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Teignmouth Harbour Commission's Strategic Vision and Plan 2022-2025

Introduction

1. This short term Vision seeks to pull together the key features and challenges of managing the River Teign in order to meet the aspirations of all those users who have a stake in the future prosperity of the river, whether their interests are commercial, recreational or environmental. The Strategic Plan is developed from the aspirational Vision and sets out the framework for what the Harbour Authority must do and what it would like to do over the next three years.
2. Both the Vision and the Plan are evolutionary and have been developed by engagement across the user community and more specifically by the Teignmouth Harbour Commissioners (THC) as the Duty Holder¹.
3. Detailed planning for each year will take the form of the subordinate annual Business Plan and Forward Budget. This will be based on the Strategic Plan but will adopt a flexible approach to adapt to the prevailing circumstances and be agile enough to take advantage of opportunities.

The Strategic Vision:

To conserve the natural beauty, environment, character and history of the Harbour, balanced with the needs of the many people who use it, whilst ensuring that it is safe to navigate and accessible to as many people as possible, now and for succeeding generations.

Within that Vision, the Mission Statement:

To ensure that the Harbour is operated safely and efficiently, so as to safeguard the Harbour, its users, the public and the environment both now and in the future. It is committed, within its powers, to fulfilling all its duties and responsibilities in a safe and efficient manner, to the enhancement of access and facilities for river users and to the enhancement of the well-being, enjoyment and economic benefit of the River for all.

¹ Within the meaning of the Port Marine Safety Code.

Background

4. Situated at the heart of Devon, the River Teign is nestled between the seaside towns of Teignmouth and Shaldon, beneath the shadow of Dartmoor. There are panoramic views from the high ground around the town. Teignmouth claims record-breaking hours of sunshine and its geographical position ensures mild weather conditions for much of the time. The town is in a convenient position for Dartmoor National Park, and within easy reach of both Exeter and Plymouth. When the railway opened up the coast in the 1840s, Teignmouth became the second most popular health resort in Devon. The previous trades of salt production and fishing gave way to the demands of tourism. The 19th century saw an influx of new business and consequently a number of new buildings. Boat building was a major local industry and most commodities were brought in under sail. As local business increased so did waterway traffic. Clay and granite quarried nearby were important exports. The Quay is constructed from this granite. Today the river itself is a bustling centre of recreational boating activity. It is becoming increasingly popular with a diverse range of uses. Commercial activities on and around the River bring considerable benefits to the local economy and are a significant factor in the local employment market. The River is also a very important part of the local environment and supports many species of birds, plant life, fish and invertebrates. It is home to over 450 recreational craft berthed afloat and many more kept ashore. Leisure activities on and near the River include yachting and power-boating, dinghy sailing and windsurfing, rowing, kayaking and canoeing, paddle-boarding, swimming, fishing, bird-watching, rambling and sightseeing. THC wishes to provide clear leadership and direction for all interested parties, to achieve a universally agreed approach to any evolution of the Harbour.

5. The role of the Harbour Authority² is to manage, maintain and improve the River Teign. Whilst THC are not the planning authority for the River Teign – THC nonetheless wishes to play a role in defining the Harbour's future, primarily by considering and providing advice and relevant impacts for harbour works. Full enjoyment of the Harbour is dependent on the relationship with adjoining land users and its true non-statutory extent may be said to be all that land which supports and sustains the harbour activities and those of other interested parties – i.e. the support infrastructure. For clarity, THC has no current desire to extend either its statutory jurisdiction or its statutory responsibilities within the Teign.

The Vision

Purpose

6. The Vision is not intended to be a plan or a statement of policies. Rather, it is a starting point and a statement of shared values. It aims to take a pro-active approach to the evolution of the Harbour as a centre for a wide range of diverse recreation activities, as an economic hub and commercially operated Port and as a site of environmental significance. It seeks to avoid being over-prescriptive and, to that end, stops short of setting out detailed proposals for future development activity. It is intended, however, that this Vision will help to guide the THCs when considering their support or not for future applications for Harbour Works. It is also intended to be a living document. Comment and feedback are welcome and it will be subject to regular review. A measure of its success will be its adoption by a wide range of interested parties as the primary reference by which proposals for change can be judged fairly.

