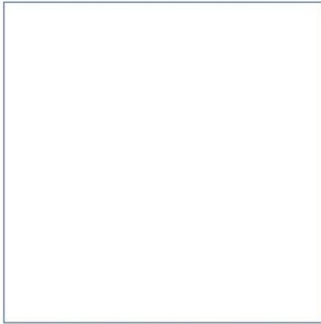
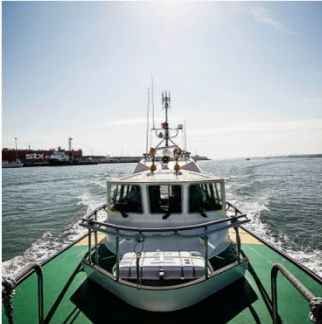
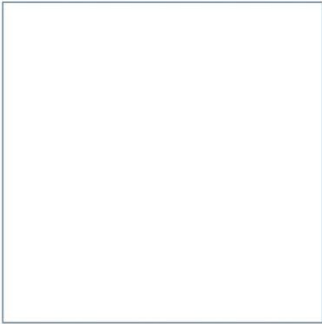
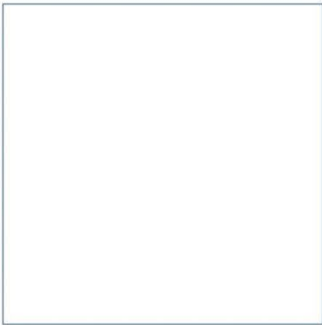


Dorset Council

# Pilotage Review

Bridport

September 2023



Innovative Thinking - Sustainable Solutions



# Pilotage Review




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# 1 Introduction

The Dorset Council port of Bridport has Competent Harbour Authority (CHA) status and is listed on the Department for Transport (DfT) list of CHAs as 'West Dorset District Council'.

West Dorset was a local government district in Dorset, England. The government district was formed on 01 April 1974 under the Local Government Act 1972 (HM Government, 1972) and was a merger of the boroughs of Bridport, Dorchester and Lyme Regis, along with Sherborne urban district and the rural districts of Beaminster, Bridport, Dorchester and Sherborne. The district and its Council were abolished on 01 April 2019 and together with the other four districts outside the greater Bournemouth area, replaced by a new Dorset Council unitary authority.

As Dorset Council has CHA status, this provides the Council with a duty to supply a Pilot, should a vessel Master request this service. A CHA must arrange for pilotage as they consider necessary and may be held responsible for failure to maintain an adequate pilotage service.

Many small ports have no need for a pilotage service, and provisions were made to remove the function by means of 'Pilotage Function Removal Order' included in Section 1 of the Marine Navigation Act 2013. Removal of the pilotage function would relieve the Council of its duty and powers under the 1987 Pilotage Act and would therefore cease to be a CHA. This change in CHA status would not affect the Council's duties and powers as a Statutory Harbour Authority (SHA) for Bridport.

Presently Bridport is not operating as a CHA under the requirements of the 1987 Pilotage Act. This report assesses the requirements for pilotage at the port of Bridport to determine whether a Pilotage Function Removal Order would be beneficial to the port.

## 2 Description

### 2.1 About the harbour authority

Bridport (West Bay) Harbour is located in the north-east part of Lyme Bay. It is a single basin formed at the mouth of the River Brit. The harbour consists of a single tidal basin which largely dries out at low water. The river itself is behind a dam and sluice gates at the inner side of the harbour, with no navigation connection between the two. Bridport is used by a fleet of small fishing boats, some charter boats and leisure craft of various types.

In 2005 the harbour was extensively rebuilt, an outer basin and entrance was created to protect the harbour from extreme weather, the outer basin is now used for seasonal summer mooring pontoons.

Dorset Council employs one Harbour Master, two assistant Harbour Masters and one administrative staff member for Bridport. The Harbour Master is also the Harbour Master for the nearby harbour at Lyme Regis. The Harbour Master splits operational time equally between the two locations; none of the Council's staff are authorised pilots for the area.

