

Weymouth Harbour Report

Harbours Advisory Committee
23rd September 2026



Ed Carter
Dorset Harbours Manager & Weymouth Harbour Master

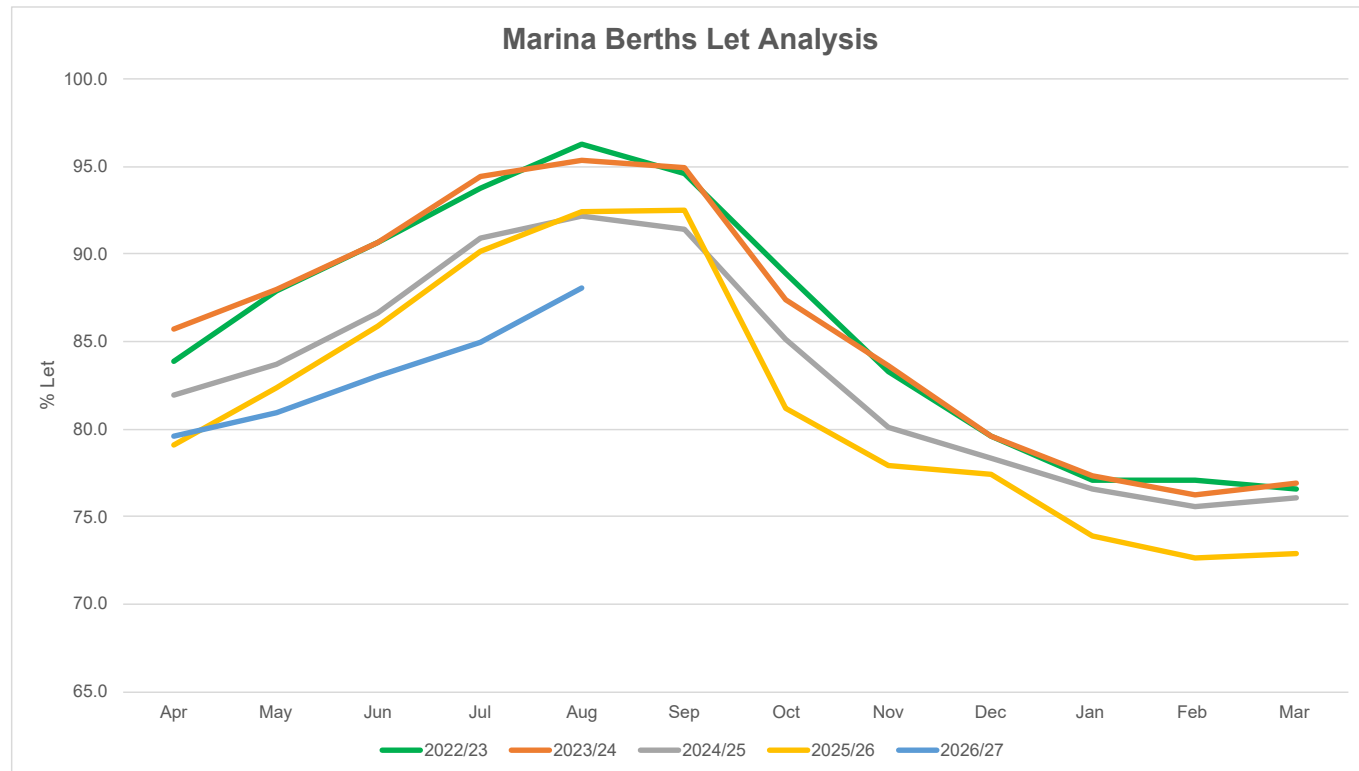
Weymouth Harbour Let Analysis

Marina Berths

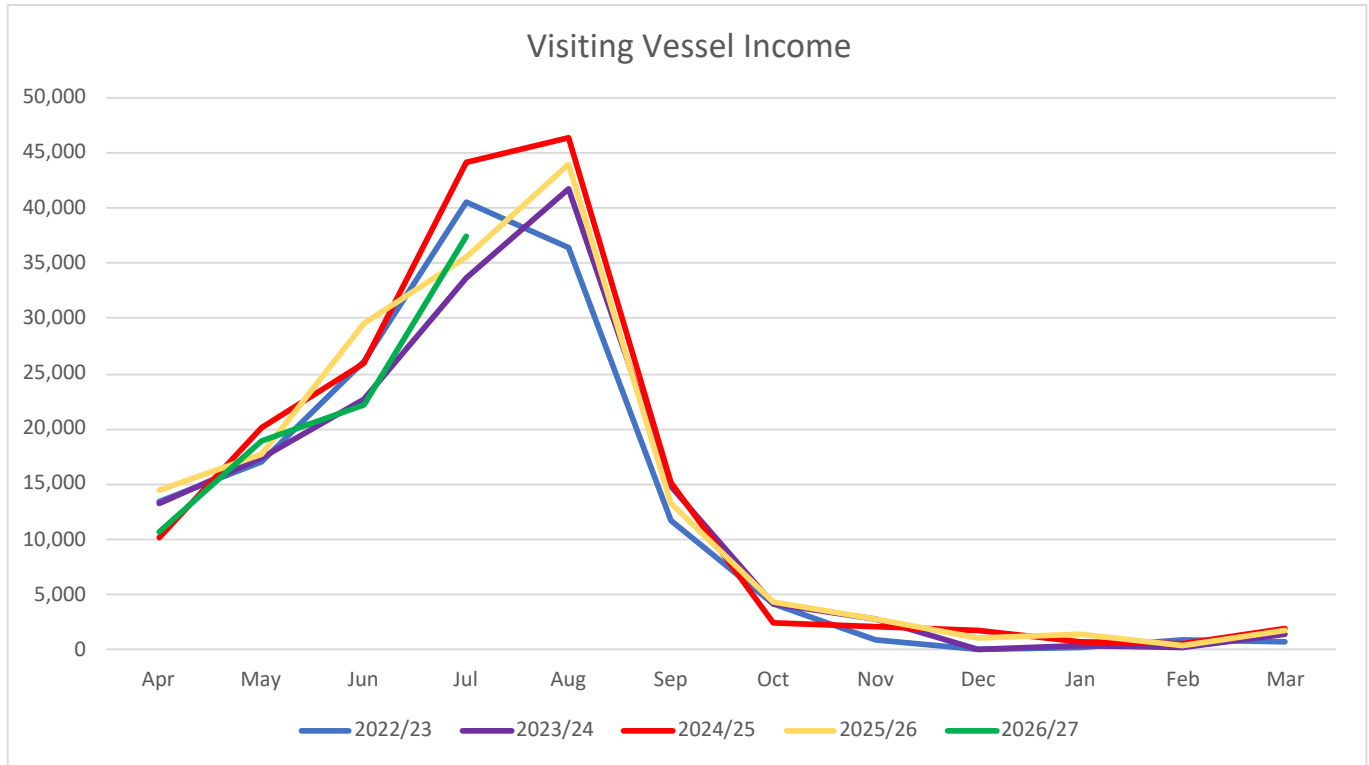
Marina occupancy has remained below the levels achieved in recent years, reaching 88% in August. Whilst this represents a lower position than historically experienced during the peak season, it is consistent with trends being observed across much of the recreational boating sector. Economic pressures, ongoing cost-of-living challenges, and sustained increases in vessel operating costs, including fuel, maintenance and insurance, continue to influence customer spending decisions and berthing preferences. The shift towards shorter-term and seasonal berthing arrangements highlighted in previous reports also remains evident, with some customers opting for more flexible arrangements rather than committing to annual agreements.

Despite occupancy levels being below those achieved in recent years, demand remains broadly stable and enquiries continue to be received. Officers remain proactive in engaging with prospective customers and promoting available berths.

Whilst previous marketing campaigns have generally delivered limited measurable uptake; the current occupancy trend provides an opportunity to review our approach. During the winter period, we will undertake a review of existing marketing activity and promotional materials to identify new opportunities, messaging, and advertising channels ahead of the 2027 season. Overall, the current position appears to reflect wider market conditions rather than any reduction in the attractiveness of Weymouth Harbour as a berthing destination.



