Harbours Advisory Committee

23 September 2026

Proposed Procurement of Dredging Services for Bridport (West Bay) Harbour

For Recommendation to Cabinet

Cabinet Member:
Cllr J Jeanes, Place Services

Local Councillor(s): All Councillors

Senior Leadership Team:
J Britton - Executive Director, Economy & Environment

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Statutory Authority: The Lyme Regis, Bridport (West Bay) and Weymouth Harbour Revision Order 2026, Local Legislation

Report status: Public (the exemption paragraph is N/A)

1. Executive summary

1.1 Annual maintenance dredging is required at Bridport (West Bay) Harbour to maintain safe navigable depths and support the continued operation of the harbour.

The requirement has been approved for submission to the Council's Procurement Pipeline, and early engagement with Procurement has commenced. It is proposed to procure a five-year contract for annual dredging from 2027 to 2031, with an estimated total value of between £800,000 and £1 million. Due to the anticipated total contract value, Cabinet approval is required before the procurement process can commence.

The five-year contract is the preferred approach. However, if it is not practicable to complete that procurement in time for the March 2027 dredging campaign, approval will also be sought to procure a single-year contract for 2027 as an interim measure.

2. Recommendation(s)

2.1 That the Harbours Advisory Committee supports that Cabinet:

- Approves the procurement of a five-year contract for annual maintenance dredging at Bridport (West Bay) Harbour from 2027 to 2031;
- Approves, as a contingency, the procurement of a single-year contract for the 2027 dredging campaign if it is not practicable to complete the preferred five-year procurement within the required timeframe; and
- That authority be delegated to the Executive Director for Economy & Environment, in consultation with the Section 151 Officer and the Cabinet Member for Place Services, to take all necessary steps to procure and award the contract(s) in accordance with the above approvals.

3. Reason for the recommendation(s)

3.1 As the Statutory Harbour Authority, Dorset Council is responsible for the safe and effective management of Bridport (West Bay) Harbour. This includes maintaining a safe and navigable harbour and managing risks to vessels, harbour users and the public in accordance with the Port & Marine Facilities Safety Code and the Council's Marine Safety Management System.

Sediment accumulation reduces navigable depths and, if not appropriately managed, could affect safe access to and operation of the harbour. Regular maintenance dredging is therefore an important part of the Council's discharge of its harbour authority responsibilities.

A planned, competitively procured five-year arrangement will support the reliable delivery of these works and provide greater operational resilience and value for money. The recommendation enables the proposal to progress through the Council's governance process so that Cabinet approval can be sought.

4. The report

Background

4.1 Bridport (West Bay) Harbour, at West Bay, provides mooring and launching facilities for small vessels and serves as a refuge harbour along this part of the Dorset coast. The outer harbour provides the principal navigable route between the sea and the harbour facilities.

4.2 Sand transported from East Beach, together with smaller quantities of sediment from the River Brit, accumulates within the outer harbour and progressively reduces navigable water depths.

4.3 Dorset Council, as the Statutory Harbour Authority, is responsible for maintaining a safe and navigable harbour. Annual maintenance dredging is required to maintain adequate depths, including during lower states of the tide. Without

regular dredging, access would become increasingly restricted, affecting harbour operations and its function as a refuge harbour.

Proposed dredging works

4.4 It is proposed that the Council procures a contract covering five annual dredging campaigns from 2027 to 2031. The works would focus on the outer harbour, between the entrance to the inner harbour and the main harbour entrance, within an indicative area of approximately 7,000 square metres.

4.5 The tender documentation is based on an estimated annual dredging volume of approximately 10,500 cubic metres, with the objective of restoring the harbour bed to approximately two metres below Chart Datum. The actual requirement each year will be informed by pre-dredge survey data, with a post-dredge survey used to assess the completed works.

4.6 The proposed methodology is to use a cutter suction dredger, with suitable dredged material pumped through a temporary pipeline to West Beach or West Cliff Beach. This returns sand trapped within the harbour to the coastal system and contributes to the maintenance of adjacent beach profiles.

4.7 The contractor will be required to manage the works safely, including the installation and removal of the pipeline, lifting operations and protection of public access. Appropriate barriers, warning notices, temporary access arrangements and marshals will be provided where necessary.

Programme and environmental requirements

4.8 Dredging is intended to take place during March each year, after the main winter storm period and before the summer pontoons are installed on 1 April. Each campaign is expected to involve approximately ten working days of dredging, subject to weather, sea conditions and the volume identified by survey.

