

Dart Harbour Communities Group

Minutes of Meeting held 7 PM Thursday 31st of March 2022 in Dittisham Village Hall.

Present

Mike Pearey (MP)	Chairman
Roger English (RE)	AONB
Pam Thompson (PT)	Ashprington
Becky Fry (BF)	Cornworthy
Doug Twigg (DT)	Dartmouth and Kingswear Association
Julian Distin (JD)	DH board representative
Paul Britten (HM)	DH Harbourmaster
Sue Pudduck (SEC)	Secretary

Apologies

Nigel Mortimer	AONB
Graham Anderson.	Dittisham
Lynne Maurer	Kingswear
Chris Moore	SGBA

Minutes from meeting held on 16 November 2021 were agreed.

Matters arising

SEC will circulate a new contact sheet by email after the meeting
SEC has encouraged PCs without Reps and the Totnes Society to think about attending.
SEC had asked Rob Price, Environment Agency SW, and a senior manager from South West Water, to attend. Neither was available on this occasion.

Action: Repeat invitation to the meeting to both EA & SWW

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

6 May 2022 – deadline for inputs to the DHCG input to the DHNA Strategic Plan review. To SEC & MP please. See Item 5 below

Ongoing: PCs / Members to advertise the Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) Grant scheme run by the AONB staff.

21 April 2022 - deadline for - PCs / Members response to the JLP Public Consultation. See Item 9 below

Agenda Items *(roughly in order!)*

1. MP welcomed to the group the new Harbour Master, Paul Britten. Paul introduced himself. He lives locally, has a long association with the Dart, and has a varied background in both merchant shipping and the cruise line industry.

The environment, and protecting the unique setting of the Dart, are high on his agenda. He reported he was happy with his team and that he had just appointed a new Assistant Harbour Master, Jack Handley, who is also the lead for Compliance.

2. Feedback on Dart Harbour & Navigation Authority (DHNA) AGM. **MP** reported that the recent DHNA AGM was most encouraging, with the DHNA Chair announcing the intention for the Board to play a more supporting and less directing role, and recognise the full breadth of the stakeholders across the harbour. The DHNA would be more forward looking in terms of responding to concerns about improving accessibility, climate change / net-zero, and biodiversity. **BF**, who had attended virtually, agreed that the tone was upbeat and more progressive. Two new Board members had been in attendance. One was Anne Marie Coyle, who has a background in renewable energy and who, with **JD**, will have Board responsibility for liaison with the DHCG group. Fellow new comer Joanna Poulton has a legal and financial background. Both are keen sailors.

3. MCZ

MCZ Guidance notes received from NM - already circulated.

The meeting discussed what having an MCZ means to the Dart Harbour, the riparian parishes and its' businesses. While **NM**'s recent paper represented progress it does not yet recognise the need to understand the perspective of the waterfront pub landlord, or the SUP user, or swimmer or beach walker. To date there has not been any public guidance: indeed, there are businesses operating in the estuary, and many residents, who have no knowledge of the MCZ's existence! In general people want to do the right thing, but it has to be fair and the information about how to operate should be available. **BF** reported that Blackness Marina is creating a pit for wash off at the bottom of the river access track to improve environmental impact on water quality and they want to do it properly.

JD questioned if there would be consequences if you 'endanger' the MCZ, and is there any enforcement?

It was agreed that Pacific oysters need removal and volunteers could help on this with the right leadership. **MP** suggested that they would be edible if river water quality was sufficiently improved, which would motivate many more people to help remove them!

RE noted that there is some environmental money which could provide for a baseline survey needed to measure the mud banks. The Environment Agency carries out an annual survey of species in the mud.

4. Dartmouth Neighbourhood Plan

DT reported that the Dartmouth Neighbourhood Plan is reaching completion (*post mtg note: public consultation completed 8 April*). Improved access to the river is a priority.

It was noted that there are few views over river from the land, and this should be a consideration when drawing up a NP or commenting on planning applications.