The entire coast from Sidmouth to West Bay is a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), also to the south of the harbour there is a Special Area of Conservation (SAC), designated for reefs and submerged sea caves. Lyme Bay is known for its bathing waters, with approximately 40 designated bathing waters.

Dorset Council is the Local Lighthouse Authority (LLA) under Section 193 of the Merchant Shipping Act 1985 (HM Government, 1985) this provides a duty to ensure Aids to Navigation are correctly positioned and operate to required international standards. The Harbour Master is responsible for the navigational marks within the SHA, these are fixed piles with lights and top marks, these are inspected once a month and any maintenance required is carried out inhouse. There is only one light buoy within the area, which is a special mark, identifying the position of a sewage outfall and is the responsibility of West Wessex Water.

Currently the port has one harbour patrol vessel, this is a Rigid Inflatable Boat (RIB) which is used for general duties and inspections and can be used to tow small craft. The Bridport Harbour Limits consist of a semi-circle of 304.9 m radius, centred on the pier end, the limits are shown in Figure 1.



Source: Port of Bridport, 2019

Figure 1. Bridport Harbour Limits

## 2.2 Current traffic use

The port is made up from 163 drying berths/moorings with additional space for temporary summer season (April to September) floating pontoons (outer basin). The majority of moorings are mooring trots, which are anchored to the seabed. Currently 26 of the berths are hired for commercial use. The inner harbour can accommodate vessels up to 11 m in length with a 4 m beam.

Bridport is a seasonal harbour; the number of vessel moves vary depending on the time of year. During the summer months the harbour is busy with yacht traffic and day charter boats, many small craft are launched from the harbour's slipway, with as many as 70 pleasure craft launched over a typical weekend. A recent record of 130 craft launched from the slipway in a single day last year. During the summer Bridport gets many visiting boats from yachts, power boats, small inflatables, kayakers and paddle boarders.

The Harbour has a busy fishing industry, this is made up of 14 inshore fishing and day potting boats, these vessels work all year round. On a typical day approximately five fishing boats leave and arrive the harbour.

All fuel bunkering within the port is transferred by road tanker or fuel cans, no bunker barges (vessel transporting fuel by water) enter the port.

The port has a maintenance dredging campaign, which is undertaken annually by a small cutter suction dredger barge which is 16.5 m length overall (LOA). The dredger arrives by road and is craned into the harbour. The harbour area is surveyed twice a year by a small workboat.

## 2.3 Past traffic, last pilotage

The largest vessel to use the harbour in recent times was the *Balmoral* (62 m) which visited in 2010. The vessel made fast on the new quay wall inside the outer basin; due to the vessel's draught, she was only able to stay alongside for an hour over the high water period. Berthing of a vessel of this size is no longer possible given the current (2023) channel depth, the introduction of fixed pontoons and harbour layout. Given the harbour layout, it is considered that vessels up to 21 m would be the maximum practicable which could be accommodated inside the inner harbour.

There are no authorised pilot/pilots working within the port since the 1980s.

It is believed that the last commercial cargo vessel called into the port in 1986, there have been no cargo vessel movements since. Future cargo operations are not planned, there is no quay infrastructure or cargo handling facilities at the port.

Currently, the largest vessels using the inner harbour have a length of 11 m. The harbour dries out at low tide and is not suitable for vessels which cannot 'take the bottom' or constructed to a 'not always afloat but safely aground' (NAABSA) specification.

Vessels of this size do not typically require a pilot when entering harbour limits. The Pilotage Act 1987 also specifically excludes compulsory pilotage for fishing vessels with a length less than 47.5 m and ships of less than 20 m in length (Pilotage Act 1987, Section 7(3)).

