

HARBOURS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON MONDAY 29 JUNE 2026

Present: Cllrs Rob Hughes (Chair), Peter Dickenson, Sally Holland, David Northam, Gary Suttle, Lee Hardy, Mark Roberts and Richard Tinsley

Apologies: Cllr Sarah Williams and Mark Saxby

Officers present (for all or part of the meeting):

Lara Altree (Senior Lawyer - Regulatory), Ed Carter (Harbours Manager & Weymouth Harbour Master), Claire Connolly (Harbours Business Manager), Kevin Evans (Senior Accountant (Place)), Joshua Kennedy (Democratic and Governance Officer), Matthew Penny (Service Manager - Flood & Coastal Erosion), James Radcliffe (Bridport and Lyme Regis Harbour Master) and Louis Wicks (Democratic Services Officer Apprentice)

1. **Minutes**

The minutes of the last meeting held on 04 March 2026 were confirmed and signed.

2. **Declarations of Interest**

Mark Roberts declared that he held a mooring in West Bay.

3. **Public Participation**

There were no public questions.

4. **Chairman's Report**

The Chair delivered a verbal report to the committee. He welcomed the two new members of the Harbours Advisory Committee, Cllr Suttle and Cllr Northam and thanked the outgoing members, Cllr Baker and Cllr Bryan for their time on the committee.

5. **Harbour Consultative Group Minutes**

The Bridport Harbour Consultative Group minutes from the meeting held on 11 May 2026, were presented by the Group Chair, Emma Bourne.

The Lyme Regis Harbour Consultative Group minutes from the meeting held on 14 May 2026, were presented by the Group Chair, Sally Holman.

The Weymouth Harbour Consultative Group minutes from the meeting held on 13 May 2026, were presented by the Group Chair, Tim Day.

The Chair acknowledged a concern from a member about there not being a Harbours Advisory Committee member present at the most recent Consultative Group meetings. It was explained that the Chair could not be present at these meetings due to a recent operation but looked forward to attending future meetings.

The committee noted the minutes of the Harbour Consultative Groups.

6. Harbour Master Updates

The Harbour Master provided the update for Bridport and Lyme Regis harbours. A summary of the statistics for both harbours was provided. The Committee was informed that two new members of staff had joined the harbour team in Bridport. Following a review of harbour administration staffing, it was proposed that one member of staff be relocated to Bridport and that a full-time administrative post be recruited in Lyme Regis, in order to improve administrative resilience across both harbours.

An update was provided on the Port Marine Safety Code audit. Bridport Harbour had been audited against the Code in March and had been found to be compliant with all relevant requirements, with a number of areas identified as points of best practice. The full report from the Designated Person would be presented to the Committee at its September meeting.

An update was provided on harbour buildings. Temporary portacabins had been installed at West Bay to provide office accommodation to support of operational requirements. Longer-term plans for the site included the development of permanent offices and a toilet block, although this would require both funding and planning approval.

In relation to dredging, it was explained that 10,000 tonnes of sand had been removed from Bridport harbour, enabling daily operations to continue without disruption. Water injection trials in Bridport had proved highly successful, however similar trials undertaken in Lyme Regis had not achieved the same level of success and alternative dredging methods were therefore being explored.

Refurbishment works to the Cobb buildings were ongoing. Deterioration of timber piles at Victoria Pier had been identified and their removal was required.

Members were advised that a review of the visitor moorings had identified a material safety concern regarding their capability to safely accommodate the largest vessels reasonably expected to use them under foreseeable operating conditions. As visitor moorings are available for unrestricted use, the Harbour Authority must ensure they are suitable for all foreseeable users.

It was noted that upgrading the moorings to an appropriate standard would require significant investment. However, the primary consideration was safety. The

Harbour Authority concluded that retaining moorings whose safe capacity could not be demonstrated presented an unacceptable risk, particularly given the potential consequences of mooring failure. The decision not to deploy visitor moorings was therefore taken as an operational safety measure in accordance with the Harbour Authority's statutory responsibilities.