Harbour Statistics



	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27 (up to 01 Aug)	Against Previous Year Profile
Visiting Leisure Craft Revenue (Berthing Fees)	£162,974	£183,516	£177,126	£91,767	-5.8%
Slipway & PWC Permit Revenue	£21,382	£17,555	£19,159	£15,322	27.0%
Number of Bridge Lifts	1,354	1,404	1,366	689	0.7%
Number of Vessels Transiting Bridge	5,952	5,522	5,539	3,339	11.9%
Number of Non-resident Fishing Vessel Visits	78	174	206	61	-35.0%

Harbour Operations & Port Marine Safety – Quarterly Update

1.0 Harbour Use

1.1 Harbour activity throughout the summer season has remained generally positive, although visitor numbers have been somewhat variable. Visiting vessel revenue has fluctuated in comparison to 2025 and overall is currently slightly below last year's figures. This reflects a pattern seen across much of the season, with stronger activity during weekends and favourable weather periods, but quieter trading during less settled spells (strong winds) and mid-week periods.

Despite this, demand for harbour facilities remains healthy. Slipway usage has continued to perform particularly well, with revenue significantly ahead of the previous year throughout the reporting period. Watersports permit sales have also shown sustained growth, indicating continued strong participation in recreational boating and water-based activities.

At the time of writing this report, complete August figures were not available, however early indications were encouraging. Visitor overnight stays increased significantly compared with the same period last year, helping to improve the year-to-date position, while slipway usage and watersports permit sales continued to perform strongly.

It is worth noting in the above figures that the sharp drop in fishing vessel visits is due to a single visiting vessel from last season now operating from a Weymouth berth, and as such is no longer included within these statistics.

The visitor market continues to be influenced by wider economic pressures, including ongoing cost-of-living challenges and higher operating costs for vessel owners, particularly fuel prices. In addition, periods of windy weather during the season are likely to have affected cruising activity and short-term visitor stays. Nevertheless, Weymouth Harbour continues to attract strong levels of recreational use, with overall harbour activity remaining robust and broadly in line with expectations for the season.

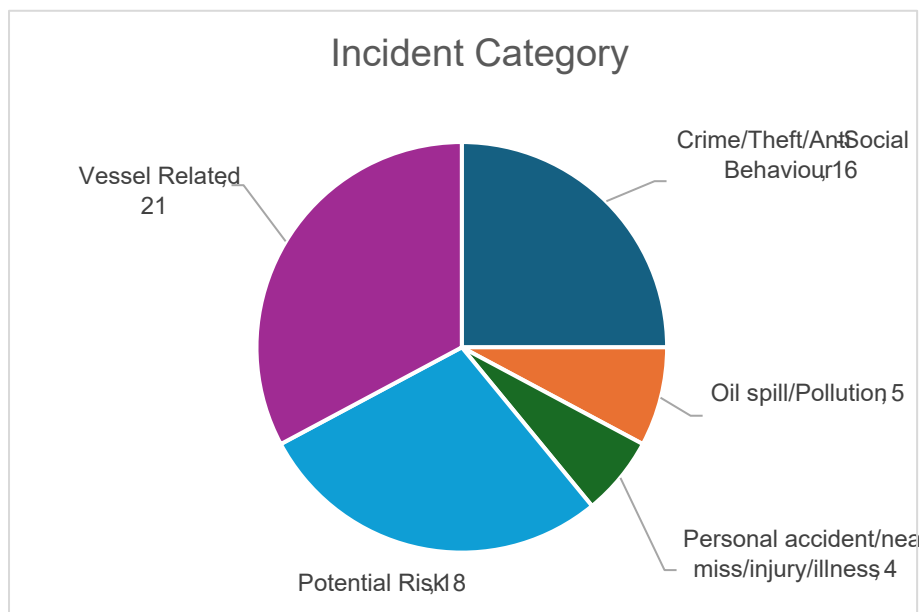
1.2 Dorset Seafood Festival & Harbour Nights Market

The Dorset Seafood Festival returned to Weymouth Harbour in July, marking its long-awaited return to the harbourside following a number of years at alternative venues. The event was very well attended and generated positive feedback from visitors, businesses and festival organisers, many of whom highlighted the harbour as the festival's natural home. The return of the festival supported significant footfall within the town and reinforced the important role the harbour plays in supporting tourism, the local fishing industry and the wider visitor economy.

