

Weymouth Harbour Report

Harbours Advisory Committee
3rd December 2025



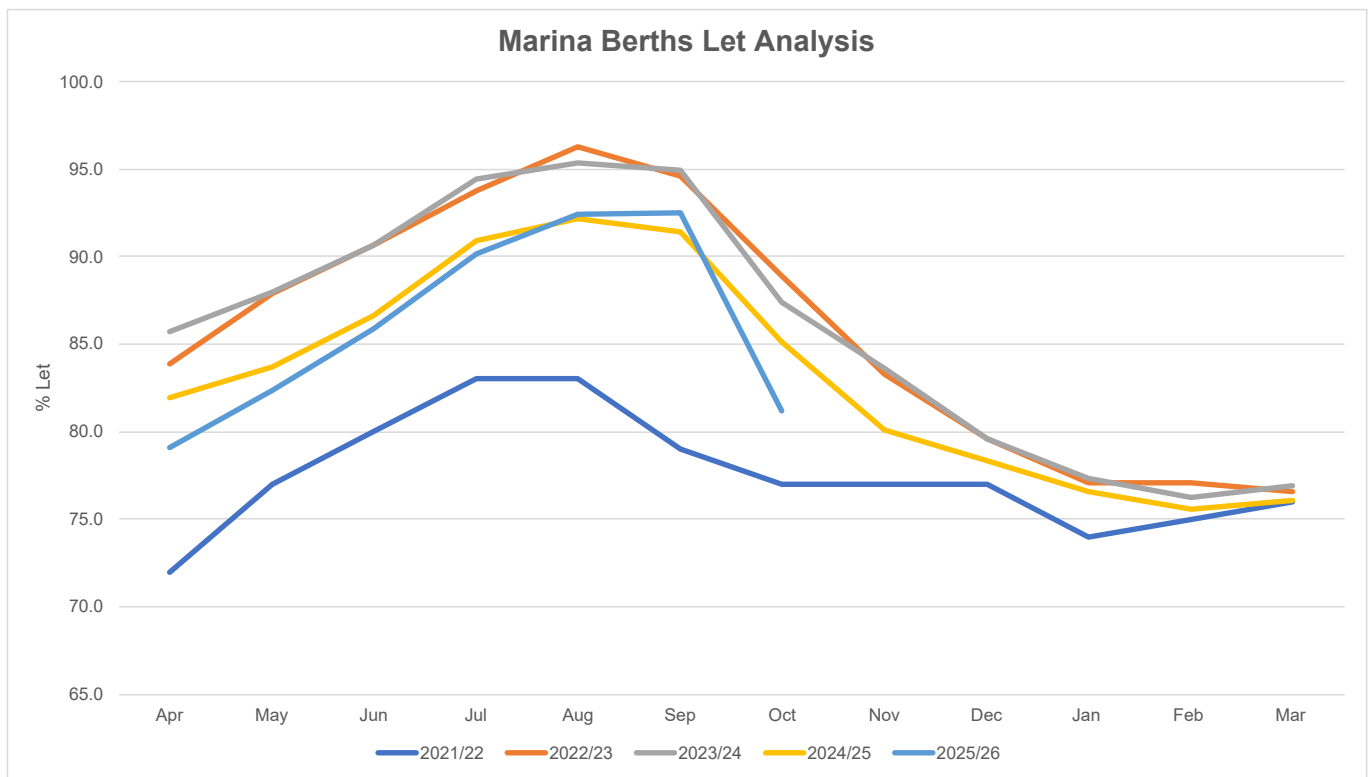
Ed Carter
Dorset Harbours Manager & Weymouth Harbour Master

Weymouth Harbour Let Analysis

Marina Berths

Marina occupancy peaked during September this year at 92.5%, a position slightly ahead of the 2024 season. While analysis of let berths in the marinas is following an established pattern, we have seen a steeper drop in occupancy during October than in previous years. We are beginning to see a possible shift in letting behaviour, with people electing to take up a 6 month berthing agreements rather than a full 12 months. This is especially prevalent in the smaller vessel categories. We collect data on new berthing agreements, tracking whether customers are new or returning, and analysis shows that the majority of 6-month berth holders return year-on-year. We will analyse this data further as we get closer to next season to better understand our success in retaining existing customers alongside attracting new berth holders to Weymouth.