In response to a question from one member, the Harbour Master confirmed that the condition of the timber piles and ladder fixings on Victoria Pier would continue to be inspected and if they deteriorated further the ladder could be removed if necessary.

In response to a question, the Harbours Manager explained that there was less demand for small vessel moorings and this was a trend across many harbours in the country, while demand remains good for larger vessels. This was likely impacted by external factors, such as the economic climate.

The Harbour Manager presented the update on Weymouth Harbour. Mooring occupancy levels were provided, as well as a summary of the financial statistics for the current year. Activity in the harbour at the start of the season had been light, however activity was beginning to increase heading into the summer. An update was provided on recruitment, two members of staff had left the berthing team in addition to one being promoted and the three vacancies had been filled through the appointment of seasonal staff.

Weymouth Harbour had received national recognition from Navily in the 2026 UK Marina Rankings. Weymouth Harbour was highlighted among the UK's leading marina destinations, with users praising its attractive setting, high-quality facilities, and excellent access to the town centre, beach, and local amenities.

A summary of incidents was presented. Since the previous meeting, 56 incidents had been recorded, including a number of thefts and incidents of anti-social behaviour. Personal accidents, near misses, injuries and incidents involving collapsed individuals had also been reported. The majority of incidents were of low severity and were generally related to behaviour rather than harbour infrastructure.

The harbour team had responded to an issue relating to a storm drain, while the Environment Agency was undertaking its own investigations. A number of light fuel sheens had been identified and quickly rectified. Incidents involving oil being deposited into a bin were under investigation. There had also been a number of minor collisions and near misses.

The Committee received a detailed analysis of incidents recorded throughout 2025, representing the first year for which usable incident data was available. A seasonal trend was emerging, with incident numbers peaking during the summer months and remaining high through July and September. Vessel-related incidents represented the largest category and were generally small-scale incidents associated with routine harbour operations. Twenty of the twenty-one anti-social behaviour incidents related to nuisance behaviour and trespassing, with very little evidence of marine crime. Vessel collisions accounted for the largest proportion of vessel-related incidents. It was noted that a collision was recorded when harbour staff were required to attend an incident, even if no injury or damage occurred.

Analysis did not identify any particular hotspot within the harbour, indicating that there was no single major area of concern. A number of incidents initially categorised as breaches of General Directions had not met the required threshold and had therefore been reclassified. These predominantly related to people entering the water and unsafe navigation.

An update on harbour operations and maintenance was provided. None of the recorded spills required activation of the Oil Spill Management Plan, although a major exercise was planned later in the year. Old pilings had been removed as part of harbour maintenance works and quotations were being sought for replacement structures. New CCTV equipment had been installed at the gatehouse. Work to replace the Stone Pier railings had commenced in May and access to Stone Pier had remained unrestricted throughout the works. A dive survey of the sand jetty had been undertaken in June and the results would be reported to a future meeting of the Committee.

The fuel pontoon had returned to service at the end of April following a redesign of the delivery system and the installation of an energy chain. Work was continuing on the provision of a waste pump-out facility to be located on the fuel pontoon. The facility was intended to improve the customer experience and support improvements to water quality. It was noted that waste collection arrangements would be required and that the facility would not become operational during the current season. The total cost of the project was estimated at £40,000, which was higher than originally anticipated, although funding had already been allocated through the Operational Management Plan.

The Seafood Festival would take place over the coming weekend. The first artisanal market had been reported as a successful, busy and well-attended event. Members also noted that the IQFoil Championships were scheduled to take place in September.

