

Dart Harbour Communities Group Update & Notes from the 14/7/21 River Trip

Note on Stakeholder Consultation.

In response to concerns about the publishing of a revised Moorings Policy (the '*Moorings Guide*') without due Stakeholder consultation, the Chairman met with HM this week to discuss the issue. On taking over the CEO / HM role, Capt Geoff Holland inherited a number of out of date policy documents. These, including things such as Wrecks Policy, Pilotage Policy, Environmental Policy and the Mooring Policy. These policy documents have to be extant to ensure DHNA is legally compliant with the Part Marine Safety Code (PMSC). The Chairman is happy that the actions taken by Capt Holland on taking on the CEO/HM role were an expedient way to ensure that he had the legal framework in which to work. HM fully understands the Trust Port structure, including the need for proper consultation with all stakeholder groups on all policy issues. From hereon this will happen. On this occasion DHCG will run its' own, retrospective, consultation on the Mooring Guide.

The current trend sees an increased need for larger moorings. To meet this demand DHNA is looking at reducing moorings in unpopular areas and placing them where demand is greater and the owners can have easier access at all points of the tide.

The River Trip

After an extended delay because of Covid, the DHCG finally managed to get together for a harbour River Trip. Our first non-virtual event since 2012, this was also the first event with the Captain Geoff Holland, the new HM. The aim of these trips is to increase the DHCG's understanding of the working of DHNA and also allow Parishes and other members to raise their points of concern.

Key points:

River use has changed during the Covid pandemic. There is an increased use of SUP (paddle boards) and small craft on the river. This does pose a safety issue however HM has addressed this, in conjunction with the RNLI, with increased safety signs at all major launching points and HM staff have been warning people without safety gear of the dangers.

Speeding on the river is still an issue and during the trip the HM had to indicate or speak to several boat owners who were not observing the speed limit: many do not understand that the speed limit is speed through the water, not speed over the ground (i.e. a Satnav speed reading). That said HM has placed new signs and buoyage, and all speeding offences are now logged. HM staff view is that the message is getting around and that speeding is now reducing.

At present there are an estimated almost 50 houseboats with live-on-boards. Currently there is only one vessel of medium concern to HM on the river: work is currently underway to get this sold. If this fails DHNA will have to dispose of it, so every avenue will be tried before this to save the large costs involved. Several boats have now been removed and HM also has five boats, which are due to be sold off as no owners have come forward. Dittisham Mill Creek has also seen several of the old

boats removed yet there are still 3 vessels of minor concern which, it is hoped, will be removed over the winter.

Water Quality and Testing. It was encouraging to hear that HM has already developed a constructive working relationship with the EA and AONB on water quality, involving enhanced water quality testing and cross-comparison with SWW sewage discharge data (such as it is!). The new testing regime will result in a new water quality baseline from which to measure future change.

Pontoons.

The group had the opportunity to see for themselves how the seals are using the pontoons! At Stoke Gabriel improvements to pontoon design will allow access to the shore at all states of the tide. There has been discussion concerning a new landing at Sandridge where new wine production and associated visitor facilities are being developed, although no formal application has yet been made to DHNA or the Marine Management Organisation (MMO).

AOB. Other discussion areas included ways to encourage electric outboards (reduced harbour dues?); the hoped for positive impacts of ELMS (the incoming but not yet fully funded Environmental Land Management Scheme); increases in wildlife sightings during the lockdowns; and the proposed developments at Galmpton.

The group were very grateful for the opportunity to see the harbour from the water and for the HM to share his experiences and expertise after a few months in post. Thanks also go to Rob Everitt, Assistant HM, for his insights and driving the boat, James Dodd, Board Chairman, and Nigel Mortimer, the AONB Estuaries Officer.

Mike Pearey
Chair, Dart Harbour Communities Group
28 Aug 2021