4.9 The contractor will be responsible for mobilising and demobilising the dredger and associated equipment, carrying out the works and fulfilling the role of Principal Contractor under the Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2015.

4.10 The dredging will be undertaken in accordance with the applicable Marine Management Organisation licence and associated environmental requirements. The existing licence covers the proposed contract period. Amendments to the permitted discharge arrangements are being pursued and will need to be secured before any activities affected by them take place.

Procurement proposal

4.11 Dredging requires specialist equipment and experienced contractors and is generally a long-lead activity. Timely procurement is therefore necessary to complete

a competitive process and secure contractor availability before the first proposed campaign in March 2027.

4.12 It is proposed that the opportunity is advertised through the Council's electronic tendering system and evaluated against appropriate price and quality criteria. The successful tenderer would be appointed under an NEC4 Engineering and Construction Short Contract.

4.13 Tenderers will be asked to price the five annual campaigns, including mobilisation and demobilisation, lifting and transportation of equipment, dredging by measured volume, pipeline installation and removal, and potential standing time. The final contract value will depend upon the tendered rates and the actual quantity dredged each year.

4.14 A five-year arrangement is considered preferable to separate annual procurements. It would provide continuity for an essential operation, improve certainty over specialist contractor availability and reduce the administrative and programme risks associated with procuring the works annually.

Procurement approach and approval route

4.14 A five-year arrangement remains the Council's preferred approach. It would provide continuity for an essential operation, improve certainty over specialist contractor availability and reduce the administrative and programme risks associated with procuring the works annually.

4.15 The requirement has received Executive Director approval for submission to the Council's Procurement Pipeline, and early engagement with Procurement has commenced. However, inclusion within the pipeline does not guarantee the immediate allocation of Procurement resources. There remains a limited period in which to complete the necessary governance and procurement processes and secure a contractor before the March 2027 dredging window.

4.16 If it is not practicable to complete the preferred five-year procurement within the required timeframe, it is proposed that the Council may procure a single-year contract for the 2027 campaign as an interim measure. This would protect delivery of the essential dredging works while allowing the longer-term procurement to continue. Any interim procurement would be subject to the Council's Contract Procedure Rules, available budget and applicable procurement legislation.

4.17 The estimated total value of the preferred five-year contract is between £800,000 and £1 million. The value of any interim single-year contract would be established through the relevant procurement process and managed within the available harbour budget.

4.18 Due to the anticipated value of the five-year contract, Dorset Council Cabinet approval is required before that procurement process can commence.

4.19 The Harbours Advisory Committee is therefore asked to support the preferred five-year approach, together with the interim single-year contingency, and recommend to the Cabinet Member that a report is presented to Cabinet seeking approval to proceed on this basis.

5. Alternative options considered

5.1 *Water Injection Dredging:* Water Injection Dredging has previously been trialled at Bridport (West Bay) Harbour but is not capable of moving the heavier shingle that accumulates in the outer harbour from East Beach. It has therefore been discounted as the principal method for the proposed contract.

5.2 Water Injection Dredging will continue to be used when required in the inner harbour, where it is suitable for removing finer alluvial sediment. As this work is required less frequently and differs from the annual outer harbour dredging operation, it will be procured separately.

5.3 *Crane and grab dredging:* Following the significant influx of shingle during a storm in January 2026, a crane and grab were used to provide a rapid response and begin removing material. While effective as an initial intervention, this method is comparatively slow and costly when removing the volumes required. It has therefore been discounted as the primary dredging methodology but may remain appropriate for urgent or localised works.

5.4 *Single-year procurement:* Procuring the cutter suction dredging separately each year would increase procurement activity, reduce certainty over specialist contractor availability and create a greater risk that the works could not be completed within the required operational window. It is therefore not the preferred long-term approach. However, a single-year procurement for the 2027 campaign may be necessary as an interim measure if the five-year procurement cannot be completed within the available timeframe.

6. Legal considerations

6.1 Dorset Council is the Statutory Harbour Authority for Bridport (West Bay) Harbour and has responsibilities relating to the safe and effective management of the harbour. Maintenance dredging supports the Council in maintaining navigable access and managing marine safety risks.

6.2 The procurement will be undertaken in accordance with the Procurement Act 2023, associated regulations and statutory guidance, together with the Council's Contract Procedure Rules and governance requirements. The estimated value will be calculated over the full five-year contract period, including any applicable contingency and VAT, for the purpose of determining the appropriate procurement procedure.

