

**Meeting:** Harbour Committee  
Cabinet  
Council

**Dates:** 16th September 2021

**Wards Affected:** All Wards

**Report Title:** Torquay Town Dock Infrastructure Improvements

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## **1. Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 This report provides Members with the opportunity to consider the approval of a capital spend not exceeding £1.2m required for Torquay harbour to carry out urgent & essential pontoon replacement and repair works to the Torquay Town Dock (see layout in Appendix 1). If approved the project works would commence in the winter of 2021/22.

## **2. Reason for Proposal and its benefits**

- 2.1 The current pontoons used for annual customer berthing on the Town Dock were installed in 2007 by Solent Marine Ltd. Some fourteen years later they are now exhibiting signs that they are coming to the end of their useful life. The piles are still in good condition but the steel work that make up the floating pontoon sections is corroded to an extent that they are starting to lose their structural integrity. We have recently had to replace two sections as they were becoming unsafe. The floats that support the pontoons have also deteriorated to an extent that several are starting to fail, and many have required temporary fixes to keep them serviceable. Although we have replaced two sections and carried out several patched repairs to a number of the floats, it is an expensive and labour-intensive solution and considered to be emergency maintenance to keep this berthing facility open. The preferred option is to replace all the floating pontoon sections for the entire Town Dock.
- 2.2 If the deterioration in usefulness is allowed to continue it would impact on the income from the sale of Town Dock berths. Although the current infrastructure is still useable it could take three years to completely replace all the pontoons and more serious deterioration is likely to occur over this timescale, so we need to

start this project as soon as possible to prevent having to close sections of the Town Dock and lose income.

- 2.3 New pontoons would also provide a fair justification for an increase in Town Dock charges above the standard inflationary increases once the works are completed.
  - 2.4 The proposal is to carry out an annual phased replacement of each leg of the existing pontoons. Each phase of the work would be carried out over a winter period (October to March) with the first phase being a repair and refurbishment to the existing wave-screen and the access bridge in the winter of 2021/22.
  - 2.5 Phase two would be the entire replacement of one of the three pontoon legs and associated fingers the following winter (2022/23), then a leg each winter until the works are completed. The Town Dock would need to remain operational and open to customers throughout the various phases of the project.
  - 2.6 On completion of this project in 2023/24 the following outcomes will have been achieved :-
    - Refurbished wave-screen to cure the issue with the connecting joints (requires dismantling and transporting off site for works to be completed). A temporary wave-screen will need to be installed during this phase.
    - Refurbishment of the access bridge to the Town Dock (a temporary access bridge from the ferry pontoon will need to be put in place while the main bridge is taken off site).
    - Replacement and fitting of new pontoons and berthing fingers for legs X, Y, Z (see Appendix 1) and the access pontoon from the legs to the bridge. All services (water & power) and service pillars to be taken off the old infrastructure and refitted to the new pontoons.
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### **3. Recommendation(s) / Proposed Decision**

#### Harbour Committee

- 3.1 That the Harbour Committee recommend to full Council that borrowing is approved for up to £1.2m for the Torquay Town Dock infrastructure improvements, as set out in this report, and that the Harbour budget will meet the additional borrowing costs, expected to be £115,500 per annum, from increased revenue, commencing in 2024/25.
- 3.2 That the Torquay Town Dock Infrastructure Improvements Project be added to the Council's Capital Programme.

#### Cabinet

- 3.3 That Cabinet recommend to full Council that borrowing is approved for up to £1.2m for the Torquay Town Dock infrastructure improvements, as set out in this report, and that the Harbour budget will meet the additional borrowing costs,

expected to be £115,500 per annum, from increased revenue, commencing in 2024/25.

- 3.4** That the Torquay Town Dock Infrastructure Improvements Project be added to the Council's Capital Programme.

Council

- 3.5** That, following recommendations from the Harbour Committee and Cabinet, the Council approve borrowing of up to £1.2m for the Torquay Town Dock infrastructure improvements, as set out in this report, and that the Harbour budget will meet the additional borrowing costs, expected to be £115,500 per annum, from increased revenue, commencing in 2024/25.
- 3.6** That, following recommendations from the Harbour Committee and Cabinet, the Council add the Torquay Town Dock Infrastructure Improvements Project to the Council's Capital Programme.

