

**Dart Harbour Communities Group  
Minutes of Meeting held 7 PM Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> November 2025 in Dartmouth  
Guild Hall**

**Present:**

Mike Pearey Chair (**MP**)  
Paul Britten Harbourmaster (**HM**)  
John Milsom. Dart Harbour Board Chair (**DHBC**)  
David Shorten. EA Dart Catchment Officer (**DS**)  
Doug Twigg. Dartmouth & Kingswear Society (**DT**)  
Nigel Mortimer. South Devon National Landscapes (**SDNL**) Officer (**NM**)  
Dave Hawkes: Dittisham (**DH**)  
Len Grant: Stoke Gabriel (**LG**)  
Dawn Shepherd: Dartmouth (**DS(D)**)  
Colin Thompson: Cornworthy (**CT**)  
Darren Peters: Totnes TC. (**DP**)  
Roz Beasle: Clerk KW (**RB**)  
Sharon Whelon DC KW (**SW**)  
Rose Wallace: Galpton (**RW**)  
Teresa Hembury: Galpton (**TH**)

Sue Pudduck Sec (**SP**)

**Apologies**

Nik Green Dittisham (**NG**)  
Pam Thompson: Ashprington (**PT**)  
Tom King: Totnes and District Society (**TK**)  
John Cummings Totnes TC: (**JC**)  
Julian Distin (JD)

Minutes from meeting held 7pm on Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> March 2025 were agreed.

**Matters arising**

Port Master Plan Report back, included in meeting Agenda

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF ACTIONS**

**1. Introductions. And 2. Opening Statements from MP (Chair)**

Mike welcomed everyone to the meeting, especially new attendees. He explained that, as part of our communication effort, we distribute various campaigning emails and leaflets to everyone e.g. from groups like Friends of the Dart, Tree wardens, or on SW water quality. He went on to talk about the plans to improve the protection for trees. There is a SHDC-led campaign for Registering Ancient, Veteran or Significant landscape trees (actioned by Tree Wardens, but anyone can contribute) This effort is spawned from recent

events such as “Sycamore Gap” and the damage to an ancient oak in a NE London Pub car park. The aim is to significantly increase the recording of Ancient, Veteran and significant Landscape trees. Such trees should be recorded on the **Woodland Trust’s Ancient Tree Inventory (ATI)**, for which anyone can sign up free of charge. The Woodland Trust will send tree specialists to inspect each tree on the inventory to confirm status / type. This process will help ensure improved awareness if these trees are involved in any planning process.

MP also passed around copies of a new guide for the management of hedgerows, titled “**Healthy Hedgerows on your land**”. This offers an easy-to-follow pictorial guide to hedge condition, and the recommended management steps to take to bring the hedge back into good condition. It is available from SHDC Trees Officer, or via your Tree Warden, or using the on-line version, attached to these Minutes.

### 3. Reports from Members

#### 3a. HM

**Harbourmaster** The HM updated on developments with the **Port Master Plan**. He had held four consultation meetings, two on each side of the river, from which he had collated over 200 suggestions / proposals, then colour coded them by priority and added them to the baseline Harbour map. The ones that couldn’t be taken forward are in red, partially taken forward in yellow, but the vast majority could be incorporated. The initial consultation is closed but people can still add their ideas by ringing or emailing the Harbour Office. The next stage will be drafting the plan and then undertaking another round of consultation events (to different parishes than the first consultation). HM’s aim is to have the final draft ready in February 2026.

**Safety.** The Port Marine Safety Code has been changed. Dart Harbour were audited in a national checklist and have found to be compliant. This is five months earlier than the deadline.

The new system impacts on marine facilities as well as the harbour. Any berth rented out for profit will have to follow the code; this will include (for example) a cottage with a mooring. Small commercial vessels will now also have to comply with the code. HM has created a code for the Dart for small boats which don’t go to sea and it has already raised interest from 50 responders. Speeding continues to be a problem with speeders hard to catch. However, there has been some success and recently somebody was caught on CCTV doing 28 kn at Noss, in the dark without lights. The Harbour published the offence and the offender’s mooring was removed. There will be a prosecution but they take time and require substantial evidence.

Dart Harbour recently helped the police helped the police with a fatality, identified as homeless person living on a boat. There is concern about people living on boats and the **HM** is working on a policy to help identify and support such individuals. This policy should be published by the end of the year. It will reinforce the message that river users should always take care when on the river, including wearing appropriate safety equipment and clothing. Dartmouth Counsellor, **DS(D)**, raised concerns about people at risk living on

the river. HM said that any matters of concern should be reported to him at the moment. Dart Harbour can offer pontoons with access to land or electricity, but there is very limited availability of both. Carbon Monoxide poisoning is a particular danger.

