

**Minutes  
Whitby Harbour Users Group  
15 April 2026  
Whitby Lifeboat Station Meeting Room**

**Present:**

Adrian Fusco (AF) – Chair and Whitby Yacht Club  
 Alan Page (AP) – Small Fishing Boards  
 Alan Feast (AF) – Designated Person for Harbours NYC  
 Chris Bourne (CB) – North Yorkshire Council  
 John Anderson (JA) – Whitby Yacht Club  
 Shaun Wood (SW) – Fish Processors  
 John Woodhead (JW) – Engineer, NYC  
 Gary Pearson (GP) – North Yorkshire Council  
 James Cole (JC) – Whitby Commercial Fishermen's Association  
 David Wall (DW) - WyBA  
 Cllr Sandra Turner – Rowing Club  
 Cllr Linda Wilde – Whitby Town Council  
 Paul Hobson (PH) – Charter

**Apologies:**

Councillor Mark Crane (North Yorkshire Council)  
 Councillor Neil Swanick (North Yorkshire Council)  
 Callum McKeon (North Yorkshire Council)  
 Kirsty Patullo (North Yorkshire Council)  
 David Moore

	<b>Executive Summary</b>	<b>Action</b>
1.	<p><b>Welcome, Introductions &amp; Apologies:</b></p> <p>Adrian opened the meeting, and introductions were shared for the purposes of the minute</p> <p>Apologies: Callum McKeon, Cllr. Mark Crane, David Moore and Kirsty Patullo.</p>	
2.	<p><b>Minutes of last meeting:</b></p> <p>It was noted that John Anderson and James Cole were not in attendance at the last meeting, contrary to the minutes. David Wall was present but not recorded, and Bob Bennett was present but not listed.</p>	

	<p>AF advised the withdrawal of the objection for the Secretary of State, requested by Chris Bourne, was submitted to the DFT in January, but no acknowledgement has yet been received.</p> <p>An action item for Gary Pearson regarding pot storage was deferred for later discussion.</p> <p>Kirsty to update the minutes from the above noted comments to correct these mistakes. <b>Action: Kirsty Patullo.</b></p>	<p><b>KP</b></p>
<p>3.</p>	<p><b>Port and Marine Facilities Safety Code (PMSC)</b></p> <p>Gary Pearson shared a MAAB safety flyer concerning a foundering fishing vessel.</p> <p>Gary declared Whitby Harbour's full compliance (as of March 2026) with the Port Marine Safety Code, OPRC, ISPS, Port Waste Management Plan, and local aid certificates to navigation. He emphasised a commitment to continuous improvement post-compliance. It was noted that many other North East Ports are still working towards compliance, with further guidance from the MCA awaited.</p> <p>Designated Person (DP) Introduction:  Alan Feast introduced himself as the Designated Person for Scarborough and Whitby. He outlined his extensive maritime career, including roles as a deck officer, container terminal manager, Lockmaster, Harbour Master (UK and Tasmania), and Deputy/Harbour Master at Port of Tyne, confirming his suitability for the DP role.</p> <p>Alan clarified his role as providing independent assurance to the duty holder on the effectiveness of the marine safety management system. For daily matters, contact should be via the marine team; for major incidents or PMSC issues, direct contact is appropriate.</p> <p>Chris Bourne confirmed Alan's independent role, noting this addresses a previous amber rating. He stated that any initial issues should go to the harbour team, but serious PMSC-related concerns can be escalated to Alan. Alan has already conducted an independent investigation in Scarborough, demonstrating his independence.</p> <p>Alan reported conducting a PMSC audit in September (finding no non-conformances), working with the harbour team on improvements, undertaking familiarisation visits, and conducting an investigation in Scarborough. He maintains regular contact and reports to the senior executive board quarterly.</p> <p>Chris announced that a public report on the port's PMSC compliance, including the Duty Person's audit report, will be presented to the Scarborough and Whitby Area Committee in June.</p> <p>David Wall enquired about individual facilities responsibilities. Alan clarified that facility owners must certify their own compliance directly to the MCA, though the port (Gary Pearson) can offer assistance.</p> <p>Alan described the audit as thorough, covering many areas beyond a simple tick-box exercise.</p>	

