

Weymouth Harbour Report

Harbours Advisory Committee
20th September 2023

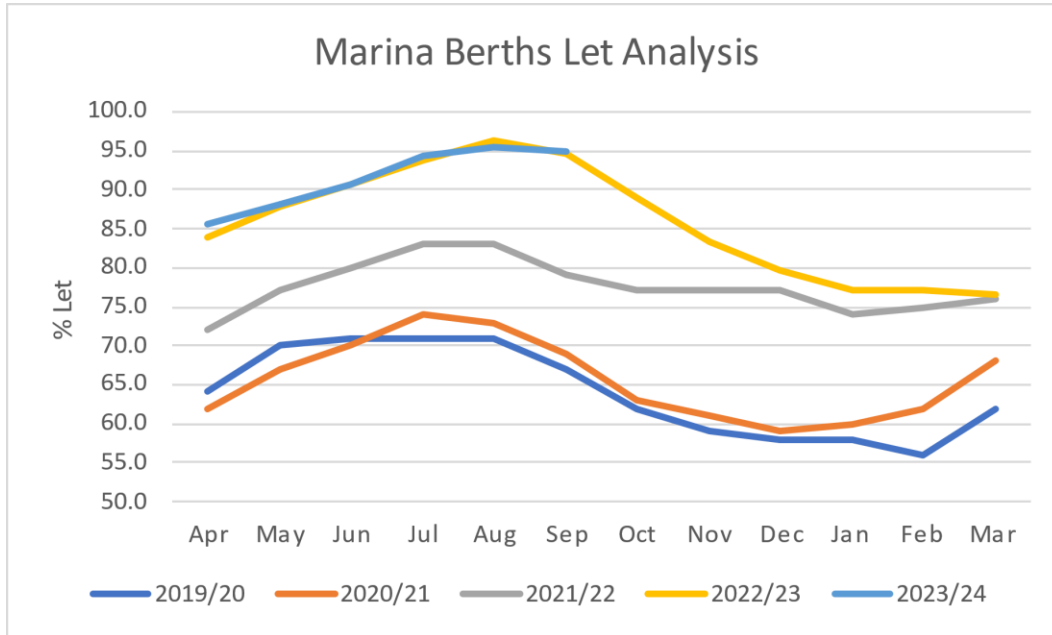


Ed Carter
Weymouth Harbour Master

Weymouth Harbour Let Analysis

Marina Berths

Interest in recreational berths remains strong, with the let of marina berths peaking slightly behind the 2022/23 season, when compared to the same period. While we are holding a significant waiting list for vessels requiring larger berths, vacancies remain in the small vessel category (predominantly 6m LOA and below), where demand is low.



Commercial Berths

Commercial berths are at almost 100% let, with the remaining spaces being less popular due to access issues (mid-stream pontoon) or size restrictions at the berth.

While commercial operators have seen the same pressures this season from bad weather as land-based businesses, many of the vessels have seen a noticeable increase during the last month and the harbour has seen a steady and constant flow of charter, pleasure trip, and commercial fishing traffic.

Weymouth Harbour Statistics

	2020/21*	2021/22*	2022/23	2023/24 (to 01 Sept)	Against Previous Year Profile
Visiting Leisure Craft Revenue (<i>Berthing Fees</i>)	£53,485	£140,501	£152,372	£122,664	-4.63%
Slipway & PWC Permit Revenue	£22,940	£20,094	£25,351	£16,607	-25.54%
Number of Bridge Lifts	926	1,383	1,350	852	-7.69%
Number of Vessels Transiting Bridge	6,151	7,251	6,182	4,271	-14.27%
Number of Non-resident Fishing Vessel Visits	303	167	48	24	-69.62%
Number of Acts of Pilotage	0	0	0	0	-

*Years impacted by Covid restrictions

Harbour Operations & Port Marine Safety – Quarterly Update

1.0 Harbour Use

1.1 The unpredictable weather at the start of the 2023 season, with a brief respite in June, has remained a consistent theme this summer and continues to have an impact on recreational and commercial boating activity. While there have been many sunny days, these are often accompanied by ‘fresh to strong breezes’ and sea conditions during these periods of high winds have been challenging. Combine the unpredictable weather with the continued economic pressures and the cost of living crisis being felt both in the UK and by potential visitors from abroad, the result this year is a disappointing downturn in activity.

1.2 Continued periods of very windy and wet weather have kept visitor numbers down throughout July and the early part of August. Feedback from local businesses at the recent Harbour Consultative Group also mirrors a steep decline in the number of expected customers during this period.