In response to questions the Harbour Manager explained that

- The Harbour Manager had met with the fire service and discussed the danger of lithium batteries that could be present on vessels in the event of a fire and options were being explored on how to communicate the risks to customers.
- The cost of removing the linkspan ramp and replacing it with a slipway were being considered and it could be included as part of a wider project to replace/repair Wall E (commercial berth one), to reduce the cost.
- The fuel pontoon only supplied red diesel.
- The fees from traders at the artisan markets goes to the harbour.
- In order to bring the seafood festival to the harbourside and have it as a free event a contribution from the harbour was required.

The committee noted the updates.

7. Flood & Coastal Erosion Risk Management (FCERM) Engineering Update

The Service Manager for Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management (FCERM) provided an update on engineering matters across the harbours.

At Bridport Harbour, inspections had been undertaken in June and July. Harbour wall improvement works had been completed earlier in the month. Further construction works were scheduled to take place during the autumn.

At Lyme Regis Harbour, inspections and repair works had been scheduled for the previous week but had been postponed due to the hot weather. Repairs had been completed to a void identified at the base of the Cobb wall and the site would continue to be monitored. An update was also provided on the Lyme Regis Environmental Improvement Scheme Phase 5. Key stakeholders had been consulted on the proposals and the project had secured Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funding to address the remaining funding gap, enabling the scheme to progress. Subject to the necessary approvals, construction was expected to commence in summer 2027.

At Weymouth Harbour, inspections and repair works were scheduled to take place later in July.

An application to address a funding shortfall had been successful. It was anticipated that the Outline Business Case would be ready for submission in 2027. Members were advised that works to Harbour Walls F and G remained on programme and were expected to be completed on time. In relation to Harbour Wall E, areas of localised deterioration had been identified and a condition survey was being undertaken. The results of the survey would inform the scope of any future commissioned works.

In response to questions from members the officers provided the following responses:

- Funding for the pre-construction phase of the Lyme Regis Environmental Improvement Scheme Phase 5 had been secured and an overall funding matrix had been completed and it was anticipated that there was enough funding for the full scheme.
- The business case had been delayed due to changes in funding rules.
- Engineers would continue to inspect the walls annually so there was good knowledge of the condition of the walls.

Members noted the engineering updates.

8. Harbours Year End Budget Report 2025-26

The Harbour Business Manager presented the year end budget report. It was explained that service recharge calculations had been revised from the original budgets, resulting in increased costs for both Bridport and Lyme Regis. Staff costs had also increased as a result of the nationally agreed pay award being higher than had been budgeted for. At Bridport, a vacant mechanic post had contributed to staffing variances, while seasonal staffing costs at both Bridport and Lyme Regis had been reviewed. At Weymouth, additional staffing costs had been incurred due to a recruitment gap in the mooring team, although this had been partially offset by a small reduction in seasonal staff costs.

The year-end position for Bridport showed an increased surplus. It was noted that part of this increase related to the reorganisation of funding arrangements, with

some expenditure previously funded from revenue budgets now being funded from reserves. Members were advised that there were plans to adopt this approach more widely in future years. Significant additional expenditure had been incurred as a result of storm damage works. However, routine dredging costs, including water injection dredging, had been below budget. There were also a number of minor variances relating to business rates and banking charges. Overall, harbour income had generally performed in line with budget expectations.

The financial position at Lyme Regis had been more challenging, with a budget shortfall of approximately £30,000. It was reported that the harbour had been on track to achieve its budget position before the impact of storm damage costs. Lyme Regis ultimately recorded a net cost of £34,000, with the resulting overspend being absorbed within the wider Place Directorate budget.

Members were informed that Weymouth had experienced a successful financial year, with most areas achieving or exceeding budgeted expectations. Two significant factors had contributed to the positive position. The delay to Harbour Walls F and G works had meant that income from the Pavilion Car Park had not been affected. In addition, income generated from the fish landing quay had performed strongly and had not been included within the original budget. Offsetting pressures included increased energy costs following the installation of a new electrical supply and the cost of repairing a water leak on the Peninsula. These costs had been partly mitigated by underspends on routine maintenance and management costs.

