



THE DOCKYARD PORT OF PORTSMOUTH

ANNUAL REPORT 2020



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Introduction and Aim

1. The aim of this report is to demonstrate the Dockyard Port of Portsmouth's (DPP's) compliance with the Port Marine Safety Code while meeting the Ministry of Defence's (MOD's) need to maintain core operational outputs. To do this, the report aims to demonstrate that throughout 2020 the Queen's Harbour Master (QHM) Department successfully delivered on all the commitments set out in QHM's Navigational Safety Policy¹, and to highlight the core output of the organisation in supporting the Royal Navy. 2020 was characterised by the COVID-19 Pandemic which presented multiple challenges in maintaining an open port in order to facilitate continued use by Ministry of Defence and Commercial vessels, and when circumstances permitted, recreational vessels and craft.

2020 Headlines

2. The year featured a number of headlines as set out below:

a. COVID Resilience. The department has continued to support the operational output of the Royal Navy, allowing the ongoing delivery of defence critical tasks and operations. In line with Government guidance, the department built new ways of working to continue to assure delivery of safety-critical services which are essential in order to maintain an open port. This has included the management team primarily working remotely as well as a reduction in numbers of VTS staff in Harbour Control in order to maintain resilience within the team and to continue to provide a safe traffic management service. A move to remote working has heavily relied on increased communications between the department and stakeholders, and meetings conducted via Skype or other providers. Our civilian Marine Services provider Serco have continued to provide critical services to the Royal Navy throughout the pandemic, completing 5,724 tasks.

b. Ballast Pile Upgrade. In July, Ballast Pile was changed from a single pile to a more rigid tripod structure. Marking the northern limits of the Small Boat Channel and an important mark for ships in the adjacent channel, the charted position, light characteristics and signage have remained the same. The more rigid structure has solved an issue with the previous pile oscillating during strong flood tides and made it suitable for fitting an electronic tidal stream sensor which will provide real time data to Harbour Control.



c. Replacement of 4 Bar. Within the Marine Services contract, Serco provide upkeep and overhaul of a large percentage of the Dockyard's Aids to Navigation (AtoN). In July, the mooring team on board *SD Navigator* facilitated the changeover of 4 Bar buoy in the Bar Channel. 4 Bar buoy is another key AtoN, marking the southern limit of the Small Boat Channel and often used as a turning mark for vessels transiting onto the Swashway if out bound from Portsmouth Harbour.



e. Personal Watercraft (PWC) Licences increase. 2020 was an unprecedented year for PWC licence applications across the DPP. There has been nearly a threefold increase

¹ The latest edition of the Navigational Safety Policy is available at www.royalnavy.mod.uk/qhm/portsmouth/sms

in applications which is in line with the rise in PWC use seen across the majority of the country. Harbour Authorities believe that the increase in leisure traffic, particularly PWCs, has been a result of the extensive lockdown and restrictions on international travel over the summer months which has resulted in an increase in small craft purchase and use.

f. LCT 7074 moved by barge. Following extensive restoration work led by the National Museum of the Royal Navy and undertaken in the Naval Base Ship Hall, the last surviving landing craft tank (LCT) from the 1944 Normandy D-Day landings was moved



from the Naval Base to the beach at Southsea over three days in August. A joint towing operation was undertaken by SERCO and Baker Trayte Marine Services with pilotage provided by Admiralty Pilots. Programmed to take place during spring tides in order to land the barge high enough up the beach, the move was

initially postponed by Storm Ellen and then the first attempt to move her was aborted due to ongoing strong winds and waves. At 0340 hours on 24 August, the barge was landed on the beach where it was flooded down on to pre-placed pads before LCT 7074 was moved to the adjacent road by self-propelled modular transporters and then subsequently to her installation position at the D-Day museum.

