

Weymouth Harbour Report

Harbours Advisory Committee
17th September 2025

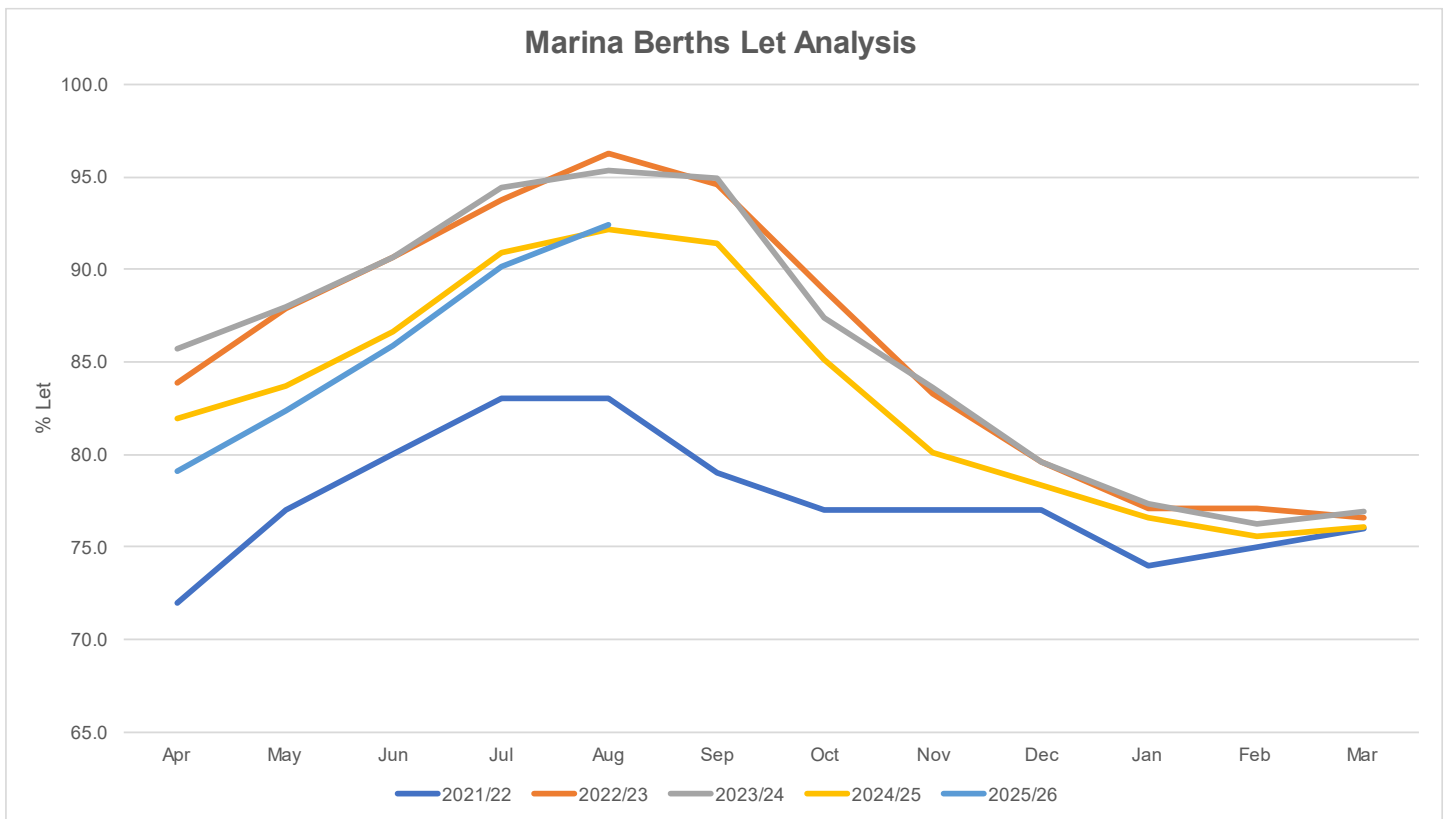


Ed Carter
Dorset Harbours Manager & Weymouth Harbour Master

Weymouth Harbour Let Analysis

Marina Berths

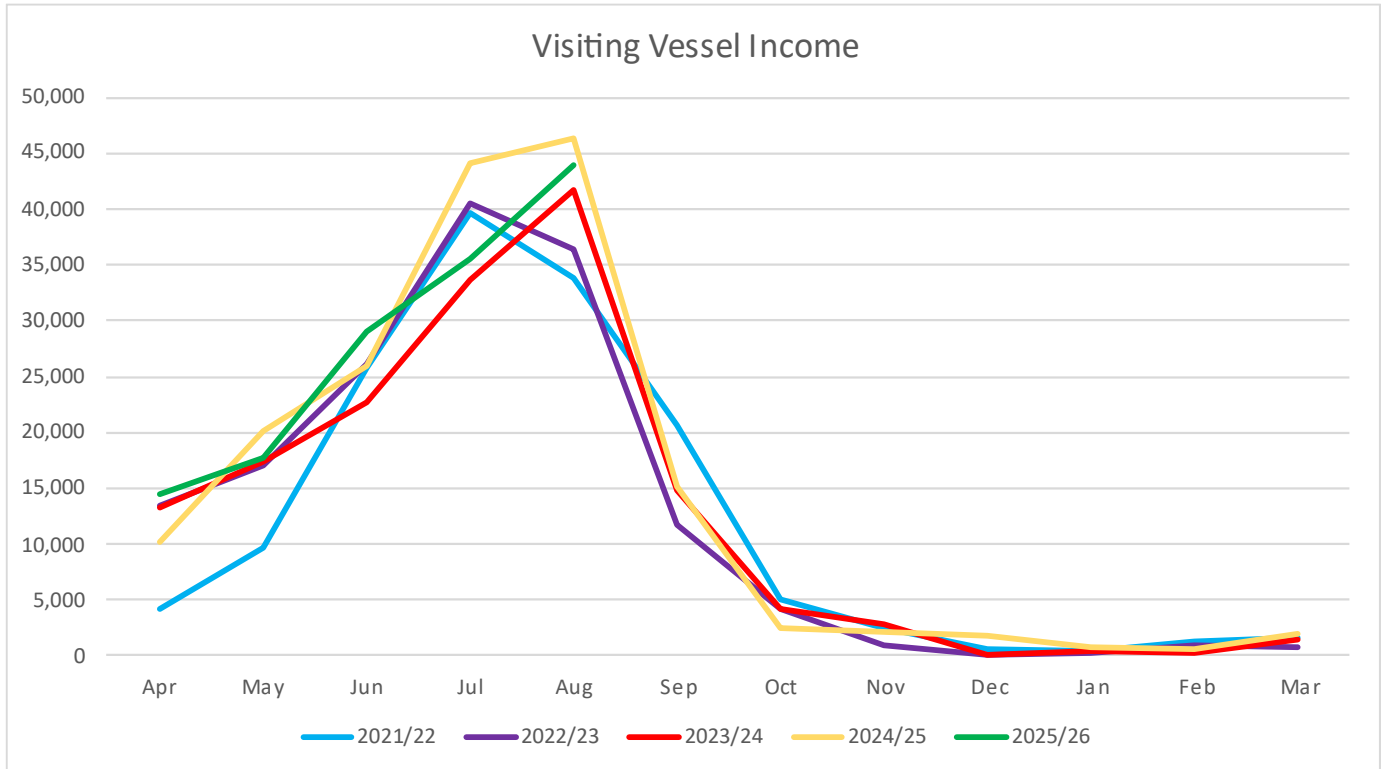
Our marina occupancy during August this year is 92.4%, which is directly comparable to the 2024 season, and still above the lowest occupancy figure recorded during the years impacted by Covid restrictions. Recently, we have seen a decline in demand for larger berths, while interest in berths for small vessels, typically around 6 metres, has seen a large increase this year. The ongoing financial pressures in the UK, particularly the rising cost of living, appear to be impacting the affordability of operating larger vessels. Increased expenses across fuel, insurance, and maintenance may be contributing to the reduced interest we've seen this season in berths for larger boats.