Alongside the Seafood Festival, the Harbour Nights Artisan Markets have also been introduced to the harbourside events programme during 2026. Delivered by Dorset Artisan Markets, these evening events have brought together local traders, food producers, craftspeople and entertainers, helping to create additional activity along the waterfront during the summer months. The markets have complemented the harbour's existing events offer and support Dorset Council's wider ambitions to promote local businesses, encourage tourism and enhance the harbour's role as a vibrant community destination.

2.0 Incidents

2.1 Whilst harbour activity has increased significantly during the peak summer period, the majority of recorded incidents remained low consequence in nature. A total of 64 incidents were recorded during the reporting period. Consistent with previous reporting, the largest proportion related to vessel operations, potential safety risks, and anti-social behaviour, rather than serious accidents or infrastructure failures.



Crime/Theft/Antisocial Behaviour:

A notable proportion of incidents related to anti-social behaviour in and around the harbour, particularly involving people entering the water from quaysides, pontoons and harbour structures. Several incidents involved trespassing onto restricted areas, interference with lifesaving equipment, and nuisance behaviour towards harbour users. In a small number of cases, theft or attempted theft of property was reported. Harbour staff responded quickly, often working alongside Police, CSAS and other partners where appropriate.

Personal Accident/Near-miss/Injury:

Only a small number of incidents involved injury or personal accidents. These primarily consisted of slips, trips and falls, passenger welfare incidents, and situations where prompt intervention by harbour staff helped prevent more serious outcomes. No significant injuries were recorded during the period.

Potential Risk:

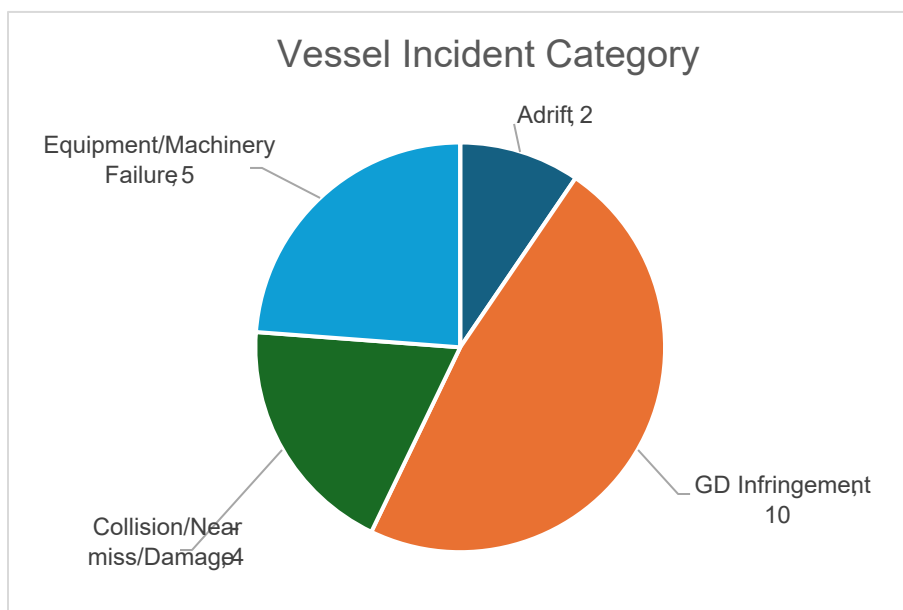
The most common risks recorded related to people entering the water within harbour limits, including swimming, paddleboarding, snorkelling and diving activities. Several incidents involved the deployment or interference of lifesaving equipment, whilst others related to obstructions, debris, or hazards to navigation. These incidents continue to highlight the challenges associated with managing a busy public waterfront alongside commercial and recreational vessel movements.

Pollution Incidents:

Five pollution incidents were recorded during the period. These were generally minor in nature and primarily linked to vessel operations or mechanical issues. All incidents were investigated and appropriate advice or mitigation measures were implemented. No major pollution events occurred and no activation of the Oil Spill Management Plan was required.