	<p>Gary Pearson spoke of post audit actions and confirmed that a "snagging list" was created from the audit's suggestions for improvement, which the team is actively working through.</p> <p>Sandra Turner noted receiving public contact regarding concerns within the community as to which parts of the harbour that would fall under the report's scope.</p> <p>Linda Wild enquired about safety measures following a past drowning incident. Gary Pearson confirmed that ladders are present on pontoons, ensuring individuals could exit the water.</p>	
4.	<p><b>Fishing Industries Update</b></p> <p>Shaun Wood reported only one request to borrow the forklift for scallop landing in the last three months. James Cole noted two local boats engaged in scalloping and general pot clearing for the upcoming season.</p> <p>Tuna Fishing:</p> <p>Gary Pearson confirmed he had been approached by a local fisherman for support regarding tuna fishing and would assist with provisions like fork trucks, ice, and suitable scales. James highlighted the potential for 4-tonne tuna licences, the large size and abundance of tuna (September-November), and expressed concern with unlicensed sport fishing.</p> <p>Gary Pearson mentioned inquiries from southern boats seeking short-term berths for the tuna season, raising questions about fair treatment compared to local annual licence holders.</p> <p>Chris Bourne assured local fishermen that the port would provide necessary facilities (forklift, ice, landing area, scales) if they secure tuna licences.</p> <p>Gary Pearson and Chris Bourne confirmed plans to instal another feeder pillar with four 110V sockets near the hand winding winch on Endeavour Wharf to support fishermen and guard vessels.</p> <p>James Cole highlighted the disparity between good winter pontoon berths and poor summer berths (ladders, no electricity). He suggested a continuous pontoon system from marine steps to the bridge. John Woodhead and Gary Pearson raised concerns about wave motion, excavation difficulties due to wall foundations, and vulnerability to winter storms. A test dig at indicated shallow bedrock.</p> <p>John Woodhead suggested extending the three fingers of the Trident Pontoon for winter mooring with water and electricity, pending resolution of dredging licence issues. Gary Pearson acknowledged the need for moorings but highlighted challenges with dredging around the pontoon.</p> <p>Alan Page noted the recent announcement of grants (DEFRA/MMO). Chris Bourne confirmed the Council is preparing applications and invited user input on priority projects. Chris urged quick action for grant applications due to their first-come, first-served nature. He confirmed a team is ready to assist and that multiple applications for both Scarborough and Whitby would be submitted.</p> <p>The grants offer 80% funding, administered by the MMO (DEFRA). Shaun Wood noted the difficulty in obtaining three quotes and the requirement for upfront</p>	

	<p>expenditure before reimbursement, which Alan Page stated was prohibitive for small operators.</p>	
<p>5.</p>	<p><b>Pot Storage</b></p> <p>Gary Pearson acknowledged ongoing problems with pot storage on Endeavour Wharf. He outlined plans to dispose of non-working pots during the summer and is drafting a pot storage policy for group feedback.</p> <p>James Cole suggested re-establishing designated squares. Gary noted past issues with squares (pots not moved after payment period). A walkabout is planned to identify traditional storage areas (e.g., end of the wharf) and ensure clear areas for safety.</p> <p>Chris confirmed that permission for free pot storage at Spittal Bridge had been granted following MP intervention, but no pots have been stored there yet. Alan Page raised concerns about security, lighting, and the location's suitability.</p> <p>James suggested moving the unused pots from Endeavour Wharf to Spittal Bridge during the planned walkabout, allowing owners a chance to collect them.</p> <p>Gary Pearson expressed the difficulty of balancing support for the fishing industry with the needs of the leisure sector and the overall requirement to keep the harbour open and clear for commercial use.</p> <p>Chris Bourne announced that the area in front of the new maritime hub would be cleared by September, prohibiting pot storage, to ensure quayside access for industrial unit tenants. Alan Page expressed concern about the loss of quay space.</p> <p>The possibility of placing containers at Spittal Bridge was discussed. Chris Bourne noted planning regulations (12-month limit without permission) but confirmed the Council would not object to planning applications from fishermen.</p> <p>Sandra Turner raised significant concerns about vermin (rats) being attracted to stored pots, particularly if moved to residential areas. Gary Pearson agreed this was also a reason to keep pots off the fish quay.</p> <p>James explained the upcoming permit scheme limiting pots to 1,000 per boat, which will primarily affect a few vessels. He anticipated a peak in pot numbers this year, followed by a reduction, with old pots potentially being repurposed. Gary noted that harbour infrastructure has not expanded to accommodate the fishing industry's diversification into shellfish and the use of larger pots, contributing to the storage problems.</p>	
<p>6.</p>	<p><b>Harbour Maintenance and Infrastructure</b></p> <p>Chris Bourne reported a delay with the Endeavour Eskside Wharf project due to risks associated with steel piling (noise, vibration for residents) following consents applications. The contractor is exploring alternative designs, such as a mass retaining wall, as current piling consents are rigid and costly.</p> <p>There is no revised timetable available yet for the Eskside Wharf project, with more clarity expected by June. David Wall will contact Martin Lloyd for an update, noting the impact on moorings. <b>Action: David Wall.</b></p> <p>John Woodhead confirmed his engineering team completed a comprehensive walkover survey of harbour assets, which have now been prioritised. Work is</p>	<p><b>DW</b></p>

commencing on "red" (worst condition) assets. Timbers on the "chicken run" are being renewed, and renovation work has been completed on the bridge to the west side pontoon.

Funds are allocated for dredging the Trident Pontoon once licencing issues are resolved.

Gary confirmed an application has been made to the MMO for a new sampling plan to lift the dredging exclusion zone at Endeavour Wharf. Chris Bourne announced that the 5,000 tonne/month dredging limit has been lifted.

The dredger is currently broken down (clutch problem); a part has been ordered from Norway. Once repaired, it will first go to Scarborough for a short period to address a sandbank in the harbour entrance before returning to Whitby.

