



NORTH SUNDERLAND HARBOUR USERS GROUP

**Note of Meeting held at The Olde Ship Inn, Seahouses
on Thursday 19 September 2024**

1. Present

Members: Ian Clemmett (Clerk); Michael Dawson (Chair); Andrew Douglas; David Fordy; Julie Harris; Kerry Loughlin; Ailsa Shiel; William Shiel

Ex Officio: James Boulton (Chair, Harbour Commissioners); Fiona Kibby (Deputy Harbour Master)

Apologies: Jonathan Dawson; John Thorburn

2. Minutes of Last Meeting (16/5/24)

Accepted

3. Matters Arising

None

4. Deputy Harbour Master's report

- 4.1 Currently addressing parking and how this fits with pedestrian safety. All piers need to be kept clear of obstructions at all times. Harbour hill is a particular problem with speeding motorists. The speed limit is 10mph but is not clearly signed. This could be addressed along with possible hatching to designate vehicle and pedestrian areas / thoroughfares. FK to investigate new signage and to speak to regular delivery and coach drivers about the speed limit **Action: FK**
- 4.2 Keeping piers tidy is essential for safety. There are concerns that on occasion emergency vehicles will struggle to get through **Action: All**
- 4.3 There have been problems with the power supply on the harbour including things like freezers frequently tripping out. Oswald Hughes have been looking into

solutions and have reported that power surges are occurring. This is a grid supply issue affecting the whole village. FK is liaising over this **Action: FK**

4.4 Risk Assessments are currently being reviewed **Action: FK**

4.5 Facilities are being improved around the boatyard compound and the forklift is being repaired

5. Port Master Plan

5.1 The Plan is up for review. FK has received comments direct by e-mail **Action: FK**

5.2 It was asked whether businesses operating around the harbour could be given preferential treatment for parking – say, 3 or 4 dedicated spaces – for a set fee. It was agreed this was feasible but could be compromised by the total number of spaces available. It would be difficult to guarantee parking spaces unless every single one was individually marked, and this would need policing to ensure it worked

5.3 Installing pontoons has been suggested. These would rise and fall with the tide and therefore improve access to vessels. The idea has been considered previously but engineering issues concerning drilling into the harbour wall had been identified. More detailed information will be required before further consideration. It was acknowledged there are current limitations with the existing steps in the outer harbour in particular. They need redesigning to be fully accessible. The HUG agreed there is a need for access improvements and future discussions will be necessary **Action: Harbour Commissioners**

6. Code of Conduct

Review and endorsement of the Code of Conduct was put on hold in order to address other matters which were deemed to take priority

7. Electricity charges

7.1 Rather than the existing metered system, new Smart Meter pedestals are proposed which operate using pre-paid cards. Cards can be topped-up at the Harbour Office. The objective is to be fair to all and for users to pay for what they use. It will apply to all boats, kiosks and garages

7.2 The HUG expressed concerns about cards running out unexpectedly – most particularly at nighttime when uninterrupted power to equipment such as freezers was essential. There would be no way of telling how much credit was on a card and this would leave systems vulnerable. The HUG felt a new card system was not the answer for all and some users would need to remain on the existing metered system. This needs further investigation **Action: FK**

8. Charging structure

- 8.1 Charges have been based on a fee per passenger. The proposal is to move to a new fixed rate system of £4,000 + berthing fee of £300; but are there alternatives to this?
- 8.2 The Harbour is a trust and needs to raise money in order to invest in improvements. The HUG needs to make a case to present to Commissioners on two issues: 1) Charging structures 2) What happens if there are any extenuating circumstances e.g. if unable to trade for some reason. The case was made that smaller vessels should pay proportionately less than larger ones
- 8.3 It was agreed that ultimately deciding on a system is a matter for the three tour boat operators. There was general agreement that a fixed price is the way forward but based on the size of the vessel. For example, a small vessel (say, <20 passengers): rate 1; medium (<50): rate 2; and large (>50): rate 3. This is given for indicative purposes only and was not agreed at the meeting. It was agreed the tour boat operators should take this forward and agree on a system based on a sliding scale that is fair for all
Action: AD, AS & WS

9. New car parking rules

- 9.1 A question was raised about income from car park fees compared to potential income if more kiosks / traders were permitted on the harbourside. This would, of course, result in fewer car parking spaces. At present there is no appetite to review this
- 9.2 Painting of new hatched areas will be starting from w/c 23 September 2024. This will include disabled parking provision

10. Formalisation of tenancy agreements for traders

There was a request that existing traders be consulted before new businesses are allowed to establish. Security of tender and continuation of tenancy was deemed important and should be balanced against potential higher bids from new businesses. It was proposed that existing traders should be granted first refusal for new tenancies, and this should be viewed favourably by the Harbour Commissioners wherever possible
Action: Harbour Commissioners

11. Proposed action plan for bins on the harbour

- 11.1 It is recognised that much of the litter arising on the harbourside comes from businesses on Main Street. There have been previous discussions with chip shops about paying towards this
- 11.2 Bins soon overflow and realistically can never cope with the quantity of rubbish they attract. They also need to be gull-proof

- 11.3 Ultimately litter and waste disposal is a County Council issue. It was recommended we gather evidence of the situation around the harbour by taking photos and lobby NCC to take action
Action: All

12. Proposed boot wash facilities

- 12.1 Biosecurity for England have recommended installing a boot wash facility on the harbourside to encourage visitors to disinfect their footwear before heading out to the Farne Islands
- 12.2 The HUG were broadly supportive of the principle but raised a number of questions about its practicability including where such a facility could be sited and how effective it would be given the large number of visitors that pass through. Insisting on its use would cause a bottleneck
- 12.3 Facilities are in place elsewhere in the country so it was agreed we should ask Biosecurity for England to feedback on how those work and how that could be applied to Seahouses
Action: IC

13. Any Other Business

- 13.1 There has been an ambition to install bike racks. There could be scope where Middle Pier joins Long Pier or perhaps they may be better placed in the NCC car park
- 13.2 There have been issues with divers' gear blocking access. This may call for a review of better signage of the sort that used to exist. The Harbour Master's Office should be informed of any non-compliance

14. Date of next Meeting

- 14.1 Given the quantity of issues currently being considered, it was agreed to meet quarterly
- 14.2 The next meeting will be held at the Olde Ship Inn on 5 December at 18:00