

Dart Harbour Communities Group

Minutes of Meeting held 16th November 2021 at Hillside, TQ9 7ER

Present

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| Mike Pearey (MP) | Ashprington (Chairman) |
| J. Distin (JD) | DH Board Rep |
| Graham Anderson (GA) | Dittisham. |
| Rob Everitt (REv) | Acting HM |
| Pam Thompson (PT) | Ashprington PC |
| Doug Twigg (DT) | Dartmouth & Kingswear Assoc. |
| Roger English (RE) | AoNB |
| Sue Pudduck (SP) | Sec |

Apologies

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| Sophie Rennie | Dartmouth |
| James Dodd | Chair DHNA |
| Becky Taylor | Cornworthy |
| Marion Adams | Totnes |
| Nigel Mortimer | AoNB |
| Lynne Maurer | Kingswear |
| Chris Moore | Stoke Gabriel BA |
| Tim Bumby (TB) | NT |
| David Wells | Dartmouth |

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

- A. Circulate contact details and reps to check details are correct. Action Sec.**
- B. Encourage Parishes to send a Rep to the DHCG, reminding them of the value of being part of DHCG decision making. Action Sec.**
- C. Contact Totnes Society to invite them to attend. Action Sec.**

D. Contact SW Water and ask for a speaker to attend the next meeting. Action Sec.

E. Work with Natural England to craft a guide to the MCZ for riparian parishes. Action Chairman

F. Request a River trip to accommodate a larger number from the DHN Board. Action JD.

G. Organise programme of site visits to venues on the Dart. Action Chairman & Sec.

Minutes from meeting held 16th March 2019 were agreed.

Matters Arising

1. HM hosted a very useful river trip on 14th July 2021 to update DHCG members on harbour & river issues. These events require careful planning around tides! A separate report on the event was circulated. **Action complete**
2. The new contact sheet had been produced and would be circulated for representatives to check their details. **Action Sec**
3. The Secretary will continue to encourage all Parishes to have representation on the DHCG. **Action Sec**
4. DT suggested contacting Totnes Society to offer them membership: this was agreed. **Action Sec**

Other Matters Arising were included on the Agenda.

Agenda Items

1. Welcome to Acting HM Rob Everitt and New Members (Chair)

The Chairman welcomed Rob Everitt, currently Acting HM until the new HM is appointed, and Pam Thompson (Ashprington PC) to the group. Brief introductions were given.

2. Updates from Group Members.

- a. **DT** updated the meeting on Dartmouth's Neighbourhood Plan, which includes comment on and references to the River Dart. It is now being circulated for public consultation. When approved this NP should provide useful mutual support for Dart Harbour. Similarly, DHNA has produced a planning statement which provides useful support for all riparian Councils writing NPs, covering topics such as Disabled Access, the Public Slip, and

Riparian Planning. The importance of looking beyond land issues and linking Neighbourhood Plans with the marine Planning was agreed by all.

Action: Neighbourhood Plans - Representatives are requested to make sure that their councils are aware of, and make reference to, the Dart Harbour Policies.

b. **T Bumby, National Trust** sent an update on the NTs current focus around the Dart Estuary, principally Ash dieback work. They are working on trees that will potentially cause damage to people or property, and leaving for biodiversity those trees that pose little or no threat.

c. **Update from Acting Dart Harbourmaster (REv)**

i). DHM briefed that a routine hydrological survey of Totnes Mill Tail had been completed, and showed no significant change. Members were noticing increased levels of topsoil washing into the river during heavy rainfall events, which led to broader discussion about water quality and dredging. AHM reiterated that there are currently no plans for any dredging in the estuary. It is hoped that the incoming Environmental Land management Scheme (ELMS), replacing the Basic Farm Payment system, will help reduce topsoil loss and improve water quality

ii) Report on Summer season on the River. Post Covid Dart Harbour experienced their busiest ever year in 2021. Visitor numbers reached between 1700 and 1800 visits per night, which is up 20%. The DH also saw a very large increase in personal craft: paddle boards and kayaks. The Dart doesn't attract many jet skis because of the speed limit and limited launch access. During this "Staycation" year, some behaviours on the river were not what would normally be expected. It was questioned if the Harbour Guide meets the needs of advising people on how to behave on the water. One option might be to develop a process similar to that used on the Tamar estuary. https://www.royalnavy.mod.uk/-/media/qhm/plymouth/documents/180803tecf-waterways-guide-2018_final_v2_updated.pdf?la=en-gb&hash=075EF285440499060BF22E3D1B6EB2BB

As the DH also works with commercial operators, who are all licensed by DH, they could be encouraged to educate river users about good practise.

iii) The DHNA has been providing a conservation advice package for bigger projects on the river.

iv) The Steamer Quay in Totnes is not in good condition. If it is to remain a facility for boats visiting the town it needs repairs. The question is who funds this: a combination of Totnes TC and S.Hams was suggested. Concern was also expressed about some of the mooring rings in Dartmouth, which are also S.Hams property.

v) **GA** raised the issue of the closure, by SHDC, of the showers at Dittisham. The group agreed these facilities were an important part of the harbour services infrastructure: as always the question is who funds them. Further

discussion is required between Dittisham PC, HM/DHNA and SHDC to resolve this.

