

Harbours Committee - 9 December 2020

Public Participation

1. Richard Bright-Paul

Question

The Dorset Council strategic plan for harbours to be developed in the coming months needs to develop a clear shared vision for Weymouth Harbour, understand its many issues, scope out potential strategic options to tackle each of those issues, and decide which of those options should form the Council's strategies.

We are given to understand that the heavy lifting work of developing this plan is to be undertaken by this committee with subsequent review of a draft plan by local stakeholders. The process seems rather upside-down. Does the chair not agree that it would be better to engage key stakeholders in each of its harbours who have intimate knowledge of the issues in the development of a draft plan rather than at a later stage? Those draft strategy proposals, engaging experts on the ground, could then be presented to this committee, thus using the Harbours Committee in a role better suited to its time constraints and capabilities as a review and approval body.

Response

The council has used independent facilitators to engage with harbour users across the three Dorset Council Harbours through virtual workshops and online/papers surveys resulting in over 500 responses. Information has been gathered about how the harbours currently work, existing issues and what stakeholders would like to see from the harbours in the future. The next stage in this process is for a working group of the committee to develop a draft vision and strategic priorities for the Harbours with initial engagement with the Harbours Consultative Groups. This will then be consulted upon more widely. Rather than harbour users only having the opportunity to comment on a draft plan as suggested in the question, we have established an iterative process with harbour user consultation at various stages. This is likely to include more direct consultation with target groups, where we can utilise the expertise and experiences referred to, to shape a strategy which will benefit everyone.

2. Susan Boyd

Question

At the last Dorset Harbours Committee meeting on September 23rd 2020, Dorset Council stated that it now has the design for the Weymouth Quay Regeneration Project. What plans, if any, does Dorset Council have to share the design with Weymouth Harbour users prior to the plans being submitted for consent?

Response

The only change to the design previously seen by Harbour Users is the relocation of the centre of excellence to the town. Aspects of the plan previously described such as the fish landing quay, fuel and ice facilities, commercial fisheries compound, harbour office/storage/training space and a public walkway around the peninsula are all still included. An updated plan can be seen on the Dorset Council website. It is likely because the development is within the Harbour estate and that the works are harbour related it will fall under permitted development, not requiring planning consent, and it is hoped to start work in March 2021. The development will 'hug' the harbour quayside leaving a significant amount of space on the peninsula for future development. The old harbour buildings on the peninsula will be demolished over the next 3-4 months.

3. Mary Harris (Old Harbour Dive Centre)

Question 1

There remains a significant issue with Dorset Council's involvement of the Harbour community in its plans. The current processes stifle community involvement and frustrate communications. Every major council decision in the recent past has completely lacked community engagement resulting in protests, complaints and costly decision reversals. The Harbours Consultative Group, supposedly tasked with gaining customer and stakeholder insights, has clearly failed to do so on every recent occasion. 97% of businesses in the harbour and 100% of residents have no access to the Harbour Consultative group, and the group has failed to bring a single issue before the Harbours Committee for resolution in the last decade. There are many pertinent issues, some relating to safety, becoming more urgent by the day. Could the Harbours Committee chairman specifically order some real customer research on the matter and order a proper and immediate review to enable better dialogue and decision-making between Dorset Council and harbour stakeholders going forward?

Response

The existing consultative group aims to balance harbour user representation with a sensible group size. Current members have dedicated a significant amount of time and effort on a voluntary basis to represent their harbour user sector. It is clearly not possible to have members from all harbour related groups and businesses, so it is necessary for representatives to canvass those they represent about issues and bring these to the Consultative Group meetings. Comments made at the last Harbours Committee highlighted the difficulty that representatives have getting information from some users and the problems some users have in identifying their representative. To resolve this issue,

- We have revamped the website page where the Consultative group information is held and made it easier to find.
- We are progressing putting links on relevant web pages to take anyone direct to their representatives contact details.
- All new customers receive a “Have we told you everything” letter once their berth allocation is complete. We are updating this to be more specific about the Consultative group and to include representatives’ names.