Vessel Related:

Vessel-related incidents remained the largest single category. The majority involved speeding, excess wash, red-light infringements at Town Bridge, minor collisions, machinery failures and vessels requiring assistance following loss of propulsion. As in previous reporting periods, most incidents were low severity and were resolved through advice, intervention by harbour staff, or routine harbour procedures. The data demonstrates that vessel manoeuvring and compliance with harbour speed limits continue to represent the most frequent operational challenges within the port.



2.2 Prosecutions

On the 27th of July 2025, the motor vessel AMBERLION was observed by Harbour Officers being navigated at a speed in excess of 4 knots and without care and caution within the Inner Harbour. Following investigation of the circumstances, the decision was made to proceed to prosecution. In July 2026, the Court found the skipper of the vessel guilty of offences for speed of vessels and navigating without care and caution, contrary to the Weymouth Harbour General Directions 2024, and was ordered to pay a fine of £936.

At the time of writing this report, a further prosecution for a similar incident that occurred in November 2025 had been adjourned until the 1st of September. It is hoped that a verbal update on this prosecution can be given to members at the September meeting.

Members should note that the progression of both cases through the Magistrates' Court has been significantly affected by wider pressures across the criminal justice system. Nationally, criminal courts

continue to experience substantial caseload backlogs and delays, with demand for court time exceeding disposal rates in many areas, resulting in longer waiting times between hearings and case conclusion.

As these are the first prosecutions brought under the Weymouth Harbour General Directions 2024, once both matters have concluded, officers will undertake a review of the end-to-end process with Dorset Council's Legal Services team. This review will seek to identify lessons learned, streamline procedures where possible, and improve the efficiency of future enforcement action.

3.0 Anti-social Behaviour

Anti-social behaviour continues to present a challenge during the summer months, particularly in relation to young people entering the water from harbour structures, swimming within operational areas, and accessing restricted parts of the harbour estate. The issue is not unique to Weymouth and reflects trends being experienced by many coastal communities across the country, particularly during periods of warm weather and school holidays.

Members should note that the Crime, Theft and Anti-Social Behaviour incident figures reported earlier in this document relate to incidents formally recorded through the Harbour's principal incident reporting system. Due to the frequency and recurring nature of youth-related anti-social behaviour, particularly harbour jumping and swimming, these events are recorded separately within a dedicated operational log. This approach allows officers to monitor trends, record interventions, and coordinate responses without disproportionately influencing broader incident reporting statistics.

The Harbour Team has recorded numerous interventions throughout the season involving groups of young people jumping from quaysides, piers, pontoons and harbour infrastructure. Whilst much of this behaviour may appear low-level in nature, it presents a significant safety concern due to the proximity of vessel traffic, commercial operations, harbour structures, bridge movements and other navigational hazards. Harbour staff have been required on occasion to warn vessels of swimmers, patrol affected areas, and work with partner agencies to reduce the risk of serious injury. Encouragingly, despite the frequency of intervention, no serious injuries associated with these activities have been reported.

A positive aspect of this year's response has been the continued partnership working between Weymouth Harbour, Dorset Police, Community Safety Accreditation Scheme (CSAS) officers, Dorset CCTV, Youth Services, Weymouth Town Council and other local stakeholders. Information sharing and joint responses have enabled a coordinated approach to tackling issues as they arise, combining education and engagement with proportionate enforcement where appropriate. The Harbour Team also continues to work closely with Dorset Council's Health and Safety colleagues to ensure that emerging risks are identified, reviewed and managed appropriately, with control measures being updated where necessary.

Recognising the changing nature of the issue, the Weymouth Harbour Anti-Social Behaviour Management Plan was reviewed and substantially expanded earlier this year. Previously focused primarily on the Pleasure Pier, the revised plan now encompasses the wider harbour estate and provides officers with a structured framework for intervention, enforcement, escalation and officer safety. The revised arrangements have improved consistency in recording, reporting and managing incidents across the harbour.