Within the wider SHA/CHA, but outside of the Bridport harbour, the only known occurrence of marine traffic that might be considered big enough to require pilots occurred in 2019. A large coastal defence project was undertaken with the Barge *Sea rock 2* delivering 36,000 tonnes of large rock delivered to

the beach to the west of Bridport Harbour. The barge (55 m) was position in place with the use small tugs and was beached at high water. No pilotage was undertaken, the barge was manoeuvred by the tugs Master. The Barge never entered the Bridport Inner Harbour.

### 3 Assessment of the Need for Pilotage

Pilotage is not considered necessary for the following reasons:

- A pilotage service is not required at Bridport in the future due to the geographic layout of the port precluding vessels over 21 m entering the inner harbour.
- The inner harbour is not suited for any vessel over 21 m, there is not sufficient sea room to manoeuvre a vessel larger than 21 m; it would therefore be impossible to turn a vessel.
- There are no plans to create berthing facilities for larger vessels, nor are there any plans to operated cargo handling, passenger of vessel services that would cater for larger vessels in the port.
- There are no authorised pilot/pilots working within the port since the 1980s.
- The Navigational Risk Assessments do not include Pilotage as a risk control (the assessed hazard scenarios, the types of vessels and the level of risk does not identify a pilot as an appropriate risk control in Bridport).
- There have been no known/recorded vessel collisions, allision or grounding of larger vessels that would trigger the need for a pilotage service, as vessels of this type cannot physically enter the port.
- Removal of the Pilotage function will have no foreseeable significant impact on port stakeholders.

### 4 Conclusion

The review of operations at the Port of Bridport concluded that there is no need for a pilotage service. This is supported by the fact that no Pilot has been requested for approximately 40 years.

The inner harbour is not suited for any vessel over 21 m, there is not sufficient sea room to manoeuvre a vessel larger than 21 m; it would therefore be impossible to turn a vessel.

The cost to the port if they had to provide a pilotage service would be substantial where a service is not required. To provide a Pilotage service would require a training program to authorise a pilot, a suitably qualified mariner would need to be employed or contracted, a suitable pilot boat would have to be sourced and crewed, passage planning processes would need to be drawn-up and pilotage risk assessments would need to be written. There would be no ability to recoup the cost from service users.

The Port Marine Safety Code (DfT, 2016) requires harbour authorities to keep their powers under constant review and take responsible action if required to add or remove powers as duties as appropriate. Presently, the pilotage function for Bridport is not required and removal of the CHA duty is a responsible course of action and demonstrates the Council's intent to amend unnecessary and costly duties where they are assessed to have no ongoing use.

**It is recommended** that a Pilotage Function Removal Order is sought for the Port of Bridport.



## 4.1 Benefit of removing the duty

The removal of pilotage functions from the harbour authority would:

- Relieve the Council of the duty to provide a Pilotage Service for Bridport; where this assessment concludes that no such service is required.
- The cost currently incurred by Dorset Council with regards to maintaining a pilotage service are not recoverable from service users, therefore removing the Pilotage function will have a monetary benefit.
- The removal of the CHA duty and powers conveyed by the Pilotage Act 1987, will save the Council (and the public purse) time and money in conducting risk assessment reviews as an ongoing function, for a service that is not required.

## 5 References

Department for Transport (DfT), 2016. Port Marine Safety Code. Department for Transport (DfT), November 2016.

HM Government, 1972. Local Government Act 1972

HM Government, 1985. Merchant Shipping Act 1985

HM Government, 1987. Pilotage Act 1987

HM Government, 2013. Marine Navigation Act 2013

Port of Bridport, 2019. Marine Operations Plan (for compliance with the Port Marine Safety Code), June 2019.

## 6 Abbreviations

CHA	Competent Harbour Authority
DfT	Department for Transport
HM	His Majesty's
LLA	Local Lighthouse Authority
LOA	Length Overall
NAABSA	Not always afloat but safely aground
RIB	Rigid Inflatable Boat
SAC	Special Area of Conservation
SHA	Statutory Harbour Authorities
SSSI	Site of Special Scientific Interest

Cardinal points/directions are used unless otherwise stated.

SI units are used unless otherwise stated.

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