

EXETER HARBOUR BOARD

Date: Thursday 12 June 2025

Time: 5.30 pm

Venue: Rennes Room, Civic Centre, Paris Street, Exeter

Members are invited to attend the above meeting.

If you have an enquiry regarding any items on this agenda, please contact Josie McDonald, Democratic Services Officer on 01392 265354.

Membership -

Williams, R (Chair), Cookson, Read, Rolstone, Snow and Sheridan.

J Green, Lt Col D Marino, J Prescott and C Seddon

Agenda

1 **Apologies**

2 **Minutes**

(Pages 3 -
8)

To approve the minutes of the Exeter Harbour Board meeting held on 17 March 2025.

3 **Declarations of Interest**

Councillors are reminded of the need to declare any disclosable pecuniary interests that relate to business on the agenda and which have not already been included in the register of interests, before any discussion takes place on the item. Unless the interest is sensitive, you must also disclose the nature of the interest. In accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct, you must then leave the room and must not participate in any further discussion of the item. Councillors requiring clarification should seek the advice of the Monitoring Officer prior to the day of the meeting.

4 **Local Government (Access to Information Act 1985) - Exclusion of Press and Public**

It is considered that the Board would be unlikely to exclude the press and public during consideration of the items on this agenda, but if it should wish do so, then the following resolution should be passed:

RECOMMENDED that, under Section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act

1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the particular item(s) of business on the grounds that it (they) involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in the relevant paragraphs(s) of Part 1, of Schedule 12A of the Act”.

5 **Public Questions**

A period of up to 15 minutes is available to deal with questions relating to the business of the Harbour Board from the public.

Details of questions should be notified to Democratic Services via committee.services@exeter.gov.uk by 10.00am at least three working days prior to the meeting. For this meeting any questions must be submitted by 10.00am on Monday 9 June 2025.

6 **Chair's Announcements**

(Verbal
Report)

7 **Exeter Port User Group update**

(Verbal
Report)

To receive a verbal update from the Secretary of the Exeter Port Users Group (EPUG).

8 **Southeast Devon Wildlife- Joint Habitat Mitigation Strategy 2024**

(Presentat
ion)

To receive presentation from Neil Harris, from Southeast Devon Wildlife- Joint Habitat Mitigation Strategy 2024.

9 **Harbour Master's Report**

(Pages 9 -
16)

To receive a quarterly report from the Harbour Master

Date of Next Meeting

The next scheduled meeting of the Exeter Harbour Board will be held on **Monday** 29 September 2025 at 5.30 pm in the Civic Centre.

Individual reports on this agenda can be produced in large print on request to Democratic Services (Committees) on 01392 265107.

EXETER HARBOUR BOARD

Monday 17 March 2025

Present:-

Councillor Williams, R (Chair)
Councillors Read, Rolstone, Sheridan and Snow
A Garratt, Lt Col D Marino, J Prescott and C Seddon

Apologies

R Eggleton, J Green and Councillor M. Williams

Also Present

Harbour Master Exeter Port Authority and Democratic Services Manager

Also in attendance:

John Monks - Chair of Friends of Exeter Ship Canal
Paul Craven - River Exe Cafe
Martin Davies - Environment Agency
Rex Harrison - Chair of the Exeter Port Users Group

1 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 12 December 2024 were taken as read and signed by the Chair as correct.

2 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No declarations of pecuniary interest were made.

3 **PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

A member of the public, Mr C submitted the following question: -

- Does the Harbour Board have any influence over the business and decisions of the Exeter Quay and Canal Trust?

The Chair advised that the Harbour Board do not have any influence over the business and decisions of the Exeter Quay and Canal Trust.

Mr C, in asking a supplementary question, enquired where there was overlapping membership between the two bodies, whether there were arrangements in place to avoid any conflicts of interest?

The Chair advised that arrangements were in place to avoid conflicts of interest relating to any overlapping membership between the two bodies.

