

Harbours Committee

16 March 2022

Dorset Council Harbours Strategy

For Decision

Local Councillor(s): All Council Members

Executive Director: J Sellgren, Executive Director of Place

Report Author: Ken Buchan

Title: Head of Environment and Well Being

Tel: 01305 225132

Email: ken.buchan@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk

Report Status: Public

Brief Summary:

In summer 2020 the Harbours Committee agreed that it would be useful to create a strategy for Dorset Council's harbours. This would set out the strategic direction for the harbours, assisting with decision making and informing harbour users of the priorities for the harbours over the next ten years.

Dorset Coast Forum officers were engaged to carry out a consultation with harbour users which was done initially through a series of virtual workshops and an online survey. Forum officers worked along with a sub-group of the Harbours Committee to develop a draft strategy. At the Harbours Committee on 29 September 2021, it was agreed that the draft strategy should go out to wider public consultation. The consultation period ran for 8 weeks from 11th October to 5th December 2021 and was publicised widely. Documents were available online and in hard copy at a number of locations. Around a thousand people accessed the consultation survey online, where just under half downloaded the draft version of the strategy which generated 82 responses.

In general, responses to the draft strategy were very positive and a high percentage of respondents 'agreed' or 'somewhat agreed' with the strategic goals and actions outlined in the document (see Appendix 1). Respondents were asked, for each goal and action list, if there was anything that they felt should be added or changed. Comments were collated and categorised for each strategic goal and considered by the Harbours Strategy sub-group prior to updating and producing the final draft version of the Strategy presented today.

Many of the comments relate to operational issues and improvements that could be made in the day-to-day operations of the harbours and will be considered and actioned accordingly. A number of comments related to quite specific issues the detail of which will be addressed in future business plan and master plan documents in further consultation with harbour users. Several comments related to issues outside of the harbour authority's responsibility in particular those relating to the highway. A full list of comments and how these have been considered by the Strategy sub-group is presented in Appendix 2.

The final draft strategy (Appendix 3) is presented to committee today for approval and adoption.

Recommendation:

Harbours Committee approve and adopt the Dorset Council Harbours Strategy.

Reason for Recommendation:

The draft Dorset Council Harbours Strategy sets out the strategic direction for our harbours. The Strategy has been widely consulted upon in its development and through an eight-week public consultation on the draft strategy document. Responses to the public consultation were very supportive of the strategy objectives and proposed actions.

1. Report

1.1 In Summer 2020, the Harbours Committee agreed that it would be useful to develop a Strategy for all of Dorset Council's Harbours. The purpose of the strategy is to:

- Set out a vision, aims, objectives and strategic goals to guide the development of the harbours.
- Provide a working framework to ensure harbour users, local communities and key stakeholders know what they can expect in Weymouth, Bridport and Lyme Regis harbours regarding development of the harbours over the next 10 years.
- Aid regional and local planning bodies to understand the ambitions of the harbours under Dorset Council and help to ensure that future harbour development remains coherent with change delivered through the Council's Economic Plan, Neighbourhood Plans, and other regional and local strategies.
- Generate a partnership approach to the development of the three harbours.

- 1.2 Dorset Coast Forum officers were engaged to carry out a consultation with harbour users which was done initially through a series of virtual workshops and an online survey resulting in over 500 responses. Forum officers worked along with a sub-group of the Harbours Committee to develop a draft strategy. The draft strategy has gone through a number of iterations and has also involved consultation with the three harbour consultative groups and their constituents and harbour related competent and relevant authorities.
- 1.3 At the Harbours Committee on 29th September 2021, it was agreed that the draft strategy should go out to wider public consultation. The consultation period ran for 8 weeks from 11th October to 5th December 2021.
- 1.4 The consultation was publicised in the local press, through a number of social media channels and directly by the harbour consultative groups and harbour user databases held at Weymouth, Bridport and Lyme Regis Harbours. The consultation documents and survey were available at local libraries, the harbour offices and online. A thousand people accessed the consultation survey online, where just under half downloaded the draft version of the strategy which generated 82 responses.
- 1.5 On average 90% of respondents 'agreed' or 'somewhat agreed' with the six strategic goals. Each strategic goal is accompanied by a list of actions to be delivered over the next ten years with the aim of maintain and enhancing safety, strengthening relationships, increasing economic benefits, improving economic and environmental sustainability, and celebrating the harbours' natural and cultural heritage. On average, the actions listed under the strategic goals 1-6 were supported with 85%, 81%, 68%, 75%, 83% and 77% of respondents in agreement or some agreement with the proposed actions (Appendix 1).
- 1.6 The Harbours Strategy sub-group met to discuss the consultation results and scrutinise the comments made. How these comments were considered is outlined in Appendix 2. Some of the main areas that were commented upon are outlined below.
- 1.7 A large number of comments related to specific operational issues at the harbours. These issues would not normally form part of a high-level strategy, but there will be opportunities to consider the issues raised in the development of more detailed business and master plans, and also

directly through the Harbour Consultative Groups and the respective harbour offices.