Commercial Berths

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

Weymouth Harbour Statistics



	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26 (up to 01 Sept)	Against Previous Year Profile
Visiting Leisure Craft Revenue (Berthing Fees)	£160,715	£162,974	£183,516	£140,710	-4.1%
Slipway & PWC Permit Revenue	£25,351	£21,382	£17,555	£15,751	6.3%
Number of Bridge Lifts	1,350	1,354	1,404	899	3.6%
Number of Vessels Transiting Bridge	6,182	5,952	5,522	4,347	2.8%
Number of Non-resident Fishing Vessel Visits	48	78	165	78	-27.8%
Number of Acts of Pilotage	0	0	0	0	-

Harbour Operations & Port Marine Safety – Quarterly Update

1.0 Harbour Use

1.1 The summer of 2025 has brought a mixed but generally positive outlook for recreational ports across the UK. Weather conditions have been notably favourable, with June and July recording some of the warmest temperatures on record. England experienced its warmest June ever, and July followed with widespread sunshine and above-average temperatures, contributing to increased coastal activity and tourism.

The broader economic climate continues to influence holiday habits. The cost-of-living pressures have led many consumers to favour shorter, domestic getaways over extended travel. Overall, UK recreational ports have benefited from the favourable weather and resilient consumer interest in leisure experiences.

Weymouth continues to be a popular destination for visiting vessels, and we are seeing an increase in the number of larger motor vessels arriving and staying for extended periods. Yacht Association and Club rallies are a continuous feature of the summer, and many weekends see vessels rafted out 4 or 5 deep on the pontoons.

Despite these busy periods however, we have seen protracted periods of quiet, and overall visitor numbers in June, July, and August were lower than in 2024. The continued good weather has seen more local vessel use, with increased vessel numbers transiting through the Town Bridge and more vessels launching at the slipway.

The new Fish Landing Quay has seen plenty of use in the early and middle part of the year, with the chilled catch stores being utilised predominantly by vessels sending catch to the Brixham Fish Market. We have replaced one of the ice-machines with a unit that contains a higher capacity storage bin, and CCTV has been fitted within both the ice making and chilled catch storerooms. We are continuing to provide better services and facilities, with further space recently created for the storage of fishing gear, bins for the disposal of leaded ropes, waste oil disposal, and the erection of a covered working area where gear can be repaired and serviced.

The quayside office is being fitted out with desk spaces and Wi-fi connectivity, enabling our staff to better monitor the area from a central position, and to also provide a working space for enforcement officers from Fisheries and Border Force to carry out their duties, and for representatives from organisations such as the Fishermen's Mission to be able to contact and work with the fishing community more easily.

Fishing activity at Weymouth has seen a notable decline in August, both from resident and non-resident vessels. This appears to reflect wider national trends, driven by a combination of factors including tighter quota restrictions, seasonal gear limitations, and ongoing challenges in the small-scale fleet such as rising costs, workforce shortages, and reduced access to viable fishing grounds. Environmental pressures and shifting fish stocks are also contributing, while post-Brexit trade and regulatory complexities continue to impact the viability of operations. These issues are particularly acute for ports like ours that rely heavily on inshore fishing.

Looking ahead, the outlook for the remainder of the year remains uncertain. While some seasonal recovery in catch volumes may occur, particularly for shellfish and pelagic species, the challenges

facing the industry are likely to persist. Continued fleet contraction and reduced investment in small-scale operations may further impact activity at Weymouth.

1.2 Surf Life Saving Nationals

The 2025 National Surf Life Saving Competition took place on Weymouth Beach in early August. The very well attended event saw competitors from all over the UK take part in races both on and off the water. While we worked closely with the event organisers and Weymouth Town Council in the run up to the competition to review event plans, Risk Assessments, and Emergency procedures, there was little to no effect on harbour operations, as all water-based activities took place well within the buoyed bathing area, and the event was well supported by their own safety staff and vessels.



