

# Minutes

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<b>Title of meeting:</b>	Dee Conservancy Consultative Committee Meeting (No.2)
<b>Location:</b>	NRW Buckley Office and online (MS Teams)
<b>Date of meeting:</b>	26/11/24 10:00-12:30hrs
<b>Members present:</b>	<p>Sarah Bailey – West Cheshire &amp; North Wales Chamber of Commerce (Commercial Representative)</p> <p>Kathleen Bealby – Natural England</p> <p>Anthony Bestwick – Wirral Council</p> <p>Andrew Challinor - Cheshire West &amp; Chester City Council</p> <p>Jayne Eade – Maritime and Coastguard Agency</p> <p>Liz Felton - Natural Resources Wales (Appointed representative)</p> <p>Nigel Glasgow – Environment Agency (Appointed representative)</p> <p>Josef Hanik – Wirral Council</p> <p>Trevor Jones – Fisheries Representative</p> <p>Lisa McLellan – Flintshire County Council</p> <p>Jim O’Toole – Port of Mostyn</p> <p>David Parker - Dee Estuary Conservation Group (Conservation representative) temporary Committee Chair</p> <p>Roy Sheriff - Inland Waterways Association (Recreation representative)</p> <p>Tom Woodall – Flintshire County Council</p>

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**Attendees present:** Dawn Beech - NRW Dee Conservancy Advisor  
Dewi Jones - NRW Legal Advisor  
Tom McNamara - BDB Pitmans Legal Advisor  
Stuart Thomas – NRW Marine Sustainable Mgt. Team Leader  
Andrea Winterton - NRW Marine Manager

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**Apologies:** Chris Hallam – Deputy Harbour Master  
Carol Paddison - Royal Yachting Association  
Graeme Proctor - Dee Conservancy Harbour Master  
Alisdair Smith - RWE Renewables UK (Commercial representative)  
Lyndsey Rawlinson – NRW (Appointed representative)

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**Secretariat:** Kath Roberts - NRW Environment Team Assistant

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## 1. Welcome

David Parker opened the second meeting of the Committee by welcoming everyone and inviting those in attendance to introduce themselves. David explained that NRW had requested that he step in as Chair for this meeting, in lieu of a Chair being formally appointed.

## 2. Minutes of last meeting (30/4/24)

Matters arising – members agreed that minutes of the previous meeting were a true reflection of the meeting. Note: Date of next meeting amended to 20/05/25.

Actions arising from the last meeting as follows:

**Action 001 – Closed** Tom McNamara: revisions to Committee Terms of Reference have been completed. Discussion about the Terms of Reference in item 3 of today's agenda.

**Action 002 – Open** Dawn Beech: members requested a map showing collective ownership and jurisdiction boundaries for the different organisations on the Committee. This is difficult due to the complex nature of land and riverbed ownership. Agreed with members that Dawn will collate a set of maps showing the areas of responsibility in the Dee Estuary that are covered (not owned) by the different organisations.

### 3. Terms of Reference

A formal request was put to members of the Committee to express their interests in taking up the role of Chair (duration 1-3 years). Whilst knowledge of the maritime sector is preferable, support will be provided to those with less experience in marine matters. Members invited to contact Dawn Beech to discuss expressions of interest.

Tom McNamara updated members on changes made to the Terms of Reference.

- Paragraphs 2.3.1 & 2.3.2 - updated to show the date committee members began their roles in the committee.
- Paragraph 2.8 – Chairperson appointment is set out for 3 years, but it was agreed that this could be changed.
- Paragraph 2.12 – added note that in the event of a disagreement, the Chair would be required to produce a written report laying out the majority and minority opinions, and to identify a way forward.

**Action 003 - Tom McNamara** Agreed with members that the following updates to the Terms of Reference would be made:

- Paragraph 2.15 change quorum to 8 when committee has 14 or 15 members.
- Paragraph 2.3 - remove names and keep appendix 2, which provides an up to date record of current membership.
- Paragraph 2.16 - Agenda items not to be published until they have been agreed by members. Agenda items can also be raised on the day of the meeting.

**Members agreed to sign off of Terms of Reference, subject to above amendments.**

### 4. Harbour Operation, management & regulation

**Introduction to the Dee Conservancy** – Presentation provided by Dawn Beech. Accompanying Power Point presentation shared with members, and is available on request from dawn.beech@naturalresourceswales.gov.uk.

**Dee Cockle Regulating Order** – Presentation and update provided by Stuart Thomas. Accompanying Power Point presentation shared with members, and is available on request from dawn.beech@naturalresourceswales.gov.uk.

