

EXETER HARBOUR BOARD

Date: Monday 29 September 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

Agenda

1 **Apologies**

2 **Minutes**

(Pages 3 -
8)

To approve the minutes of the Exeter Harbour Board meeting held on 12 June 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 Wednesday 24th September.

6 Chair's Announcements

(Verbal Report)

To receive announcements from the Chair.

7 Exeter Port User Group update

(Verbal Report)

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

8 Designated Person Presentation

(Verbal Report)

To receive a presentation from the Designated Person.

9 Harbour Master's Report

(Pages 9 - 20)

To receive a quarterly report from the Harbour Master

10 Waterways Budget Information

(Pages 21 - 22)

For information only.

11 'Should Rivers Have Rights?'

(Verbal Report)

To receive a presentation from Professor Saintier.

Date of Next Meeting

The next scheduled meeting of the Exeter Harbour Board will be held on **Thursday** 11 December 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

Thursday 12 June 2025

Present:-

Councillor Williams, R (Chair)
Councillors Cookson, Read, Snow and Sheridan

Apologies

Councillor Rolstone.

13 **APOLOGIES**

Apologies received from Councillor Rolstone.

14 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on the 17 March 2025 were taken as read, approved and signed by the Chair as correct, subject to the amendment that in Minute 4, the word “three” is changed to “two” external vacancies on the Board.

15 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No declarations of pecuniary interest were made.

16 **LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION ACT 1985) - EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

17 **PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

A member of the public, Mr Frost submitted the following question, asked by Ms Evans in his place:

- “It is not clear from the accounts that there is any separate reckoning of moorings (a commercial enterprise) costs, fees and wages, compared to other EPA costs. Can the council please separate these streams of finance so that the running of the EPA operations is more transparent?”

The Chair advised that mooring repairs, including all costs associated with the delivery of the commercial service, are separated within the services budgets and have their own budget lines.

Ms Evans, in asking a supplementary question, enquired where these were made available for the public to see?

The Chair passed the question to the Head of Service Operations, who advised that this information is reported through the General Fund Reporting Programme through the Council.

Head of Service Operations provided an answer to the supplementary question; “Councils annual budgets accounts can be found on the following Council Page , [Annual accounts - Exeter City Council](#) in which the actual accounts commence from approximately page 29 onwards. Income & expenditure is broken down but not to a high level of granularity, however, members of the public can request additional detail through the Councils Freedom of Information process.

In comparison to the full Waterways budgets, the General fund mooring budget outturn report shows the budget was balanced for 2024/25-year end with income offsetting additional budget expenses “(See table).

Account description	ANNUAL BUDGET	OUTTURN FORECAST
PAY	126,180	129,078
SUB-CONTRACTORS & WORKS	2,000	0.00
BUOYS	0	0.00
RENTS	0	6,561.40
EQUIPMENT TOOLS AND MATERIALS	4,310	333
VOLUNTEER/STUDENT ESPENSES	0	5
BOAT MAINTENANCE	0	1,146
MOTOR FUEL	1,650	0
CAR MILEAGE ALLOWANCES	0	31
SALES	-3,850	-1,718
FEES	-16,920	-16,228
BUOYAGES	0	-17
MOORING SERVICE	-31,660	-40,331
WATERWAYS CONTRACT SERVICES	-2,450	-30,580
RENT	-42,780	-33,932
F231 Total	36,480	14,348

The Chair offered to direct Ms Evans to the appropriate place.

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CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chair welcomed the new External Members of the Board, Shelley Rhodes and Harry Temple, as well as the newly appointed Councillor J Cookson. The Chair expressed a wish for proper introductions following the arrival of a late Member. The Chair provided the board with the following announcements: -

- Mr James Hannon, the new DP (designated person), visited Exeter and spent the day with the Waterways Team;
- Anthony Garrett has completed his term as an External Member of the Board, and the Chair would like to send the Boards thanks for all his hard work, enthusiasm, and contributions to the Board; and
- the Chair asked the Harbour Master to update the Board on meetings scheduled for April 2025. He advised that the asset survey of sea defences partly completed, but there had not yet been a meeting to discuss the findings of the survey.

The Chair then welcomed questions from Members, providing the following answers: -

- the emergency action plan had been written, and had been sent to the DP for sign off; and

there had been no further progress with the floating restaurant/bar at the quayside (previous agenda no.7), but the Harbour Master would still be happy to discuss with Members further

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EXETER PORT USER GROUP UPDATE

The Chair of the Exeter Port Users Group (EPUG), Rex Frost was unable to attend this meeting, and sent Jane Evans, in his place. His update (appended) had been circulated to Members and was taken as read, and the following discussion points were made: -

- thanks were given to the Harbour Master for providing another additional

Channel Marker;

- it is evident that the weekend patrol boats had been a success, and that boat driving behaviour had seen an improvement; and
- there is now a date set for the Exmouth and Exeter East MP, David Reed, to view and discuss the river, with the hopes of improving his understanding of the problems and attractions of the river.