1.3 Harbour-side Listening Post

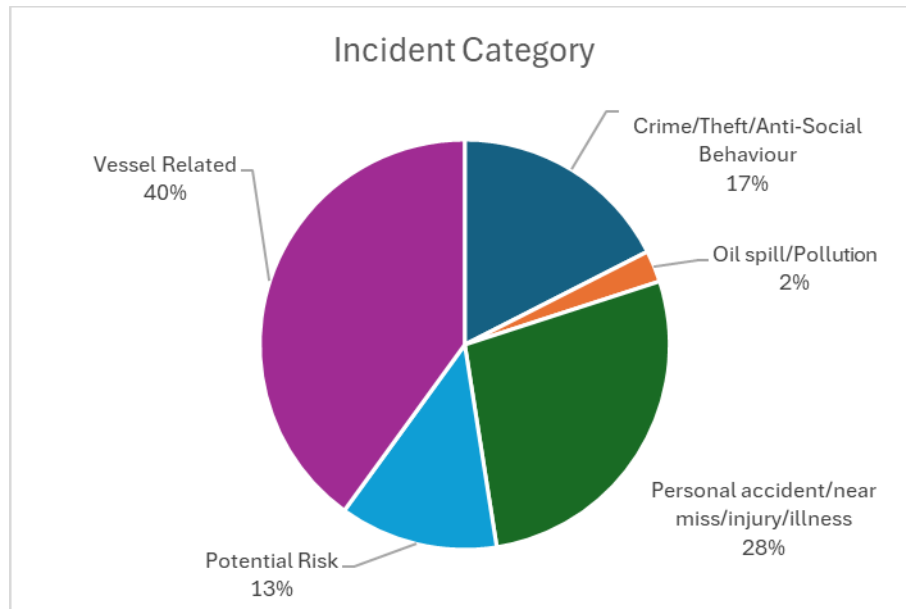
As part of the Children of WWII audio drama project led by Nothe Fort, a new listening post has been installed on the harbour side at Weymouth. It brings a unique and engaging feature to the waterfront, allowing visitors to hear stories of local life during World War II, written and performed by Dorset schoolchildren.

The installation has been delivered in partnership with the Weymouth Area Development Trust and Weymouth Museum, and funded by Dorset Council, the Heritage Lottery Fund, and Weymouth Town Council. It adds extra interest to the harbourside and is designed to be reprogrammable, meaning it can be updated in future with new content to support other local projects or themes.



2.0 Incidents

2.1 At the time of writing this report, the Harbour team have recorded 40 incidents since the last meeting:



Within each category, example incidents have comprised of:

Crime/Theft/ASB:

- Report of loud music issuing from a vessel
- Multiple instances of persons jumping into the harbour
- Graffiti and damage to HERAS fence

Oil Spill/Pollution:

- Report of a leak of hydraulic steering fluid

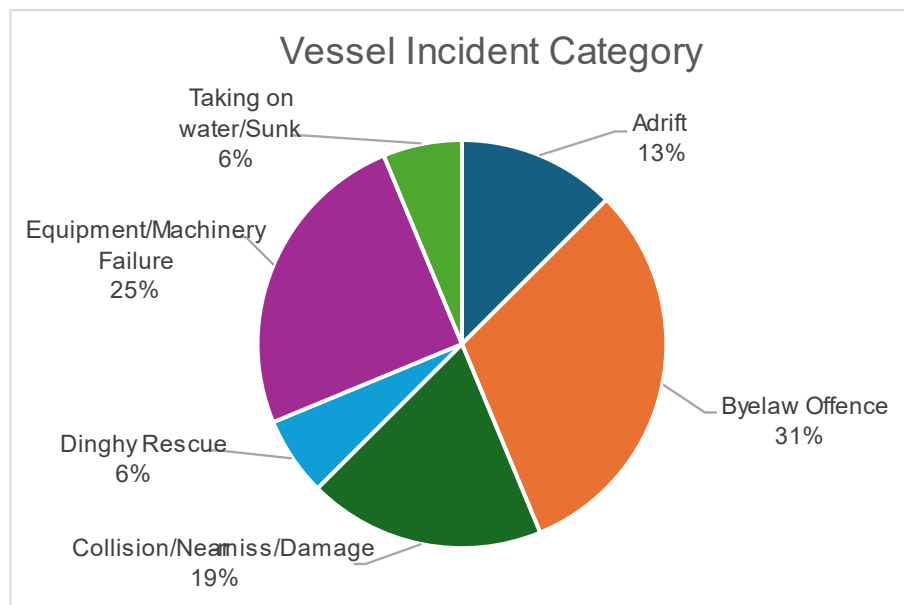
Personal Accident/Near-miss/Injury:

