
Harbour Developments

1. Summary

Yarmouth Harbour Commissioners conducted a public consultation process that commenced in the fourth quarter of 2009 and was completed in January 2010 with respect to the proposed Inner Harbour Reconfiguration. The feedback received during that process has been summarised ¹ and, where appropriate, taken into account in making amendments to the harbour layout. In addition the Commissioners have had to review the SW Corner layout, as European Funding for this development was not forthcoming.

During the public consultation feedback was requested on the proposed physical changes to the inner harbour. Whilst in general the feedback received was directed in this direction there were comments about other areas around Yarmouth and a number of comments regarding the running of the harbour. This paper sets out to address these issues where appropriate, to summarise the physical amendments made to the harbour layout in view of the feedback received and also to clarify some issues and misconception arising during the consultation period.

2. Background – Why do it?

The Harbour faces a number of significant costs over the next twenty or so years and needs to generate more profit/surplus to build up its reserves to help pay for these foreseeable expenses. They are :-

New Breakwater	£4-5 Million
Gossips Rebuild	£1 Million
Pier head pile replacement	£500k
Lifting the pier one metre	£2 Million ²
Raising the quay one metre	£5 Million ²
Raising the Ferry pier and linkspan	£4 Million ²

The Commissioners need to respond to customer demand for more convenient walk ashore berths, both from visitors and residents. This also allows for more pre bookable berths.

The Commissioners aim to reduce the Harbour's reliance on the income from the cross Solent ferry company, currently Wightlink. This ferry income is currently about 40% of the total harbour income. The Inner Harbour Reconfiguration reduces the ferry income to 35% of the total.

The SW Corner development tidies up an unsightly area whilst providing commercial fishermen with safer berthing and greater storage space. This also frees up an area of the harbour for resident and visiting yachts.

3. General Layout ³

Contrary to some people's misperception the proposed changes are to the inner harbour area only, i.e. the area between the breakwater/harbour entrance and the Yar Bridge. There are no changes proposed to the areas south of the Yar Bridge, nor the outer moorings to the north of the harbour entrance. These areas will remain unaffected; there are no planned changes to these areas in the foreseeable future.

Within the inner harbour the Sandhard pontoon and the piles to the south of Sandhard will remain unchanged. Berthing along Town Quay will also remain with the same conditions as currently apply

¹ See earlier paper "Inner Harbour Reconfiguration, Public Consultation – Summary of Feedback" dated Feb 2010

² Those marked ² predominantly due to predicted sea level rise.

³ Regarding the physical amendments made to the harbour layout this paper should be read in conjunction with the revised harbour layout, drawing MP134-900.

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regarding the need to vacate this area should Wightlink require to use the slipway for emergency berthing.

During busy summer periods the number of craft within the harbour that constitutes a “full” harbour varies depending of the size of vessels and activities within the harbour. The revised layout is designed to accommodate the same average number of vessels as now when the harbour is recorded as being “full”. The number of annual mooring holder berths will remain the same and therefore the mix of resident and visitor berths will effectively remain unchanged.

The Commissioners have taken into account the comments regarding the need to retain some non-walk ashore berths for annual mooring holders and visitors. As such two pontoons, not connected to the shore, have been created. One to the west of the training groyne, replacing the existing red pontoon, will be assigned for residents; the other, just south of the breakwater, will be for visitors. Berthing on the latter will be to the south of the pontoon only and provides a barrier to the north of the access channel to prevent grounding on the SSSI.

The layout of the pontoons has been amended to provide a visual appearance less like a marina; piled moorings have been shown close to Town Quay to maintain the traditional look in this part of the harbour. The latter also retains the ability of sailing schools to teach the skills associated with mooring to piles.

The Commissioners are currently in discussion with Wightlink to improve the ferry marshalling area with the idea of making a clear promenade along South Quay. This would then be landscaped with benches, planters etc.

4. Western area of the harbour

The Commissioners fully appreciate the comments submitted regarding the western part of the harbour. This area of the harbour has been completely redesigned. The pontoon configuration associated with SW Corner now allows for more sea room to the north of the Yar Bridge for turning, which in association with the non-walk ashore pontoon in the same area provides the escape route requested by many in their comments. The mid stream pontoons are further to the north than the current red pontoons giving much more manoeuvring space in this area.