6.3 Dredging and the deposit of dredged material are regulated activities under the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009. The works must be undertaken in accordance with a valid Marine Management Organisation licence and its conditions. The current licence covers the proposed contract period, although amendments to the discharge arrangements are being pursued and must be secured before any affected works take place.

6.4 The works will also be subject to relevant health and safety legislation, including the Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2015. The appointed contractor will undertake the Principal Contractor role and will be required to prepare and implement suitable plans and controls for the safe delivery of the works.

6.5 The successful contractor will be appointed under an NEC4 Engineering and Construction Short Contract. The final procurement and contract documentation will be reviewed by the Council's Procurement and Legal Services teams before the tender is issued and the contract awarded.

7. Financial implications

7.1 The estimated value of the five-year contract is between £800,000 and £1 million. The final contract value will be determined through the competitive tender process.

7.2 Annual expenditure will vary according to the quantity of material dredged, the contractor's tendered rates and any authorised additional works or standing time.

7.3 The costs of the dredging works will be met from the harbour budget and will not create a financial pressure on the Council's General Fund.

7.4 Budget approval is recorded as being in place for the requirement identified in the Procurement Pipeline Request. Financial provision for the final contract will need to reflect the agreed contract duration and tendered price and be incorporated within the Harbour's annual budgets.

7.5 Contract award will be subject to the tendered price being affordable, representing value for money and remaining within the approved financial provision. Any tender exceeding that provision would require further consideration and approval.

8. Natural environment, climate & ecology implications

8.1 The dredging and discharge works will be undertaken in accordance with the existing Marine Management Organisation licence and associated environmental conditions.

8.2 Dredged material will be returned to the coastal system at West Beach or West Cliff Beach. This supports the natural westward movement of sediment and

contributes to the maintenance of local beach profiles, rather than removing the material permanently from the area.

8.3 The works may cause temporary local effects, including sediment disturbance, noise, emissions from plant and equipment, and disruption at the discharge location. These will be managed through the marine licence, contract requirements and the contractor's working methods.

8.4 The Council will continue established Drop-Down Video monitoring of local reef habitats. Surveys will follow a standardised and repeatable methodology, enabling ecological assessment of reef condition and any evidence of sediment accumulation associated with dredging activities.

8.5 Tenderers will be required to demonstrate appropriate environmental management arrangements, including measures to prevent pollution, minimise unnecessary emissions and protect the marine and coastal environment during the works.

9. Well-being and health implications

9.1 Maintaining safe and accessible harbour infrastructure supports health and well-being by enabling boating, water-based recreation and other outdoor activities. It also encourages people to visit the harbour and enjoy its natural and cultural heritage. Regular maintenance dredging, together with the harbour's established safety management systems, supports the ongoing safety, health and well-being of harbour users, employees, contractors and visitors.

10. Other implications

10.1 None.

11. Risk implications

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

Current Risk: High

Residual Risk: Medium

Risk - Failure to secure and deliver dredging within the required operational window, resulting in restricted navigation and disruption to harbour operations.

Current Likelihood	Current Impact	Current Score	Residual Likelihood	Residual Impact	Residual Score

Likely (4)	Major (4)	**16**	Unlikely (2)	Moderate (3)	**6**

11.2 The current risk reflects the specialist nature and long lead time of dredging procurement. Failure to secure a suitable contractor could result in continued sediment accumulation, restricted navigation, operational disruption and difficulty in discharging the Council's statutory harbour responsibilities.

11.3 The proposed five-year procurement will reduce the likelihood of this risk by securing access to a suitably experienced contractor, enabling works to be planned in advance and reducing reliance on annual or emergency procurement. The ability to undertake a single-year procurement for the 2027 campaign, if the five-year process cannot be completed in time, provides an additional contingency to protect delivery of the essential works.

11.4 The residual impact remains Moderate, rather than Minor, because contractor failure or delay could still result in temporary navigational restrictions, additional expenditure and local reputational consequences.

11.5 Operational risks arising during the dredging works, including vessel movements, lifting operations, public access, weather conditions and environmental effects, will be managed through the harbour's Marine Safety Management System, project-specific risk assessments, marine licence conditions and the contractor's Construction Phase Plan.

12. Equalities

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

13. Appendices

13.1 None.

14. Background papers

14.1 None.

15. Report sign-off

15.1 This report has been through the internal report clearance process and has been signed off by the Director for Assurance & Governance (Monitoring Officer), the Director for Resources (Section 151 Officer) and the appropriate Cabinet Member(s).