In summary the current Dee Cockle Regulating Order ends 2028. Options are being explored with North Western Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority regarding cross border arrangements for future regulation of the Dee cockle fishery. Discussions are underway with the Welsh Government and Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.

Jim O'Toole raised a query with regards to cockling activities and public liabilities for land owners in the Dee Estuary.

Roy Sheriff asked that sailing clubs are included as consultees on the new cockle order.

Tom Woodall raised the possibility of including management controls in the new Order, regarding the landing of cockles onshore. This would enable landowners and NRW to manage risk, liability and costs.

Queries recorded by Stuart Thomas for consideration.

**Dee Conservancy Harbour Master (DCHM) updates** on regulation of navigation activities within the Dee Conservancy:

Routine weekly checks on all Aids to Navigation (AtoN) are conducted by the Dee Conservancy Marine Engineer contractor to ensure operational efficiency, as well as 3 monthly afloat inspections of all AtoN on the estuary by the DCHM.

The General Lighthouse Authority (GLA) annual 2024 inspection by Trinity House was completed 18th September with all AtoN reported in good and efficient order.

As of 1st October, the 3-year rolling average for Conservancy AtoN availability was 99.89%, which remains well within the IALA standard of 97%.

Shotton Mill/Terra Marique Shipments were successfully completed in August, where the specialist heavy lift vessel Terra Marique delivered 6 boilers, in two trips up the river, from the Port of Mostyn to Shotton Paper Mill. The project required a significant level of liaison between Shotton Mill's contractors and local operators, including the Port of Mostyn, Pilots, and the Harbour Masters for the Dee Conservancy and the Port of Mostyn.

Annual audit of the Dee Conservancy Marine safety Management Plan (MSMS), in accordance with requirements Port Marine Safety Code, completed in July 2024. The audit reviewed all sections of the MSMS, and determined that a 95.6% compliance score has been achieved in 2024 (97.25% in 2023). All audit deficiencies have been closed out.

**Illegal Yacht Moorings** - Two vessels on non-approved moorings identified between Llanerch y Mor and Mostyn by the DCHM. Owners of the 20ft motor yacht 'Coel Na Mara' have come forward, and have been advised under formal notice to remove the boat and mooring. Boat now moved to a berth at Llanerch Y Mor. The 2nd smaller vessel is under notice to remove the illegal mooring. DCHM will remove if it remains beyond that date.

## 5. Incidents & Near Misses

**Yacht 'Takapu' wrecked, West Kirby (Aug 24)** - A minor incident in itself, the yacht moored at West Kirby Sailing Club (WKSC) became adrift and broke up on the beach south of the marine lake. The response and cooperation from WKSC, who mobilised and removed the wreck over the next low water, ensure that no pollution or debris remained. A good positive example of cooperation with local users.

**RWE Crew Transfer Vessel Grounding, Mostyn Channel (Sep 24)** - A slow speed incident, with no injuries or damage. Good cooperation between authorities, vessel owners and operators ensured lessons were learnt and appropriate Maritime Accident Investigation Branch (MAIB) reports filed. DCHM issued a notice to mariners regarding safe lookout and safe speed in narrow channels.

RNLI rescues 20th October - The bad weather and large spring tides of 20th October resulted in 4 incident alerts from Holyhead Coast Guard:

- i) Small yacht 'The Promise' with two crew became disabled and rescued by Flint RNLI off Llanerch Y Mor. Casualties recovered. Vessel drifted seaward and was not seen again, despite efforts to identify and recover.

This incident prompted a discussion about the increasing incidence of vessels becoming adrift following RNLI rescues of people on stricken vessels. Jayne Eade, MCA stated that RNLI decisions not to recover some vessels to shore are driven by risk assessments and safety of the crew, rather than a change in RNLI policy.

- ii) West Kirby RNLI rescue of two separate walking groups cut off by tide at Hilbre.
- iii) Flint RNLI rescue of a stranded fisherman (wading) cut off by the tide near the Connah's Quay ski club slipway.

Tom Woodall asked that Flintshire County Council is informed of RNLI rescues/incidents at or near to assets owned by local authorities. The DCHM and Dee Conservancy Advisor will consider this in future communications regarding RNLI rescues.

## 6. Harbour Maintenance & Improvement

Airbus Midway Berth update – Stuart Thomas told the Committee that Airbus wish to surrender their lease with NRW on the Midway Berth, a mooring structure next to the Tata Steel site. Discussions are ongoing with regard to the future of the berth. Andrea Winterton asked for any feedback from members on this matter.