Post meeting information received from **GA**.

Firstly, the building sits on DPC land but is managed by SHDC and they carry out all maintenance, and of course retain the fees that visitors pay. (20p per entry)

They did at one point (lock down) close the loos but since then have only left the showers closed for the last 2 years or so. DPC did have a dialogue with SHDC whereby they offered to pay an annual sum to SHDC to keep everything open but the costs became prohibitive.

Part of the dialogue I had was with Mark Cooper at a previous DHCG meeting was that DHNA had a budget out of which they would provide c.£1000 per annum which was approx. 50% of the sum requested by SHDC.

It is clear there is a much stronger interest in the showers now, particularly given the increase in water use at Dittisham involving paddleboards, kayaks etc. Certainly DPC is looking at car-parking in the village as a possible consequence of this.

3. Update from AONB. RE briefed on a wide number of new initiatives, on which a short resume has been attached. More detail will be published on these various projects in coming months.

4. Update to HM Recruitment Post Mtg note: the selection process is now complete. A welcome new addition to the selection process included inviting representatives of the Stakeholders Groups to meet prospective candidates at the Dartmouth YC.

The appointment of Paul Britton was confirmed on 27/01/22.

<https://www.dartharbour.org/news-and-notice/news/2022/01/27/welcome-aboard-to-the-new-harbour-master-paul-britton/>

5. Update on Current DH consultations. JD reported that DHNA was reverting to the previous system for producing the Moorings Policy: a draft and then a consultation with the stakeholder community. The new draft is expected in the second quarter of 2022. DH is looking at solutions for addressing disabled access; one proposal is for the south east end of the embankment by Dartmouth sailing club, although this would require substantial engineering works including a wave breaker. Tidal access is difficult. Probably the best option for providing improved accessibility is still the proposed improvement to the Double Steps, Dartmouth Embankment.

The DHNA Board were also looking at increasing the funding for an AONB Officer: JD was working towards reinstating the previous, higher, level of funding. In return the Board would expect an Annual AONB Report with greater transparency about how any DHNA money was being spent.

6. Water quality General concern was expressed about the water quality on the Dart, and the lack of up to date and detailed information available. While several organisations monitor water quality this data is not fully transparent to the wider community. SWW had circulated a paper for the

group to comment on, but the author had left SWW, and they did not respond to our request for an update. The group will extend an invitation to SW Water, and it was also proposed to invite Rob Price from the Environment Agency, to attend a future meeting. **Action Sec**

8. MCZ RE The Chair remains concerned that the advice on the MCZ sent thus far does not give any advice to riparian communities or local businesses on what management action is required: it is aimed at the scientific community. the advice offered thus far is at:

<https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/Marine/SupAdvice.aspx?SiteCode=UKMCZ0057&SiteName=dart&SiteNameDisplay=Dart%20Estuary%20MCZ&countyCode=&responsiblePerson=&SeaArea=&IFCAAarea=&NumMarineSeasonality=>

RE offered to see if more suitable documentation exists. **Action RE**

POST Mtg note: At the Dart Estuary Forum meeting on 1 Dec the local Natural England Rep agreed to discuss this issue with the Chairman.

Action Chairman

9. Future Meetings and visits

The value of the annual River Trip to DHCG was re-emphasised and JD stated that he would ask the Board to organise a vessel that would take the number of delegates in more comfort, thus giving the opportunity to discuss the issues being observed. **Action (JD)**

The Chair also listed a number of visits that might be of interest to the group: Sharpham Rewilding; Sandridge new vineyard and visitor destination; Noss Marina; Baltic Wharf. The group agreed these would be useful visits. **Action: Chair & Sec**

10. AoB

a) NHS has put forward a proposal for Dartmouth Hospital. One idea is for a community hub which would include DH Offices, thus making them disability friendly, and provision of showers for yachtsmen. More information can be found at <https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/DartmouthHospital>.

b) **Date and Venue for Next meeting - March 31; Dittisham VH**

Minutes of this meeting are held on <https://www.dartharbour.org/about-dart-harbour/port-management/stakeholder-groups/>

Mike Pearey

Chairman

mikeandyo@gmail.com

01803 732629

The Govt Environmental Incident Hotline number 0800 807060