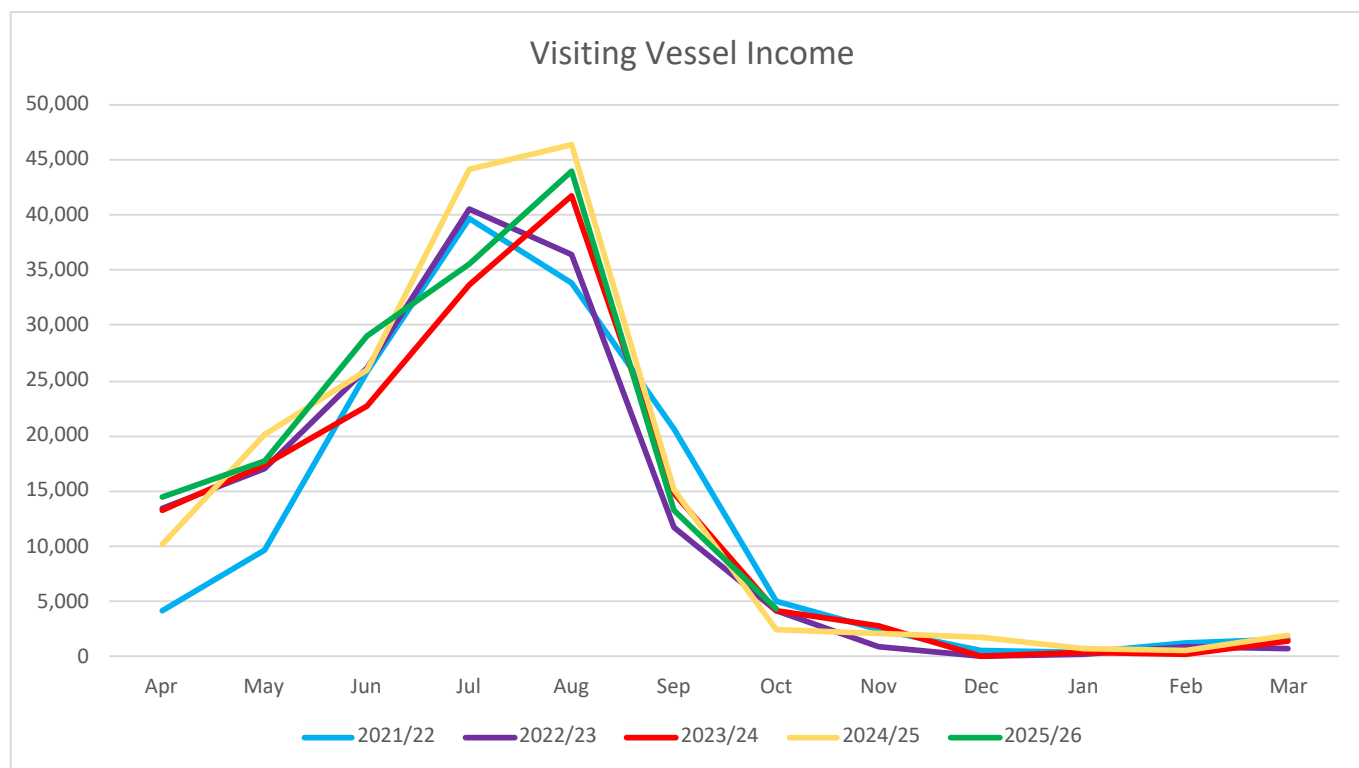
While interest in the largest vessel berths (12m LOA and above) remains strong, with a waiting list in place, we do have vacancies for vessels around 10m LOA. We are however already receiving enquiries for 10m berths of this size for the 2026 season.