Jim O'Toole commented that the North Wales Ambition Board approached him 12 years ago to request a design for a new berth to replace the old Corus Jetty.

**Action 004 - Jim O'Toole** to share this design and presentation with Andrea.

Dee Derelict boats – agreed to move this item to the agenda for next meeting.

## 7. Member Comments

Lisa McLellan, Flintshire County Council – raised a question regarding use of land around Flint Point by the Flint Gun Club, and land management measures that might be required to make safe areas of erosion, including overhanging areas, on the banks of the estuary. Dawn and Lisa to discuss this outside of the Committee meeting.

Roy Sherrif, representative for recreational users of the estuary, stated that Dee Sailing Club activities have had to move from Heswall due to Spartina growth reducing water depth in gullies. Growth of Spartina is now spreading across to Thursaston, and if not dealt with activities will cease here also. Josef Hanik, Wirral Council, is aware of this and is looking at options regarding Spartina at Thursaston.

Josef and Roy to discuss the impact of the Spartina growth on the sailing club, as well as possible solutions outside the Committee meeting.

Roy also raised concerns about the Mersey Barrage and its potential impact on the morphology of the Dee Estuary. David and other members reassured Roy that whilst the proposed development is in its early scoping stage statutory consultees have been provided with information concerning a wide range of environmental impacts to assess. Wider consultation will happen in 2025.

Jim O'Toole, Director of the Port of Mostyn, reported that the Port of Mostyn is waiting for the final decision on the Marine Licence application for the Port Expansion project. This will provide a larger berth to allow for heavier loads required by current and future off shore energy developments.

Jim also informed the Committee that he has acquired the 47 acre Warwick Chemicals site, next door to the Port of Mostyn. Plans for the site include a commercial/enterprise hub to support the offshore energy operations in Liverpool Bay.

Josef Hanik, Wirral Council, highlighted that the area above the Thurstaston Slipway has now been blocked to stop parking and ensure that permit holders and emergency vehicles have access to the foreshore. Enforcement is now in place and a parking ticket may be issued.

Josef also highlighted work of the Wirral Coastal Defence Team to address erosion into the old Dawpool landfill at Thurstaston, which is being carried out in conjunction with Sefton Council.

**Action 005 - Josef Hanik** to provide Sefton Council contact details to Nigel Glasgow.

Josef informed the Committee that the seasonal Hilbre marker buoys have now been permanently moved to their winter position. This has been approved by the DCHM and the General Lighthouse Authority Trinity House.

Josef commented that the Wirral Water Sports Centre at West Kirby have been requested to restart their small passenger boat services in the Dee Estuary around Hilbre. Dawn highlighted that early discussions with the Dee Conservancy Harbour Master about a Small Passenger Boat Licence for the passenger boat activities would be welcome, as a licence will be required prior to commencement of services.

Anthony Bestwick, Wirral Council, highlighted that he is involved in project work to remove abandoned boats on the Heswall foreshore by April 2025. Anthony also advised that Wirral Council Parks and Countryside Managers and Senior Officers had recently undertaken the Maritime and Coastguard Agency Beach Supervisors Course so they could assist with shoreline clean-up operations.

Andrew Challinor, Cheshire West & Chester Council, commented on recent safety data review, which has led to training campaigns with Swiftwater on flood rescue and working near water safety skills.

**Action 006 - Andrew Challinor** to prepare an introduction to Cheshire West and Chester City Council Harbour Authority duties on the River Dee, for the next Committee meeting.

Kathleen Bealby, Natural England, referenced the Hynet North West Environmental Impact Assessment scoping report. Discussion regarding this case during which it was stated that all consultation documents will be made available on Planning Inspectorate website. Andrea Winterton highlighted that NRW's advisory service has been consulted. Nigel Glasgow, Environment Agency, also stated that he is the lead contact in the EA for the HyNet North West Project.

## **8 Action Confirmation**

Actions confirmed.

## **9. AOB**

Agenda items for next meeting.

Standard items to be included as well as an agenda item covering 'Derelict boat removal work on the English and Welsh sides of the Dee Estuary', and 'An introduction to the Harbour Authority duties of Cheshire West and Chester Council on the Dee Estuary'.

## **10. Next Meeting(s)**

20 May 2025

25 November 2025

## **11. Closing remarks**

David thanked members for attending and sharing information and thanked those that delivered updates and presentations.