4 **CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chair provided the board with the following announcements: -

- meetings were scheduled for April 2025 with Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council, and Teignbridge District Council to discuss sea defences;

- there had previously been unanimous approval for the Harbour Master to communicate the Exeter Port Authority's best practice approach to the fire services in relation to the Princess Marina Ferry Fire;
- an emergency action plan for incidents had been written but was waiting to be reviewed the newly appointed Designated Person (DP);
- a visioning event had been held on 1 February 2025 where several suggestions had been made from Members and Waterways team;
- the Chair and Councillor Read had met Tom Watts of West Country Rivers Trust to discuss salmon passages on the Trues Weir and Mill on the Exe and were advised that further work was needed on those passages;
- the Chair had attended the Exe Estuary Management Partnership meeting on 11 February 2025, and further information about the partnership was available on their website;
- at the Exe Estuary Management Partnership meeting, Myles Blood-Smyth had proposed depositing spent oyster shells offshore to create a natural barrier and build up a sandbank, which was being considered by the partnership;
- the Chair and Harbour Master had attended a meeting with Ashford's solicitors regarding the Harbour Revision Order (HRO) and discussions had included Port Authority and Harbour Board governance arrangements, a focus on collaboration between the Harbour Board, the DP, and the Duty Holder and updating the Terms of Reference for the Harbour Board; and
- Board Member Richard Eggleton had resigned from the board due to other commitments, leaving three vacancies on the board. It was intended to fill these positions by June 2025, with information circulated to all members and advertised on the website.

A discussion was held on whether board members could reapply after partial terms and clarification would be sought on whether the limit was six years in total or per term.

5

EXETER PORT USER GROUP UPDATE

The Chair of the Exeter Port Users Group (EPUG), Rex Frost, was in attendance. His update had been circulated to Members and was taken as read and the following discussion points were made: -

- the Exe Estuary Management Partnership included various councils and was well-attended, providing a platform for collaboration across the region; and
- the Exe Estuary Management Partnership participated in organising litter picking activities and residents who had expressed an interest in organising a floating litter pick for the canal would be encouraged to contact the relevant authorities for participation.

6

A STRATEGIC VIEW OF THE CANAL'S FUTURE

The Chair welcomed John Monks, Chair of the Friends of Exeter Ship Canal to the meeting, who provided a verbal presentation on the strategic view of the canal's future. During the presentation, the following points were made: -

- the Port of Exeter had a rich maritime history, dating back to the 17th and 18th centuries when it was a bustling hub for sailors, highlighting the estuary and canal being vital for trade and transportation;
- the port currently supported an active boating and water sports community, with a renewed interest in maritime heritage and restoration of historic boats;
- Dawlish Warren, being a natural breakwater, was eroding and posed a risk to the port's safety, which a Senior Ranger, had highlighted the need for a 'Plan

- B' to manage high water levels, flood risk and impact to loss of moorings;
- the canal was an asset, offering safe moorings and a potential for economic growth, with strategic opportunities available;
- the canal and port needed be integrated into strategic planning, focusing on new enterprises, skills, and investment and boost the stability of the Exeter's resilience over the coming decades;
- encouraging boatyard businesses in exploring clean propulsion technologies, would support the enhancement of the canal and boost Exeter's resilience, and prosperity, while offering benefits for locals, traders, and visitors;
- the canal could also support water-based passenger transport and commercial activities;
- there were concerns about current plans that could hinder future opportunities, such as the end of boat building on the canal and the earmarking of Grace Road Fields for industrial use;
- the canal and port needed to be viewed as integral to Exeter's strategic planning, requiring partnerships with communities and various authorities;
- as a comparative analysis, the canal was compared to the Kiel Ship Canal in Germany which demonstrated how inland waterways can thrive with marinas, pedestrian walkways, and cultural attractions; and
- viewing the canal and port as integral to Exeter's future was important and a high-level strategic feasibility study was proposed to explore the canal's potential as a future asset for Exeter, which could attract outside funding and consultancy support.

In response to questions and points raised, John Monks advised: -

- it was not proposed to abandon areas south of Turf Lock and the remit of the Harbour Board was acknowledged;
- a need for a contingency plan was being requested to address increasing costs and difficulties in providing winter mooring, which was crucial for the port's income;
- the cost of a waterway's feasibility study for climate change and development impacts of Water Lane were not known; and
- conducting a feasibility study with consultants to assess the potential of the waterways was important for Exeter's future planning and potential grant funding from the Inland Waterways Association (IWA) was a possibility.

