

**MALDON HARBOUR
IMPROVEMENT COMMISSIONERS**

**ANNUAL REPORT
2012/13**

13 June 2013

INTRODUCTION

Trust Ports such as Maldon are required to produce accurate and pertinent reports for stakeholders and the public at large on certain aspects of their activities (Modernising Trust Ports – Second Edition – Department for Transport 2009).

Reports should be produced alongside the annual accounts and be provided to public bodies, the local library, the media and made available to the public.

There is some exemption, i.e. on the detailed aspects, for small Trust Ports like Maldon, whilst still ensuring that information on the Port's operations and future plans, progress against targets (if any), and their continuing compliance and improvement is included.

This Report covers the period June 2012 to May 2013, and in accordance with Department for Transport guidance, was presented to the Commissioners with the Annual Accounts for 2012/13 at their Annual Meeting on 13 June 2013.

1 2012/13

(i) Constitution

In October 2012, Commissioners appointed a new Commissioner to ensure the full complement of twelve Commissioners was in place. This followed the resignation of the Treasurer in June 2012. One of the existing Commissioners was appointed as Treasurer.

(ii) Port Marine Safety Code

The new Port Marine Safety Code was published in March 2013 in accordance with the Department for Transport's guidance.

(iii) Liaison with Maldon District Council

Commissioners acknowledge the necessity to maintain close working arrangements with the local authority. A Member of Maldon District Council is nominated and is appointed as a Commissioner. In addition to regular liaison between the Clerk and the River Bailiff and other Council staff, a formal liaison meeting was held in January 2013 at which issues such as the redevelopment of Sadd's Wharf, promotion of the river and the facilities at Hythe Quay, river water quality, DEFRA's proposals for a new Marine Conservation Zone covering the Blackwater Estuary and safe navigation on the river were discussed.

(iv) 4th Annual Public Meeting

It is a requirement for Trust Ports to hold annual meetings with stakeholders. The fourth Annual Public Meeting was held on 11 April 2013 and was attended by 17 people representing several public and other bodies and eight Commissioners.

The meeting was again regarded as successful and covered a full range of river related issues and there is a continued commitment on the part of the Commissioners to ensure that future meetings are held as required.

(v) 4th River Safety Meeting

The 4th River Safety Meeting, again jointly organised in conjunction with the Maldon Barge Operators' Group, was held on 11 March 2013. The meeting was hosted by the Blackwater Sailing Club and chaired by an Officer of Maldon District Council and despite poor weather was attended by 26 people representing a range of stakeholders including the local authority, the Marine Coastguard Agency, Essex Marine Police and representatives of several local sailing clubs. Again, the meeting was felt to have been very useful.

(vi) Consultation Issues

Commissioners are consulted on a range of issues with riverside implications such as planning applications, licensing applications, and various other issues as they arise on which comments are sought by various bodies. Commissioners have established the criteria by which these issues are considered to ensure only riverside interests affecting the role of the Commissioners are taken into account.

In 2012/13, Commissioners were consulted on several planning applications, most notably the Sadd's Wharf development, DEFRA's proposals for new Marine Conservation Zones, and the Marine Management Organisations' amended licensing proposals.

(vii) Finance

The Annual Accounts for 2012/13 showed an increase in the balances of approximately £1,150 to just under £15,000, mainly due to an increase in dues and lower buoy maintenance costs and despite an increase in the Clerk's salary to reflect additional workload. The low buoy maintenance costs are due to the voluntary contribution made by some of the Commissioners. In recognition of this and the on-going economic situation, Commissioners again agreed a 10% discount on harbour dues for 2013/14, subject to prompt submission of Passenger Returns and prompt payment of invoices.

New procedures were also introduced to speed up the processes of issuing and payment of invoices.

During the year, several of the Commissioners undertook various duties on river issues totalling 208 hours.

(viii) Statutory Requirements

In July 2012, Commissioners approved and published a Scheme under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, a new requirement for ports and harbours.

(viii) Publication of Documents

In order to show more transparency of Commissioners' activities, a range of documents continued to be lodged on the website and in the Maldon Library and therefore available to the public. The documents lodged included Agendas and Minutes, Annual Accounts, the Register of Public Interests, Standing Orders, Financial Regulations, Commissioners' names and contact details for the Clerk, the Port Marine Safety Code, the approved Freedom of Information Scheme and various consultation documents as they arose.

The new website continues to be used to increase the transparency of the Commissioners' work.

(ix) Port Aids to Navigation Availability Reporting (PANAR)

The software for the above database, which relates to the recording and reporting (to Trinity House) of the local aids to navigation, was maintained during the year to show the availability of the eleven buoys (lit and unlit) the Commissioners maintain. The 'availability' details are recorded and reported as required on a quarterly basis to Trinity House.

Commissioners are set a target for Category 3 Aids to Navigation (into which category the aids fall) of 97% availability over a three year rolling period. For the year ending 31 March 2013, the availability was just under 100% which Trinity House have stated following its annual inspection meets its requirements.

The condition of the 11 buoys for which the Commissioners are responsible is assessed each year allowing Commissioners to plan ahead for financing replacement/repair/maintenance in a timely and cost effective manner.

(x) Determination of the Fairway

Three years ago it was agreed that it was necessary to determine the extent of the fairway in order to ensure its position was properly and accurately surveyed and plotted for the benefit of all river users.

The work commenced by a small group of Commissioners undertaking the necessary survey work required to determine the fairway and to mark its extent was continued during the year.

(xi) Document Retention

During the year, the initial work of cataloguing many of the documents held was commenced with a view to offering them to the Essex Records Office.

(xii) Publicity

During the year, Commissioners considered the lack of material available to visitors to the town both in terms of navigating the river and the businesses, attractions etc. available in the riverside area. Initial work in preparing a leaflet and possible sponsorship to assist with the production costs was commenced.

2 FUTURE ISSUES AND PLANS IN 2013/14

In looking forward to 2013/14, Commissioners have identified the following issues as on-going and scheduled for completion during the year.

(i) Determination of the Fairway

The work of marking further lengths of the fairway will be continued and hopefully concluded during the year.

(ii) Consultation with Stakeholders

The important work of consulting with local stakeholders will be continued. This will include holding the next Annual Public Meeting and the Joint River Safety Meeting, both in early 2014, and continued annual liaison and ad hoc meetings with the local authority.

(iii) Publication of Information

Work to expand the new website will continue with further documentation being published as and when it becomes available (as well as being made available in the local Library).

(iv) Document Recording and Preservation

During the year, the work cataloguing many of the documents held, mainly of historical interest, will be concluded and offered to the Essex Records Office for retention.

(v) Finance

Further discussion will be held with the local authority on the Commissioners' financial situation, particularly with regard to raising income through harbour dues and other sources.

(vi) Publicity

Work to progress the production of a leaflet aimed at assisting those visiting the town by river and publicising the businesses and attractions available in the riverside area will be continued and hopefully concluded during the year.

NANCY HARRISSON

CHAIRMAN

MALDON HARBOUR IMPROVEMENT COMMISSIONERS