²Harbours Act 1964

Scope

7. THC will seek to conserve the natural beauty, environment, character and history of the harbour, balanced with the needs of the many people who use it. The Commissioners are acutely aware of any cumulative effects of river development and use. Concerns about cumulative effects are due, in part, to the increasing diversity of Harbour users and a perceived increase in congestion. There is a clear requirement for a process that is seen to be transparent in safeguarding the River and its amenities, and in balancing user needs and entitlements, be they environmental, recreational or commercial. As a finite resource, the Harbour requires careful husbandry to ensure that it is sustainable as a thriving centre for a diverse range of marine activity now and for succeeding generations. This Vision should be read in alongside the Strategic Plan, which forms part of this document. The Vision focusses on the situation as it is today but can be easily updated as changes occur in the future.

Harbour Commission Objectives:

Maintain Safety.

8. Safety within the Harbour is the primary responsibility of the Commissioners (as Duty Holder under the Port Marine Safety Code). The Board seeks to:

- ensure that all users feel safe and are safe on the water;
- ensure that all users understand and respect the needs of other users;
- accommodate the diverse range of craft currently found in the Harbour;
- ensure that appropriate navigation channels are available to meet their needs, whether in terms of depth, width, accessibility, shelter or crossing places and;
- provide relevant information on safety which can be widely disseminated to harbour users.

THC recognises the importance of safety for sailing dinghies and other small craft in the Harbour and will seek to ensure the managements and preservation of safe areas for these activities. THC will also encourage the safe use of the Harbour by children and, where possible, will look to understand how to provide access for those less able.

Preservation and enhancement of the Harbour's environment.

9. THC will ensure its compliance with appropriate environmental legislation. In carrying out its statutory functions, it must have regard to nature conservation, water quality and waste management. Thus, protection of the precious environment of the Harbour is a key aspect of THC's statutory responsibilities. It is vital that the protected habitats such as any surviving salt marshes and intertidal mud be conserved in order to perform their natural functions such as sea defence, carbon capture and support of a range of species of flora and fauna. The rural aspect of the upper reaches of the River should remain as such to be enjoyed by future generations. THC are aware of the impact of climate change and sea level rise and will continue to recognise, monitor and raise awareness of the effect on the Harbour. Promoting an understanding here will assist in improving the Harbour's resilience to climate change. THC will therefore seek, where practicable, to support initiatives that will enhance the environment, restore nature and reduce carbon emissions and activities that contribute to climate change. The Commissioners also recognise that maintenance dredging and, occasionally, capital dredging may be necessary to maintain navigable depths for access and to safeguard access and useable River space.

Ensuring port, commercial and recreational balance.

10. The Teign is a busy recreational harbour with an active leisure user community both from the back beach and in Shaldon; appealing to owners of vessels of all types including yachts, motor cruisers, kayaks, canoes, rowing boats, sailing dinghies, Stand-Up Paddleboards (SUPs) and Personal Watercraft (Jet Ski's); other, new, water-based activities may also become popular in the future. Furthermore, the River is popular for fishing, bird-watching, dog-walking, swimming and simply 'sitting and watching'. It is a vibrant and important commercial location, with small local business alongside larger commercial ships supporting the local economy and employment opportunities. The Harbour's recreational activity is vital for the survival of these small businesses. It is imperative that a balance is maintained to ensure that businesses, investment and employment can thrive alongside the demands of all recreational activity.

11. THC understands the great importance of the marine businesses around the Harbour and will seek to provide support where it can to ensure that all users are treated fairly and equally where possible as demands for space increase. These businesses include specialist boat yards, yacht clubs, training centres, specialist engineering and support businesses and those services such as local shops, pubs & amenities and the ferry which enable both boat owners/users and non-boat owners to have access to and experience the water. THC will encourage marine businesses around the Harbour and anticipates that they will continue to be flexible, open to change and adaptable to the diverse demands of Harbour users in the future.

12. THC recognises the equal importance of the Harbour as a recreational resource for all who wish to access it. The Harbour has something to offer across a wide range of recreational activities. THC believes that the Harbour should continue to meet this recreational demand and will seek to ensure that such activities can take place safely and with the minimum of conflict between users or negative impact on the natural environment. Ensuring that there is sufficient space for recreational activity is important but the Commissioners also recognise the need to balance this against demand for an appropriate distribution of moorings and berths so that the full range of activities may take place safely.