Whilst anti-social behaviour remains an ongoing challenge, the Harbour Authority's primary objective remains the prevention of serious injury. Current experience suggests that persistent engagement, targeted enforcement, environmental improvements, close partnership working and regular review of management arrangements continue to provide the most effective and proportionate means of managing the issue. The situation will continue to be monitored closely throughout the remainder of the season and further measures considered where trends indicate they are required.

4.0 Harbour Operations

4.1 Oil Spills & Emergency Response

During the reporting period, the Harbour team responded to a small number of pollution incidents, all of which were minor in nature and managed using routine procedures and available pollution response equipment. Incidents primarily involved light oil sheens, vessel-related discharges, and small spills associated with vessel maintenance or operation. In each case, appropriate containment, monitoring, and follow-up action was undertaken by harbour staff and, where necessary, vessel owners were advised regarding corrective measures.

No pollution incident during the reporting period reached the threshold requiring activation of the Oil Spill Contingency Plan, and there were no significant environmental impacts identified. The Harbour team will continue to promote good housekeeping practices and maintain readiness to respond should a more serious incident occur.

In addition, as part of the planned multi-agency emergency exercise, officers intend to incorporate a tabletop Tier 1 oil spill response scenario. This will provide an opportunity to test notification procedures, decision-making processes, inter-agency communication, and the practical application of the Oil Spill Contingency Plan within a controlled environment, helping to identify any lessons that can be incorporated into future emergency planning arrangements.

4.2 Trinity House Inspection

Weymouth's Aids to Navigation are managed to IALA standards and inspected by Trinity House under the Local Lighthouse Authority regime. The latest inspection, conducted on the 18th of August, reported:

"We are pleased to advise you that the audit of the records of the availability of the local aids to navigation under the management of Dorset Council was satisfactorily carried out on 18/08/2026 by an Officer of Trinity House and everything was found in good order and there were no matters arising which require further comment."

4.3 Tuna Licence

Weymouth Harbour has recently been approved as an authorised landing port for Atlantic Bluefin Tuna, following the expansion of the UK's commercial Bluefin Tuna fishery for 2026. The fishery operates under a tightly regulated national quota system administered by the Marine Management Organisation (MMO), with authorised vessels permitted to target and land tuna using low-impact rod-and-reel methods. The 2026 season opened in mid-July and forms part of the UK's growing participation in a sustainable and internationally managed fishery.

Since receiving approval, Weymouth has already seen a number of tuna landings, providing a new opportunity for the harbour's commercial fishing sector and further diversifying activity within the port. The return of Bluefin Tuna to waters off the south coast has been one of the most significant developments in UK fisheries in recent years, with increasing numbers being observed in the English Channel and along the Dorset coastline.

Whilst it remains too early to properly assess the long-term economic benefits, initial activity has generated considerable interest from both the fishing industry and the wider public. Officers will continue to monitor landings and engagement with the fishery and will provide further updates to the Committee as things progress.

4.4 Multi-agency Emergency Exercise

Further to the update provided at the previous meeting, officers have continued to work with Dorset & Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service on the development of a multi-agency emergency response exercise for Weymouth Harbour. A draft exercise scenario has now been prepared, based around a simulated vessel fire within North Quay Marina, involving multiple casualties, potential fire spread, and associated environmental considerations. At the time of writing this report, the draft scenario is under review, before being finalised.

The exercise is intended to test operational response arrangements, command and control structures, inter-agency communications, casualty management procedures, and environmental response capabilities within a realistic harbour setting. It will also help inform the development of a Memorandum of Understanding between Dorset Council Harbours and Dorset & Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service, providing greater clarity around roles, responsibilities and joint working arrangements during maritime emergency incidents.

At present, the exercise is provisionally scheduled to take place towards the end of September. However, given the operational demands of the summer season and the time required to fully develop and agree the exercise arrangements with participating agencies, it may be necessary to move the exercise into October. A final date will be agreed once the planning process has been completed and all agencies are satisfied that the exercise can deliver meaningful outcomes and learning opportunities.

The exercise represents an important opportunity to strengthen existing partnerships, validate emergency response procedures, and identify any lessons that can be incorporated into future harbour emergency planning arrangements.

