

Whitstable Harbour Strategic Plan

2024 to 2034





Image: George Fisk

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Image: Andrew Hastings



Introduction

Whitstable Harbour is a **vibrant and dynamic community asset at the heart of the town**. This plan exists to ensure that Whitstable Harbour Board, with support from Canterbury City Council, are able to manage, maintain and invest in the Harbour for generations to come.

Whitstable is a municipal harbour owned by Canterbury City Council who are the duty holder responsible for safety under the Port Marine Safety Code and have powers conveyed on them under the Whitstable Harbour Act 1957.

Operational responsibility for the Harbour is devolved to the Whitstable Harbour Board, a committee of Canterbury City Council, which includes five elected members and four independent members of the local community. The Board in turn appoints a 'Designated Person' to help us evaluate our responsibilities under the Port Marine Safety Code.

Our governance arrangements follow Department for Transport's Ports and Good Governance guidance, and are outlined in a Memorandum of Understanding between Canterbury City Council and the Harbour Board.

The Harbour Board ensures that the management of the Harbour reflects the needs of the local community and stakeholders first and foremost.

This Strategic Plan is the product of extensive interviews and consultation with key stakeholders, public workshops and an online consultation completed by almost 200 local residents between 6 November 2023 and 8 January 2024.

In everything we do, the Harbour Board strives to:

- build a reputation for safety, reliability and a friendly service;
- be open, accessible and accountable;
- create a profitable and sustainable commercial business which is financially self-sufficient;
- be good communicators, regularly engaging with residents and stakeholders;
- work with our community to make things happen.



Our overriding vision is:

"to support the fishing industry of Whitstable and provide a safe, welcoming, memorable and accessible Harbour that drives local business, protects our environment and delivers a positive social impact for our community."

Image: Michael Marsh

Managing the Harbour

Managing the competing needs of stakeholders within the Harbour is a considerable challenge and one which requires good communication. In order to build these relationships, the Harbour Board:

- sets our clear operational commitments which all stakeholders can expect of us in our day to day work;
- holds an annual stakeholder event to report progress on the Strategic Plan;
- continues to welcome members of the public to its meetings;
- publishes a Business Plan detailing how this strategy will be implemented once every three years.

We ensure the competing priorities of stakeholders are additionally managed by:

Operating a zoning model to improve safety in the Harbour

The zoning map shows how areas within the Harbour estate are broadly reserved for distinct industries as follows:

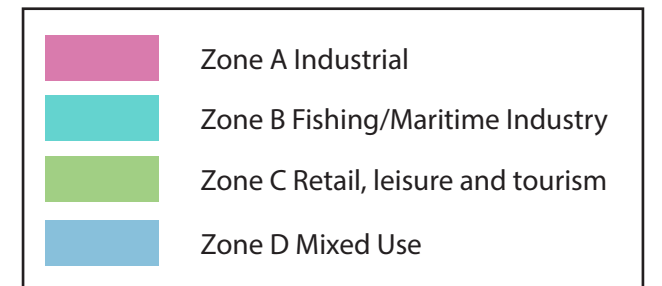
Facilitating a network of stakeholder user groups

The Harbour management team has regular meetings with:

- The Whitstable Fisherman's Association
- South Quay Traders Forum

And regular communication with:

- Property holding tenants
- Water users including the RNLI, Whitstable Yacht Club and members of Canterbury City Council's Watercraft Registration Scheme
- Local community stakeholders



Monitoring and review

This is a 10 year strategy, published in July 2024 and due for renewal in March 2034.

The Strategic Plan is broadly broken into three horizons which sets out the short, medium and long term goals of the plan:

- Horizon 1: activities completed in years 0 to 3
- Horizon 2: activities completed in years 0 to 6
- Horizon 3: activities completed in years 0 to 9

The Harbour Board will publish a three year business plan which outlines actions under each of the key strategic pillars. Progress on these actions will be reviewed by the board on a six monthly basis.

An annual plan showing progress will be presented to the board and circulated amongst stakeholders every September.

The annual plan will also include a balanced scorecard evidencing our fulfilment of commitments and based on customer feedback.