Ensuring our financial future.

13. As a Trust Port THC is self-funding mainly through the collection of Harbour Dues from the commercial port and mooring fees for services. THC is a 'not-for-profit' organisation and the Commissioners are committed to ensuring that any surplus is reinvested in the infrastructure of the Harbour. This will include sustaining pro-actively the Vessel Replacement Reserve and in time building an Asset Enhancement Reserve so that opportunities can be taken advantage of as they arise. This will be priority post 2028 when the Commitment to the Pilots National Pension Fund (PNPF) becomes more sustainable.

Responding to future demand.

14. There are considerable pressures on the Commission and a great deal of competition for space within the Harbour. In balancing future demand, the Commissioners will seek to preserve public access to the Harbour for all types of recreation (with appropriate restrictions to ensure safety of navigation and environmental protection). It will work with local planning authorities to maintain access to the shoreline for non-boat users and seek to encourage the provision of facilities for non-boating visitors when appropriate.

15. THC aspires to manage the space available for all categories of Harbour users and to give due consideration to 'zoning' of activities where practicable. Optimal use of space

has not yet involved the clearing of moorings from specific areas but may do so and THC accepts that moorings elsewhere may need to be reconfigured to accommodate displaced boats. THC will, where appropriate, seek the agreement of the Crown Estate to this. Competition for space is not limited to the water and THC recognises the importance of adequate facilities for car and trailer parking and will maintain a dialogue with the local planning authorities to encourage the inclusion of parking issues on their agendas. THC wishes to encourage access to the facilities of the River for boat users of all means.

Engagement and consensus building

16. The Vision is for a harbour where there is a shared understanding between all the individuals and groups who use it. THC is committed to working to build consensus between these individuals and groups through the reinvigorated Teignmouth Consultancy Group, where all users have been invited to nominate representatives. THC will continue to lead on consultation with those whom Members represent and will advise the Commissioners accordingly when Members believe that consultation is required. Consultation and engagement will be open and accessible where possible. THC will also work to disseminate information about the Harbour, how it is managed and operates and its history and environment, so as to inform local communities and build ownership of this valuable resource. To this end, THC seeks to encourage a more 'joined-up' approach to the use of the River and any planning and development in the Harbour, working in cooperation with the local planning authorities and other interested parties. Finally, it is fully intended that this Vision will be a living document, to be reviewed every three years and amended on a regular basis.

The Strategic Plan

Purpose

17. The Strategic Plan is derived from the broader Vision and sets out within that what the THC will do. It will:

- Comply with all legal requirements;
- Aim to meet the national requirements of the Port Marine Safety Code;
- Heed the Guide to Good Practice on Port Marine Operations, published by the Department for Transport (Ports Division);
- Act in pursuance of the South Marine Plan issued by the Marine Management Organisation.

In doing so, it will exercise its functions openly and transparently in the long-term interests of the Harbour's River Users and other concerned parties and beneficiaries.

Scope

Port Status and Governance Arrangements.

18. The Commission was first established in 1836 due to the increasing number of ships and the requirement to maintain a navigable channel and exercise control and the Harbour has been operated as a Trust Port ever since. It is assumed that this arrangement will continue for the foreseeable future. Information about THC and Harbour can be found on the new THC website which will develop and expand over time to provide the single point of truth about the harbour and THC. The Commissioners collectively form a democratically accountable body responsible for overseeing the operation of the Harbour and the impacts

arising from it. The Commissioners are individually and collectively responsible as the Duty Holder for the Harbour as defined in the Port Marine Safety Code.

19. Although THC is the Statutory Harbour Authority for the River Teign from the Ness to the Stover Canal at Newton Abbot, it is not the local planning authority for the River. Planning for development on and around the Teign is covered by the Local Development Framework produced by local district Councils; all structural development on the River which is attached to the land requires their planning permission. Factors for consideration when determining the merit of applications are contained in the Port Marine Safety Code and environmental legislation. The Marine Management Organisation's South Marine Plan must also be used for all planning recommendations or advice.

