

**Dart Harbour Communities Group  
Minutes of Meeting held 7 PM Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> March 2023  
in Dartmouth Guild Hall.**

Present

Mike Pearey (MP)	Chairman
Paul Britten (HM)	Harbourmaster
Ben Piper (BP)	Totnes
Dave Bailey (DB)	Cornworthy
Doug Twigg (DT)	Dartmouth and Kingswear Association
Julian Distin (JD)	DH board representative
Nigel Mortimer (NM)	AONB
Lynne Maurer (LM)	Kingswear
Emma Magee (EM)	Dart Catchment Officer, EA
Pam Thompson (PT)	Ashprington
Sue Pudduck (SEC)	Secretary

Apologies

Cllr Marion Adams (MA)	Totnes
Chris Moore (CM)	Stoke Gabriel Boating Assoc.
Graham Anderson.(GA)	Dittisham
Cllr David Wells (DW)	Dartmouth
Sophie Rennie (SR)	Dartmouth
Becky Fry (BF)	Blackness

Minutes from meeting held on Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> September 2022 were agreed.

Matters arising

Confidentiality Clauses had been addressed.  
SW Water Consultation doc had been circulated to Councils.  
and will be covered in .4 and .7 of the meeting.

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF ACTIONS**

**ACTION (Item 1): All to circulate the Draft Moorings Policy consultation to their Councils / groups.**

**Action (Item 4): TCs / PCs to discuss and feed back on the SWW consultation document**

### **Introductions.**

MP welcomed new member Dave Bailey from Cornworthy to the meeting. MP commented on the big increases in Stewardship grants for landowners, though concerns remain about whether this funding will make up for loss of the Basic Payment Scheme and what potential impact that might ultimately have on the environment. He is trying to encourage some amalgamation of the raft of new initiatives concerning surveying or measuring woodland / veteran trees / Temperate Rainforests, which seem somewhat disjointed.

### **1. DH Moorings Policy (HM)**

The Harbour Master produced a table showing changes that had been made to the Moorings policy. (Circulated 13-03-23) Most changes had been minor. The focus of the changes to the mooring policy was to try to give local people priority on the waiting list for Moorings, thus allowing more access to the river for locals who live within walking distance. Full time residents will be moved up the waiting list. No moorings would be removed. Electric boats would receive a priority listing.

Phased in regulations regarding holding tanks would be introduced over the next 10 years with regulations applying first to live-on boats, secondly for larger boats and then the smaller boats.

There are also slight changes to passing on moorings after a bereavement.

There will be a consultation on the proposed changes that will finish at the end of March. The HM explained that he is planning on a fully open and consultative document which also includes planning for the whole Harbour rather than just moorings. This would include landings, visual impact of moorings etc. This is hoped to be an on-going plan for the next 10 years.

**ACTION: All to circulate the Draft Moorings Policy consultation to their Councils / groups.**

## **2. Double Steps (HM) Paper attached.**

Consultation on the Double Steps has been taking place over the last 10 years on how to improve the Double Steps.

Finally a solution has been reached which, it is hoped, will be acceptable to all. It is planned to lower the visual impact by bringing the pontoons further inshore. The bridge will be removed from the design to ensure views from shore across the river. DHNA has worked with Dart Sailability, and together they have found an acceptable alternative for disabled access. The changes should be in place by the spring.

DT Raised the issue that this change could possibly add to congestion on land with access to the ferries working from the pontoon and the buses and coaches pulling up near the pontoon. The HM believes that there will be much clearer and safer space on the water from which to get ashore, and should not impact the existing tourists disembarking from coaches. This will be monitored. It should all be in place by the Spring.

### **3 Cruise ships. HM.**

Cruise ships are part of the consultation and it has been put forward that the large mooring at Warfleet Creek, which was last used in the 1970s, could be a suitable alternative for larger ships. It would provide a safer mooring. It would mean a far shorter passage to travel while they reverse in. It could bring 2000+ passengers on the larger ships and there is unlikely to be a clash with main stream tourism as cruise ships tend to come to British ports in May, June and September, thus avoiding the high summer months. The numbers on a cruise ship only equal two loads of steam train passengers which Dartmouth handles well. There is the option to limit numbers landing but offset against this, the cruise ships bring £3million income to the south Devon area. There will be some impact on views but it could be that the sight of a large cruise ship provides interest. Re the question of pollution, there will be very little pollution to the water, though probably some atmospheric soot. CO2 emissions are calculated globally, not locally, so emissions would be part of the world account for the company concerned. There could also be some noise pollution, but loud speaker broadcasts would be controlled. Use of the mooring would impact on two existing moorings. There was no discussion about the impact on the sea bed of the double anchoring arrangement for the cruise ship's bow.

Research suggests that the spend in town and local area averages €80 per passenger when ashore, and much of that goes into local businesses. In addition, there is evidence that, following a cruise visit, many people return again to holiday again in Dartmouth and they also recommend Dartmouth to their friends. This also benefits the wider region.

