

Report from the Harbour Master to the Harbour Board 17 April 2023

Since the last meeting of the Harbour Board the Waterways team have been carrying out maintenance task, essential training courses and preparation work for the start of the new season.

Exeter Ship Canal

Unfortunately at the time of writing the Bascule bridge is still not back in operational use. Hopefully at the forthcoming meeting there will be a positive update.

The swing bridge has had maintenance work done and is now operational once more.

Limited canal bank repairs have been carried out downstream of the M5 Motorway bridge on the east side.

A limited amount of vegetation cutting back was carried out in January and early February.

The MV Johnny Eager has now been broken up and removed from Gabriel's Wharf by a specialist contractor. The work was done over two days without incident. A final invoice for the whole of the associated works related to the lift, clean-up and disposal of the vessel has been raised and sent to the owner.

The Turf lock inner gates are leaking badly on the timber mitre seal. We are in communication with a specialist contractor from Appledore shipyard to carry out repairs to the seal.

The salmon Smolt net is now in position at the Kings Arm's gates.

The invitation to tender document for the Topsham Quay boat storage agreement has been written and is due to be promulgated from the Civic Centre.

A small dredging programme at the King's Arms gates was started in early March but unfortunately had to stop due to complaints about moving silt into low river levels. An alternative method of dredging this section of the canal has been found. A dredger called the MV MANIN has been purchased by the owners of Exmouth Dock Company and we are discussing with them potentially chartering the vessel to move dredged material out to sea. We would have to make an application to the Marine Management Organisation for a licence to carry out this work.

Buoy Store team

Navigation aids have been checked by the inspector from Trinity House and found to be in order.

Commercial moorings servicing work started in late February, this work will go on now until mid-May.

A survey of the approaches to the channel leading in to the river has been done, the results will be sent out to the Port User Groups and other interested parties if requested. A full study of the survey has not yet been done but the initial reports show no significant change in the approaches but in the area of the Bight, the sands from Bull Hill bank have spread well to the west, which has an impact on the width of the navigation channel leading up river. The Lower Exe Moorings Association have been informed of this and we will be working together to see which licenced moorings may have to be moved to keep the channel clear of obstructions.

The Exe Estuary Management Partnership have commissioned a full Light Detection and Ranging (LIDAR) survey of the river to show in detail the areas of sand/mud bank shift. That survey will be done shortly and the information will be publicly available. The Partnership have also recently started a silt survey in the upper reaches of the river.

The replacement workboat has been ordered in place of the aging Dory, the patrol craft City of Exeter is due to be changed for a more suitable rigid inflatable boat (RIB) for use in the river and the moorings barge which we hope to charter to replace the 'Can-Doo' will be available from early May.

The Harbour Patrol team attended a one-day course dealing with gathering evidence for potential prosecutions on the water.

Harbour Revision Order

There have had two meetings with Ashfords Solicitors LLP to commence the process to create the application to the Marine Management Organisation.

A meeting was held last week with Ashfords, attended by the Chair of the Harbour Board, David Bartram (Director) Baan AL-Khafaji (Corporate Services Director) and Simon Copper (Service Lead-legal services) to receive an overview of the HRO process and to discuss the Premises Plan that will need to be created.

Grahame Forshaw
Harbour Master
April 2023