- A trip on a curb resulted in minor first aid being administered
- A jumper from the Town Bridge required medical assistance and was attended by paramedics and taken to hospital.
- A person experienced a medical episode while involved in sailing racing in Weymouth Bay, conducted by WPNSA. The casualty was brought in to Weymouth Sailing Club as this was the closest and quickest point that emergency medical attention could be provided, and CPR was undertaken on the pontoons at WSC, prior to the casualty being taken to hospital.
- A person pushed through the closed barriers on the Town Bridge immediately prior to a bridge lift.
- A small vessel chose to ignore the red vessel traffic signal at the Town Bridge after getting bored of waiting.

Potential Risk:

- Visitors observed to be boarding their vessel drunk (prior to staying the night).
- Fishing gear being laid close to the bathing area buoys
- Life-ring removed from housing

Vessel Related:



Within the 'Vessel Related' category, no incidents stand out in particular, and all fit within what we would expect from a summer season, and the increased activity across the harbour. While in the above graph it does appear as though Byelaw Offences form a large part of the data, it is important to highlight that this category only accounts for 5 out of the 40 incidents attended during the last period. Two of these incidents are currently being investigated further, with assistance from colleagues in Legal, with a view to pursuing prosecution action.

3.0 Operations

3.1 Oil Spills & Response

In May, while collecting waste oil from the tank in the Commercial Port area, a malfunction on the vehicle used by the third-party contractor to carry the oil caused a fine spray of oil to issue from the tank. The machinery was immediately shut off and the total oil spilled was less than a litre. It was quickly ascertained that there was no possibility of any oil reaching the harbour waters. The area where the waste oil container is kept has been deliberately chosen as the area has no drains and is set in an area sunk down from the harbour side, forming a natural bund. Due to the controlled nature of the area the incident occurred in, and the small amount of oil spilt, no external notification was made.

The third-party contractor and harbour staff conducted a clean of the area, and another vehicle was sent to collect the waste oil. Investigation found that an indicator light on the vehicle was incorrectly showing that the pump systems were operating to pump oil into the vehicle, although in fact the pump was operating to pump oil out of the onboard tank. Additional checks have been put in place by the

contractor to ensure systems are double checked for correct operation, prior to being connected to the waste oil tank, and harbour staff will continue to be present at each future collection to ensure all procedures are correctly followed, and that if any spill control response action is required, it is immediate and proportionate.

One other incident occurred in June where a small amount of hydraulic fluid was found to be leaking from a small vessel's steering system on a marina berth. Sorbent materials were used to clean up the fluid. Due to the extremely small nature of the spill, and the ease of containment, no external notification was required. Further exercises are being planned this year to ensure continued preparedness in compliance with regulations.

3.2 Weymouth Harbour Revision Order

Following Cabinet approval in November 2024, the Harbour Revision Order application was formally submitted to the Marine Management Organisation.

Due to its relative simplicity, Ashfords LLP, acting for Dorset Council, were able to persuade the MMO to slot in the Weymouth HRO for consultation ahead of some of the other big orders that are waiting to be processed. Consultation has now been undertaken by the MMO, which concluded on the 31st of July.

Ashfords confirmed on the 14th of August that the consultation closed with no objections and no actions. In light of this, Ashfords have made their final drafting checks and the HRO has been returned to the MMO to be placed in the queue for laying. Ashfords have a meeting planned with the MMO on the 17th of September, where HROs are being discussed, and where they hope to get further detail on the timescale for laying.

3.3 Love Your Harbour

Litter Free Dorset has launched a new awareness campaign titled "Love Weymouth Harbour", aimed at encouraging responsible boating and protecting water quality in Weymouth Harbour. The initiative highlights the importance of maintaining clean waters for wildlife, recreational users, and the wider community, especially given the harbour's connection to Weymouth Beach via the River Wey.

The campaign promotes practical actions for boat users, including using onshore toilet and shower facilities, fitting holding tanks or chemical toilets, and properly disposing of waste and recycling at designated harbour facilities. It also raises awareness of the environmental impact of discharging untreated sewage and littering, even biodegradable items like orange peel or coffee residue, which can degrade water quality and harm marine life.