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SOUTHEAST DEVON WILDLIFE- JOINT HABITAT MITIGATION STRATEGY **2024**

The Chair welcomed Neil Harris, Habitat Regulations Delivery Manager (East Devon District Council) from Southeast Devon Wildlife to the meeting, who provided a presentation on 'A Joint Approach to Habitat Regulations Mitigation'. The presentation discussed the following points: -

- Our history;
 - the strategy is a joint approach to habitat regulations and mitigation, formally constituted in 2016;
 - habitat regulations are a critical legislative requirement for local plan delivery, placing a legal duty on competent authorities to ensure mitigation is delivered before granting permission for any plan or project likely to affect European sites;
- Southeast Devon;
- Our Sites;
 - Devon contains internationally important wildlife sites; the Exe Estuary, Dawlish Warren, and East Devon Pebblebed Heaths, all with the highest environmental designations;
- Decision Making;
 - Natural England has oversight on delivery of mitigation delivery; and
 - decisions are largely made using visitor strategies, which are then referred to an officer working group, there is an annual business plan, and a 5-year business plan. This goes to committee for ratification, and there is a review of measures each year.
- Mitigation Delivery; and
 - wildlife wardens;
 - Devon Loves Dogs;
 - public awareness campaigns;
 - visitor access improvements;
 - complete redesign of signage;
 - Suitable Alternative Natural Green Space (SANGs)
 - Dawlish Countryside Park- funded through Council partners and is secured with a 999-year lease to The Land Trust.
- What Next?
 - new local plans;
 - increase housing targets;
 - new strategy;
 - devolution; and
 - Planning and Infrastructure Bill.

The Habitat Regulations Delivery Manager responded to Members questions as follows: -

- there is increasing concern from charities nationally about the Planning and Infrastructure Bill;
- it is a legal requirement for new housing developments to be assessed, and this is carried out extrapolating data from current population access patterns;
- financial contributions are collected by council finance departments through

- planning obligations (Section 106 and Community Infrastructure Levy);
- the mitigation strategy has been developed with careful input from stakeholders and council partners to ensure appropriateness and proportionality;
- The strategy aims to provide certainty that environmental impacts will be addressed; and
- SANGs are classified as a priority infrastructure, which guides related planning and funding decisions, they are required to have 8 hectares per 1000 new population.

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HARBOUR MASTER'S REPORT

The Harbour Master updated Members on the following: -

- a brief update into the investigation following the death of Delvin Musakwa;
- a review of canalside and quay signage was being undertaken and additional risk assessments for swimming in the canal;
- the smalt net has been removed;
- a canoe race down the river and the canal will be held next weekend, the canoe club has been asked to introduce another turning mark to reduce congestion during the race;
- there is still an issue with abandoned boats, with the three boats that broke free from their moorings last autumn still in situ. Where the owner of the boat is known efforts are being made to have them removed. The council will have a statutory obligation to do something about them if they become a hazard;
- recruitment of volunteers for the patrol team will begin soon as summer starts to progress;
- the Friends of Exeter Ship Canal were taken out on the water to ensure they were comfortable using the new electric motor in the patrol boat; and
- Ashfords have been in contact and progress will soon be made towards starting the 42-day consultation period for the Harbour Revision Order.

The Harbour Master responded to questions from members as follows: -

- the buoys placed off Sidmouth and Budleigh Salterton beaches are reduced speed buoys, however it is local acceptance that these are informal swimming area makers, though not legally defined as such;
- in discussions with the Head of Waterways team regarding the wording that needs to be put on signs;
- supplementary budget has been carried over to enable funding for Turf Lock gates;
- a barge along the canal that was being rented had been recently purchased at a reduced rate and they are in the process of working out a long-term plan for its use. This was supplemented by the Head of Operations, who made it clear a business case can be found in the Council minutes;
- there are numerous risk assessments for the canal, but these will be reviewed as part of the process following an incident in May.

The Chair then asked the Harbour Master to discuss the visit from DP Mr James Hannon. The Harbour Master discussed the following points: -

- James Hannon visited in March and was shown the infrastructure of the canal, and visited Exmouth;
- he was also shown the extent of the Port limits;
- he has been invited to speak at the Executive Committee.