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 Nov)	Against Previous Year Profile
Visiting Leisure Craft Revenue (Berthing Fees)	£160,715	£162,974	£183,516	£158,404	-3.6%
Slipway & PWC Permit Revenue	£25,351	£21,382	£17,555	£18,328	10.5%
Number of Bridge Lifts	1,350	1,354	1,404	1,104	1.1%
Number of Vessels Transiting Bridge	6,182	5,952	5,522	4,952	0.9%
Number of Non-resident Fishing Vessel Visits	48	78	165	90	-28.6%
Number of Acts of Pilotage	0	0	0	0	-

Harbour Operations & Port Marine Safety – Quarterly Update

1.0 Harbour Use

- 1.1 The summer season came to an abrupt end in late August, as cooler and more unsettled weather arrived in early September. This shift brought a noticeable decline in recreational activity, with visitor numbers and income both down compared to the same period last year. September saw a 25% drop in visiting vessel nights and a 12% reduction in income, although a few strong weeks helped offset the overall decline.

Despite the quieter conditions, Weymouth remained a popular stop for charity vessels, including frequent visits from the Sea Cadets, contributing over £4,000 in income. Recreational use of the slipway and PWC permits continued to perform well, seemingly bucking the trend of the previous years.

Commercial activity has been mixed. While annual berth occupancy dipped slightly, temporary berthing income rose, and we have seen additional revenue from services such as fishing storage, boat-on-trailer storage, parking, and mooring gang support.

1.2 Staffing Changes

We were sorry to receive the resignation of Karen Womack from her role as Assistant Harbour Master towards the end of the summer. Karen has been a valued member of the Weymouth Harbour team for the past 12 years and took up the role of AHM in early 2023. Her commitment to the harbour and its users has been greatly appreciated, and she leaves with our sincere thanks and best wishes for the future.

We will shortly be opening recruitment for this now vacant position to internal and external applicants, with the intention of appointing a successful candidate prior to the start of the 2026/27 season.

- 1.3 Lesley Clarke, one of our Moorings Officers, has notified us of her intention to retire at the end of November. Lesley joined Weymouth Harbour in 2021, initially through an agency, as we trialled the idea of having a more dedicated front office position. She quickly settled into the role with great enthusiasm and helped shape it into the valuable position it is today, the welcoming face of the harbour, meeting and greeting customers and providing them with a first-class service. Lesley will be greatly missed, and we wish her all the very best in her well-earned retirement.

We will be seeking to recruit to this vacant position early in 2026, with the intention of appointing a successful candidate prior to the start of the 2026/27 season.

1.4 Staff Training

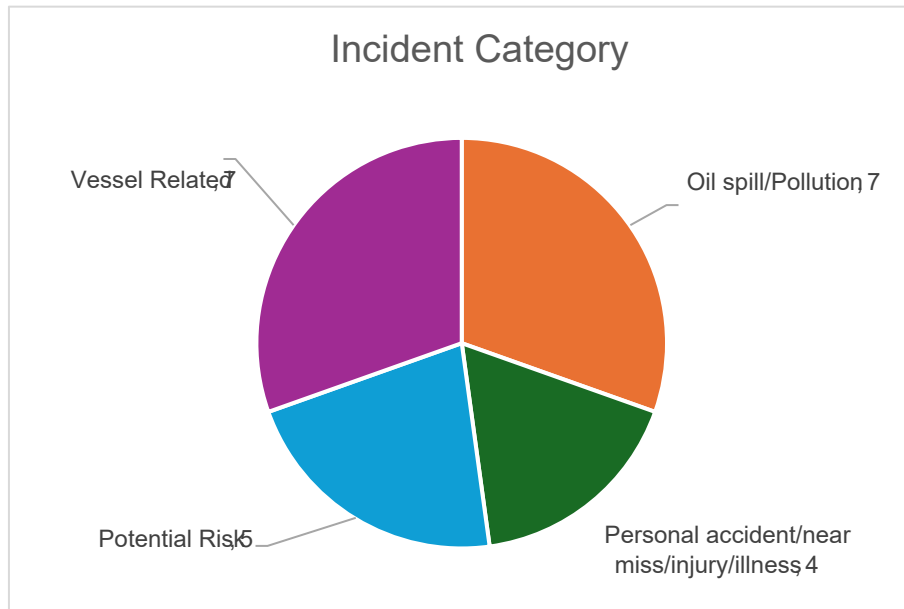
Under the Port & Marine Facilities Safety Code, all persons involved in the management and execution of marine services should be competent, qualified and trained to the appropriate national standard.