4.5 Dorset Council Parking Review and Listening Events

Dorset Council is currently undertaking a comprehensive review of its parking services alongside the preparation of a new local plan for public bus and community transport. The review will help shape parking tariffs for 2027/28 and inform wider transport policy over the next 15 years. The Council has stated that any future parking surplus could be used to support improvements to public and community transport across the county.

Issues under consideration include parking tariffs, lengths of stay, management of seasonal visitor demand, congestion, wayfinding, the promotion of underused car parks, and the relationship between parking and wider transport objectives.

The Council currently expects to consider the outcomes of the review at a Cabinet meeting on 6 October 2026, with any approved changes anticipated to be implemented from April 2027 onwards. Formal consultation on the 2027/2028 proposed parking charges is planned to take place between November 2026 and February 2027, prior to final decisions being made by Cabinet in March 2027.

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 Cargo Stage

Following the update provided at the previous meeting, works to improve the Cargo Stage have continued to progress. The installation of new safety railings along the edge of the raised platform was completed ahead of the Dorset Seafood Festival, significantly improving the safety of the area and helping to create a well-defined and usable space for events and public activities. This allowed the area to be utilised successfully during the festival and the July and August Artisan Market events.

Whilst it had originally been hoped that resurfacing works would also be completed before the summer season, further to the requirement for investigation work into the area it became apparent that there was a significant risk of the works remaining unfinished during the events period. To avoid disruption to a major public event and ensure the area remained safe and accessible, a decision was taken to defer the resurfacing element of the project until later in the year.

The resurfacing works will be undertaken by Dorset Council's Highways team after the summer season. The completion of both the railings and resurfacing elements will provide a safer, more attractive and more functional space, supporting both day-to-day harbour operations and the growing programme of events held on the harbourside.

5.3 Stone Pier Railings

Work to refurbish and replace sections of the Stone Pier railings has continued throughout the reporting period. The project follows inspections which identified areas of corrosion and deterioration caused by prolonged exposure to the marine environment. The railings form an important safety barrier along the 500-metre pier and the works are intended to ensure the structure remains safe and serviceable for residents and visitors for many years to come.

The scheme commenced on 6 May 2026 and has been completed in phased sections, enabling the Stone Pier to remain open to the public throughout the works. Dorset Council's Communications Team highlighted the project in July, drawing attention to the importance of the investment, both from a public safety perspective and as part of wider improvements taking place around Weymouth's waterfront.

Once completed, the refurbished railings are expected to provide a service life of 20 to 30 years with routine maintenance, helping to protect one of Weymouth Harbour's most popular public assets whilst reducing the need for more extensive future intervention. Further improvement works being considered

in the wider Stone Pier area include enhancements to the viewing tower, repairs to concrete benches, and resurfacing of adjacent walkways.

This project continues to support the Dorset Harbours Strategy objective of maintaining safe, high-quality infrastructure and enhancing the visitor experience throughout the harbour estate.



5.4 Sand Jetty

Ramboll have now completed the structural survey of Sand Jetty, including land-based, boat-based and underwater dive inspections of the structure. The survey reviewed the condition of the deck, beams, piles, fendering, harbour wall and riverbed, and compared findings against Ramboll's previous inspection undertaken in 2013.

The report concludes that the overall structural condition of Sand Jetty remains fair for its age, with no evidence of significant settlement, movement, deformation or scour. Ramboll noted no visible signs that the structure is being overstressed in its current form and did not recommend any restrictions on the jetty's current use, including the existing vehicle parking provision.

Whilst the main reinforced concrete structure remains generally serviceable, the survey identified ongoing deterioration consistent with a structure operating in a marine environment. The most significant defects were associated with the timber fendering system around the perimeter of the jetty, together with a seized drainage flap valve.

The key maintenance actions identified by Ramboll are:

- Review the existing timber fendering system and remove or replace damaged, deteriorated or redundant timber fenders that are at risk of detaching from the structure.
- Repair or replace corroded fixings and associated timber elements connected to the fendering system where necessary.