The Chair advised that future changes and increased powers from the Harbour Revision Order (HRO), would influence future operations and partnerships. She thanked John Monks for his presentation. A copy of the presentation is appended to the minutes.

7

RIVER EXE CAFE UPDATE

The Chair welcomed Paul Craven, Managing Director of the River Exe Café to the meeting, who provided a presentation and video on a new concept for canal pods. During the presentation, the following points were made: -

- an introduction and background of the River Exe Café which started as a local initiative and had been operational for 15 years;
- the introduction of two pods in the canal, designed to offer a unique experience beyond a typical Airbnb accommodation;
- the pods would be accessible by a specially designed boat that could navigate the canal's swing bridge and travel from Turf Lock to Double Locks for collection;
- the pods would be in the canal for eight months of the year and then moved

downriver for four months during summer season and permission had been granted for the pods to be placed in the river.

In response to questions and points raised, Paul Craven advised: -

- the boat to be used for accessing the pods would also operate as a taxi service between Double Locks and Turf Locks, enhancing accessibility and experience;
- the strong positive reaction from the Visioning Day was welcomed and highlighted the potential to boost tourism in both winter and summer months;
- currently there was a ferry service from Turf Lock to Topsham only operated during the summer, but historically there had never been a service running from Double Locks under the bridge;
- the new ferry would be enclosed, solar-panelled, and equipped with a backup diesel generator for emergencies, but would primarily run on an electric motor;
- trips would take about half an hour to avoid disturbing canal activities like fishing and a schedule would be developed in collaboration with Turf Lock and river users;
- the River Exe Cafe operated six months a year due to weather constraints, with attempts made to extend operations proving to be a challenge;
- the café did not directly compete with the Turf hotel and there was a potential for increased trade if the ferry service operated year-round;
- the service would offer two pricing tiers: affordable rates for the public during winter and higher rates targeting boat owners during the summer season;
- the boat currently accommodated up to 12 passengers, with potential plans to increase this capacity pending further approval;
- a waste boat system was currently in place, which operated in a comparable way to the cafe's operations, ensuring proper waste disposal;
- there was a potential to extend waste services to other vessels in the area, enhancing overall environmental management;
- there were plans to introduce electric people carriers to improve connectivity between Marsh Barton Railway Station and Double Locks, which was subject to demand;
- cycling routes were also being considered to enhance accessibility; and
- the possibility of establishing a floating restaurant / bar at the Quayside in Exeter, had recently been discussed and was pending a site evaluation.

The Chair advised that the Harbour Master would be able to provide further information on establishing a floating restaurant / bar at the Quayside. She thanked Paul Craven for his presentation which was welcomed by the board.

8

DAWLISH WARREN MANAGEMENT

The Chair welcomed Martin Davies from the Environment Agency to the meeting, who provided a presentation on Flood and Coastal Risk Management at Dawlish Warren and Exe Estuary. During the presentation, the following points were made -

- the Flood and Coastal Risk Management Strategy was initially developed in 2014, projecting changes to rising sea levels and climate change predictions for 100 years;
- in 2014 the Strategy originally planned for a 700mm sea level rise but had since been updated to plan for a 1-meter rise over the next 20 years due to changes in guidance, climate predictions, and legislation;
- completed and ongoing projects included: Exmouth, Topsham, Star Cross and Cockwood, and Clyst St. Mary;
- open coast resilience was being delivered with typical flood defence schemes

which required some site changes for habitat creation, which the Exe Estuary was designated area for compensated habitat creation;

- Dawlish Warren had undergone significant changes over time, with images presented, showing shifts and erosion patterns;
- current monitoring indicated ongoing erosion trends, sand movement and the dominant wave direction and coastal processes, which contributed to erosion and defence challenges;
- erosion and defence strategies included continual beach lowering, and outflanking the relic gabion baskets;
- potential damage would primarily affect the western bank and the mainline railway, with declining impacts further up the estuary;
- the scheme was reviewed in 2020, which acknowledged larger changes than was first predicted and the next strategy update would include a consultation;
- there was a legal requirement to improve the condition of the Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), and dune features through the removal of some defences;
- the smaller exposed geotube required patch repair and the larger geotube was undamaged and mostly buried providing further resilience;
- the current Environment Agency policy for failing relic gabion baskets was to do nothing, allowing them to fail over time and to removed failing groynes as the beach continued to lower;
- most of the local community preferred visible defences which contrasted with the ambition for broader maintenance and sustainable defences;
- collaborative work was being undertaken with Network Rail, notably a project to set back power banks to create habitat in front of the railway; and
- there were plans to review management positions at Dawlish Warren and assess business cases for Topsham and Powderham.