Several staff have undertaken training courses in the past year, including:

- Use and Safety of Oxy-fuel Gases
- Oil Spill Level 4 Refresher
- Day Skipper Theory

2.0 Incidents

2.1 At the time of writing this report, the Harbour team have recorded 23 incidents since the last meeting:



Within each category, example incidents have comprised of:

Oil Spill/Pollution:

- Further detail on these incidents can be found at Point 3.1 of this report.

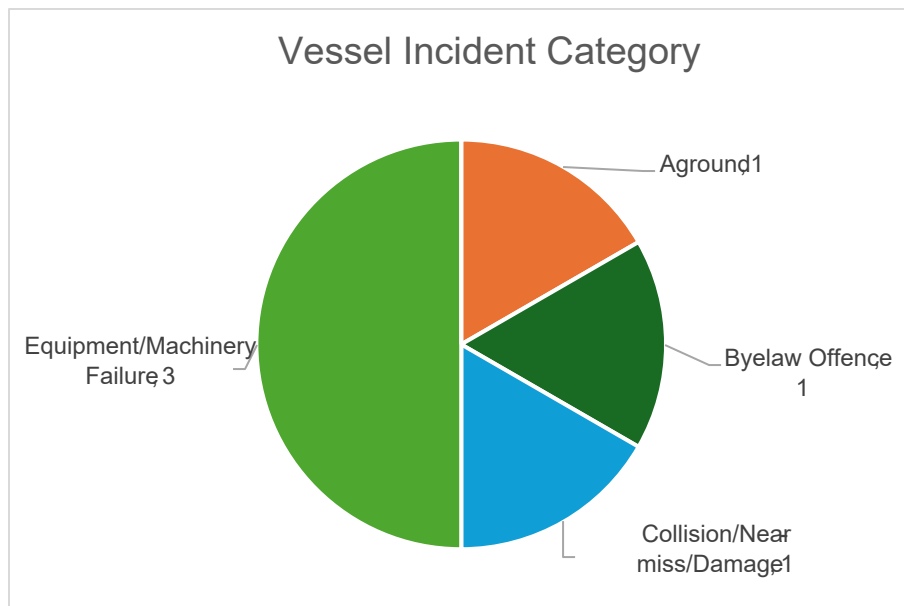
Personal Accident/Near-miss/Injury:

- A fall from the Cargo Stage
- Three reports of potential entanglement in fishing nets.
- A member of the public climbing onto a moored vessel to fish within the harbour.

Potential Risk:

- Person entering the water from pontoons near the Town Bridge
- Fishing gear being laid close to the bathing area buoys
- Life-ring removed from housing

Vessel Related:



3.0 Operations

3.1 Oil Spills & Response

In January 2025, Weymouth Harbour experienced a small pollution incident involving the discharge of oily bilge water. A Tier One response was initiated, and subsequently a letter was issued to all berth holders reminding them of their environmental responsibilities under MARPOL and local harbour regulations. The communication reinforced best practices for bilge water management and the importance of prompt reporting.

More recently, a series of small diesel spills have been observed in the early mornings near the Commercial Road pontoons. These incidents were all minor in scale, dispersed quickly and naturally, and did not require pollution control measures or external notification. Following a period of monitoring and investigation, we believe we have identified the vessel responsible. The vessel owner has been contacted, and the vessel has since been removed from the harbour for winter maintenance.

Should further incidents occur and suggest another source may be involved, we will seek to contact berth holders in the area to request their cooperation in arranging vessel inspections. This would be a precautionary step to help identify any additional sources of pollution and ensure continued environmental compliance.

3.2 Bathymetric Survey

The annual Bathymetric Survey of Weymouth Harbour has been brought forward by a month, following the brief grounding of a large fishing vessel, the *Jacoba Maria* (36m LOA, 4m Draught), exiting the harbour at low spring tide in October. The *Jacoba Maria* was aground for a matter of minutes. Harbour staff that were already patrolling on the water attended promptly to assess and keep other vessels clear if required, however the *Jacoba Maria* became free very quickly under its own power and continued safely on passage. Several other large and deep draught vessels have visited Weymouth over the season, and no other groundings have been reported.