(The meeting commenced at 5.30 pm and closed at 6.41 pm)

Chair

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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 and Harbour Board members on the 29 th of September 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 waiting for a procurement lead to deliver the project. 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 Survey of the approaches completed March 2025, next survey of the approaches and the channel up the river to be completed in April 2026	Constant monitoring of navigation channels. Survey information shared with Port User Group and Topsham River Commissioners
			Hydrographic surveys in date		

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	Harbour Master liaising with providers of Marine Facilities within the port to deliver awareness training on the PMSC
	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 and clubs maintained
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Maritime activity report

The period since the last Harbour Board meeting has been perhaps the busiest out on the waterways but paradoxically the least productive in terms of work output. A few reasons for this; priority of providing on-water patrols, staff holidays, sickness and retirement of a staff member and vessel maintenance has meant that we have not been able to complete as much work afloat that we would normally do. Having said that, we have managed to do most of the seasonal tasks that we set ourselves.

The next period is all about preparing our areas for the closed season which means bringing in all the seasonal markers that we have laid around three different sites, maintenance of navigation aids and winterising our customers moorings in readiness for spring maintenance. We will also be reacting to the oncoming winter weather events around the waterways; we hope that the number of storms heading our way will be fewer than last year.

From Nick Stone at the Buoy Store – lead officer

The Summer has flown by.

With the weather we have had this year the water has been very busy at times, not necessarily always as busy as we might expect with the excellent conditions, but busy none the less.

Staffing levels have been a bit of a problem this summer more than usual. In addition to the normal summer leave of staff, the retirement of one of the team and the need for him to use up outstanding leave and TOIL prior to retirement has meant he has been away the entirety of the school holidays often with another member of staff off as well. Having said that we have been able to maintain and improve on the weekend patrols which have been a real success.

Our aim to put out more regular mid-week evening patrols still has work to do, hampered this year with staffing levels and other demands mentioned in the report – HRO, recruitment, recoding boat, H & S review.

The recruitment of Alan Harwood's replacement has been a success. We had several strong candidates, and we are confident that the new member of the team, Lee Price, will be a positive addition to the team.

Our work boat Port Constructor has been brought into Shelly beach behind the Buoy Store and had her summer refit, cleaned, painted along with some other mechanical improvements. She has also been 're-coded' as is required following a change of ownership.

We have also had a health & safety consultant working with us, reviewing our main risk assessments. He has been working across the Councils' operations departments, but with a focus on waterways, given the level of risk in the work we do. Some interesting things have come out of this and although time consuming, our risk assessments will be better for it.

From Graham Manchester - lead officer on volunteers and Aids to Navigation

Volunteer Patrols and the Local Neighbourhood Police

We have a team of ten volunteers who give up their time (mainly at weekends in the summer) to allow us to do regular weekend patrols on the estuary and approaches by acting as crew on the patrol boat. We started the season with some 'on the job' volunteer training as well as an RYA Level 2 Powerboat training course for three new volunteers who did not hold the qualification. This included a new volunteer who is a recently retired member of staff from the United Kingdom Hydrographic Office.

Please note, Exeter Port Authority is an RYA Powerboating School, specifically for training volunteers and new staff members.

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The volunteers are a great resource, resulting in an increased presence on the water at the busiest times of the year. In total between May and the end of August 2025, 43 patrols took place equating to 197 volunteer hours. We have also developed closer ties with the local neighbourhood police. Police officers have joined us on three patrols and are keen to join us on additional patrols moving forward.

Over the last two to three years there has been a noticeable decline in the number of vessels breaking the Bye Laws, especially speeding. Often when we stop a vessel it is more for a friendly word to tell them or remind them of the bye laws. Where we feel that a vessel is vastly exceeding the speed limit, or which may be of further interest we record the stop as an incident and keep a log of these. This year if we have recorded 98 incidents. Around 90 percent of these have been for speeding (Byelaw 4: Do not exceed speed limit as defined by charts and buoyage: 10 Knots Max). Other incidents have included: incorrect of navigation lane (waterskiing in it), children jumping off the quay wall at the marina; anti-social behaviour, collision with vessels (on moorings) engine failure and rigging failure – towing. We have noticed a marked decrease in speeding because of these patrols over the last two to three years.

We are very grateful to the team of volunteers who have generously given their time to help achieve this.

We will be having our Trinity House Inspection in the first two weeks of October. All aids to navigation are undertaking a regular inspection and service and going through a gradual renewal process, as they come to the end of their life. We will have a very busy autumn as many need to be serviced prior to the winter setting in.