Furthermore, it has been suggested that the workload of representatives could be shared with their substitute allowing for wider reach prior to meetings, but this is to be discussed further.

The New HM will be engaging with harbour related groups and users and we are considering establishing open review meetings a couple of time a year for Harbour users to highlight any ongoing issues. Over the past few weeks this mechanism has been used successfully to mitigate concerns and issues arising from the rail removal works on Customs Quay, ensuring access to both vessels, fish landing quay and businesses.

Question 2

The imminent repair works that are shortly due to commence to the harbour wall on Nothe Parade are directly outside our premises at Old Harbour Dive Centre. Whilst there are predominantly residential properties in this area, our premises being the only commercial property along Nothe Parade, We believe will be adversely affected by this work (even though we understand it will all be from the seaward side). Could, or have the Committee taken into account the disruption/interruption this will cause to our business? As a special case, would the committee request the Council to look at some compensatory measures for us?

Response

The initial works that are due to take place to the harbour wall along Nothe Parade are site investigation works. The site investigations are due to start in mid to late February and last approximately 1-2 weeks. Letters went out last week to residents/businesses to ask about projects or activities they may be undertaking that the site investigation works could adversely impact. The investigation work is likely to result in the closure of Nothe Parade along this section to vehicular traffic, but it is our intention to keep it open to pedestrians, albeit fenced for Health & Safety reasons.

Dorset Council Coastal Engineers will keep in contact with local residents and business owners that may be affected by the investigation work and will keep them informed of the overall project as it progresses. The investigation work is necessary to inform repair of the harbour wall that is scheduled to start Autumn 2021. We understand and try to minimise the disruption that necessary repair works such as

this can cause, but the repair of the wall will benefit users of Nothe Parade as well as local residents and businesses along it. Previous harbour wall repair works have provided compensation where loss of business as a result of the work is robustly proven.

4. Lyle Stantiford

Question

Most of the commercial pontoons in Weymouth Harbour have no shore power, lighting and in some cases potable water. The commercial pontoons are used year round and generate a healthy profit for the harbour. All of the visitor pontoons have these basic facilities despite making a loss and being used for the summer months only. As a matter of health and safety, can a sum be set aside from the 2020 Harbour surplus with immediate effect to install shore power, lighting and potable water to all the commercial pontoons in Weymouth Harbour that are lacking these basic facilities to ensure the harbour-based workforce can work safely through the winter months and beyond.

Response

The Harbour Master and Committee are keen to make these type of improvements to the harbour facilities, unfortunately costs are somewhat prohibitive for example recent cost estimates to provide lighting and power to all commercial berths are around £160k, the most significant cost being attributed to the utility supply itself. However, that is not to say that a programme of improvements over a few years couldn't happen. The Harbour Master has recently applied for EMFF funding to start this work along Commercial Road and it is hoped this funding application will be successful. Unfortunately, there is no harbour surplus. In recent years funds have been drawn down from reserves to manage harbour assets where necessary. The new harbour master will be reassessing the harbours asset management plan to determine future priorities. The new harbour strategy will support the decision-making process in this respect.

5. Bob Summerhayes

Question

In view of the increasing number of anti-social behaviour incidents in Weymouth Harbour, can the Harbours Committee commit today to making a full assessment of security arrangements with a view to:-

1. Increasing surveillance cameras in the harbour.
2. Re-installing security lighting where appropriate.
3. Assessing the plausibility of 24hr manning of the harbour office

Response

As part of the new Harbour Master's familiarisation and assessment of current harbour operations, he will be completing a review of the security arrangements including CCTV and lighting arrangements within the Harbour, then in consultation with the Dorset Marine Policing unit and Dorset Council Community Safety team, determine the best use of assets and personnel to address the security concerns of harbour users.

This will be complemented by the establishment of the Harbour Watch Group, made up of harbour users and harbour staff and create effective liaison with both local and marine police with the remit of '*Working Together for a Safe Harbour*'. This will be similar to the Poole harbour watch scheme.