

REPORT FROM GHT TO THE ADVISORY BODY

Aids to Navigation

The dayboards of the Counts beacon have been repainted in yellow in a bid to make them more conspicuous, and the tide gauge has been refitted on the “upstream” face of the beacon. Some additional boards have been added to the Hills Flats beacon to replace those which had been damaged. In addition, we propose to paint white the grey columns which carry the lights at Redcliffe, Sedbury and Inward Rocks. This should make them more conspicuous during daylight.

The annual Trinity House compliance audit (PMSC, maintenance schedules, Notices to Mariners, fault reporting) took place on 30 July. No issues were raised by the Inspector. The annual inspection of the aids to navigation took place on 15 August, with no defects noted or notices to improve required.

Pilotwatch Radar System

The upgrade to the radar equipment has now been completed. The new system is performing reliably and continues to provide a useful tool for the pilots. The equipment at Sharpness can also be used to monitoring craft which may have got into difficulty and to show the position of leisure vessels which are expected at Sharpness but have not made contact with the port. A new recording system compatible with the replacement radar equipment has now been installed and provides a useful record of vessel tracks and passage timing.

GHT Website

We commissioned an IT student from the University of Gloucestershire to revamp our website during the summer. He has given us a slicker, more modern, look and eliminated some of the gremlins in the old system. Hopefully, it is still a useful source of information for all harbour users.

Cruising Guides

We discovered earlier in the year that a number of local cruising guides had significant errors in the information published for the Gloucester harbour area, such as wrongly describing some of the navigation aids in the shipping channel. Where possible, the publishers have been contacted and the correct information will be included in future editions. If AB members are aware of any other sources of misinformation, they should get in touch with Mike Johnson so we can put things right.

Canal & River Trust

The CRT and GHT have now agreed that Mike Johnson should provide advice and support to the CRT on navigational matters at Sharpness when required. He reports regularly to the Waterways Manager on relevant issues.

Pilotage

The pilots recently reviewed the pattern of traffic to and from Sharpness requiring pilotage. The increase in trade coupled with the ‘bunching’ of ships on particular tides often makes the even distribution of the workload difficult and they came to the conclusion that an additional pilot was necessary. Consequently, Darren Naggs, who has a background in sail training, has been appointed as trainee pilot and he will begin his formal training in January.

Piloted vessel movements to and from Sharpness Dock
during the first half of the financial year 2012/2013

Month	Ship Numbers	DWT	Month	Ship Numbers	DWT
April	28	93,584	July	23	75,777
May	40	139,907	August	24	81,218
June	16	58,732	September	27	87,189
Monthly Average: 27 ships: 89,401 dwt					

Pilots' National Pension Fund

This is an issue which has involved GHT in a considerable amount of work for a number of years. Several years ago, the Trustee of the PNPf, of which our three self-employed pilots are members, reported 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. The amounts due have now been calculated and invoices for the first tranche of contributions are due to be issued on 1 January.

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. Quite apart from that, the amount of the deficit attributed to GHT is just under £2m to be paid over ten years – a level of payment which can only be met by an increase in harbour dues to a level that would make the port of Sharpness economically unviable for ship owners and potentially endanger its very existence.

The implications of this levy are still being considered by GHT and the Trustees will decide in the near future on the best course of action to take.

Lydney Docks

GHT continues to be involved in the Lydney Docks Partnership and has attended a number of meetings about the future of the docks. It is understood that the Environment Agency is still awaiting the legal go ahead to commence the marketing of the harbour. Partners have been assured that a key aspect of any future potential transfer will be to ensure the integrity of the harbour and that public access and the benefits of it as a local amenity including the yacht club are legally secured.

Severn Barrage

A revised scheme proposed by Hafren Power for the Severn Barrage has been attracting a considerable amount of publicity and interest in government circles. The promoters of the scheme, which would apparently be funded from Kuwaiti, Qatari and other sovereign wealth funds, appear to have influence in high places and are anxious to get the project off the ground quickly – within the next three years. However, few technical details are yet available and very little consideration has been given to the environmental impact and almost none to the effect on the Severnside ports, especially Avonmouth and Sharpness. There is also concern that the technology proposed is untested and considerable scepticism about the level of power generation claimed for this new barrage.