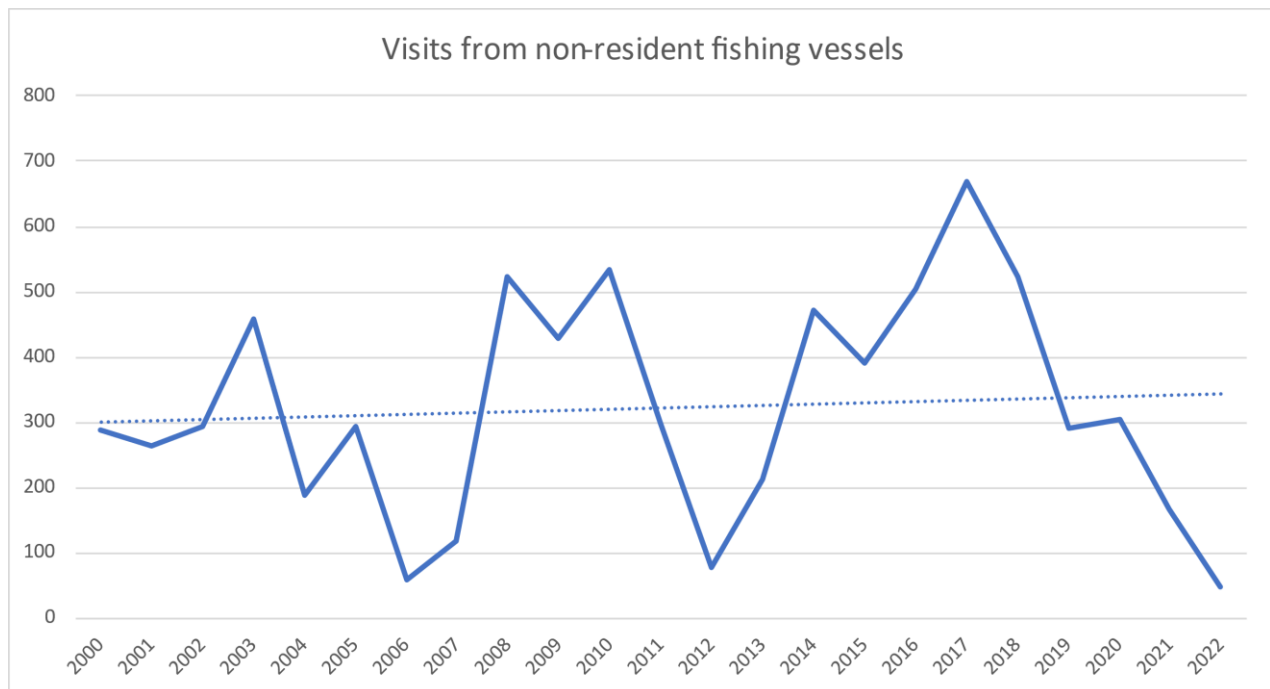
1.3 During August, as the weather has improved, the number of visitors, both on and off the water, has picked up. While the number of visiting vessels in August this year is 14.5% ahead of August 2022, the overall number of visitors across the season is 11% lower than last year. While the promise of an ‘Indian Summer’ is ever-present, weather forecasts for the rest of the season remain uncertain, with a predicted return to cooler temperatures towards the end of September.

1.5 We have seen a reduction in the number of PWC and small speed boat users this year. It is hard to know if it is the weather keeping people away, or if the general move to tackle anti-social vessel use (Police initiatives such as Operation Seagoing/Operation Seabird, changes to ColRegs, for example) is having an effect. Dorset Police have confirmed that Weymouth has the lowest number of instances of anti-social vessel use this year. Discuss with SASHMA/SWRPA at the autumn meetings will reveal if the decrease in activity is similar in other ports outside of Dorset.

1.6 The current pressures on the UK fishing industry are widely acknowledged. The UK's departure from the European Union and the Common Fisheries Policy led to significant and continued challenges through changes in fishing rights, catch quotas, and access to EU markets. Rising fuel costs, maintenance expenses, the cost of regulatory compliance, and an increasing shortage of skilled labour means that maintaining profitability is a constant concern.

Taken in the short term, the picture for non-resident fishing vessels landing catch at Weymouth looks bleak. However, analysis of the last 22 years indicates that this decrease in activity is showing a repeating trend. With a peak of nearly 700 individual visits in 2017, the number of visits has dropped below or close to 100 on four occasions, and examination of the trend in visits over the same period actually demonstrates a slow increase.