The scorecard records:

Financial metrics

- Revenue generation: contribution to reserve
- Grant funding: total amount of grant funding obtained from external organisations for projects

- Tenancy utilisation (including berths): income from all commercial tenancies across the harbour

Customer metrics

- Stakeholder satisfaction: results of annual stakeholder satisfaction survey
- Stakeholder engagement: number of stakeholders actively engaged in a six month period
- Complaints: complaints handled by Canterbury City Council on behalf of the Harbour operations

Internal processes

- Safety incidents: number of reports made within the marine safety management system
- Total industrial tonnage: tonnage shipped in vessels to the Harbour
- Compliance meetings held: meetings held with the 'designated person'

Learning and growth

- Staff training: hours of total staff training on core operations
- Community engagement: number of education and or engagement sessions held by the Harbour team
- Staff turnover: percentage turnover across the Harbour team and Harbour Board



Image: Michael Marsh

Long term strategy

Our aspirations, commitments and goals are presented against each of our five strategic pillars.

The pillars have been developed following a public consultation and input from stakeholders, with consideration of our responsibilities, remit and resources.

The commitments reflect and compliment the focus of the council's Corporate Plan and emerging Local Plan. The new Corporate Plan focuses on how our local action can make our local community a greener, fairer, stronger and better place for us all to live. As such, our goals include references to the United Nations Sustainable development goals on which the council is increasingly basing its work.

Our aspirations reflect what we are working towards. Our commitments reflect the responsibilities we have on an ongoing basis and our goals are measurable outputs to help us achieve our aspirations

Our five strategic pillars are:

Effectiveness: To provide a safe and first class service to customers and stakeholders in line with the Port Marine Safety Code and good governance

Environment: To actively manage our Harbour in a way which is responsive to climate change, enhances the environment and promotes the health and biodiversity of our local waters

Employment: To ensure the Harbour remains a significant employer in the town and continues to support local and small businesses

Equity: To promote and enhance opportunities for all to safely access the Harbour environment

Education: To improve people's knowledge of the role the Harbour has and continues to have in the cultural life of our town



Effectiveness

Aspiration

To provide a safe, first class service to customers and stakeholders in line with the Port Marine Safety Code and Good Governance Guide.

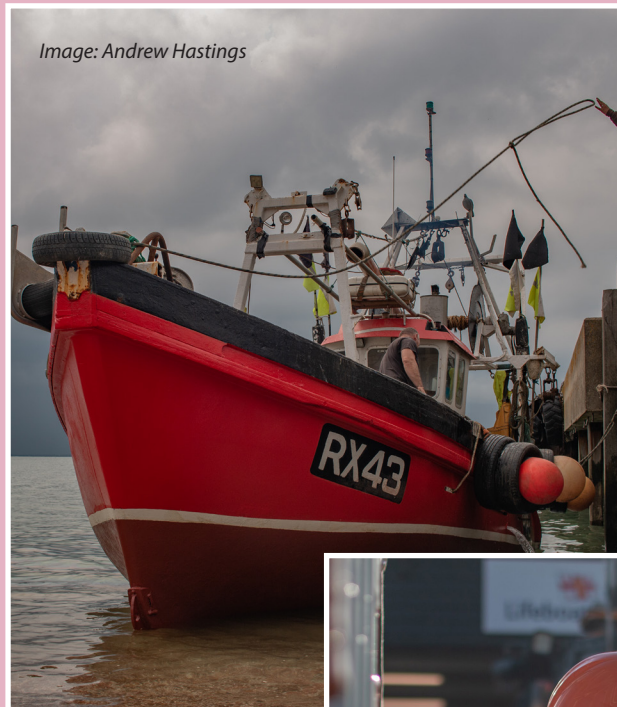


Image: Andrew Hastings

Commitments

- Annually review the Marine Safety Management System (SMS)
- Report on Port Marine Safety Code (PMSC) compliance to the Department for Transport
- Operate a 10 year financial capital and maintenance budget plan
- Hold an annual stakeholder event to show progress in line with the plan objectives
- Implement findings from health and safety audits
- Maintain and regularly review the Memorandum of Understanding between the Board and the Council
- To annually prepare a balanced scorecard monitoring implementation of the Strategic Plan



Image: Andrew Hastings

Goals

Goal	SDP Ref	Horizon
Review the network of user groups to help support the Board's work	17	One
Devolve responsibility and regular monitoring to independent members of the Board	16	One
Conduct a Review of the Harbour Act	16	Two

Environment

Aspiration

To actively manage our Harbour in a way which is responsive to climate change, enhances the environment and promotes the health and biodiversity of our local waters.



