Harbours Advisory Committee

17 September 2025

Dorset Council Harbours Economic Review

For Review and Consultation

Cabinet Member:
Cllr J Andrews, Place Services

Local Councillor(s): All Councillors

Senior Leadership Team:
J Britton, Executive Director for Place Services

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Statutory Authority: Dorset Council

Report status: Public Choose an item.

Executive summary

This paper seeks the Committee's consideration of the scope for a planned economic review of the three Dorset Council Harbours: Bridport (West Bay), Lyme Regis, and Weymouth. The review will assess the economic contribution, operational performance, and future opportunities of each harbour, informing strategic planning and investment decisions ahead of the next Harbour Business Plan review in 2029.

1. **Recommendation**

1.1 That members of the Harbours Advisory Committee consider and advise on the scope of a new economic review

2. **Reason for the recommendation**

2.1 The Dorset Harbours Strategy 2022 - 2032 identifies the need for periodic economic reviews to support strategic goals, including maintaining safe and economically viable harbours and contributing to the local and blue economy.

While Weymouth Harbour was last reviewed in 2017 (Fisher Associates), no equivalent review has been undertaken for Bridport or Lyme Regis. Given the significant changes since 2017, including the impact and recovery from the Coronavirus pandemic, evolving tourism and marine leisure trends, and ongoing global economic uncertainty, it is timely to undertake a comprehensive review.

Recent reports from the Bank of England and UK Finance highlight subdued GDP growth, persistent inflationary pressures, and a loosening labour market. Local government planning is increasingly challenged by financial constraints, infrastructure demands, and the need for resilient economic strategies. A harbour-specific economic review will provide valuable insights to guide future investment, operational priorities, and community engagement.

3. Report

3.1 Scope of the Review

It is proposed that the review should cover:

- *Economic Contribution:* Assess direct and indirect Gross Value Added, employment, and business activity linked to each harbour.
- *Sector Analysis:* Evaluate performance and potential in marine leisure, commercial fishing, sea angling, tourism, and associated services.
- *Infrastructure and Assets:* Review the condition, utilisation, and economic value of harbour infrastructure, including moorings, pontoons, quays, and buildings.
- *Market Trends:* Analyse current and projected trends in vessel ownership, berth demand, visitor numbers, and charter activity.
- *Financial Performance:* Review revenue streams, cost structures, and value-for-money indicators.
- *Strategic Opportunities:* Identify growth areas, investment needs, and alignment with Dorset Council's wider economic and environmental strategies.

3.2 Why These Areas Matter

- The review will underpin the next Harbour Business Plan cycle (2029), ensuring decisions are evidence-based and future-focused.
- Bridport and Lyme Regis deserve the same level of strategic insight as Weymouth, enabling balanced development.
- Understanding economic strengths and vulnerabilities will help the harbours adapt to external pressures and seize new opportunities.
- A transparent review process will support stronger relationships with users, residents, and partners.

4. Legal considerations

None.

5. Financial implications

While there is no immediate financial risk to harbour operations, commissioning an economic review will involve consultant costs, which will need to be budgeted appropriately. This investment is considered worthwhile given the strategic value of the review. The findings will have important financial implications for future planning, particularly in shaping the next Harbours Business Plan, identifying opportunities for revenue growth, and informing decisions on infrastructure investment and service delivery across all three harbours.

6. **Natural environment, climate & ecology implications**

6.1 There are no climate implications linked to the subject of this report. However, the Harbours aim 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.

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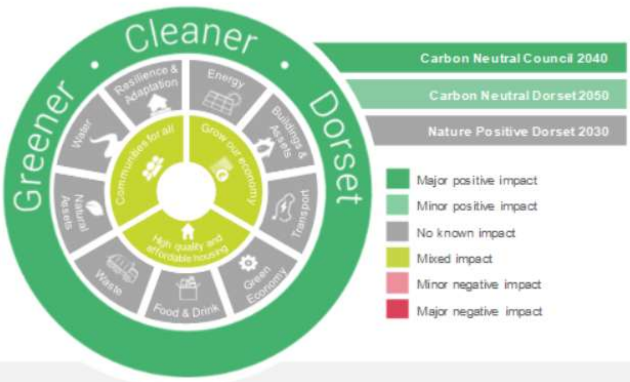

Quantitative Impact on CEE targets (if known)		
	Unit	Number of units (+/-)
2030 - Natural asset extent & condition	Ha	0
2040 - Operational Emissions	CO_2 (tonnes)	

7. **Well-being and health implications**

7.1 There are no wellbeing and health implications resulting from the subject of this report. However, established safety management systems at the harbours support the ongoing health and well-being of harbour users and harbour employees.

8. **Other implications**

8.1 None.

9. **Risk implications**

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

Current Risk: Low

Residual Risk: Low

10. **Equalities**

10.1 There are no equalities impact issues resulting from the subject of this report.

11. **Appendices**

11.1 None.

12. **Background papers**

12.1 None

13 **Report sign-off**

13.1 This report has been through the internal report clearance process and has been signed off by the Director for Legal and Democratic (Monitoring Officer), the Executive Director for Corporate Development (Section 151 Officer) and the appropriate Portfolio Holder(s).