### **4. South. West Water Consultation. HM NM EM**

The Consultation on Water Resources Management Plan had previously been circulated. DT reported that Dartmouth and Kingswear Society had submitted a response. The 25 year

plan outlines a long term strategy. There is a further public consultation and engagement period until May 23. MP encouraged everyone to take the document back to their Councils and organisations to discuss responding. On p40, (the last page of the document, there are some basic questions which would help inform discussion.  
<https://www.southwestwater.co.uk/environment/water-resources/water-resources-management-plan/>

After the meeting EM circulated a paper from DEFRA and EA which highlights some of the positive actions that are taking place. (Attached.)

**Action: Reps to encourage TCs / PCs / Groups to discuss and feedback on the SWW consultation document before 23 May.**

## **5. Bathing Waters Consultation HM EM NM**

The Dart and Tavy River water trials. There has been a lot of interest in this project including support from landowners and local authorities. Results will inform other projects. There are three groups in Totnes keen to have designated bathing water areas but as well as water quality, progress also depends on facilities and footfall. The Harbourmaster has had a constructive meeting with Southwest Water on working together on water quality and safe bathing designation. SWW has an ambition to designate two inland bathing sites per year and they appear keen for the Dart to apply because it has amongst the best river water quality in the SW! At the moment there are only two inland designated sites in all of England. On the Dart, 4 sites are currently being monitored: Noss, Stoke Gabriel, Dittisham and Totnes (above the weir). Monitoring is not a prerequisite for applying for designation. Standards designed for sea bathing beaches are currently

being used. Areas are selected on the basis of easy access to the water to carry out testing.

EM informed the group that testing areas are indicated by a pin on the map;

<https://environment.data.gov.uk/bwq/profiles/>

The annual monitoring programme is carried out by testing once a month and the data is shared online. The designation of quality is published in the autumn. If an area is poor for three years in a row it is deselected and loses its status.

The test gives an indication of water quality over the seasons. Phosphorus and nitrates are not as damaging as bacterial matter and the tests focus on the effects on human health.

NM reported attending a seminar on plastics in water, where the plastics grow a biofilm, much of which is resistant to antibiotics, thus having an impact on bathing water quality designation.

Working with Friends of the Dart there will be an application submitted at the end of the season but no proper testing till the end of the summer. The issue with Avian flu was discussed but EM informed the group that, percentage wise, the level of water contamination is extremely low.

## **6. Reports from members**

Ashprington and Tuckenhay (PT)

The Sustainability Group in the village has developed quickly, with outcomes including Toad Wardens to cover the toad migration route; working on hedgehog connectivity in built up areas, routes; and a successful programme of sustainability talks in the village hall.

Tuckenhay Regatta is returning (a local event).

PT raised concerns about three dog owners who have reported illness after their dogs had been swimming in the Harbourne, possibly connected to water quality.

PT reported an on-going environmental issue in Lime lane, where the landowner has smashed down oak trees beside

Bow Creek. The District Counsellor is taking up with SHDC the lack of any visit by Planning Enforcement, and apparent dis-interest in the destruction of the oak trees.

There has been concern in Bow Creek about heavy rain requiring piping out of foul water and removing it up to a holding tank which is not very satisfactory as there are odours and leakage.

**Cornworthy. DB.** Nothing to report.

**EA. EM**

Has several projects underway but not yet at reporting stage. However, she will bring a full report next meeting about a project in the Dartmoor catchment area that is looking at natural flow and run-off. This should tie in with monitoring down river. EA are working with landowners and investigating peat sources. There is a national project looking at standardising citizen science outputs and how those could be integrated into EA decision-making. This has read across to all estuaries.

SWW have contracted the EA to provide live monitoring of the water, and they have shared the data with Dart Harbour. The data does not instantly show the exact status of the water as it is not possible to test directly for bacteria on a live basis.

**Dart Harbour Board. JD**

JD reported that Emma was a very welcome addition to the DHNA board as she brings considerable professional environmental experience which had been missing for some time. He reminded members about the DHNA AGM meeting to be held at the Flavell 7 PM on Tuesday.

**AONB. NM.**

NM has been working on the Dart Estuary Salt marsh project, aimed at restoring / improving salt marshes around the Estuary. It starts with a survey of the condition of existing salt marshes and it includes raising awareness among landowners and fundus owners of the value of such marshes; the project will help them to access funding to protect the salt marshes. The project will then look at measures to protect the salt marshes.

NM also mentioned that there is some money to support a project on Dart Harbour walls.

Where there is evidence of topsoil being moved around, and creating runoff, this can be reported to EA

### **Kingswear. LM**

Kingswear also has an active Sustainability Group. They have purchased a thermal camera to record heat loss from buildings, which is being lent out to residents.

A working party had meet at Light House Beach for an update. There are still on-going problems with Beacon Road and more weak spots have been identified. The Boathouse now has a new owner although Light House Beach was not part of the sale. Access to the Beach will eventually happen but is dependent on path repairs and the opening of the SW Section of the English Coast Path with would mean access would be a legal requirement.(See information on Path here.:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/england-coast-path-overview-of-progress> ) There is an aspiration that it could be part of the coronation celebrations and be opened at the same time.