In response to questions and points raised, Martin Davies advised: -

- the exposure of geotube and gabions interfered with natural processes, which had a negative impact and there was ongoing debate about the responsibility for relic gabions;
- it would be difficult to predict and model channel changes and sediment movement due to historical and future scenarios;
- there was no Council budget available for the Harbour Board to look at additional modelling, but annual surveys were undertaken which were shared with the Port User Group;
- the original flood defence plans for Topsham were envisaged as an embankment, but were reconsidered for property-level protection and was now led by Exeter City Council, focusing on community involvement and economic assessments;
- the strategy included a review of economic, technical, engineering, and environmental aspects to determine feasibility and impact of projects;
- the strategy would also involve engaging with relevant communities and groups, including flood risk groups, to discuss and refine plans;
- the strategy aimed to complete by 2027-2028, covering the entire area discussed in presentation slides;
- there were legal requirements to include comprehensive assessments of economic, technical, engineering, and environmental impacts in the strategy; and
- reporting back to the Exe Estuary Management Partnership would occur annually through the normal channels.

The Chair thanked Martin Davies for his presentation. A copy of the presentation is appended to the minutes.

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GOVERNANCE AND HARBOUR REVISION ORDER UPDATE

The Harbour Master advised that: -

- a meeting had been held with Ashford's Solicitors on 17 March 2025 to receive an update on the Harbour Revision Order (HRO) application;
- the application was one of three applications and was awaiting a 42-day consultation period by the Marine Management Organisation (MMO); and
- there was no fixed date for the consultation period or completion of the revision order, but it was hoped that the consultation would be completed by summer 2025.

10

HARBOUR MASTER'S REPORT

The Harbour Master advised that an internal application to adopt MARNIS port risk assessment software for reporting had been approved by Strata.

11

MARINE SAFETY PLAN - MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES

The Harbour Master advised that: -

- the Marine Safety Plan had been written and was now awaiting sign-off from the new Designated Person (DP), before being published online;
- James Hannan, the new DP, will visit on 26 March 2025 and will be invited to the Harbour Board meeting in June 2025; and
- both the DP and another individual would be involved in MARNIS assessment and would have flexible availability for both in-person and remote interactions.

12

STATUTORY HARBOUR AUTHORITY STATEMENT OF ACCOUNT AND 2024-25 FEES & CHARGES

The Chair advised that the statutory Harbour Authority Statement of Account and 2024-2025 fees and charges were included for members to note and had been compiled from reports to Audit and Governance Committee and the Council Budget.

Attendees were encouraged to email any questions that may arise from the Statement of Account and 2024-2025 fees and charges to the Chair.

(The meeting commenced at 5.30 pm and closed at 7.05 pm)

Chair

Management Objectives

Management Objectives for the Marine Safety Plan have split its into two sets, the first addresses 'Standing Objectives' the second set addresses 'Period Objectives'. This plan is owned by Exeter City Council on behalf of the Duty Holder and aims to address high level targets which will benefit all port and harbour locations and fulfils the requirement of the PMSC for the Duty Holder to maintain a Marine Safety Plan.

