

NEWPORT HARBOUR COMMISSIONERS

REPORT TO THE ADVISORY BODY TO THE NEWPORT HARBOUR COMMISSIONERS

OCTOBER 2013

Five meetings of the Harbour Commissioners and two Channel Dredging Committees have been held since my last report to the Advisory Body and I set out below the significant issues which have arisen over the last six months.

1. Harbour Dues

- I am again pleased to report that overall trade in the Port has remained reasonably healthy and Commissioners consider there is no need to revisit their current financial strategy.
- In the light of maintaining reserves at a level set out in this financial strategy, the Commissioners have decided to remove the current discount of 1p/GT and the level of Harbour Dues is now set at 4.5p/GT with effect from 1st June 2013.
- The service level agreements currently in place with three external providers will be reviewed in the next financial year.

2. Navigation and Safety

- The dredged channel has remained in good condition with only minimal targeted dredging undertaken at the Bellmouth up to the end of September 2013. However, the latest full survey has revealed a significant increase in the volume of retained material above the maintenance level within the Channel and a dredging campaign will commence shortly. The on-going maintenance level remains at 0.7m above sill.
- Trinity House carried out a full Navigation Aids audit on 7th May 2013 and no issues were raised by the Inspectors. A successful annual light inspection took place on 13th August 2013.
- The new West Usk Buoy is now in position and a replacement Number 5 Buoy has now been purchased following competitive tendering. Maintenance and replacement work had been undertaken very professionally and efficiently and all the navigational arrangements are robust and fit for purpose.
- Commissioners were very pleased to note the large investment that had been made by ABP into repair work in the enclosed dock. This showed a clear confidence in the future of the Newport Dock.
- Concern remains over the private moorings in the River Usk with many of the structures now in a parlous state. Whilst ABP can control moorings adjacent to their land, there are many moorings further up the river where ownership is unknown and remedial action urgently required. Commissioners concerns with respect to safety and potential impact on navigation have been taken up with Newport City Council.
- A further revised Oil Spill Response Plan has been sent to the MCA for approval, and the table top exercise to test the plan is set to take place on 20th November 2013.
- The final adjudication letter from the Department for Transport regarding a complaint was received in September 2013. Commissioners were pleased to note the

vindication of their position and rejection of the complaints made, and agreed to implement the two recommendations contained in the letter.

3. Annual Audit by the Designated Person

- The formal report of the Designated Person, Mr William Heaps, was presented to the Board on 9th October 2013. This reported on progress made to rectify issues highlighted during the previous internal audit undertaken by Mr Heaps and focussed on continuing compliance with the Port Marine Safety Code. It is pleasing to report that, from his examination of the evidence provided, Mr Heaps was able to confirm completion of actions identified in 2012. An action sheet has been provided with topics highlighted for further consideration this year but, in summary, the Newport Harbour Commissioners have received an extremely satisfactory report on the performance of their duties and responsibilities.

4. Welsh Ports Association

- Members held discussions on 5th September 2013 with the Wales Office of UK Office Minister Stephen Crabb on the challenges for Welsh Ports. Concern was expressed on the implications of Ports policy being fully devolved to the Welsh Government. The current market-led policy adopted by the UK Department for Transport has enabled ports in Wales to thrive. Members needed more evidence that further devolution would strengthen economic delivery and performance of ports as generators of inward investment, growth, economic activity and development within Wales.
- Latest figures show that port trade in the U.K. has held up well with only a slight decrease on 2011 levels. Welsh ports handled 11% of U.K. freight and a significant opportunity is provided by the offshore renewable market.
- Welsh Government can have a role in supporting port development and growth. The streamlining of government agency activity, including immigration, customs, security and vehicle safety checks at the border would contribute to improved connectivity. This is also the case for land side and marine planning consents.
- The Newport Security Regulations have been published and will become operational in the next few weeks. The Designation Order includes both the River Ebbw and the River Usk up to the Southern Distributor Bridge as well as the enclosed docks. Commissioners will be required to act as an advisory body to the board set up to oversee such security issues. Newport, Cardiff and Barry comprise one area and the Department for Transport is the governing body and the National Maritime Security Compliance Division is responsible for the new protocol.

5. M4 Relief Road

- The Welsh Government is currently consulting on a draft plan aimed to address transport related problems on the M4 around Newport. Mr Andy Falleyn (Deputy Director, Welsh Government), Dan Saville (ARUP, M4 Project) and Mark Dixon (Welsh Government M4 Project) made a presentation to the Harbour Commissioners meeting on 12th June 2013. At that date there were three potential routes, two requiring construction of a motorway, the other was a dual carriageway.
- Commissioners reiterated their concerns about the impact on local businesses and the effect on employment as well as the number of vessels utilising Newport Docks. A meeting has been arranged with ABP and a further meeting with the

Welsh Government officers will be held as part of the consultation which concludes on 16th December 2013.

Other issues:

- Docks Disaster Memorial Plaques
- Annual Accounts
- Stakeholder engagement
- River Trip
- Merchant Navy Welfare Board
- Appointment of New Commissioners
- Revised Byelaws.

C. P. Crick

Chairman

16th October 2013