

NEWPORT HARBOUR COMMISSIONERS

REPORT TO THE ADVISORY BODY TO THE NEWPORT HARBOUR COMMISSIONERS

MAY 2014

Six 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

- Reports received by the Commissioners reveal that overall trade in the Port continues to improve. The Commissioners reviewed their financial position and supporting historical data at the meeting held on 11th December 2013. In view of the annual budget and current level of reserves it was agreed unanimously to increase the level of Harbour Dues by 1p per gross tonne with effect from 1st January 2014. It was agreed to keep the level of dues under constant review.

2. Navigation and Safety

- During the period 9th October 2013 to 6th January 2014, dredging campaigns have been necessary in the Newport Channel along with Dock and Bellmouth dredging. From 6th January to 9th April 2014 no dredging was carried out at Newport Channel. Dredging has however taken place in the South Dock and Bellmouth in this period.
- Work on the construction of a new rail bridge is progressing well. Damage had occurred to the Dock gates as a result of inclement weather, and hydraulic seal replacement will now be undertaken, planned around shipping movements as far as is practicable.
- An Oil Spill Response table-top multi agency exercise was held on 20th November 2013. This was a joint exercise with ABP/NHC held with Tier two responders Adler & Allen. The MCA confirmed that the Joint Oil Spill Contingency plan was fully tested with 33 representatives attending. A few minor amendments have been made to the plan, which has MCA certification, following a debrief with Natural Resource Wales.
- The ownership and activities undertaken on moorings on the west side of the River Usk and on the River Ebbw continue to give rise for concerns. The Commissioners have confirmed their support to the Land Agents in their endeavour to produce a file detailing ownership and registration, and also to consider mooring standards. I joined ABP on the pilot boat for an inspection trip on 21st February 2014 which undertook a photographic record of every mooring as part of a full register completion.

- A final adjudication letter was received from the Department for Transport in January 2014 concerning complaints made by a stakeholder last year. Commissioners were pleased to note the contents of the adjudication and the dismissal of the complaints made. Careful consideration was given to the recommendations made in the conclusions, most of which were already in place.

3. M4 Relief Road

- I reported the Commissioners' concerns concerning the proposals for the M4 to the last Advisory Body meeting, and have since met with ABP to consider further concerns. In response to the consultation exercise managed by the Welsh Government and ARUP, Commissioners made full reference to the objection letter sent in relation to a previous consultation exercise in 2008. I responded to a Western Mail approach and was interviewed by the BBC for a programme on all the route options, broadcast on 27th November 2013. Commissioners will continue to work closely with ABP with regard to all future consultations and submissions on this project.

The Vice-Chairman, Secretary and I met a consultant working for Arup on 10 March. The consultant, who had previously been a Director of ABP, had been very supportive. He was consulting with both NHC and ABP and would discuss matters further when details were known about the proposed route (e.g. the proposed height above the River and the Docks). The importance of economic regeneration was noted, and issues about the curvature of the proposed routes and problems relating to construction on a rubbish tip site were also raised.

4. Byelaws

- All matters that had been raised by the Department for Transport on the submission last year of new Newport Byelaws have been resolved and amendments agreed. Updated byelaws were submitted to the Department in advance of their deadline of 18th December 2013. A letter detailing further amendments was subsequently received in February and updated draft byelaws submitted and we now await final approval.

5. Newport Dock Memorial

- A memorial service took place on 25th October 2013 at the memorial in St Woolos Cemetery to those who lost their lives in the Docks Disaster. The service was conducted by the Bishop of Monmouth and the three replacement plaques commissioned by the Commissioners and ABP were recognised. The original three bronze plaques honouring the victims were removed after an attempted theft. Arrangements are being made with the website 'History Points' to include any information the public may wish to supply on the Disaster or the Memorial. The original plaques may be viewed in St Marks Church, Newport. Commissioners are delighted that the monument has been restored to its original state.

6. Other Issues

- AGM held on 13th November 2013
- HMS Severn visit
- East Usk Lighthouse
- NATO conference on 3/4th September 2014 at the Celtic Manor
- Welsh Government Ports and Harbour Infrastructure Fund
- Silk Commission on Devolution in Wales – Final Report

Colin Crick

Chairman – Newport Harbour Commissioners

April 2014