Annually, we assess all depths in the harbour to assess the requirement for any dredging. In the Harbour Entrance, the tidal flow around Weymouth Bay slowly moves sand from North to South past the end of the Pleasure Pier, and the last time this area was dredged was in March 2022. At the time of writing this report, we were awaiting the results of the latest survey.

3.3 Weymouth Harbour Revision Order

Following Cabinet approval in November 2024, the Weymouth Harbour Revision Order (HRO) was submitted to the Marine Management Organisation (MMO). Due to its relative simplicity, Ashfords LLP, acting on behalf of Dorset Council, were able to persuade the MMO to bring the Weymouth HRO forward for consultation ahead of several larger orders. The consultation concluded on 31 July 2025 with no objections or required actions.

Ashfords completed final drafting checks and returned the HRO to the MMO for laying. Following the final drafting, we were advised that despite earlier indications the MMO were unlikely to assign a laying date for the Weymouth HRO until 2027 at the earliest.

Upon receipt of this information, options were explored to see if there was any way of expediting the laying of the HRO. We have now received confirmation that the MMO will combine the Weymouth HRO with the Bridport and Lyme Regis HRO into a single amalgamated order. The making and laying of this combined HRO is now scheduled for January, rather than December as previously indicated for the Bridport & Lyme Regis HRO alone. The order is now expected to come into force in February (21 days after being laid).

3.4 Port & Marine Facilities Safety Code Compliance Exercise

In early 2026, a national three-yearly compliance exercise will commence, requiring all marine facilities, including ports and harbours, to formally report their adherence to the Port & Marine Facilities Safety Code (PMSC) to the Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA). This exercise is part of a wider initiative to ensure consistent safety standards across the UK's marine infrastructure and to reinforce the responsibilities of Duty Holders under the Code.

As a statutory harbour authority, we are required to demonstrate ongoing compliance with the PMSC, including through regular audits, safety plan reviews, and operational oversight. Our recent internal reviews and the Designated Person's reports confirm that our three harbours continue to operate in line with the Code's requirements.

In November, the British Ports Association (BPA) circulated a set of template resources developed in collaboration with UKHMA and UKMPG. These include draft bridging documents and tiered template letters designed to support engagement with third-party marine facilities, particularly those who may not be fully aware of their obligations under the PMSC. The bridging document reflects recent updates to the Guide to Good Practice (April 2025), specifically section 6.8, which encourages the use of Memoranda of Understanding to clarify responsibilities between harbour authorities and adjacent facilities.

We will review and adapt these templates for local use, particularly in relation to smaller marine facilities operating within or adjacent to our jurisdiction. This will help ensure that all relevant parties are informed of their duties and supported in achieving compliance. The BPA has indicated that these documents

will be shared with the MCA and may be annexed to the Guide in future, offering a consistent framework recognised by regulators.

3.5 Dorset Harbours Economic Review

At a recent Harbours workshop, members noted significant and high-profile development opportunities emerging in Weymouth, particularly at key sites around the harbour's edge (North Quay, Westwey, and the Peninsula). The Committee recognises the harbour's role as a major stakeholder in these plans but also acknowledges that many aspects of Weymouth's future development remain undecided. To ensure that any Economic Review is meaningful, members expressed a desire for greater clarity on proposed developments and the harbour's position within them before defining the scope of a detailed review.

It was agreed that a further workshop early in the New Year would be beneficial to explore this matter further. In the meantime, members supported commissioning a stand-alone Sector Analysis to provide insight into current trends in the UK marine industry and assess how the three harbours are performing against the wider economic backdrop. Quotes for this work are being sought, and further information will be shared in due course.

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 Cosens Quay

Further to concerns raised by a member of the Harbour Consultative Group, investigation works are planned at Cosens Quay car park in two locations where changes have been observed in the surface level. To minimise disruption, this investigation is scheduled to be carried out in the w/c 24th November, with the assistance of the FCERM and Highways teams. The results and any subsequent required 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 have been sought, which have been compared with quotes to refurbish the railings to a sufficient standard. It is looking likely that a full and thorough refurbishment of the railings is not only possible, but also more cost effective. In line with procurement requirements, we are awaiting one final quotation before deciding on a course of action. It is hoped that these works will be carried out over the coming winter period.