The Port Safety Committee has been updated. It consists of HM's team, and representative of both the Leisure Users and the Commercial Users Groups.

Britannia Royal Naval College (BRNC) will have a pontoon installed in the next couple of weeks to allow the college to use their waterside training facilities again. "Pelican" is now based in Dartmouth and will be used as a training vessel by the RN.

Commercially, this year has been a good summer with a satisfactory number of visitors to the Harbour. The river has been marketed as a whole experience, including transport and places to stay and to eat. The 10 K swim was cancelled because of the water quality.

**Kingswear Rep RB** reported that Lighthouse beach appears to be working well. People are using the path and it is no longer being deliberately blocked. The DHCG members thanked HM for his help in resolving this long running issue.

### **Nigel Mortimer. SDNL**

Nigel is working on a review of the Estuary plan. It includes the areas of water quality, disturbance, bio security, and Estuary literacy. It is felt that if people understand the sea they will be better able to protect it. If there is an issue, NL will advise clubs how to deal with it

Human impact is relatively low but the need for education is obvious. The Estuary Forums will run online for each Estuary.

On the 3/12/25 he will produce the Estuary Catchment Plan which covers the management of water that flows into the estuaries.

Newly appointed **David Shorten, Dart Catchment Officer**, is working on various projects including Long Marsh Saltmarsh and the creation of a boardwalk from Stoke Gabriel to Totnes. (Based on bundles of rushes tied together). The marshes need maintenance and help to restore them. **EA** are looking for a final site for seagrass restoration. There is a plan to get floating grass at Kingsbridge, clean it and bring it to the Dart. It is planned that there will be more trees planted on the edge of estuaries.

### **River trip**

**LG**, Stoke Gabriel, spoke about the river trip in the summer and said how successful it had been for sharing information about the river. Everybody on the trip agreed that they had come away with a much better understanding of how the river is managed and the wide range of issues in which DH are involved. There was enthusiastic approval for the use of the electric boat, and its capabilities.

LG spoke about the work at Stoke Gabriel and about how stone has been left over on the beach from the Boat Club build. Will it be removed? The HM assured him that when everything was completed the beach would be restored. He suggested that once the new pontoon is installed, then the

temporary pontoon could go to Duncannon Point to serve as an opportunity to restore the old ferry route from Ashprington to Stoke Gabriel. Dart Harbour would support this.

**David Shorten (DS)**, the new Catchment Co-ordinator at the Environment Agency, was welcomed to the Group. He said that there was a lot of change going on particularly around holding water companies to account. Standard discharges are allowed with permits but there are 30 legal cases going to court where the permits have been exceeded. Southwest Water have delivered grant funding for environmental projects, and there should be £2 million available. This will help the Southwest Nature Recovery fund. In the South Devon catchment partnership there is a lot happening in the Dart. Results of the Bathing Waters survey will be available at the end of November.

**LG** raised the question of sludge at both Stoke Gabriel and at Harberton Ford . There is a telephone number **the Environment Agency's incident hotline 0800 80 70 60**. where you can report on environmental incidents. Examples are collapsed or badly damaged river banks, damage or danger to the natural environment, and marine mortality.

River quality is better than it has been for a long time. There are lots of test sites on the Dart. **LG** met the SWW team testing the water in the Mill Pool for 6 hours. It was part of a project that had been running for several weeks. They were also testing the water in the river for 12hours at a time. There was a spike in unsatisfactory water on the 28th of August which happened immediately after a very heavy downfall and a high run-off from the fields. Similarly, problems at Totnes can be caused because of incidences at Buckfastleigh. Good water testing is taking place and the Southwest Water Authority will test the Mill Pool and will put up signs advising against bathing if water quality is poor.

**LG** thank the **HM** for labelling the rubbish skip, "Yacht Waste only."

The group expressed their thanks and appreciation for the work that **Julian Distin** has done during his time on the Board.. His knowledge and input into the work of Dart Harbour and disseminating information out to all river users has been exceptional and we will miss his expertise.

The Chairman thanked Dawn Shepherd for arranging Dartmouth Guild Hall as the meeting venue, laying out the room and for supplying excellent refreshments!

The next meeting is provisionally on March 12 2026, venue to be confirmed.

Attached: "South Hams **Healthy on your land**" leaflet for web.pdf