Exeter Canal Report from Colin Acton

From November 2024 to April 2025 the Canal team consisted of 1.6 full time equivalent staff: one member being a full-time member and another part-time Waterways casual whilst a full-time member of staff remained on long term absence. This severely reduced our ability to carry out operations and planned maintenance. Fortunately, with assistance from the Harbour team we were able to continue operations to ensure boat customers could transit and lift out at Exeter.

In late April we were able to recruit a new full-time member of staff to the third post which was temporarily allocated to our casual operative. We currently still have a full-time member of staff currently off work due to shoulder injury.

I would like to highlight the efforts and goodwill of the Waterways staff to facilitate Canal operations during a difficult staffing period. The current staff allocation of 2.6 full time equivalent staff leaves one member of staff working alone twice a week when a full-time operative is on leave.

This ongoing situation severely reduces our resource ability to deal with larger incidents such as pollution response. Canal maintenance planned works and resourcing operations involving multiple boats convoys and cranings are still affected.

Waterways staff are required to have multi-disciplinary skillsets including boat skills, boat craning, civil works, plant and machinery qualifications. Canal Operatives need to be react to unforeseen issues including boats sinking and other hazards. In addition, Canal staff are required to assist with various Harbour operations outside of their normal duties.

Page 15 Inhouse training takes a considerable amount of time and planning. We rely on one or two personnel with a suitable number of years of experience to train new personnel.

The future operations of the Exeter Canal will require experienced and knowledgeable staff and succession planning is a key issue to ensure this. Further consideration needs to be given to staff resourcing to ensure Exeter Port Authority compliance with moving forward with the Harbour Revision Order.

The very unfortunate and sad death by drowning of a young person in the Canal earlier in the year focused a review of the current Canal Risk Assessment for “No Swimming” in the Canal. Staff resources are very limited in terms of confronting this activity particularly with young people. A local mobile security company has been carrying out patrols in the school summer holidays since July 2024.

Following the incident earlier this year we have seen a reduced frequency of swimming in the Canal by adolescents around the location and weather is a factor.

A review of the current Canal warning signage was carried out in the summer, and it was decided to add new signage to the existing sign locations. The signage prohibits swimming, jumping and diving into the Canal.

In addition, the revised signage highlights the dangers and advises buoyancy aids for everyone paddling on the water.

There have been repeated incidents of anti-social behaviour over the summer by a group of adolescents aboard an 80T wooden vessel that is already in disrepair. The mobile generator that was used by the Canal team to pump water out weekly was tampered with and had to be removed. There were repeated attempts to force entry into the vessel and cause damage.

Similarly, there have been repeated vandalism incidents at the disused Secanim and Coastal Workboats buildings at Water Lane. In addition to causing damage to the properties there was an incident of arson.

The Topsham Lock Cottage has also had repeated break-in attempted including last weekend.

Last year some yachts which had been at Turf for years that were falling into disrepair left the Canal for other boatyards.

We have introduced 50-week annual storage contracts for the remaining vessels.

There are still a few vessels at the Exeter basin that are not in contract which in the main belong to liveaboards. I have previously highlighted some vessels do not have working engines or rudders.

One MFV which had been considered a potential risk left the Canal in August.

Graham Manchester has been working on promoting boat storage in the Canal involving advertisements, a webpage review and new boatyard signage. This has generated some new enquiries for winter storage at the canal.

This season’s plan for winter storage for boats at Turf and the Exeter Basin is well under way.

During October & November there are three planned convoy Saturdays and two craning Saturdays with over 20 boats lifted expected to be lifted on the hardstand. Due to short staffing additional members of the Harbour team will assist the Canal team as required.

We have not been successful in recruiting a Harbour & Waterways Engineer to assist with assessing the Harbour assets and producing proposals for repairs and future maintenance capital funding.

Currently the Engineering team are managing projects such as the Trews Weir refurbishment scheme and refurbishing the walkway over Topsham Lock.

The Canal team have been working on more localised work directly around the Canal.

Works to replacing the Double Locks pontoon decking with a GRP mesh has finally been completed by the Canal team over the summer. Also, some additional replacement pontoon decking work has been done at Turf.

A marine contractor was utilised to carry out some repair work at Turf to the cill on the outer gates and some other minor repairs. The silt directly around the Kings Arms gates was cleared by airlifting during the same week.

We plan for the contractor to return in the winter to carry out some works to Turf lock walls to highlight where leaks are running behind the masonry and carry out some initial repairs. The remedial works to the lock gate mitres remain outstanding.