To help raise awareness and engage directly with harbour users, a series of pop-up sessions will be held around the harbour. The first of these will take place outside the Harbour Office on Friday 15th August, offering an opportunity for boaters and visitors to learn more about the campaign and its importance. The campaign is a strong example of community-led environmental action and aligns with broader efforts to improve harbour sustainability and user experience.



3.3 Marine Litter Recycling

The Weymouth & Portland Marine Litter recycling facility, based within the commercial port area, continues to go from strength to strength, marking its second year with impressive results. To date, the project has successfully diverted over 12.25 tonnes of marine-related waste from landfill, including end-of-life fishing gear such as rope, gill nets, and whelk pots, as well as other recyclable waste such as parts of old pontoons, fish boxes, empty waste oil cans, and broken safety barriers. The facility also collects broken beach toys and crabbing equipment from bins placed around the harbour, alongside materials recovered during regular beach cleans.

The initiative now supports collections from across the Dorset coast, including direct pickups from Lyme Regis and West Bay, annual collections from Mudeford, and regular contributions from Poole. This expansion means that fishing waste from the entire Dorset coastline is now being captured and recycled. On-site infrastructure has also improved, with dedicated bins now available for fishing line,

cans and plastic bottles, glass, and general fishing waste. The only ongoing cost, van hire, is currently being met by Rockfish, a south-west-based sustainable seafood restaurant group. This project continues to be a model of collaborative environmental stewardship, driven by the dedication of volunteers and local partners, and stands as a testament to the strength of community cooperation.



4.0 Harbour Works

4.1 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.

4.2 Cousens Quay

Further to concerns raised by a member of the Harbour Consultative Group, investigation works are planned at Cousens Quay car park to investigate changes in the surface level. In two locations in particular, slight slumping has been observed, and at the end of the summer season the top layers of tarmac in these locations will be removed to determine the cause. This investigation is being carried

out with the assistance of the FCERM team, and the results and any subsequent works will be reported at a future meeting.

4.3 Stone Pier Railings

Through a regular programme of inspections, the railings surrounding the Stone Pier have been identified as needing replacement work in certain areas. Some railings are showing severe signs of rust deterioration, and temporary fencing has been affixed where necessary to prevent accident. Working with colleagues in the FCERM team, quotes to replace the railings as a whole are being sought, which will be compared with quotes to refurbish the railings to a sufficient standard. It is hoped that these works will be carried out over the coming winter period.

4.4 Sand Jetty

While the structure of the Sand Jetty is regularly inspected visually, due to the age of the structure, and the relative difficulty in accessing underneath the jetty to conduct a more detailed appraisal of the concrete pilings, and harbour wall and footings underneath the structure, a more thorough investigation is planned to ascertain the current condition. A detailed structural survey was carried out in 2013 by Ramboll, and some piling repair works were subsequently carried out. It is intended to engage Ramboll again to carry out a further survey to determine the scope of any deterioration that has taken place since the last assessment, and to assess the previous piling repairs. The survey will better indicate the remaining useful life expectancy of the jetty, and if any limitations need to be imposed. A Procurement Initiation Document is being prepared, and we will report further detail to this committee at a future meeting.

4.5 Town Bridge

After review of the repair programme by Highways Engineers, the decision has been taken to push the planned repair for this year to a now hoped for start in early 2026.

Survey work is continuing to take place, focusing currently on the steel structure underneath the bridge, and we are continuing to work with our colleagues in Highways to ensure that when works do occur, disruption is minimised to all harbour users.

4.4 Weymouth Quay Fuel Pontoon

While the Weymouth Quay Regeneration Project area is now fully open, there continue to be delays in bringing the fuel pontoon online. Although Dorset Council purchases large volumes of fuel for use across its fleet, Weymouth Harbour is the first Council service to be selling fuel to external customers, we continue to await approval from HMRC to become a Registered Dealer in Controlled Oil.