A crane is shown immediately to the north of the SW Corner pontoons. This area will replace the existing alongside berthing area at South Quay; craft will be able to berth alongside to load/unload heavy gear using the crane if necessary and can be used for yacht recovery and launching. It is proposed to supply a wash-down facility in this area to comply with likely regulations associated with this activity; this will considerably enhance the current situation.

Berthing on the non-walk ashore pontoon has been aligned with the main current flow, whilst finger berthing along the walk ashore pontoon on the western side of the training groyne has been preferred to rafting in this area.

The revised Yar Bridge procedures are currently in operation but it is only during the forthcoming summer months when these will be tested to the full. Amendments to these procedures will be made as necessary to ensure the safe passage for yachts through the bridge.

Other than the berth under the crane all the berthing in this area will be for residents. All the above measures will ensure this area is less busy than previously anticipated and used by those persons who are more familiar with the currents.

5. Access Channel to the north of the harbour

The access channel is located slightly south than originally proposed with a pontoon to the north of the channel providing a barrier to the shallow water to the south of the breakwater. With two visitor craft rafted alongside the pontoon there is still a 16 metre minimum channel width; with no visitors berthed on this pontoon this channel width is considerably more. This is significantly wider than the minimum channel width when the harbour is currently full.

Also, with the revised pontoon layout within the harbour, this access channel will be less busy than previous perceived.

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6. Fuel Berth

The fuelling berth, as before, is intended to have 4 berths rather than the one/two at the moment. This will prevent the excessive queuing currently experienced as commented by many users. However, there are visitor berths in close vicinity that will be available for waiting traffic if necessary. Wave modelling undertaken for the reconfigured harbour shows that the heavy-duty breakwater pontoon considerably reduces the wave effect within the harbour. Yarmouth Harbour Commissioners have commissioned expert advice on the provision and location of the fuel berth; this advice along with the comparison of other fuelling berths in other harbours indicates there will be minimal disruption due to weather conditions.

7. Crane

Following comments about the crane Yarmouth Harbour Commissioners have reconsidered their position and agreed to retain a crane. The revised location close to SW Corner allows for alongside berthing and there is the proposal to site a wash-down facility in this location.

The existing crane is currently being inspected under the harbour's insurance criteria. Should the crane be sound for future use there is a possibility that this crane can be re-located. Alternatively, a new crane will have to be purchased. The provision of a crane in this location and the associated wash down facility is an extra cost over the original plan.

However, the liability associated with the public using the crane without harbour staff supervision is unacceptable to the Commissioners. At the appropriate time procedures will be adopted to make alternative arrangements for future operation of the crane.

8. Slipway

The original proposal to remove the slipway adjacent to the harbour office has been revoked. This means an additional bridge and public access gate will be required to serve the pontoons around the training groyne; access to this area will be for residents only. All visitor berths will be accessed through the bridge and gate at the harbour office.

The alternative slipway in the river received some adverse comment; Yarmouth Harbour Commissioners are reviewing the requirements needed to upgrade this slipway for more general use.

9. Taxi

A water taxi service, previously operated as an independent business, is to be retained and operated by Yarmouth Harbour Commissioners. The Commissioners are employing additional seasonal staff to run this service.

10. Dinghies

With the majority of the berths being walk ashore it is perceived there will be less requirement for dinghy mooring/pontoons. Despite this three dinghy pontoon/berthing areas are shown; one close to the Yar Bridge for river and Sandhard users, retaining the one close to the training groyne/slipway and the third being by the emergency slipway.

11. Loading/unloading and Disabled berths

Two loading and unloading berths are shown. Whilst the outermost area on the heavy-duty breakwater pontoon will be the prime location for this activity, a further area along South Quay is shown to accommodate adverse weather conditions. The latter position will have considerable protection from the heavy-duty breakwater pontoon.

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12. RNLI Lifeboat Re-alignment

Yarmouth Harbour Commissioners are in discussions with the RNLI about the re-alignment of the lifeboat. No re-alignment will be undertaken without the full approval of the RNLI.

13. Consequences

The Commissioners have listened to the feedback obtained during the consultation and included a number of changes. Whilst the overall total cost for the SW Corner development and the Inner Harbour Reconfiguration is reduced by £220,000, the income from these developments, despite the inclusion of the income from a crane and a wash down facility, is also reduced by £106,000 per annum as there are fewer more expensive berths.

14. Financial Viability

The Commissioners have discussed the revised plans with two of the four banks that were originally approached; they were both very supportive of the projects and keen to be involved. They see investment in these projects as low risk.

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