

Minutes

**Whitby Harbour Users Group
21 August 2025
Whitby Yacht Club Meeting Room**

Present:

**Bob Bennett (BB) – Whitby Cruising Association
Chris Bourne (CB) – North Yorkshire Council
John Anderson (JA) – Whitby Yacht Club
Adrian Fusco (AF) – Chair and Whitby Yacht Club
Gary Pearson (GP) – North Yorkshire Council
James Cole (JC) – Whitby Commercial Fishermen's Association
David Moore (DM)
Cllr Linda Wilde – Whitby Town Council
Paul Hobson (PH) Please
Kirsty Patullo KP (via Ms Teams) – note taker**

		Action
1.	<p>Welcome, Introductions & Apologies:</p> <p>AF opened the meeting, and introductions were done to welcome new members.</p> <p>Apologies: Alan Paige, Callum McKeon, Cllr. Mark Crane, Sally Atkinson</p>	
2.	<p>Minutes of last meeting:</p> <p>The notes of the last meeting were shared late, and colleagues were asked to review and provide any changes or additions back to Kirsty Patullo.</p>	All
3.	<p>Bridge Openings</p> <p>CB wished to highlight the concerns raised regarding the charging of the openings. This has now been referred to a barrister to seek legal clarification. Apologies were given to member for the length of time it's taken. NYC is yet to receive an update from them. An urgent response has been requested. A full response will be circulated when it has been agreed.</p> <p>Dredging operations are progressing following the granting of a licence for 50,000 tonnes at max 5,000 tonnes per month, which is expected to be fully utilised. The dredging will primarily target the channel now and pontoons during the winter period when more boats are lifted out. The dredger now has increased resilience, with two skippers available,</p>	

	<p>allowing for more consistent and efficient operations compared to previous periods when only one skipper was available.</p> <p>The team is currently catching up on dredging work that was paused for approximately a year and a half. Around 3,600 tonnes of sand have already been removed, and the focus has now shifted to softer siltation. Siltation is easier to dig and less damaging to machinery than sand, which allows for faster and more sustainable operations. The team is monitoring progress closely and may pause operations if targets are met early to avoid extended downtime and equipment wear. For example, if 4,999 tonnes are reached by the third week of a month, a short operational break may be taken so as not to exceed the monthly allowance.</p> <p>Regarding bridge operations, the Council has recently introduced charges for extra bridge openings beyond the standard schedule, which has led to a legal challenge from the Yacht Club. The standard provision includes bridge openings four hours around high tide—two hours before and two hours after as per the Council website. Extra bridge openings, previously provided at the discretion of the Harbour Master subject to navigational safety, are now subject to charges due to financial pressures. The Yacht Club has cited various legislative grounds in their challenge, and the Council is currently seeking legal advice to determine the validity of these claims.</p> <p>Historically, extra bridge openings were provided without charge, and there is some disagreement over how long this practice has been in place. The Council maintains that the published bridge schedule remains unchanged and that only additional requests are now chargeable. Staffing and financial considerations are central to this issue, as bridge operations require two staff members per shift. Many extra bridge openings are underused, leading to inefficiencies. While events like yacht races do justify additional openings, ad hoc requests are less predictable and harder to manage cost-effectively.</p>	
4.	<p>Fishing Industry Update</p> <p>The discussion covered various aspects of local fishing activity, beginning with a note on the absence of Shawn Wood, who has not been in contact recently. Lobster season is currently underway and proving highly successful, with strong catches and rising prices, reaching up to £13 per kilo. Wildlife activity is healthy, with herring and other species moving in. Concerns were raised about tuna fishing, particularly around licensing and fish welfare. While commercial vessels have been denied licences by DEFRA, a few rod-and-line licences have been issued for catch-and-release, though doubts remain about the survival of released fish. This has led to unregulated attempts by inexperienced individuals to catch large game fish, posing risks to sustainability and safety. Recreational mackerel fishing was also discussed, with tourists catching large quantities and taking them to market, despite commercial fishers facing strict quotas. This imbalance was noted as economically unfair. The conversation also touched on predator behaviour, such as seals following herring and potentially impacting cod stocks. Finally, concerns were raised about the lack of competition among buyers, with only one main buyer in town, Terry, who controls most of the infrastructure. While some members</p>	

