

Confidential

Teignmouth Harbour Commission

Chairman's Statement Year ending March 2024

- **Financial** Year to March 2024 saw a continuation in the shift of balance from commercial to leisure. This, together with an ongoing reduction in the take-up of non-maintained moorings, and the continuing demands of the Pilots National Pension Fund (PNPF) deficit has resulted in a challenging financial position for the Commission and the need for careful control of spend.
- **Shipping** The ongoing trend of a reduction in number of vessels and tonnage seen in recent years has begun to flatten out, albeit at a lower level than previously. In the Year to end March 2024 250,000 tonnes of cargo passed through the port.
- **Port Safety Compliance** Annual Audit carried out on 14 and 15 December 2023 in line with the Port Marine Safety Code. This confirmed that THC continues to be compliant.
- **Beach Management** Teignbridge District Council has commissioned a study entitled "Teignmouth, Shaldon and Holcombe Beach Management Plan" (BMP) using the consultants, Jacobs. Teignmouth Harbour Commission is actively supporting this important work as a member of the Stakeholder Group. This study will provide a solid, data driven, foundation for future decisions. It is due to report its findings around the end of 2024.
- **Moorings** Whilst take up of maintained moorings remains high with a lengthy waiting list there has been a significant reduction in non-maintained moorings. A net loss of 72 non-maintained moorings over 3 years has resulted in a fall in annual income of approx. £35K. This reflects a change in leisure craft with more, higher value vessels, not suitable for drying out moorings. The Commission needs to take this on board in future planning both in terms of mooring charges going forwards and exploring whether more maintained moorings could be made available.
- **Vessels** A secondhand coded Rib has been purchased as this proved to be significantly more cost effective than having the existing vessel upgraded and coded. The Pilot boat, the Syd Hook, has been in service for nearly 30 years and has been out of action since Autumn 2023. The decision was taken in March 2024 to draw down on the *Vessel*

replacement Fund and replace with a Mersey Class 1, former lifeboat, based in Poole.

- **Pilots National Pension Fund.** Given the challenging financial situation, the decision was taken at the start of 2024 to make payments to the PNPF at the 'minimum required level' rather than the increased rate that had been adopted for the previous two years. This is reviewed quarterly.
- **Leisure Use** The trend we have seen in recent years of increasing leisure use of the Harbour has continued with evermore kayaks, SUPS, and swimmers. Whilst it is good to see more people enjoying all that the Teign has to offer this brings its own challenges. Personal Watercraft and small motor craft continue to launch in increasing numbers from the public slipways and speeding remains a concern. Voluntary registration remains an option for these craft but, proportionally, take-up is low.
- **Safety** The deployment of volunteers alongside Harbour Staff has enabled the increased level of Harbour Patrols, introduced in 2023, to continue in 2024. Feedback has been positive, and my perception is there has been less speeding and anti-social use of the water. Although there is still a problem with a few persistent offenders and the Commission may need to consider the option of a prosecution to act as a deterrent going forwards.
- **Visitors** The numbers using the visitor moorings and pontoons remained high in the 2023 Season despite lack of facilities that might be desired but is since showing a downward trend. (Unfortunately, the desire to offer running water in 2024 had to be put on hold due to financial constraints.)
- **Consultative Body** the reconfigured Consultative Body got off to a good start with new Joint Chairs appointed in May 2023. However, relationships have since deteriorated and there is again much work to do to ensure the body functions in a way that enables meaningful consultation about future policy. This has begun.
- **Environmental** – we have all become more aware of our responsibility to conserve and enhance the environment; the good news is there have been no major incidents but going forwards, we need to be ever more focused on how we can make a positive contribution to this beautiful place. There is the possibility of offset environmental work within the river resulting from the BMP. The ever-increasing number of water

users is placing pressure on the environment. Concerns are growing within the river community about pollution from SWW and changing of testing regimes.

- **Looking ahead**

- With the challenging financial position driven both by the shifting balance between Commercial and Leisure and also within the leisure market, the Commission needs to look at developing new income streams and offering more facilities to users whilst continuing to control spend.
- The process to update the Teignmouth Harbour Revision Order (HRO) (Last updated in 2003) was initiated in 2023 but has been stalled for the past 12 months, a nationwide problem. – the timing is driven by the Marine Management Organization (MMO), and it is not possible to predict when this might go to Public Consultation – this is leading to mistrust within some elements of the user community but must be managed. The HRO represents significant financial investment and is needed to position THC to manage the Harbour in an efficient, economical and safe manner going forwards.

- **Staff** – Toby Dean has served as CEO since May 2023. My personal thanks to Toby, for the leadership, professionalism, wisdom and humor he has shown as he steered the team through some challenging times. Fred Pearce and Pilot, Mark Fleming have retired. A programme is in place to ensure adequate cover of qualified Pilots. The Commission is planning to have one or two staff members on the national apprentice scheme from 2024.

- **Commissioners** My thanks for the contributions each has made in different ways during the year, both in meetings and particularly in more hands-on ways at times. My particular thanks to Vic Weston as Vice-chair who is always a very wise sounding board. Vic and myself complete our terms on the Commission in December 2024 and stand down as Vice-Chair and Chair at this meeting.

Dr Sue Astbury
Chair
Teignmouth Harbour Commission

26.9.24