- 1.8 Some respondents had concerns about the cost of delivering the strategy and whether becoming financially self-sufficient was indeed achievable. In updating the strategy, the sub-group sought to clarify that the goal is for the harbours to become self-sufficient in their daily operations but to recognise that the ongoing management of significant infrastructure around the harbours such as harbour walls would require more than is possible for the harbours to generate from fees and charges. External funding would be required to meet this need along with ongoing support from Dorset Council.
- 1.9 Several comments were made around the importance of heritage and the individual character of each of the harbours and how this shouldn't be lost in future development plans. It is outlined in the strategy that the harbours are individual and unique to their own communities. The intention is to enhance these characteristics and ensure future development is appropriate and sympathetic to the existing character.
- 1.10 Views were received about consultation and engagement. The strategy recognises the need to improve consultation and engagement, and this will be enhanced through the proposed communications plan. Comments regarding some of the technical language used in the document and the consultation will be addressed where possible in the drafting of future documents. It is recognised however that some of the terminology around harbour legislation and operations is not commonplace and will still be necessary to correctly describe future actions.
- 1.11 Some respondents had views on what the future economic focus should be for the harbours. There were concerns that both Bridport and Lyme Regis harbours were operating at capacity in the summer months and any further development would risk the character of the harbours changing.
- 1.12 A number of comments were made in relation to monitoring. Monitoring the progress of strategy delivery is extremely important and following consultation the process for this has been outlined in more detail in the strategy. For example, the Harbour Masters will update the committee quarterly on operational matters all of which will relate in one way or another to the strategy objectives, but it is proposed that there will be a specific annual review of the strategy and how it is being delivered to both the Harbours Committee and the Harbour Consultative Groups.

- 1.13 Following consideration of the survey results and comments the draft strategy has been updated.
- 1.14 The final draft of the Dorset Council Harbours Strategy is presented to Committee today for approval and adoption.

2. Financial Implications

The Harbours Strategy presents a number of strategic goals. One of these is to have a balanced budget whilst building the ability for investment into the harbours. The aim is for the harbours to become self-sufficient during the lifetime of the strategy. In order to do this the harbours will explore and deliver commercial opportunities and identify external funding opportunities which will sustain the harbours and fund improvements. In terms of the wider economy, the strategy supports sustainable economic development and looks to provide the infrastructure and facilities that enable economic growth and support existing businesses.

3. Climate Implications

The Harbours Strategy aims to meet the targets of the Dorset Council Climate and Ecological Emergency Strategy. Adopted by Dorset Council in July 2021, the Climate and Ecological Emergency Strategy sets out a framework for action to become a carbon neutral Council and the direction of travel needed for a County-wide approach. Harbours have an important role in helping to deliver some of the goals set out within the strategy and will aim to reduce their carbon footprint in line with that of other Council Services.

In terms of the natural environment, the harbours will ensure development aligns with the DEFRA 25-year environment plan using resources sustainably, managing exposure to chemicals, mitigating, and adapting to climate change, minimizing waste, and enhancing biosecurity.

Adaptation to Climate Change will be required going forward and harbour operations will work alongside Dorset Council's coastal engineers as Flood and Coastal Risk Management Plans are delivered in response to sea-level rise and increased storm conditions providing safe spaces for harbour users.

4. Well-being and Health Implications

Leisure and recreation are key components of each of our harbours. Water sports including sailing, rowing, scuba diving, and sea angling are very popular; in addition, sight-seeing and many other leisure activities are supported by the harbours. All of these activities promote the health and well-being of our communities and visitors. Culturally the harbours are a focus of activity for the towns in which they are located. The strategy aims to ensure there is integration with wider culture and heritage projects creating safe, high-quality environments,

that capitalise on the waterfront and heritage setting enhancing community spirit and interaction.

5. Other Implications

None

6. Risk Assessment

6.1 HAVING CONSIDERED: the risks associated with this decision; the level of risk has been identified as:

Current Risk: Low

Residual Risk: Low

7. Equalities Impact Assessment

An Equalities Impact Assessment has been carried out on the draft Harbours Strategy. No negative impacts on those with protected characteristics have been identified. Opportunities around improved accessibility and support for areas of economic deprivation are promoted in the Strategy.

8. Appendices

Appendix 1: Dorset Harbours Draft Strategy Survey Responses

Appendix 2: Strategy sub-group Consideration of Comments

Appendix 3: Final Draft Dorset Council Harbours Strategy

9. Background Papers

None