

REPORT FROM GHT TO THE ADVISORY BODY

PORT MARINE SAFETY CODE

All harbour authorities are required to achieve and maintain nationally agreed standards for safe marine operations within their waters as set out in the Port Marine Safety Code and its associated Guide to Good Practice. In line with this, GHT has developed a Safety Management Plan which sets out the procedures which GHT follows to comply with these criteria. This is regularly reviewed and updated as required. Earlier this year it was audited by an independent assessor and verified by GHT's Designated Person before being presented to the Board for formal approval. The latest edition is available to download from GHT's website.

We are pleased to report that there have been no incidents or emergencies in the Gloucester Harbour since the last AB meeting.

AIDS TO NAVIGATION

The annual inspection by Trinity House of the local aids to navigation was carried out during the evening/night of 14 August. Lighting on the Wye Bridge was observed to be deficient and the bridge operator is in the process of installing new light units.

The quarterly PANAR reports to Trinity House on the availability of aids to navigation either maintained by GHT or by third parties within the GHT area continue to show 100% compliance. The next PANAR report is due to be submitted at the end of October

Representations have been received from Chepstow Boat Club relating to a number of overhanging and "likely to fall" trees on the banks of the Wye. The Harbour Master has visited the area by boat but does not consider that the problem is any worse than usual. Nonetheless, a further inspection by GHT and representatives of the Environment Agency and the Forestry Commission will be carried out during the autumn.

The Shoots Beacons near the Second Severn Crossing were repainted during the summer and work has also recently been carried out on the Charston light. Vegetation at Inwards Rocks has been cut back to improve perspicuity.

Fluorescent tubes at all onshore sites are due for renewal in October, when the "Day-Glo" marks at a number of sites will also be refreshed in order to maintain their conspicuity. Some adjustment to the support chains of the Narlwood beacons is required to remove the slack which has developed since the chains were renewed several years ago.

The cabin at Severn Beach which houses the pilot watch radar equipment is deteriorating and will be replaced next year.

SEVERN BORE

Informal reports of speeding and irresponsible navigation by powerboats on the Severn Bore have again been received. However, GHT is unable to investigate further unless correspondents provide more information about the type of craft involved, launch/recovery points, location and time of alleged incidents.

PILOTAGE

A new trainee pilot, Tim Butten, was recently appointed and began his training at the beginning of September. He is progressing well and will be examined in due course with a view to authorising him as a probationary pilot by the end of the year.

Ships pay for pilotage according to the size of vessel and the level of trade has been very much within the level predicted at the beginning of our financial year. Cargoes have included cement, fertiliser, scrap metal, grain and, of course, the remaining ten redundant boilers from Berkeley Power Station. Trade continues to remain buoyant with the import of cement as its main staple.

Piloted vessel movements to and from Sharpness Dock
For the first six months the financial years 2012/2013 and 2013/14

2012			2013		
Month	Ship Numbers	DWT	Month	Ship Numbers	DWT
April	28	93,584	April	30	86,465
May	40	139,907	May	37	106,484
June	16	58,732	June	33	111,293
July	23	75,777	July	33	98,960
August	24	81,218	August	23	85,269
September	27	87,189	September	26	83,998
Monthly Average:	27 ships:	89,401 dwt	Monthly average:	30 ship:	96,822 dwt

FINANCE

AB members who are interested in the details of GHT's finances can find the Annual Report and Accounts for 2012/13, and previous years back to 2000/01, on GHT's website.

We aim to break-even each year but in fact made a small loss last year. Through prudent management, we have been able to keep the harbour dues at 35p per deadweight tonne for the last four years. However, a review of rising costs revealed that it would no longer be possible to contain them at this level and the rate for GHT's element of the harbour dues rose to 37p on 1 April. However, we anticipate a similar tonnage of shipping coming to Sharpness during this year so are reasonably confident of achieving at least a break-even result.

PILOTS' NATIONAL PENSION FUND (PNPF)

Members will recall that this is an issue which has caused GHT much anxiety and a considerable amount of work for a number of years. The Trustee of the PNPF, of which our three self-employed pilots are members, reported in 2006 that the fund was in deficit and various ways of repairing this situation were being explored. After protracted legal arguments, the Trustee has been allowed to change its rules so that all competent harbour authorities which authorise pilots in the PNPF, whether employed or self-employed, must make contributions to the deficit. GHT's overall liability has been calculated at just under £2m with repayments due over eighteen years.

GHT has always vigorously repudiated liability for any contributions to this scheme as it has never had any involvement in the pension arrangements of its authorised pilots who have always been self-employed. However, having debated this issue at great length the Trustees have reluctantly come to the conclusion that the only way forward is for GHT, as a gesture of commercial common sense and without admitting any liability for the deficit, to offer affordable annual payments of £30,000 to the PNPf over a five-year period. This short-term contribution will be funded by an additional levy of 2p per dwt added to the harbour dues (making a total of 39p per dwt) with the shortfall made up from reserve funds. It is considered that this level of contribution will not have a detrimental effect on the port. The existence of the port of Sharpness would be endangered if harbour dues were raised to the point where it was uneconomic for ships to come here. An affordable level of contribution to the PNPf after this initial period has yet to be determined.

CANAL & RIVER TRUST (CRT)

Mike Johnson continues to provide advice and support to the CRT on navigational matters at Sharpness when required. He reports regularly to the Waterways Manager on relevant issues.

Trustees have been interested in recent presentations on CRT's master plan for the long-term development of their land at Sharpness. This aspirational document includes the expansion of the marina, the provision of new housing and tourist facilities and a new emphasis on the heritage aspects of the port. Trustees welcomed the prospect of future investment at Sharpness but were concerned that the existence of the flourishing commercial dock was not overlooked.

SEVERN BARRAGE

The report from the Energy and Climate Change Committee issued in June concluded that the case for the barrage was unproven and Hafren Power had yet to provide robust and independently verified evidence of the economic, environmental and technological viability of the project. A recent UK ministerial response to this report stated that, in its current form, the Hafren Power proposal for a Severn barrage did not demonstrate that it could deliver the benefits it claimed would be achieved. The scheme could only be considered further if robust and credible evidence were provided by Hafren Power including an in-depth study of the environmental impact, detailed environmental compensation and mitigation plans and evidence of the flood impact. All these studies would have to be undertaken by private sector developers as there was no strategic case for funding further studies at the expense of taxpayers.

Simon Bird, the Chief Executive of the Bristol Port Company has been quoted as saying: "This is a damning indictment of the feeble and unconvincing barrage scheme. We now have the Government, MPs on four independent committees and the scientists at the Houses of Parliament all saying that the Hafren Power proposal is thoroughly unconvincing."