A contractor is also planned to carry out bank works at Turf in preparation for additional support “arms” pontoons to be added.

The ongoing lack of dredging and especially at Kings arms is still an area of concern that we are still trying to resolve. We intend to instruct an ecology survey and agree a method with the Environment Agency.

There remains various Canal works that will need revenue or capital funding: these include refurbishment works to lock gates at the Kings Arms and Turf. Upgrades to the old the marine electric and water outlets for boats at the Basin & Turf which are becoming more urgent.

Topsham Ferryman – John Kent

The Topsham Ferry season for 2025 had a very successful start to the season then evened out during the seasonal peak period, I am pleased to confirm that the numbers of families with young children increased during the season, they have enjoyed our fantastic river estuary and canal side views.

The numbers of public using electrical assisted bicycles has increased considerably this year, these bikes have enabled people who would not be able to use a conventional bicycle to complete the loops around the estuary and into the city along the fantastic cycle tracks.

There is currently no specific ferry on the Exe estuary that disabled users and their mobility buggies can safely use to access the canal side from Exmouth or Topsham, The Topsham ferry causeway ramp up to the canal and the ferry itself would need adapting, these adaptations would also greatly help the many families with push chairs who struggle to get up causeway ramp on to the canal bank.

This year has also seen another steady flow of tourists from Europe cycling from Harwich and channel ports down through the south of England to Lands' End then either returning to Europe via Plymouth or other south coast ports, the Topsham ferry appears in their cycle travel guides.

It is an absolute privilege to be the Topsham Ferryman and provide a safe, friendly, easy economical route across the canal for locals and visitors, many of my customers are repeating trips across the river that they have been carrying out for many years.

Wildlife enthusiasts continue to enjoy using the service, as soon as a wild bird that is not often seen on the river or water meadows there is a regular procession of bird watchers on the ferry.

Many customers report they have enjoyed the walk to the Turf Lock inn along the canal and then back to the ferry, Customers sat outside the Passage House Inn at Topsham continue to be a source of customers for the ferry.

Visiting craft users of all types are increasingly happy to chat and take on information regarding water safety on the river and estuary, next year I hope to include tide tables and further water safety notices on the ferry notice board, the numbers of kayaks and paddle board users on the river and canal at Topsham has increased this year, Information for those both new and old to these sports will hopefully lessen the risk of safety incidents.

Hopefully this is ok, I enjoy the challenges of the job and with my further fine tuning of operating hours within the operating restrictions I look forward to a more successful year in 2026.

The Topsham Ferry operating days have been reduced to 5 days over the summer holidays.

The ferry will continue operating on this schedule until the end of September and then continue operating on weekends until the end of October. The Topsham Ferry will then close for the winter season. This will allow the ferry to be brought into the canal and brought up to the Basin for lifting out and servicing. The landing stages on both sides of the river also need some maintenance work to be done.

Statistics

Complied by Carolyn Nation lead officer for stats

2025 – 98 incidents this season, including 1 breakdown, 1 dismasted yacht, 3 antisocial behaviour, 5 collisions, 1 sinking, 1 swimmer stuck on Stuart Line pier, 3 skiing in channel, 3 occasions children jumping into marina entrance, 1 kite surfer caught around a mooring buoy, 79 speeding vessels stopped .

Incident type	Number
Sinkings	2
Groundings	1
Collisions	5
Speeding vessels	79
Machinery failure	1
Engine breakdown	2
Injury afloat	2
Vessels adrift	2
Swimmers in the main channel	
Navigation errors	3
Capsized vessels	1
Man overboard	
Vessels parted from moorings	
other	12

Grahame Forshaw

Harbour Master

11th September 2025

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Annual Statement of Accounts relating to Harbour Activities:

	2023-24	2024-25
	£'000	£'000
Income		
Fees and Charges	(142)	(94)
Total Income	(142)	(94)
Expenditure		
Employees	182	150
Premises	106	95
Supplies and Services	79	72
Transport	53	40
Capital Charges	44	37
Total Expenditure	464	394
Net cost of Harbour Activities as included in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement	322	300

	2025-26 Approved Budget £'000	2025-26 Actuals at Qrt 1 £'000	2025-26 Outturn Forecast at Qrt 1 £'000
Income			
Fees and Charges	(89)	(21)	(89)
Total Income	(89)	(21)	(89)
Expenditure			
Employees	275	75	275
Premises	53	33	53
Supplies and Services	115	26	115
Transport	22	16	22
Support Services	3	-	3
Capital Charges	29	-	29
Total Expenditure	497	150	497
Net cost of Harbour Activities as included in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement	408	129	408