

Harbour Master report to the Harbour Board 13 July 2023

The month of July is at the height of our summer season, maximum activities on the water and it has been heartening to see so many people out and about enjoying the wonderful warm weather that we have had since the start of May.

Commercial mooring servicing work in the river has been finished and we have many happy customers with their vessels swinging on moorings in the wind and tide.

Our focus now turns to the maintenance work on our navigation aids. In the River Exe there are over 50 lateral marks, each one will need to be lifted, inspected and serviced before putting it back down in the same position.

Moorings barge

The Can Doo that we have been using for our commercial work has now been withdrawn from service and we are in the middle of laying up the vessel until we have decided what to do with her.

The moorings barge (named Port Constructor) that we will be chartering will be available to us from the end of July. The vessel will be fully MCA coded and fit for purpose.

Before we start using Port Constructor for any work in the river, we will be carrying out some staff training. The team have already received training on the vessels' crane and once we take control of the boat we will put her to work straight away.

Patrol craft

In late May we took delivery of the new patrol craft named Exe Harbour Launch and has been out on regular patrols in the river. The boat is popular with both staff and our volunteers and one of the benefits is that we are able to respond quicker to incidents afloat, the down side is that we cannot now stop and have a cup of tea as we did on City of Exeter!

The patrol teams have been actively engaging with water users reminding of the Bye-Laws regarding speed etc. but also the teams have been helping out recover stranded vessels, paddle-boarders getting into trouble and also kitesurfers.

This kind of positive engagement instead of just looking for people either going too fast or ignoring the Bye-Laws is as a result of feedback that our patrollers have had. We want to be seen as a good influence on the river and not just a deterrent or viewed as a negative to users of the waters.

Canal

At the canal the team have been carrying on with both the regular maintenance of the banks, the cutting back of the foliage has finished for the nesting season so the team are concentrating on cutting back the weed in the water. At this time of year the weed in the canal grows at a phenomenal rate and as try as the team might, keeping up with the harrowing of the canal bed is almost impossible. What is needed is a weed control boat but the cost of one is far beyond our means at present. The best that the team can do at present is to run a harrow through the middle of the canal to chop the weed off at the roots just as it grows out of the canal bed.

Preparations are now underway for the arrival of both the replica Thames sailing barge Snark and the historic fishing vessel Britannia that are due to arrive at the canal late September this year.

The Snark will go into the river all being well, and tie up alongside King's Wharf just downstream of the Transit Shed and take part in the Harbour Festival at the end of that month. Britannia will be craned into the canal, move to the Basin under tow and be moored at the west for quay for the restoration work to be completed. The completion work should be done in just over a year all being well.

Harbour Revision Order

Progress towards the application is progressing. The maps showing all council owned property on the canal and riverbanks are now available and from these plans, a start can be made on formulating the Port Premises Plan that needs to be completed before the initial application to the Department for Transport about the revision to the Order.

Duty Holder

The Chief Executive at Exeter City Council has proposed that the Duty Holder for the Port of Exeter will be David Bartram, the Director in the Council responsible for Waterways. David will be attending an on-line training session with the British Ports Association about the role in the autumn of this year.

With the nomination of David Bartram as Duty Holder, he will ultimately be responsible for ensuring compliance with the Port Marine Safety Code. It is proposed that the wording in the role and terms of reference of the Harbour Board be revised. (see separate draft document). It is intended that a report will be submitted on this matter to the Council's Executive.

Grahame Forshaw

Harbour Master