

EXETER HARBOUR BOARD

Wednesday 18 March 2026

Present:-

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

External Members:-

Prescott and Rhodes

Apologies

Councillor Cookson.

External Members:-

Green, Marino, Seddon, and Temple.

Also Present

Harbour Master Exeter Port Authority, Waterways Team Manager, Harbour Patroller, Democratic Services Officer and Head of Service Operations.

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APOLOGIES

The Chair advised that apologies had been received from Councillor Cookson, as well as External Board Members, Jane Green, Lt Col David Marino, Colin Seddon, and Charles (Harry) Temple.

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MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting on 11 December 2025, were taken as read, approved, and signed as a correct record, following minor amendments of a spelling mistake and the missing start and end time of the meeting.

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DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made by Members.

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PUBLIC QUESTIONS

The Chair advised that no questions had been received from members of the public.

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CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chair advised Members of the following announcements:

- Exe Estuary Management Partnership and South West Water would both be bringing a presentation to next meeting of the Harbour Board on 11th June;
- she had written to Councillor Jacqi Hodgson, the Leader of the Green and Independent Group and the Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Bio-diversity at Devon County Council regarding the funding for Mallison

Bridge, and had been advised by Cllr Hodgson that the funding was being used for a cycle lane in Plympton;

- the Harbour Visioning Day held on 28 February had been successful; and
- Steve Race MP for Exeter would be spending the day with the Harbour Master out on the waster in April.

The Chair also informed Members that this would be Councillor Tess Read's last meeting of the Harbour Board as she would not be seeking re-election in May, and thanked her for her hard work and contributes to the Harbour Board.

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HARBOUR REVISION ORDER UPDATE

The Chair provided an update on the Harbour Revision Order from Ashfords LLP, making the following points:

- the MMO had passed all representations made during the public consultation to Ashfords LLP;
- each consultee would receive a letter from Ashfords LLP on behalf of the Council;
- response letters were expected to be sent over a period of a few days;
- all responses needed to be prepared before any were sent; and
- the responses were in the process of being prepared and would be reviewed by Officers before being sent out.

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EXETER PORT USER GROUP UPDATE

The Chair of Exeter Port User Group gave his update, making the following points:

- the name of the group had been changed to the Exeter Port Advisory Group to better fit the Harbour Revision Order;
- winter storms had moved large amounts of sand off the Warren;
- the channel marker around Bull Hill would be readjusted in the next few months;
- extra work had been needed to reposition a number of markers in the river that had moved;
- David Reed MP for Exmouth and Exeter East had written to the government to criticise the Harbour Revision Order application; and
- he had not had an opportunity to invite the MP to visit due to health issues.

The Chair of the Harbour Board provided clarity of David Reed MP's criticism of the HRO application, advising that the Council had followed rules set out by the Marine Management Organisation, for their consultation process.

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TREWS WEIR PROJECT AND PUBLIC CONSULTATION UPDATE

The Head of Service – Operations gave an update on the Trews Weir project and public consultation, making the following points:

- since the previous meeting in December, detailed designs regarding the flood defence had been received and the flood modelling needed to be revised;
- the cost for the project had doubled as it would be carried out over two years;
- they were looking at additional funding to cover the gaps and revising the approach to delivery to bring down costs and address flood modelling;
- work was being done with developers, contractors, and the Environment Agency;
- public consultation could not begin until design and a program of works had been considered; and

- consultation was not anticipated to start until 2027.

In response to questions from Members, the Head of Service – Operations advised Members that the condition of Trews Weir had been established, and the risk of collapse had been considered significant enough for works to be approved and progressing, the delay was not anticipated to increase the risk, though the risk remained present.

Members were also informed that part of the flood modelling issue involved the fish and kayak passes, and the kayak pass was unlikely to meet planning requirements.

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A379 CANAL BRIDGES, EXETER

The Chair welcomed John Monks, Chair of Friends of Exeter Ship Canal. Mr Monks gave a presentation on the A379 Bridges and the Exeter Ship Canal, making the following points:

- replacing the existing bridges would make a huge difference for the canal, especially if it allowed for freight traffic on the water;
- changes needed to be made soon, or the opportunity would be lost for 60 years, as that was the expected lifetime for a new bridge;
- there were two bridges over the canal, a steel bridge and a bascule bridge. It was the steel bridge that was in need of renewal;
- the A379 was a major road and carried up to 37,000 vehicles a day, as well as acting as a strategic diversion when the M5 was closed;
- the bridges were opened fewer than 100 times a year, for boats and maintenance;
- the current bridge was so low that only canoes could fit through, and people using the tow path must go to road level to pass;
- Devon County Council (DCC) had presented five options to stakeholders but only two were being considered;
- option two would make no difference to users on the canal or the tow path;
- option four would enable use of the tow path, but not boat users;
- water for freight transport has been recognised as part of the future;
- commercial use of the canal would be beneficial for the reputation of the city;
- Regents Canal in London was used for deliveries of goods and materials;
- the Exeter Ship Canal could be used in conjunction with the Councils new Materials Reclamation Facility in Marsh Barton;
- officers from DCC had suggested that each 0.1m of air draft would had an additional £1million to the cost;
- public consultation preliminary bridge design would begin in spring, so it was important to get involved now before proposals were finalised; and
- a three-metre air draft was a responsibility to the environment, the community, and the economy.

