentious area of administration. The Authority is confident we operate with clear objective principles that are consistently applied. During 2025, we allocated 52 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. It is natural that mooring re-allocations tends to occur more at the start of the year as existing holders consider whether to continue, or

not, and this is the case this year, with already 32 new moorings having been allocated since January.

We are continuing to address a few historic mooring allocation anomalies to ensure over time that these anomalies are removed.

Thirdly: The International Paint Limited voluntary remediation programme. The history of the historic pollution caused by International Paint Ltd in the harbour is familiar to all of us. The Marine Management Organisation (MMO) marine licence to carry out remediation works, was approved in April, subject to extensive conditionalities. All of these were met by the end of October.

Whilst the MMO licenced International Paint Ltd to carry out the programme of remediation, it was also necessary to address actual access into the river and the foreshore to allow works to progress.

(Here a small explanation may be helpful. The river fundus below mean high water springs, including the area that had 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.)

Having taken independent legal advice and following helpful and supportive dialogue with the Crown Estate, it was agreed that the access licence would be issued by the Crown Estate, with the Authority joined as a party in the agreement. By doing so, the Authority's rights were protected, responsibility and liability were placed firmly with International Paint Ltd, and the Authority gained the ability to secure payment for harbour dues, berthing, contractor fore-shore access and other charges in relation to the Authority's engagement and oversight during the remediation programme.

The works were undertaken during November, December and early January. Oversight and operational control of the remediation process involved the Authority in significant work and management time. Here, a big shout out for the Harbour Master and his team. Whilst we all have our own views about the remediation programme, The Harbour Master and the Office Manager handled the engagement in a positive, constructive and highly professional and competent manner. Many mooring holder vessels and some moorings needed moving to enable barge access and virtually daily dialogue and engagement with the contractors, Teignmouth Maritime Services ensured issues were quickly resolved.

Fourthly: The harbour launch. The launch had a comprehensive re-fit over the winter, involving re-wiring, general repairs, keel and hull fittings, work on stern gland and propulsion and so on. The work was timely and ensures the launch will be fit for purpose for a good few years into the future.

Lastly: two other important projects that are worthy of mention, namely an overhaul of our accounting systems, and the compilation of an Authority 'Book-of-Reference'. The Authority completed the transition from the Sage accounting system, to an accounting package called Xero. The benefits were evident immediately and have allowed the Authority to streamline and simplify billing, record keeping, and deliver much enhanced management information to aid well-informed financial decision making. Our thanks to Mike Cosby for his invaluable help in shepherding the Authority through this transition.

Just a few comments on the 'Book of Reference'. The Authority exercises its powers and seeks to meet its responsibilities by reference to several important foundational documents. These include: The Yealm Harbour Revision Order 1981; Byelaws, Regulations, Standing Orders, and Policies. For new Authority members, understanding how these documents interrelate can be a challenge. A project was launched to create an encompassing 'Book of Reference'. Input and observations were sought from past and present members, parish councils, and so on. The result is a central reference document, in which very little of consequence has changed, but its utility in providing guidance and reference is greatly enhanced. It will serve as a valuable reference document for current and future Authority members.

As ever, a few general comments on our financial performance for 2025 and our current financial position. The Authority looks to balance its books over the medium term, whilst ensuring that adequate funds are retained and added to in-order 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.

Turnover for 2025 increased by £14,001 (+6%) to £253,281 for the year. Included in the 2025 turnover figure was a one-off payment of £25,417 from International Paint Limited for harbour dues, berthing, contractor fore-shore access and other charges in relation to the Authority's engagement and oversight during the remediation programme. The payment also went significantly to covering the fees for our legal advice. The Authority reported a pre-tax profit for the year of £53,307, compared to a pre-tax profit of £19,685 in 2024, with the increase significantly augmented by the payment received from International Paint Ltd.

The financial resources of the Authority remain healthy, with cash balances of £296,969 at the end of 2025, compared to £219,078 at the end of 2024.

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. We have good people, seeking to do a good job fulfilling the defined objectives of the Authority. My thanks to them.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "D. A. Crawley". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish at the bottom.

**Dominic Crawley**

**Chairman  
The River Yealm Harbour Authority**

**20th April 2026**