Standing Objectives

	Number	Provision	Objective	Target	Evidence
	1	Duty Holder	Duty Holders to have received training on their role and responsibility under the Code in the last three years.	To appoint ECC Executive Committee as DH	Action complete. ECC Executive are now appointed as Duty Holder, most members have received training, new member will receive training in September 2025
	2	Designated Person	To have undertaken an operational tour of Exeter waterways in the last three years.	DP selected and appointed in March 2025	Mr James Hannon from ABPmer visited in late March, he has been invited to meet with the Duty Holders to brief on the changes to the Port Marine Safety Code and the Guide to Good Practice.
	3	Legislation	Report by the Designated Person to the Duty Holder at least once per year.	Not yet, but will be an annual review	Awaiting report
	4	Duties and Powers	MAIB Reportable Incidents: make all reports to the MAIB within 24 hrs, with investigation followed up.	24 hrs initial report, investigation at incident close	Maritime activity report
			Incidents recorded and investigated (if necessary) within the agreed timeframe.	Initial action 7 days, investigation closed in 30 days	Maritime activity report
	5	Risk Assessment	All Marine Risk Assessments to be in date.	100% complete	Strata Service Solutions Ltd have agreed to support MARNIS and we are awaiting

					procurement. Once that is in place we will be able to start the HAZID process
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	Number	Provision	Objective	Target	Evidence
	6	Marine Safety Management System	All Policies reviewed on a three-yearly basis.	To have plan produced and available to all stakeholders within 6 months.	Not yet completed. See below.
			The Marine Safety Management System will be reviewed annually (or following any significant incident, industry or legislative changes).	To distribute widely, to keep numbered and dated reviews. To liaise with other stakeholders on the waterways about their own responsibility to the PMSC	To keep as an agenda item at the Port User group meetings. Once MARNIS system adopted, contractor will conduct a HAZ ID exercise with key stakeholder groups
	7	Review & Audit	Internal Audit	Staff reviews annually. Document checks annually	Audit complete, matters raised have been addressed
	8	Competence	Ensure staff with marine safety responsibilities are trained to undertake their duties.	100% of Essential & 80% of Desirable completed	Maritime activity report
	9	Plan	Publish a three yearly 'Marine Safety Plan' (this plan).	Plan currently being prepared	Internal Audit
	10	Conservancy Duty	Aids to Navigation: Three-year performance meets or exceed IALA performance threshold	To carry out annual liaison and inspection with Trinity House	Constant monitoring of navigation channels. Survey information shared with Port User Group
			Hydrographic surveys in date	Survey of the approaches completed March 2025	

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Gap Analysis update

	Number	Provision	Objective	Target	Evidence
	13	PMSC	Liaise with marinas and boatyards confirming work towards compliance	2025	Done, emails sent by HM to boatyards signposting towards PMSC training and compliance with the code
	15	Harbour assets confirmed with MCA	Assets declared on the list held by the MCA in case of Civil Contingencies Act 1984	2025	Done, list of assets compiled and sent by HM to the MCA
	6	Update Admiralty chart no2290	Port limits to be shown on Admiralty chart no2290	2025	Done, liaised with UKHO, now illustrated on the current chart no 2290 Task complete

Period Objectives

	Number	Provision	Objective	Target	Responsible Officer
	1	Duties and Powers	General Directions	Introduce General Directions and repeal current Bye-Laws – With lawyers Ashford's currently.	Harbour Master This work is still on-going, awaiting HRO
	2	Duty Holder	Marine Facilities	Identify Marine Facilities within the port area and seek compliance with the PMSC	Duty Holder, on-going training with Harbour Master
	3	Competence	Training	Issue Training Matrix and ensure all staff have appropriate training as required to undertake their duties	Funding for training courses identified
	4	Marine Safety Management System	Management of Navigation	Carry out a formal Risk Assessment of navigable waters	Harbour Master Ongoing work, awaiting HAZID workshop to complete
	5	Conservancy Duty	Aids to Navigation	Review of all AtoN's in the port	Graham Manchester This is ongoing work, annual servicing of all Aids to Navigation has just started now that the moorings season has ended
	6	Marine Safety Management System	Liaison and consultation with stakeholder	Improve lines of communication in place with Port User Groups. Regular meetings with the Commodores from sailing clubs around the river to ensure collaborative approach to managing the different racing areas	Harbour Master Done, regular meetings in place and open lines of communication with all user groups maintained

Maritime activity report

Canal team

Regrettably, there was a tragic incident at Clapperbrook bridge on the 5th of May which led to the death of 15 year old Delvin Musakwa. We are working with the Coroner and the local police about the tragedy.