With the new fish landing quay at Weymouth scheduled to be completed by the start of the 2024 season, it is thought that the improved facilities will attract an increasing number of visiting fishing vessels back to Weymouth, as well as providing continued support to the resident commercial fleet.



2.0 Incidents

2.1 The Harbour team have recorded 87 incidents since the last meeting, including:

- Life rings thrown into the Harbour
- Fishing nets inside bathing area
- Jumping from Pier
- Jumping from Town Bridge
- Minor collisions between vessels
- Camping underneath Pleasure Pier
- Vessels out of fuel
- Reports of debris in the water
- Reports of fly-tipping
- Reports of missing persons
- Various minor injuries (non-harbour customers)

2.2 In recent weeks two separate incidents of persons falling from the harbour walls on the south side of the harbour have been attended. In both incidents, the casualties were triaged by paramedics at the scene and taken

to hospital for further treatment. Our investigations are ongoing, and we are liaising with and reviewing the incidents with Health & Safety colleagues.

2.3 Work is ongoing to streamline and standardise our incident reporting systems, with the goal of capturing and recording 100% of incidents that occur within the harbour. This will provide clear and constructive data that can be analysed in detail, trends identified, and to strengthen the feedback loop into our Port Safety Management and Risk Management processes.

2.4 The incident reporting system on the Weymouth Harbour Website has already been streamlined to enable members of the public to easily report incidents and/or defects to the Harbour Office. The data from the website, through which our staff also record incidents, is automatically collated. I hope to include this incident analysis in future updates to the Harbours Advisory Committee

3.0 Operations

3.1 Powers of General Direction

Consultation on the Weymouth Harbour General Directions was held over a period of 6 weeks from Wednesday 28th June to Wednesday 9th August 2023. In compliance with Section 22 of the Weymouth Harbour Revision Order 2021, the consultation was conducted in the following manner:

- Notice in writing was given to the Chamber of Shipping (CoS) and the Royal Yachting Association (RYA).
- Notice in writing was given to the Weymouth Harbour Consultative Group.
- Notice was placed on Dorset Council's 'Citizen Space' webpage, a dedicated page providing the public with the opportunity to consult on all manner of Dorset Council decisions.
- Notice was placed on the Weymouth Harbour website and social media channels.
- Notices were placed in prominent places around Weymouth Harbour.

On the 28th of July, the RYA contacted us requesting, due to staffing pressures, an extension for them to formulate a response to the consultation. Following advice, a two-week extension was granted until 23rd August.

Upon closure of the consultation on the 9th of August, responses had been received from 3 private individuals, and from Weymouth Sailing Club on behalf of the Weymouth Harbour Consultative Group and Weymouth Sailing Club. A response was received from the RYA on Tuesday 22nd August.

On the 29th of August, the letter that was sent to the CoS was returned to the Harbour Office unopened. As a named statutory consultee, response from the CoS is decisive in this process. Direct contact has been made with the CoS. They are in receipt of the General Directions and are formulating a response.

3.1.5 It is planned to present a full report on the responses to the consultation at the November meeting of the Harbours Advisory Committee.

3.2 Oil Spills & Response

Two small rainbow slicks of light fuel oil were reported in the Inner Harbour in August. With the first, the source was quickly identified as a recreational vessel that had discharged a small quantity of bilge water mixed with spilt fuel. With the second, and although very narrow, the slick was more extensive and evident from the Town Bridge to Weymouth Marina, a source could not be identified.



Both slicks broke up and evaporated very quickly, no containment action was required.

5.0 Harbour Works

5.1 Dorset Harbours Strategy

Strategic Goal 1 of the Dorset Harbour Strategy is to maintain safe working harbours and provide high quality infrastructure and facilities. The following harbour works are all being carried out in pursuit of this goal.

5.2 Visitor Pontoons

Installation of the new visitor pontoons has been completed.

We have had a small number of reports where the integral black fendering on the sides of pontoons has left indelible marks on the fenders and hulls of some visiting vessels. We have explored options to mitigate issues, and further to discussions with the installer, the decision has been taken to replace the black rubber fendering with a grey EPDM (a type of synthetic rubber) fender that does not cause marking. This replacement is planned to take place over the next couple of months.

In the interim, advice to visiting vessels has been published on our website and is also given at the time of booking a berth. Fenders sleeves are being provided for any vessel that wishes to use them.