Once the dredger is operational, the plan is to continue with pontoon dredging.

Sandra Turner raised concerns about the poor appearance of Whitby Bridge. Chris Bourne will raise this with the bridges team to ascertain the maintenance regime and painting schedule.

David Wall raised concerns about the lack of a suitable waiting pontoon. Gary confirmed the pontoon could no longer be located at the end of Endeavour Wharf due to structural stress.

David questioned alternatives, such as a piling system. John Woodhead raised concerns about encroachment into the navigable channel.

Gary Pearson acknowledged the current provision on the Fish Quay is not ideal due to rafting and navigation issues. He advised passage planning but conceded that sailing conditions are not always predictable. David stressed the necessity of a proper waiting facility to support leisure trade. Gary invited suggestions and a walkabout to identify potential locations.

Chris Bourne noted that if the new maritime hub users require space, the dredger might need to be moved to the Fish Quay in summer.

Sandra Turner asked if the maritime hub would be subsidised by ring-fenced harbour funds if not fully occupied. Chris confirmed as it was on harbour land it would, but equally, any surplus generated would also be added to the ring-fenced account to benefit the harbour.

Alan Page questioned the hub's purpose. Chris clarified it is multi-purpose, supporting maritime education, training, fishing businesses, and offshore wind.

Potential uses for other floors are under discussion. Chris highlighted planning restrictions due to the building's location in flood zone 3C, limiting potential uses.

7.

### **Harbour Strategy**

Chris reported that the consultation on the draft harbour strategy has closed, and comments are being reviewed.

Several organisations suggested a governance review, including the re-establishment of a Harbour Board. Chris will recommend to management and elected members that a governance review be undertaken by an overview and scrutiny committee. He noted that Whitby legislation allows for 50% non-elected members on such a board. David Wall recalled the previous Harbour Board

	<p>(disbanded 2015) faced tensions with the local authority and lacked true autonomy.</p> <p>The Whitby Yacht Club's submission regarding bridge opening times will be incorporated into the strategy review, as will a number of other suggestions by consultees.</p> <p>Positive submissions were received from the Lobster Hatchery (aquaculture/marine sciences), fishermen (assistance), and leisure paddleboarding/aqua sports, which will be considered for incorporation.</p> <p>The strategy is targeted for adoption by the Council's Executive in May, with a full appendix of all consultation comments.</p>	
8.	<p><b>Bridge Opening Working Group</b></p> <p>John Anderson (Whitby Yacht Club) advocated for the harbour to be "open for business," citing dredging and upper harbour access as critical. He presented anecdotal evidence of yachtsmen avoiding Whitby due to narrow bridge opening windows and suggested a revised scheme could be transformational for the port's reputation and income, potentially supporting North Sea industries.</p> <p>Gary Pearson expressed no objection to a review but raised concerns about emergency night openings (critical for fishing and port duties), and increased activity at low water given the harbour's limited depth and entrance constraints. He noted the bridge currently acts as a natural barrier preventing vessels from moving in unsafe depths.</p> <p>Sandra Turner highlighted past business community opposition to increased bridge openings due to disruption to tourist flow and deliveries.</p> <p>Chris proposed forming a working group to discuss bridge opening times, subject to the following conditions: an independent chair, agreed Terms of Reference (ToR), and acknowledgement that the North Yorkshire Council Executive is the ultimate decision-making body.</p> <p>Chris Bourne requested representation from interested parties including the harbour service, councillors (to represent residents), WYC, WCA, fishing representatives, and Parkol. David Wall suggested Chris Bourne draft the Terms of Reference (ToR) and propose an independent chair. Chris Bourne agreed to draft the ToR and propose a chair but stressed the group must ultimately agree to both. <b>Action: Chris Bourne.</b></p> <p>It was suggested circulating the ToR quickly.</p>	CB
9.	<p><b>Any Other Business</b></p> <p>David Wall raised the issue of flares disposal, noting Mike Major (lifeboat) had suggested a pyrotechnics handler. Gary Pearson will discuss this, acknowledging previous unsuccessful attempts at a corporate disposal event.</p> <p>Dredging/Moorings Communications: John Anderson requested improved communication regarding dredging schedules, especially when the dredger is absent. Gary Pearson agreed to email group members with updates.</p> <p>Harbourmaster's Report to Whitby Town Council:</p>	

	<p>Sandra Turner requested regular Harbourmaster's reports for Whitby Town Council. Gary Pearson agreed, asking for an email reminder a couple of weeks prior.</p> <p>Sewage in Harbour:  Alan Page reported observing sewage being pumped from a vessel. Gary Pearson confirmed he had reported this to the vessel owner and the Environment Agency. Linda Wild mentioned ongoing issues with a manhole on the slipway. Alan Page further reported witnessing a pipe being disconnected to discharge sewage into the harbour and offered to film future occurrences.</p>	
10	<p><b>Date of Next Meeting</b>  25 August 2026 – Whitby Maritime Hub (To be confirmed).</p>	<b>KP/CB</b>