After liaising with HMRC for considerable time, following their review of our Business Plan and our provision of supplementary information, we met with HMRC officers in Weymouth in June to inspect the facility. Unfortunately, although we had based our operating model on the way numerous other harbours operate, our initial application for RCDO was in the end declined by HMRC as they were not satisfied that we could provide adequate monitoring at an 'unattended site'. Despite querying this robustly, we have not been provided with an answer on how other harbours are seemingly able to provide an 'unattended site' fuel service, yet we are not permitted. In order to progress, we are making changes to the way we will serve fuel, and while fuel will be available 7 days a week during office hours,

customers will have to either call the Harbour Office by phone, or on VHF 12, and a member of staff will be sent to the fuel pontoon to supervise the dispensing of fuel.

This will of course mean that additional staff costs will be involved in the running of the fuel facility, which will for now be covered by our Berthing Office team. It is our intention to review these costs, along with the wider demands on staff time within the now busier commercial port area, to assess the necessity of creating a new job role in future.

On the 19th of August, we finally received notification from HMRC that our amended application had been accepted, and that we had been approved for RCDO status. At the time of writing this report, we are moving forward to open the fuel pontoon for operation as quickly as possible, and I hope to have a positive update to provide to members by the time of the September meeting.

5.0 Commercial Port Berths & Notable Traffic

5.1 A full size (29 metres LOA) and authentic replica of Christopher Columbus's flag ship the *Santa Maria* arrived in Weymouth on Tuesday the 29th of July. Her arrival was delayed slightly by strong winds in the English Channel, and although she did not arrive in Weymouth until 22:30 BST, a sizeable crowd still gathered on the quayside to welcome her.



During her stay, the vessel was open to the public from Wednesday the 30th, until Tuesday 5th, and initial reports from the vessel operator show that the vessel was a very popular attraction to the public.

The Santa Maria departed on Wednesday the 6th, and we look forward to welcoming her and her sister ships in Weymouth again in future.

5.2 The *Paddle Steamer Waverley* is making several visits to Weymouth in early September. The *Waverley* will berth on Commercial Berth One, and during arrival and departure the harbour entrance will be closed to all other vessel traffic.



The *Waverley* remains incredibly popular with passengers, steamship enthusiasts, and casual sightseers, with an extensive sailing programme across the UK. This year, she's operating from over 70 ports, including the Clyde Coast, Bristol Channel, South Coast, and Thames Estuary, offering a mix of day, evening, and themed cruises. Her popularity remains strong, with additional sailings added in response to public demand and special events like steam railway connections and coastal heritage tours. While bookings continue to be taken by the operator, it is expected that the *Waverley* will host over 2,500 passengers during her trips to and from Weymouth.

6.0 Pilotage

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

6.2 Following the findings of the 2021 Marico Marine review, which concluded that Weymouth Harbour no longer requires a pilotage service due to consistently low navigational risk and lack of demand, since the last meeting of this committee, a formal consultation has been undertaken on proposed amendments to the Pilotage Directions. The consultation received no objections, and the amendments have now been formally adopted in accordance with Section 7 of the Pilotage Act 1987.

Effective from 13th August 2025, pilotage is now only compulsory for vessels over 80 metres in length overall, replacing the previous threshold of 50 metres. This change reflects updated risk assessments, strategic developments including the Harbour General Directions 2024, and improvements in navigational safety systems.

We will continue to engage with the Department for Transport to initiate the formal process of removing Weymouth's status as a Competent Harbour Authority (CHA) under the Pilotage Act 1987. The DfT has previously responded positively, agreeing in principle that the removal of CHA status is appropriate and does not compromise navigational safety. However, they have indicated a preference to process similar requests from multiple small ports collectively under a single legislative notice. As such, while we await this broader legislative action, the amended Pilotage Directions serve as a proportionate interim measure that aligns with both the strategic direction of the harbour and national policy developments.

7.0 Significant Events Relevant to Harbour Operations and/or Access

- ~~Fayre in the Square – 24th to 25th May~~
- ~~National Mixed Gig Championships – 31st May to 1st June~~
- ~~Wessex Folk Festival – 31st May to 1st June~~
- ~~Lifeboat Week – 27th July to 7th August~~
- ~~Tallship *Santa Maria* – 29th July to 4th August~~
- ~~Surf Life Savings Nationals – 2nd to 9th August~~
- P/S Waverley – 1st to 3rd September
- P/S Waverley – 7th September
- P/S Waverley – 9th September
- Ironman – 14th September **Finish at Lodmoor Country Park**
- Christmas Day Swim – 25th December