### **Dartmouth and Kingswear society. DT**

The Dartmouth NP has been approved and its effect is becoming apparent in planning applications.

An objection on CSOs was submitted to South West Water as part of their Consultation. There has been a high incidence of over-flow events in the Dart Estuary, with a figure of



2,979 events recorded in 12 months. While this is deemed unacceptable, there is also no record of the severity or volume of the incidents which devalues the data as a research tool.

## **7. Totnes. Ben Piper.**

### **Baltic Wharf**

BP gave a report and update on proposed development at Baltic Wharf. He submitted a letter from John Birch to the group. (Attached) which included a link to the campaign to retain the Boat Yard.

### **Report**

Since the last meeting, there has not been much movement on progressing the development but there is a growing appreciation among the community of the advantages of having a working boat yard. The town is getting behind schemes to keep the boat yard in existence. There is a recognition that the economy in South Hams needs investment and there is a sense that Totnes has been neglected for over 10 years. Losing Baltic Wharf would impact on the whole river.

<https://balticwharf.org.uk/>

**Action.** Draw the attention of your Council to the website. It high-lights the benefits to the river community, of retaining a working boat yard, providing employment, education and leisure opportunities . However, there are issues regarding PP already granted and it is important for your Council to be aware of both sides of the argument.

Totnes want a new flood mapping project to be conducted to show the improvements since the building of the flood defences. EM pointed out that it should have been produced at the end of the building works.

After the meeting, EM sent a link to access flood risk.

[https://www.gov.uk/check-long-term-flood-risk?\\_ga=2.70547156.531705022.1678801319-91716440.1655560652](https://www.gov.uk/check-long-term-flood-risk?_ga=2.70547156.531705022.1678801319-91716440.1655560652)

## **8. Membership of the Group. MP.**

MP announced that Graham Anderson is retiring from Dittisham and will be leaving the Dart Harbour Community Group. MP recorded that Graham had given considerable time and enthusiasm to the group, and will be very much missed.

AOB.

The secretary had made contact with a counsellor from Galmpton who appears interested in attending our meetings. HM announced that MDL had been sold to the Dolphin Yard that day. It is hoped that the DHCG can have a site meeting with Ben Morris in the near future. Galmpton is becoming increasingly significant to the River Dart, amongst other reasons it has the UK's largest Sea Grass Nursery and hosts "Dart Sailability".

## **9. Dates for future meetings**

Dates will be set on an annual basis. Our intention is for two meetings and one site visit each year. It is hoped that a river trip can be run alternate years. The following dates are proposed;

Summer trip to Galmpton in early July. TBA

Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> Nov 2023 (LM offered Kingswear village hall as the meeting venue.)

Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> March 2024

MP thanked Dartmouth Town Council for hosting the meeting.

## Update on Item 4. EM.

Below are some further notes on what the EA and Defra are doing in response to CSO and water quality concerns. This text was taken from a public blog hosted by DEFRA so is all ok to share now/with the minutes - [Government response to 'Our Troubled Rivers' documentary - Defra in the media \(blog.gov.uk\)](#)

The government has taken significant action in recent years to hold water companies to account – and will continue to do so. Recent action includes:

- Securing record fines for water companies that break the law. Since 2015, the Environment Agency has secured fines of over £142m through criminal proceedings. We are also making it easier and quicker for regulators to enforce civil penalties, with more detail due to be set out in our consultation in the spring. The Environment Secretary and Water Minister continue to meet regularly with water company chief executives from underperforming companies to make it clear that improvement actions must urgently be put in place. Funding from fines will also now be [invested in schemes that benefit our natural environment](#).
- Hugely increasing monitoring of discharges, from approximately 10% of storm overflows monitored in 2015 to 100% by the end of this year. This transparency is critical in addressing the issue. The EA has also asked companies to install new flow monitors on more than 2,000 wastewater treatment works. This has led to a major investigation, announced in November 2021, with the EA requesting more detailed data from all wastewater treatment works.
- Publishing our [Storm Overflows Discharge Reduction Plan](#), which will require water companies to deliver the largest infrastructure programme in water company history - £56 billion capital investment over 25 years. Water companies are already investing £3.1 billion in storm overflow improvements between 2020 and 2025. This includes £1.9 billion investment on the Thames Tideway Tunnel super sewer, with the rest used to undertake over 800 investigations and over 800 improvement schemes to storm overflows.
- [Demanding a clear assessment and action plan on every storm overflow](#) from every water and sewerage company in England, prioritising those that are spilling more than a certain number of times a year, and those spilling into bathing waters and high priority nature sites.

The law has always allowed for discharges, subject to a regulated permitting system. The way our Victorian sewers are built is that wastewater and

rainwater are carried in the same pipe. When it reaches a certain height, it pours into another pipe and into rivers. We believe that storm overflows are operating too frequently, which is why the government has set strict new targets in the [Storm Overflows Discharge Reduction Plan](#) that will require £56 billion of investment to deliver.

More detail on the government's plans to deliver clean and plentiful water were also set out last month in its [Environmental Improvement Plan 2023](#), a five-year strategy for a cleaner, greener country.