4.4 Town Bridge

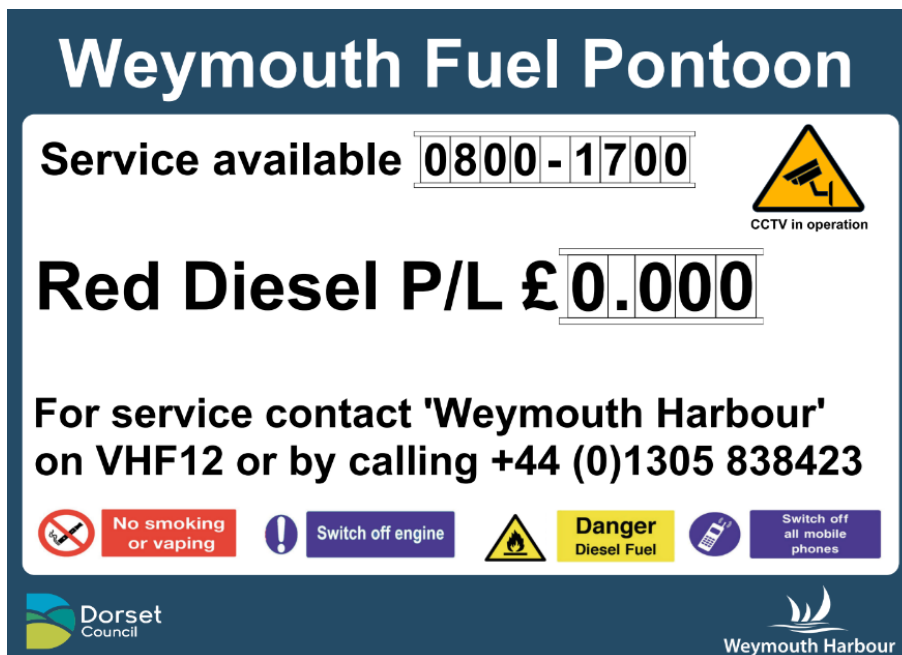
After review of the repair programme by Highways Engineers, the decision has been taken to push the planned repair for this year to a now hoped for start in early 2026.

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.

4.5 Weymouth Quay Fuel Pontoon

Since receiving notification from HMRC that our application to become a Registered Dealer in Controlled Oil had been approved at the end of the summer, work has been progressing as fast as possible to bring the fuel pontoon online, however fitting works in around external provider availability, alongside our own very busy work schedule, has proven tricky. The last couple of outstanding items are now very near completion. At the time of writing this report:

- We have worked with Dorset Council ICT colleagues to finalise the data connections and equipment that link with the payment system and allow for remote monitoring of the fuel stock and delivery systems.
- The Outdoor Payment Terminal, which could not be installed until RDCO approval was granted, is being connected on the 19th of November.
- Staff training of the operational systems is also scheduled for the 19th of November.
- Staff training for the web-based system that monitors fuel stock levels and transactions is scheduled for the 28th of November.
- Pontoon signage, as shown below, which will display fuel availability times, safety information, and current fuel cost, is on order and delivery is expected in early December.



The image shows a digital signage template for the Weymouth Fuel Pontoon. It features a dark blue header with the title 'Weymouth Fuel Pontoon' in white. Below this, on a white background, is the text 'Service available' followed by a digital display showing '0800-1700'. To the right is a yellow triangular warning sign with a camera icon and the text 'CCTV in operation'. Below the service hours is the text 'Red Diesel P/L' followed by a digital display showing '£0.000'. Further down, it says 'For service contact 'Weymouth Harbour' on VHF12 or by calling +44 (0)1305 838423'. At the bottom, there is a row of safety and operational icons: a 'No smoking or vaping' sign, an exclamation mark icon with the text 'Switch off engine', a 'Danger Diesel Fuel' warning sign, and a 'Switch off all mobile phones' sign. The footer includes the Dorset Council logo on the left and the Weymouth Harbour logo on the right.