Safety and Environmental Management System

3. The Safety and Environmental Management System (SEMS) has undergone an interim review in accordance with the department's internal procedures. This saw only minor amendments and changes.

a. PWC Prosecutions. In common with activity observed around the UK coast and ports, 2020 saw a notable increase in antisocial behaviour on the water with a significant proportion being attributable to PWC ('Jet ski') users. In addition to QHM's local education efforts on the water, 'Operation Wave Breaker' has been running under the lead of Hampshire Police Marine Unit in a drive to curb this negative behaviour. Following one particular incident in the summer, at a court hearing in the late autumn, two PWC users were prosecuted for speeding and using unlicensed craft close to beaches and bathers between Southsea Pier and the harbour entrance and a further case is due in court soon. This prosecution was undertaken by the Ministry of Defence Marine Police using evidence gathered by one of their patrols and Closed-Circuit Television (CCTV) from Harbour Control, and resulted in the operators being fined £260 + costs.

b. Review of Documentation. Throughout the year there have been continued reviews and improvements to the QHM Safety and Environmental Management System and supporting documents in line with the SEMS Management Review and recent external audit.

c. DPP Emergency Contingency Plan. After consultation and development throughout 2020, the new DPP Emergency Contingency Plan was issued in early January 2021. The aim of the plan is to not only provide stand-alone emergency response procedures for dealing with marine incidents in the Dockyard Port, but also to complement existing plans within Portsmouth Naval Base and with partner harbour authorities across the Solent. The next stage of development under consideration is integration of a new inter-agency marine emergency plan under the Local Resilience Forum's Solent Maritime Framework as a replacement for the SOLFIRE plan currently in place.

Safety Assurance

4. Among the established assurance practices set out in the port's SEMS, the following notable assurance activity took place in 2020.

a. Port Marine Safety Code (PMSC) Audit. In September, Captain Port Operations, as the port's designated person, undertook an annual audit and found QHM Portsmouth to have "Full Assurance" with the PMSC and relevant Defence Maritime Regulations. Strengths cited within the report were; a hardworking and supportive team dedicated to the safe operation of the DPP; a well-embedded and mature safe system of work that assists in the safe delivery of marine operations; and a pro-active and well-executed approach to enforcement with users of the Dockyard Port that is highly commendable. During the audit, several observations were identified including; improvement of document controls; overdue emergency plan exercises which were restricted by COVID-19; and awaiting the publication of QHM's new Emergency Contingency Plan following consultation. These areas have formed the focus for further development over the coming year where appropriate.

b. Commercial Pilotage Exemption Certificate (PEC) Board involvement. QHM staff sit on the Portsmouth International Port's (PIP) PEC board and in 2020 examined three successful candidates, representing a 100% pass rate. This figure is up from 77% in 2019, but the number of candidates throughout the year has been heavily affected by COVID-19. However, the board continues to re-affirm the need to assure high standards of local knowledge from PEC holders operating in the DPP. Membership of this board and subsequent annual refresher visits to Semaphore Tower, allows QHM and the PIP to ensure that mariners exempted from taking a Portsmouth Pilot are safe to operate the vessels for which they hold exemptions while in the DPP and the Competent Harbour Authority Area, and as such, this activity constitutes an important part of the port's SEMS. Due to the ongoing restrictions imposed by COVID-19, annual visits to Semaphore Tower have been paused. However as soon as the situation allows, these will be reinvigorated.

Berthing, Movements and Events

5. In 2020 there were 160,283 vessel movements within Portsmouth Harbour; a reduction from 224,302 in 2019. This figure is a combination of commercial, military, and ferry movements and also includes an estimate of 50,000 leisure moves (10,000 fewer than 2019).

6. The Volunteer Harbour Patrol's (VHP's) continued commitment to providing advice and assistance in the harbour entrance during peak times between May and October was once again key to reducing risk in the most congested area of the DPP. Following the first lockdown, it was particularly notable how quickly the patrol responded to the resumption of leisure activity as good weather and an easing of restrictions saw a rapid increase in numbers on the water, not just at weekends but through the week. Throughout the year, the VHP provided 220 hours on patrol, giving 20 tows and educating water users. As always, we are extremely grateful to all the volunteers for giving their time to this highly valued service. We would also like to extend our thanks to Sealift 3 who have supported the VHP by providing a complimentary lift and full clean of Volunteer 1 prior to winter storage.

7. This calendar year saw over 877 notified events, ranging from cross-Solent swims to powerboat races and major regattas. This was a reduction of 150 events compared to 2019; this is largely attributed to the restrictions on events and gatherings brought about due to COVID-19. However, the continued submission of programmes and risk assessments to the Port Safety team by event organisers and clubs, remains a key measure to ensuring suitable de-confliction of events, issuance of Local Notices to Mariners and oversight of safety for all port users.