Image: Alex Hurliman

Commitments

- Embed adaptation planning efforts into our business to withstand the impacts of climate change
- Uphold council ban on single use plastics in council operations
- Work with the Environment Agency to meet their statutory responsibilities for water quality testing
- Actively support active travel schemes
- Maintain solar infrastructure within the Harbour
- Maintain effective safety signage on site



Image: Birdwise East Kent

Goals

Goal	SDP Ref	Horizon
Develop an action plan to remove single use plastics from the Harbour with stakeholders	14	One
Engage local stakeholders in additional non-statutory water quality testing	14	One
Develop feasible renewable energy projects to seek funding to actively reduce our carbon footprint	7	Two
Identify and achieve relevant environmental accreditations	13, 11	Two
Review and update The Harbour Design Guide to conserve our built environment	11	Three

Employment

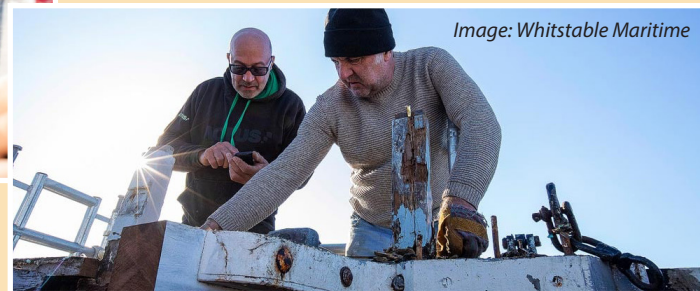
Aspiration

To ensure the Harbour remains a significant employer in the town and continues to support independent, local and small businesses.



Commitments

- Retain control of Harbour land – maximising income through development and management of our property portfolio
- Review the relationships between small commercial lets available on the Harbour to better incubate small business and support our High Street
- Proactively rent to businesses with a local connection and social ethos
- Support local fishing and shell-fishing activities



Goals

Goal	SDP Ref	Horizon
Return a fish market to allow local fisherman to sell their catch	12	One
Review the role and function of the council retaining a commercial presence in the South Quay Shed	8	One
Enable short term activities (e.g. pop up markets and events) to animate the Harbour throughout the year	8	One
To improve the appearance and access to the Harbour from its southern boundary	11	One
Commercially develop the Cockle Shed site to complement our existing leisure offer	8	One
Explore the feasibility of having fish processing facilities for the local fishing industry	12	Two
Extend the pontoon to improve visitors access to the water in a sustainable way	3	Two
Support the development of a Strategic Planning Document for the Harbour and the development of Zone D	9	Three

Equity

Aspiration

To promote and enhance opportunities for all to safely access and enjoy the Harbour environment and its activities.



Commitments

- Support disabled access to our buildings and premises
- Maintain Changing Places Toilets on our land
- Retain staff on site to help the public seven days a week
- Promote and enhance opportunities for all people to access the sea



Goals

Goal	SDP Ref	Horizon
Install a hearing loop system in the South Quay Shed	10	One
Carry out an independent accessibility study of the Harbour	10	One
Draw up plans by which we can improve access to the sea for disabled and underrepresented groups	10	One
Improve the public realm and accessibility of buildings	11	Two
To promote a wide range of different means of safely accessing the water	3	Two

Education

Aspiration

To improve people's knowledge of the role the Harbour has and continues to have in the cultural life of our town.



Image: Andrew Hastings

Commitments

- Ensure visitors understand the history and heritage of our operations
- To safely support and manage use of public space within the Harbour
- Ensure clear signage to reduce risks and enhance the visitor experience
- Improve safety at sea by proactively supporting coastal safety services inc. RNLI, Coastguard and Whitstable Coast Watch
- Improve entrance and interpretive signage



Image: Andrew Hastings

Goals

Goal	SDP Ref	Horizon
Provide a community classroom/meeting room to support school visits and professional maritime training within the Harbour	4	One
Develop a dedicated online presence for the Harbour	9	One
Produce a destination marketing strategy/brand	9	One
Improve online access and Wi-Fi in the Harbour	9	Two
Enhance the use of digital media to engage with the local community	17	Two
Enhance links and enable the sharing of resources with local museums	4	Two
Enhance links and enable the sharing of resources with local and visiting schools	4	Two
Increase awareness of the role the Harbour has played in the development of the town	4	Three



UN sustainable development goals

un.org/sustainabledevelopment



Harbour and Foreshore Services

Canterbury City Council

West Quay Building

Whitstable Harbour

Whitstable CT5 1AB

Tel **01227 266 719**

Email **whitstable.harbour@canterbury.gov.uk**

Councillor Chris Cornell

Chair, Whitstable Harbour Board

Email **chris.cornell@councillor.canterbury.gov.uk**