Reserve balances for both Weymouth and Bridport remained well established. The year-end reserve balance for Bridport stood at £282,000. Storm damage costs had been partly offset by £200,000 of support approved from the Directorate's emergency fund. A programme of works had been scheduled for 2025/26. Owing to peak summer operational demands, a number of projects were not expected to commence until later in the season.

The committee noted the year end budget report.

9. Harbours Budget Monitoring Report 2026-27

The Harbours Business Manager presented the budget monitoring report. A summary of the budgets for all three harbours was provided and it was noted that there were no major variances from the forecasted budgets.

Officers provided the following responses to questions from members:

- In Bridport there was some concern over additional expenditure and work was being done to secure funding for the emergency works.
- There had been a slight reduction in seasonal hours to cover the additional administrative post.
- The engineering position in Bridport was still vacant and a review of all posts would be conducted later in the year.
- There was a budget for essential maintenance and if that money does not get used it is assigned to the reserves and the following years budget would be reassessed.

The committee noted the budget monitoring report.

10. Coastline Cruises Berthing Fee Waiver Request Report

The Harbour Manager summarised the report for a request to waiver berthing fees for two historic vessels in Weymouth. It was highlighted that it had been previously agreed that the fees would be reduced by an additional 20% as a result of the company registering as a community trust, and that the overall fee had been further reduced for the coming season as a result of a wider review of Operating Licences.

In response to questions, the Harbour Manager explained that the fees for both vessels, including the discount would be approximately £4000 and that last year one of the vessels was stationed in Portland.

Several members expressed concern about waiving fees for individual cases and it was suggested that a policy review would be more appropriate than making decisions on a case by case basis. In addition, it was felt that business costs should not necessarily be absorbed by the harbour. It was also suggested that the organisation could seek funding from more appropriate sources such as a grant from Weymouth Town Council or Dorset Council, or from the organisations that had submitted letters of support.

It was proposed by Mark Roberts and seconded by Cllr Northam that the request to waive the fees for Coastline Cruises be refused.

Decision: That the Harbours Advisory Committee recommend that the Cabinet Member for Place Services deny the request for a discretionary harbour fee waiver.

11. Marine Compliance and Enforcement Policy Report

The Marine Compliance and Enforcement Policy report was presented by the Harbour Manager, he explained that it had returned to committee for consideration after being deferred so that members could suggest some changes to the original policy.

In response to a question from one member, it was explained that training was routinely carried out, in line with requirements.

It was proposed by Mark Roberts and seconded by Lee Hardy, that the policy be recommended to the Cabinet Member for Place Services for approval.

Decision: That the Harbours Advisory Committee recommend that the Cabinet Member for Place Services approve the Marine Compliance and Enforcement Policy for adoption.

12. Marine Safety Management System Report

The Committee received a report on the Marine Safety Management System (MSMS) documentation from the Harbour Manager. Members were advised that

the latest formats had been reviewed and restructured to align with the Port and Marine Facilities Safety Code and now followed the current recommended format.

It was noted that the content of the management systems remained essentially unchanged, with the revisions relating primarily to the structure and presentation of the documents. The updated documents had been published on the respective harbour websites and were available for public access. Members were informed that a working group session involving members of the Committee may be arranged later in the year to provide a more detailed understanding of the Marine Safety Management System and its operation.

In response to a question the Harbour Manager confirmed that the documents undergo an annual review and typically out of date information is updated then.

The committee noted the re-structuring of the Marine Safety Management Systems.

13. Forward Plan

The Harbours Manager presented the committees forward plan and outlined what reports would be presented at the upcoming Harbours Advisory Committee meeting in September.

The committee noted the forward plan.

14. Urgent Items

There were no urgent items.

15. Exempt Business

There was no exempt business.

Duration of meeting: 10.00 am - 12.03 pm

Chairman

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