5.3 Fishing Gear Storage Area

The temporary 24-hour access compound created within the commercial area of the port has proven very popular and is being used to capacity by local fishermen. The use of the storage area will help to inform decisions for the new areas planned through the Quay Regeneration Project and the assistance we are able to give with the provision of these facilities helps to strengthen relationships with our stakeholders in the commercial fishing community, as outlined in Goal 2 of the Harbours Strategy.

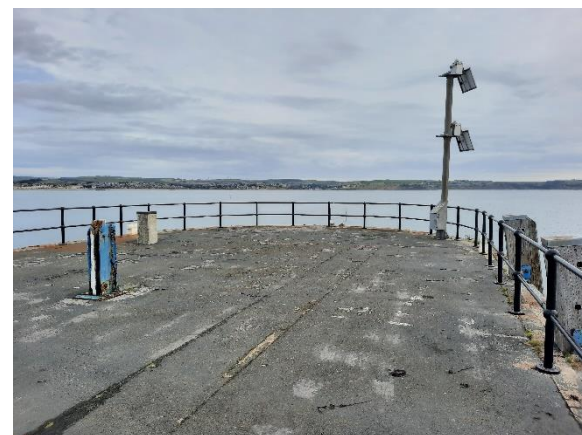


Within the storage area, a facility has also been created (in partnership with the Weymouth & Portland Marine Litter Project) where fishermen can leave their plastic waste (old nets, buoys, fish boxes etc) to be sorted and taken for recycling. This facility is also being used to capacity. And providing a valuable aid to the excellent work being carried out by volunteers keeping our beaches clean and litter free.



5.4 Pleasure Pier

As advised at the last meeting, railing replacement is currently being carried out. Apart from one small section, the installation of the new railings, and the removal of the old has been completed.



Signage has refreshed around the pier, providing compliance with current safety standards and warning of the prohibition of, and the hazards presented by, jumping from the pier.



Issues with anti-social behaviour at the Pier have continued throughout the summer months, proving a strain on resources for the Harbour, Community Safety, and Policing teams. Alongside the continued safety concerns posed by persons jumping from the Pier, abusive behaviour towards harbour officers and members of the public, drink and drug misuse, vandalism, broken glass, and littering, during the re-fit of the railings, on numerous occasions temporary fencing that was in place to keep the public safe, and other lifesaving apparatus, was forcibly removed during the night and thrown into the sea.

A proposal has been put forward to install a security gate and fence across the pier, to control access and enhance public safety. The proposal was considered at the August 16th meeting of the Harbour Consultative Group, and no negative comments or concerns were received. A copy of the proposal is included at Appendix 1 of this report for members of the Committee to note.

We will now go out to tender to produce a fully designed and costed solution to the proposal. It is hoped that installation will be complete ahead of the 2024 season.

5.5 Town Bridge Maintenance Works

Further maintenance works to the Town Bridge are planned to begin in the last week of September and continue until the end of November.

Over this period, weekday lifts will be limited to three per day, with only one leaf of the bridge being raised at midday. Vessels are required to confirm if they require a bridge lift by 4pm the previous day. Weekend bridge lifts will not be affected. LNTM 16 of 2023 refers.

6.0 Commercial Port Berths & Notable Traffic

6.1 Commercial Port Berths

VICTORY, the last remaining tug of the Griffin Towage fleet was confirmed sold in April. It is expected that she will depart for Malta at the end of the season.

Larger Navy and Border Force vessels are using Berth 1 during the summer months to keep space on A/B/C for visiting vessels.

6.3 Seagrass Survey

A seagrass survey in Weymouth Bay was carried out by the Environment Agency over two weeks in July. The survey is intended to map the extent of the seagrass beds in the bay, to ascertain the health of the habitat.

We have asked for the results of the survey to be shared with us once they have been collated, which is expected to be February 2024.

6.3 Nao Victoria

The Tallship 'Nao Victoria' visited Weymouth for a week at the end of June. While the vessel proved popular, visitor numbers were not as high as for the visit of El Galeon in May.

Berthing these vessels on the new ALPHA pontoon has proved very successful. The space lends itself well to displaying vessels of this kind and provides a safe and accessible area for the public.

We will continue to investigate opportunities to have Tall Ships visit Weymouth again in future.



7.0 Pilotage

7.1 No acts of pilotage have taken place during this reporting period.

8.0 Upcoming Events Relevant to Harbour Operations

8.1 Racing & Regattas

- None