Other items to report

The 72ft Yacht Big Spirit finally left the canal last week. We had to wait for the high tide on Wednesday evening until the canal team could let her pass through the Turf lock gates into the river where two boats from the river team were waiting to escort the yacht down to a mooring just off the Exmouth marina entrance. The yacht has a deep draught of 3.2 metres so we had to make sure the transit down river on a 3.7 metre tide was within a surveyed channel.

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Turf lock gates continue to cause concern. At the time of this Harbour Board meeting there will be a team of commercial divers on site effecting some small repairs to the cill and surveying or monitoring the deterioration of the gate mitres. We have still not managed to recruit an engineer to the vacant position we had advertised, so we are looking at bringing in external engineers to oversee a condition survey of all the lock gates and bridges that we are responsible for.

The salmon smolt net is still in place at the King's Arms gates, hopefully by the time of this Harbour Board meeting the net will be removed and then the access through the gates to and from the river and canal will be left open unless we have extended periods of rain when the gates may have to be closed to prevent flooding.

Since the last meeting of this Harbour Board, another three dilapidated boats have left the canal for disposal. There are still some more to go.

As briefed many times before, the boat storage contract has been re-written and sent out to customers underlining the requirement to have adequate insurance to cover the costs of an emergency lift out of the water in case of sinking. The new contract also reinforces the message that boats berthed in the canal must be kept in a seaworthy condition unless as a project for restoration. Also, the berthing contract is only for 50 weeks of the year, meaning for at least two weeks in each year the boat must leave the canal.

The Friends of the Exeter Ship Canal have now been briefed on how to use the former patrol boat that we have passed over to them for their use. Currently, the group are working on plans for the use of the boat which will be to broadly support canal operations.

Finally, we have a new member of the canal team, Luke Warlow joined us at the beginning of May, we wish him well in his new role.

River team

The moorings barge Port Constructor has now been purchased by the council meaning that the risk of not having a suitable vessel to undertake this work and the statutory work of maintaining the aids to navigation in the river has now receded.

Port Constructor will have to be re-coded with the Maritime and Coastguard Agency through the MECAL system because of the change in ownership but that should be completed by the end of June.

We have completed our normal spring work for East Devon District Council or laying all the 8 knot buoys off Sidmouth and Budleigh Salterton beaches. Strictly speaking they do not mark or denote a swimming area, but it is generally accepted locally that this is what they are there for.

Similarly, we have laid all the 15 No Powered Craft buoys off Exmouth beach that stretch from no 7 buoy off the Lifeboat station to Orcombe point.

For the next few months, the main thrust of work in the river will be to patrol the river at weekends and at other busy times to maintain a presence, and the work of servicing all the local aids to navigation in the river, and there are over 50 of those to do.

This is an incredibly difficult task to achieve, especially when we must factor in the weather for example, plus staff holiday leave entitlement and other surprises that come along, especially when there are so few staff (only two full-time and three part-time).

The survey of different parts the river that we had done in the spring have been useful. The main channel leading into the river shows little change in the banks and depths, whilst in the river the surveys prove that Bull Hill back has spread much further to the west, so much so that we have had to lay another intermediate channel marker between the buoy known as Little Russell and no 15 buoy in the area of the Bight. We have also had to remove a large mooring that we had under licence to us, just to help maintain a safe channel through the area.

There is the perennial issue of abandoned boats that appear in the river, some stranded and some in danger of being stranded or even worse, sinking in the channel.

We are constantly in communication with the different mooring associations when we identify a suspect vessel, but it can often prove difficult to locate an owner and sometimes more difficult to get the owner to do something about the apparent problem.

Unfortunately, the forthcoming Harbour Revision Order has still not progressed any further. I will update the board verbally at the meeting.

Incidents

Since the last report, in addition to the tragic death of Delvin Musakwa there have been the following incidents:

These numbers are not a realistic or complete picture of incidents that happen in the waterway. We have extremely limited resources and staff to cover the area of our responsibility, and similarly we can only record either what we see or what is reported to

Incident type	Number
Sinkings	1
Groundings	1
Collisions	
Speeding vessels	33
Machinery failure	
Engine breakdown	1
Injury afloat	
Vessels adrift	2
Swimmers in the main channel	
Navigation errors	
Capsized vessels	
Man overboard	
Vessels parted from moorings	
Other	2

Grahame Forshaw

Harbour Master

1st June 2025

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