- Repair and maintain the jetty drainage flap valve, which is currently seized in the open position and could allow floodwater ingress during periods of high water levels.
- Continue regular inspection and maintenance of the concrete structure, including future monitoring of historic sprayed-concrete repairs to piles and soffits.
- Undertake future structural inspections at approximately three-year intervals, with the next inspection including a tapping survey of sprayed concrete repair areas to detect any hidden delamination or voids.

Officers are currently reviewing the report in detail and will be progressing the recommended maintenance works, with priority being given to the timber fendering and drainage valve repairs. Subject to the outcome of this review, any budget implications or further works required will be reported to the Committee in due course.

5.5 Weymouth Quay Regeneration Project

Officers have continued to oversee completion of outstanding defects associated with the Weymouth Quay Regeneration Project. Remedial works have now been completed to cracking on the Fish Landing Quay slab, ponding issues adjacent to the davit crane area, a collapsed manhole, and blocked drainage infrastructure. Harbour staff are currently inspecting and verifying completed works, with a small number of outstanding items remaining, including final electrical connections to the vehicle access gates, fuel system related works, and completion of Operation and Maintenance documentation.

Harbour staff continue to investigate recurring water ingress issues affecting the fishermen's stores, including the catch store, bait store and associated office accommodation. During recent inspections, additional evidence of water penetration was identified, including concerns regarding sealing between wall panels and the concrete slab. Advice received from the project management team indicates that these matters remain within the defects process and should continue to be pursued through the principal contractor. Officers are therefore continuing discussions regarding responsibility for remedial works and long-term resolution.

5.6 Weymouth Quay Fuel Pontoon

Following final commissioning, and the opening of the fuel pontoon at the end of April, several minor operational issues were identified, including a minor leak within the fuel cabinet, replacement of a damaged fuel hose and completion of final contractor works. These items have been progressed through the defects process and contractor visits remain scheduled where necessary to finalise outstanding matters and ensure the installation continues to operate as intended.

5.7 Pavilion Car Park

Harbour officers have reviewed the final Pavilion Car Park lining and traffic management layout associated with wider wall F & G repair works. The design has undergone swept-path assessment to ensure continued access for larger commercial vehicles serving the harbour while improving parking arrangements within the wider site.

5.8 Waste Pump-out Facility

Plans for a waste pump-out facility at Weymouth Harbour have progressed through an extended design and approvals process to ensure compliance with environmental, waste management, and fuel

infrastructure regulations. The facility will be located on the fuel pontoon, with waste collected in a shoreside holding tank for off-site treatment. The project represents a long-term investment in harbour infrastructure, supporting improved water quality and enhanced services for harbour users. Due to the time required to complete the design and approval stages, installation is now planned for the upcoming winter period.

6.0 Commercial Port Berths & Notable Traffic

6.1 Weymouth Harbour was pleased to welcome the sail training vessel Pelican of London (45m LOA) once again in late August. Originally built in 1948 as an Arctic trawler, the vessel now provides sail training and educational programmes that introduce young people to seamanship, marine science and careers within the maritime sector.

Repeat visits from vessels such as Pelican of London demonstrate the harbour's continued appeal to a diverse range of maritime users. As a striking presence on the waterfront, the vessel attracted considerable public interest during her stay and provided a visible reminder of the harbour's connection to maritime heritage, education and training. Such visits add vibrancy to the port, support local businesses and further enhance Weymouth's reputation as a welcoming destination for visiting vessels.



We are also looking forward to again seeing the P/S Waverley make a number of stops in Weymouth during early September.

7.0 Pilotage

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

8.0 Significant Events Relevant to Harbour Operations and/or Access

At the time of writing this report, we were awaiting multiple visits from the *P/S Waverley* in early September, along with the events of the iQFoil World Championships, Ironman, and Ironkids.

As all of these events are scheduled to take place after the deadline for Committee papers to be submitted, verbal updates will be given to members.

Event Calendar:

Month	Event	Date(s)
September	P/S Waverley P/S Waverley iQFoil World Championships P/S Waverley Ironman & Ironkids	3 rd & 4 th 9 th 4 th – 12 th 13 th 20 th – 21 st
October	Beach Motocross	10 th
November	-	-
December	Christmas Day Swim	25 th