5. DH Strategic Plan Consultation

The group then discussed the Dart Harbour Strategic Plan Review consultation, using a draft response drawn up by **MP** and **SEC**.

a. The priority issue was Water quality. With recent parliamentary debate about river water quality there is now more public awareness of the state of health of all rivers. This, and increased activities in and on the river, has encouraged wider community interest, resulting in more volunteers helping support the drive for improvement. More responsive water quality testing and reporting is seen as essential. **HM** reported that South West Water (SWW) are unwilling to share all their data (which would include water quality, fish volume and quality, farmers runoff, sewage from yachts etc.). The Environment Agency (EA) test the Dart water monthly, although the reporting format is not readily usable by the non-scientist; detail can be found at this link:

<https://environment.data.gov.uk/water-quality/view/sampling-point/SW-70710338>

In due course it might be feasible to turn this into a traffic lights system, or similarly more readily understandable format for the general public. In response to a question from **MP** about technological solutions to water quality monitoring the meeting was briefed that manual sampling is, at present, still the only method that delivers all the required data.

b. **Electrification:** Ways of increasing the use of electric outboards and engines was discussed. The **HM** suggested that DH could reduce fees for electric engines and could also provide a quick move up the waiting list if using electric engines. **BF** reported that Blackness Marina was receiving increasing numbers of enquiries about charging points for electric outboards. Planning for provision of charging points is also essential to support the expected growth of electrification. Ideally such planning should be estuary wide, so communication is key.

c. **Stakeholders:** in the past the DHNA focus has been on what they see as their core customer, the boating sector, which brings in their income. But the Board now recognise that there are a much wider range of stakeholders, including swimmers, kayakers, SUPs, anglers, who may not be contributing to the finances of the Authority but who are driving water improvements.

d. *Post Meeting note:* **MP** collated a post-meeting updated draft "DHCG Response to the DHNA Strategic Plan review". This was sent out to all Parish Councils and other DHCG members, with a covering letter stressing the value to all riparian communities of this Strategic Plan Review, and with a deadline of 6 May to respond with comments or suggestions.

6. The Glover Report, the Government Response, and the Consultation on the Government Response.

RE reported that the powers of the AONB would remain the same and would not replicate those of the National Parks. There was general agreement that the Government Response was not concise and that there was considerable doubt over whether the proposed funding would be sufficient to deliver the outcomes. **RE** encouraged all to comment via the Public Consultation to the Govt Response (*note: The Public Consultation ended on 9 April 2022.*)

7. Baltic Wharf, Totnes

Baltic Wharf is subject to a planning proposal for more housing, which would severely impact industrial capacity at Baltic Wharf. There was general agreement that retaining covered workshop facilities and river access at Baltic Wharf was essential for the viability of the waterborne industry of the river, and that every effort should be made to keep them. It was important not to forget that employment on the river also includes suppliers and contractors, many of whom rely on Baltic Wharf. "Acorn Green" is the development company – google "Acorn Green, Totnes" for the developers marketing blurb!

8. Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) project. **RE** reported that FiPL grants are still available for environmentally beneficial or biodiversity related-projects in, or on the margins of, the AONB. All available Year 1 grant support has now been used. For Years Two and Three (2023/24) there is £175K and £152K remaining respectively. The AONB will help people identify suitable projects, based on "Nature, Climate, People, Place" objectives. For more help contact Adam Davidson at the AONB office. Action: Members to promote FiPL.

9. Joint Local Plan (JLP) for Plymouth and South Devon: "Policy for Climate Emergency.

RE drew the groups attention to the public consultation on this work on the JLP. The planning proposals are refreshingly forward – looking with all new homes requiring solar panels, renewable heating (air or ground source heat pumps), sustainable drainage, EV charge points and improved insulation as standard. Here are the full proposals:
<https://www.plymouth.gov.uk/planningandbuildingcontrol/planningpolicyandguidance/climateemergencyplanningpolicyandguidance>

Action: PCs / Members to consider responding to The Public Consultation, which runs until 21st April

10. Future events: MP proposed visits which included:

- a visit the new winery and facilities at Sandridge (with a tour and tasting provided at cost) on a date tbc in May.
- a visit to Sharpham Wilding date tbc.
- a possible river trip in June facilitated by DH (**JD / HM**), noting that Saturday would be difficult for representatives with businesses on the river. More details on all these to follow.
- It would help if group members could let **SEC** know if you are interested in attending any of these. **Action: All**

11. Future meeting dates: It was proposed that meetings would be arranged for; 23rd June (possible river trip, HW 14.39); 15th September; 16th March 2023.
Harbour Masters report attached.