4.6 Weymouth Peninsula Development

Following the recent Cabinet report on the Weymouth 2040 Regeneration Programme, we would like to highlight to the Harbours Advisory Committee proposed development at the Weymouth Peninsula, which has direct implications for the harbour. Dorset Council is preparing to invite Hall & Woodhouse to submit a long leasehold proposal for a mixed-use scheme that includes hospitality and leisure facilities, a pub/diner with accommodation, restaurants, and public realm improvements. The site is currently underutilised and presents a rare opportunity for landmark regeneration adjacent to the beach and surrounded by water on three sides. The proposal is intended to bring new life to the waterfront, boost tourism, and support the town's long-term economic goals in line with the Weymouth Town Centre Masterplan and Local Plan Policy.

As the Peninsula is designated as harbour land (excluding the Pavilion area), any disposal must be in the best interests of the harbour, with all proceeds reinvested into it. The development must comply with the Weymouth Harbour Revision Order and will require review by this Committee and the Weymouth Harbour Consultative Group before any recommendation is made to Cabinet. Legal advice confirms that while a formal procurement process may not be necessary, the Council must demonstrate best value through appropriate valuation and disposal mechanisms. Environmental and planning considerations include flood risk, heritage sensitivity, and biodiversity net gain, with the site deemed suitable for a 3 – 4 storey hotel and associated leisure uses.

In addition to the development proposal, a major harbour wall replacement project is underway at the Peninsula, focusing on Walls F and G. The new sheet pile wall design has a 70-year lifespan. Works began in September 2025 and are expected to last around eight months, with WSP appointed as consulting engineers and Knights Brown as the contractor.

5.0 Commercial Port Berths & Notable Traffic

5.1 The Tallship *Nao Victoria* (26m LOA) arrived in Weymouth on Wednesday the 1st of October. This is the *Nao Victoria*'s second visit to Weymouth, and the fifth visit by a Spanish Tallship since 2023.

During her stay, coinciding with the Weymouth Pirate Week, the vessel was open to the public and was again a popular attraction. The *Nao Victoria* departed on Tuesday the 7th of October, and we look forward to welcoming her and her sister ships in Weymouth again in future.



5.2 After an absence of nearly 7 years, the *Paddle Steamer Waverley* visited Weymouth in September. Over five visits, over 2,900 passengers enjoyed trips along the Jurassic Coast. The *Waverley* docked alongside Commercial Berth One in the Outer Harbour, which proved an excellent and safe venue, and each visit was conducted without incident. During berthing operations, the harbour entrance was closed to all other vessels with safety and vessel traffic announcements being made over VHF and a patrol vessel present on the water. Harbour staff aided with mooring the vessel, and in the safe transfer of passengers through the port area.

The *Waverley* stopped again briefly on the 13th of October to bunker and take on water, prior to making her journey to Glasgow where she will remain for the winter. We look forward to welcoming the *Waverley*, and her crew and passengers, to Weymouth again next year.

5.3 The sail training vessel *Pelican of London* (45m LOA), originally built in 1948 as an Arctic trawler before undergoing transformation into a sail training vessel, offers young people and trainees the chance to experience life at sea while learning traditional seamanship, ocean science, and maritime careers.

She recently made an unscheduled stop in Weymouth Harbour at the end of September, a welcome surprise and a testament to the harbour's flexibility and readiness to accommodate a wide range of vessels. Hosting ships like the *Pelican*, even at short notice, not only adds character and interest to the waterfront but also reinforces Weymouth's reputation as a capable and hospitable port. These visits contribute to the local economy, offer public engagement opportunities, and highlight the harbour's role in supporting maritime heritage and education.



5.4 The *Jacoba Maria*, a modern UK-flagged beam trawler (36m LOA) made several visits to Weymouth in early October. The vessel, which typically operates in the Northeast Atlantic, spent several days in port unloading its catch. In recent years, vessels from the Atlantic have targeted species such as cod, herring, whiting, hake, pilchard, and mullet in the English Channel.



6.0 Pilotage

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

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