	<p>are loyal to him, there is a desire for more market competition to ensure fair pricing. All commercial catches must be registered with the MMO upon landing, and infrastructure limitations, such as having only one crane operator, were also noted.</p> <p>There was a discussion about property ownership and dues related to the fishing scheme, with confirmation that the property belongs to North Council and is leased by Terry and Shaun Wood, although Shaun is not currently active in buying from Whitby. It was noted that the fishing school is maintaining its presence and may expand into the maritime hub. Overall, operations at Fishing Science are running smoothly. Additionally, Rachel Hungary, formerly of the MMO, has circulated flyers encouraging fishermen to participate in a survey on Marine Conservation Zones (MCZs). Although there are no MCZs currently affecting the area, participation is encouraged as future changes could have an impact.</p>	
5.	<p>Port Marine Safety Code</p> <p>The meeting covered several incidents and updates. Two individuals, reportedly under the influence and with mental health histories, entered the water voluntarily and caused disruption near vessels, leading to a near-miss. One escaped and was later seen running naked through Baxter Gate. Concerns were raised about suicide-related content online and its potential local impact. The group reviewed recent national MAIB reports highlighting fatal accidents on fishing vessels due to poor risk assessments, fatigue, and non-compliance with safety regulations. Updates were provided on the Port Marine Safety Code, including the appointment of an external designated person starting 1st September, with an audit scheduled for 17th September.</p> <p>A 12-week compliance exercise by the MCA is expected from January. Port security requirements were discussed, including international obligations, liaison with police and border force, and vigilance regarding foreign nationals. The importance of maintaining high standards in maritime safety and security was emphasised.</p>	

<p>7.</p>	<p>Harbour Maintenance & Infrastructure Projects</p> <p>A comprehensive walkover survey has been completed of the whole harbour, resulting in a detailed list of asset conditions and defects, rated from D4 (worst) to A1 (best) and colour-coded for prioritisation. This forms the basis of a five-year maintenance plan, allowing red-rated items to be addressed first, gradually improving asset conditions. Unlike previous efforts hindered by insufficient budgets, North Yorkshire Council has committed to supporting necessary maintenance. Additionally, the legal case brought by Fight for Whitby has led to the establishment of a ring-fenced harbour account, ensuring harbour-generated income is reinvested locally. However, the financial reality remains challenging, as major repairs often exceed available funds, requiring Council loans. Despite ongoing objections and audits, the Council continues to balance its responsibilities, with harbour-related costs and income now transparently managed.</p> <p>The auditors required the harbour team to pursue a legal judgement, which ultimately resulted in a favourable outcome for the objector by securing ring-fenced funds for harbour maintenance. An objector raised issues about the extension arms needing substantial repairs and feared the Whitby Maritime Hub would obstruct future works—an assumption the team strongly disputes. The judgement has improved financial flexibility, allowing easier access to funds without competing with broader council budgets. However, legacy financial commitments, such as the annual WTC repayment for the East Pier footbridge must remain in place. Meanwhile, other projects, like the Eskside Wharf pile replacement, face delays due to marine licensing conditions, with ongoing negotiations involving environmental and scientific assessments.</p> <p>The maritime hub construction is progressing well, on budget, and structurally advanced. One company has already leased space, and discussions are ongoing with an education provider and the Humber Maritime Renewables Cluster to offer training and apprenticeships. Maintenance issues around the pier and surrounding buildings are being managed by limited staff, with minor repairs handled by John's team. Community Payback contributions have been inconsistent, and there's consideration of using local contractors for painting and upkeep. Property and Asset Management now oversees key buildings, and staff are encouraged to report issues for prompt resolution.</p>	
<p>8.</p>	<p>Harbour Strategy</p> <p>CB provided members with an update on the current Harbour Strategy.</p> <p>The final draft of the Harbour Strategy is undergoing internal review and is expected to be presented to the Council's Executive in September. The Executive has requested to see the draft before it is shared publicly, and the Scarborough and Whitby Area Committee will also review it. If approved, the document will be released for public consultation. The strategy includes an executive summary, governance details, harbour backgrounds, and eight strategic objectives with corresponding actions. It is designed as a 10-year plan, with annual reviews proposed to track progress. Additionally, efforts are underway to compile a comprehensive</p>	

	welcome pack for Whitby and Scarborough Harbours, consolidating existing documents for new arrivals and online access.	
9.	<p>Any Other Business</p> <p>Crab Committee & Visitor Impact: Linda Wilde recalls a previous "Crab Committee" chaired by James, which focused on managing visitor impact at New Key Road. There's concern about the growing number of visitors and their lack of awareness, especially children mishandling crabs.</p> <p>Yorkshire Wildlife Trust Involvement: The Trust may be launching an educational programme to help inform visitors, which is seen as a positive development. There was progress in the past toward involving volunteers to educate visitors and distribute materials, and there's interest in reviving that effort.</p> <p>Cruise Ship Visitors: Discussion about cruise ship visitors arriving via tenders. There are logistical challenges, such as requests to clear car parks, which were refused. There's also mention of unusual behaviour by crew members and concerns about whether visitors are properly checked.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Security & Checks: The harbour authority uses a European reporting system (SERVES) to monitor arrivals and ensure proper checks are done, though they can't always confirm nationalities. <p>Robert Bennett requested that he was being included in meeting correspondence. His email address was confirmed as accurate, and it was requested that to check his email 'spam folder' as it had been noted previously that some members emails were going straight to this folder and not their main emails.</p>	RB
10	<p>Date of Next Meeting</p> <p>20 November at 14:00 in Whitby Yacht Club as confirmed during today's meeting</p> <p>A request was made from AF to make 2026 meetings to be held on Fridays. This appeared to suit most individuals. However, KP will reach out in due course.</p>	KP