Enforcement

8. With 214 hours of patrolling undertaken by the QHM Rigid-hulled Inflatable Boat (RIB), there were a large number of enforcement actions in 2020, most of which involved education and warning for minor breaches of Dockyard Port of Portsmouth Order 2005 (DPPO) Rules and Regulations. Two notable enforcement actions were taken with regards to leisure vessels contravening the DPPO and General Directions. QHM issued official warning letters to both vessel owners highlighting their dangerous behaviour and consideration of prosecution for further breaches of QHM's statutes.

Incidents and Near Misses

9. A standard port metric to measure safety performance is to look at a ratio of recorded incidents to total vessel moves. For 2020 there were 91 incidents and near misses recorded. 78 of those incidents were related to safety of navigation which equates to 0.48 incidents per 1000 moves.

10. The majority of incidents were near misses or resulted in minor outcomes, while the following incidents are worthy of note:

- A collision between a motor vessel and sailing canoe in the harbour, resulting in substantial damage to the sailing canoe.
- The Wightlink ferry, Victoria of Wight, facilitated the recovery of five persons from a dinghy stricken off Ryde Pier.
- A Gosport Ferry vessel suffered mechanical failure resulting in collision and damage to the Hard Slipway marker.
- QHM have arranged the recovery of several leisure vessels that have caused a hazard to navigation. This summer season has proven to be a worthy reminder that owners should ensure their vessels remain seaworthy to prevent them breaking free from their moorings.

The investigation reports may be requested and are available on a case by case basis from QHM.

Conservancy and Environmental Compliance

11. Provision of Aids to Navigation. During 2019 there were 29 failures of AtoN with one failure of category 1 equipment. Category 1 availability was 99.37% which is slightly lower than Trinity House target availability requirement of 99.80%.

12. Hydrographic Survey Activity. There were three hydrographic surveys undertaken during 2020, which focussed on the maintained channels within Portsmouth Harbour and berths within the Naval Base and the main Portsmouth approach channel itself.

13. UKHO Consultation and Chart Publication. QHM staff were consulted on two new editions of UKHO charts covering DPP waters; BA2631 and BA2629, both of which were re-published during 2020.

14. Oil Spill Response. Eleven minor pollution incidents were recorded and investigated, which is in line with previous years. The QHM team and their Tier 1 contractor, Serco, have continued to maintain their training for dealing with oil spills within the DPP, including testing and deploying pollution response equipment. Serco also conducted a no-notice oil spill drill in the autumn which tested their own responses in dealing with an incident and identifying best practice.

15. Environmental Monitoring. QHM staff have again contributed to the Solent European Marine Site annual monitoring of activities and their impact on the environment and attended the subsequent working group meeting.

Human Resources

16. During 2020, Admiralty pilot Ben McDermott took up the role of Chief Admiralty Pilot and Port Operations Manager. From early January 2021, the roles of Deputy Queen's Harbour Master and Port Safety Officer will be temporarily vacant following the departure of Lucy Dray-Pearce to the Defence Maritime Regulator. After covering the role of QHM since September 2019, I will move role in 2021 to become an Admiralty Pilot Trainee, with former Chief Admiralty Pilot, Nick Randall taking over from me from March 2021.

Top 10 Risks held by QHM

17. At the end of 2020 QHM held the following top 10 risks on MarNIS which are all assessed ALARP (As Low As Reasonably Practicable).

| Number | Risk |
|--------|--|
| 1 | Pollution – Water: Oil/Fuel Spill |
| 2 | Fire/Explosion: Large Vessel at Sea |
| 3 | Fire/Explosion: Large Vessel Alongside |
| 4 | Contact with structure: Contact with Port Infrastructure |
| 5 | Other Nautical Safety: Wash causes injury and/or damage |
| 6 | Other nautical safety: Loss of Tug Control during hot move |
| 7 | Other nautical safety: MOB/Person in the water |
| 8 | Flooding/Foundering: Small vessel |
| 9 | Ranging: Vessel alongside berth |
| 10 | Flooding/Foundering: Large vessel |