In response to questions from Members, Mr Monks provided the following answers:

- none of the options offered the three-metre air draft;
- option four, raising the road level and lowering the tow path by 0.7m was still 0.85m below the three-metre air draft;
- he had not had a direct response from DCC officers;
- the main focus of discussion so far had been the road;
- he had approached the University of Exeter to discuss research into the benefit of the city and had a meeting planned with staff; and
- he felt a response from the Harbour Board was more likely to get an answer than responses made by individuals.

The Harbour Master responded to questions from Members in the following terms:

- the right of navigation of the canal was more important than the road;
- if two bascule bridges were used the footprint would be wider, and computer modelling would be needed to ensure the widest boats would fit;
- raising the height of the bridges would be beneficial and could increase the use of the canal; and
- the canal could be used to deliver materials for the Water Lane site.

The Head of Service – Operations made the following points:

- the business case would not be going to the Department of Transport until the end of the year;
- the public consultation was due to start in spring;
- the current proposal met the minimum requirements for the canal;
- officers would put representations in during the public consultation to increase the air draft as far as practicable; and
- Exeter City Council was a statutory body so could make a representation when the matter went to planning.

The Chair advised that she would write to the appropriate Councillor at Devon County Council on behalf of the Harbour Board, and that the letter would be drafted in consultation with officers and circulated to Board Members for comments.

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PORT MARINE SAFETY CODE MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES

The Harbour Master presented his report on the Port Marine Safety Code Objectives, making the following points:

- the Port Marine Safety Code had changed its name and was now the Port Marine and Facilities Safety Code (PMFSC);
- compliance with the PMFSC was not mandatory but non-compliance could draw criticism and prosecution if something went wrong;
- ABPmer had helped with an assessment of risk on the waterway and he was hoping to have the results back by the end of the month;
- the information from ABPmer would be shared with Members;
- the Designated Person would be carrying out an audit next week; and
- a gap analysis workshop had previously highlighted 26 gaps but these could not be fully addressed until the Harbour Revision Order was complete.

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HARBOUR MASTER'S REPORT

The Harbour Master presented his report, making the following key points:

- there had been a number of buoys damaged by the weather over the winter;
- the safe water marker, and buoys 1,2, and 5 had been lost in the weather; and
- the safe water marker would not be put back out until the weather improved to ensure no further damage.

The Harbour Master and Waterways Team Manager responded to questions from Members in the following terms:

- they would be pushing for mooring associations to take more responsibility for boats lost from their moorings;
- a recovery fee could only be charged when the owner was known;
- three yachts have broken off their moorings and were not recognised by the

mooring associations so the Waterways team had been working with the Legal team to put seizure notices on them;

- the Harbour Revision Order could provide the Council with better ability to ensure mooring associations had owner details and that boats were registered;
- Station Road was closed to all vehicles as people were moving the barriers;
- the reopening of the road was dependent on the Devon County Council Highways Team;
- proposals to move the pontoons at the Quay were being investigated; and the DCC Highways officer was trying their best to get the reopening of Station Road accelerated.

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EXETER PORT AND HARBOUR BUSINESS PLAN DRAFT

The Head of Service – Operations presented the draft Exeter Port and Harbour Business plan making the following points:

- this was a revised and reformatted version of the previous business plan;
- it was currently only for three years as Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) was being taken into consideration;
- three years met statutory responsibilities; and
- it enabled business continuity after LGR.

In response to questions from Members, the Head of Service – Operations provided the following answers:

- feedback from the consultation would be considered;
- after the consultation the business plan would be brought back to the Harbour Board to review the final draft;
- they were looking to have it ratified in the summer; and
- any income changes would need to be considered and could be amended when needed.

During discussion, Members highlighted that they hoped this would help move towards being able to swim in the Exe, and that it might increase traffic on the river

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MARINE SAFETY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

When presenting this item, the Head of Service - Operations highlighted that this was for noting and the content was driven by the requirements of the Port Marine and Facilities Safety Code, the Designated Person would be looking at gaps in governance and would create an action plan.

In response to questions from Members, the Head of Service – Operations advised that this was a live document, and the draft watermark would be removed after the Designated Person had reviewed.

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STATUTORY HARBOUR AUTHORITY STATEMENT OF ACCOUNT

The Statement of Accounts was noted by Members.

As this was Councillor Read's final meeting of the Harbour Board, she gave thanks to the Chair, Councillor Williams, and to the committee and said it had been a privilege to sit on Exeter Harbour Board.

(The meeting commenced at 5.30 pm and closed at 6.58 pm)

Chair