External Constraints.

20. The following external constraints have been identified:

- The complex needs and conflicting interests of River users and other interested parties need to be understood and balanced against the statutory and business constraints within which THC operates, particularly as THC doesn't own any real-estate;
- National and Local Planning Authorities' policies and controls which may constrain the scope for development and improvement of facilities and amenities;
- The requirement to operate subject to the terms of a management agreement with the Crown Estate, which will alter from time to time.
- Recognition that many River users and actors will be unaware of the different roles and responsibilities with respect to the River of Teignbridge District Council (TDC), other local authorities, the Crown Estate, and THC.

Internal Factors.

21. The following internal pressures have been identified:

- THC is funded entirely by River Users (commercial and leisure – in accordance with the harbour revision order 2003) and visitors and must be operated as economically and cost-effectively as possible;
- THC's statutory responsibility for ensuring safety of navigation is driving an increased need for Harbour Office staff to be available to monitor and supervise activities on the River outside normal working hours, particularly in the summer months;
- THC has wide-ranging environmental responsibilities, some of which are carried out on behalf of the Crown Estate;
- The need to adopt certain formats for information sharing, for example web-based material, has both advantages and disadvantages.

Finance.

22. THC operates as an independent commercial business where its annual income must meet all operating costs and have sufficient reserves to remain sustainable for the future and operate as a going concern. An annual budget is produced and the accounts are audited by an independent auditor and published publically and provided annually to the Department for Transport (DFT).

Staff Training and Development.

23. A significant element of ensuring that we have suitably qualified and experience members of staff that manage the harbour on a day to day basis is to ensure that staff receive the training which they require to do their job and such additional training as may be required to encourage their career development. Development training will be provided for permanent staff as appropriate to their current role and future aspirations. THC will be pro-active in implementing an appropriate performance management system that values performance in staff appraisal.

Strategic Objectives.

24. For functional delivery within the constraints, THC will set the following strategic objectives for the coming years:

- Governance: To govern the River Teign in compliance with the Department for Transport's 'Trust Port Guidance for Good Governance'
- Navigational Safety: To make the Port Marine Safety Code the central pillar of everything the THC does to ensure the safety of all those who use and work in the Harbour;
- Environment: To discharge its responsibilities under the Habitats Regulations and all other relevant environmental legislation through conserving and where practicable enhancing the environment, promoting nature recovery and maintaining approved pollution prevention and nature conservation measures;
- Public Relations and Communication: To enhance the public perception and understanding of THC through building and maintaining the confidence of River Users and other interested parties by informing them of plans, progress and achievements, as well as by a commitment to enhance public understanding of the governance arrangements;
- The Crown Estate: To maintain a productive relationship with the Crown Estate and its agents;
- Moorings: To manage the maintained and non-maintained moorings efficiently and fairly;
- To be pro-active in monitoring the River for the impact of Climate Change and identifying the implications of decisions. Additionally to implement where practicable initiatives and inform, encourage and support the initiatives of other river users in reducing carbon emissions and activities that contribute to climate change;
- Enhancement: To encourage and facilitate the enhancement of access and facilities for River Users and the enhancement of the well-being, enjoyment and economic benefit of the River for all;
- Consultation: To listen to ideas and suggestions put forward by River Users and other interested parties and consult on proposed changes;
- Visitors: To promote and advance the provision of appropriate facilities for visiting yachtsmen, both afloat and ashore and to manage them as efficiently as possible;
- Policy: To ensure whenever possible that its views are taken into account when future government policies on ports, harbours and the marine environment are under consideration;
- Future Trends: To respond appropriately to new trends in recreational boating, for example: larger boats, Rigid Inflatable Boats (RIBs), Personal Water Craft (PWCs), dry-sailing and Stand-up Paddle boarding;
- Financial: To maintain and manage the harbour cost-effectively, and within the available resources;
- Staff: To employ and retain a well-motivated, properly trained staff and provide regular training for Harbour Commissioners;

- Health and Safety: To ensure that staff and visitors to Harbour Authority facilities are made aware of health and safety policies and procedures and their own individual responsibilities.

Teignmouth Harbour Commissions Mission Statement combines these Objectives and sets the headmark for operational and tactical decision making.