**Appendices**

Appendix 1: Torquay Town Dock Pontoon Layout

# Supporting Information

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Town Dock at Torquay harbour was installed in 2007 at a cost of £1.1m and was funded by prudential borrowing supported via the harbour revenue account. It was built to accommodate 175 berths for vessels ranging from 6 metres to 13 metres in length.
- 1.2 Income generated from this facility was £334,000 in 2020/21. It provides affordable berthing opportunities for local boat owners as well as supporting maritime events and accommodating visiting recreational craft. The dedicated visitor berthing ('V' – pontoon ~ marked as 'A' in the attached Appendix 1) is approximately 135 metres in length and provides safe berthing along with access to fresh water and electricity services. This area is exceptionally busy in the summer season and has an excellent record of visitor berthing from early April through to the end of October each year. Visiting vessels therefore generate a steady income in addition to the resident berth holders within the dock.
- 1.3 The Town Dock also has disabled access and is home to vessels owned by the Disabled Sailing Association, Torbay British Sub Aqua Club, and the Royal Torbay Yacht Club. The local Sea Scouts and Rowing Club also make use of the dock to berth their safety boats.
- 1.4 The design, construction and installation of the Town Dock pontoon system was completed by Solent Marine in 2007. The design comprises of a steel structure supported by a series of floats that have a plastic skin. The design characteristics of this float can be simplified as a large plastic container filled with polystyrene beads. The float is then injected from two filling ports with steam to fuse the beads together into one large solid block of polystyrene. Once the beads are fused together the ports are sealed to make a watertight unit. The filled floats are then fixed at each corner to the underside of the steel framed walkway or finger pontoon.
- 1.5 Experience gained in working with this product has shown that the design and methodology is not 100% effective in this location. The wave climate in this area of the outer harbour puts sufficient pressure on the floats to cause the plastic to split in the corners at the fixing points, which then allows water into the plastic casing. Once the casing starts to slowly fill with water the beads can be seen floating out of the cracked casing and the remaining void is replaced with more water. The additional weight of this fluid then enhances the problem as it flows around the inside of the casing until there can be a catastrophic failure of the float.
- 1.6 The area of the harbour where the Town Dock is located will sometimes experience excessive wave action, which also puts severe pressure on the steel frames of the walkway pontoons. As a consequence, the existing infrastructure suffers from occasional cracking to the steel, including the welded joints, and in extreme circumstances the bolts connecting the walkway units and finger pontoons can sometimes shear.

1.7 As a temporary measure the harbour staff have been modifying some of the damaged floats before recycling them back into the facility. The top of the floats are cut open so that the soaked polystyrene beads can be removed before the void is backfilled with expanding foam that is impervious to salt water. These works are completed by the harbour maintenance team. The floats changed so far have only been fitted to finger berths and to date no attempts have been made to replace floats on the visitor's area because the floats are still likely to crack due to the wave climate. Some of the main walkway sections also require attention where the buoyancy is deficient.

## 2. Options under consideration

2.1 No other options are under consideration.

## 3. Financial Opportunities and Implications

3.1 If we had to close parts or all of the Town Dock due to safety concerns with the existing infrastructure the loss of revenue and reputation will be severe. The annual income from the Town Dock is £334,000 and it is the centre piece of Torquay Harbour.

3.2 The replacement of the pontoons will give us the opportunity to increase some of the berthing finger lengths so that we can put larger vessel on dock, where appropriate and increase the overall income. The refurbishment would also provide a fair justification for an increase in Town Dock charges above the standard inflationary increases once the works are completed. Demand for this facility remains very high.

3.3 The life expectancy of the new installation will be better than that of the current infrastructure. This has been demonstrated by MDL who operate the marina adjacent to the Town Dock and who are just about to replace their pontoons after the initial install 30 years ago.

3.4 At the end of the Town Dock infrastructure improvement works, which will take two years and three winters to complete, there will remain a residual debt from the original loan in 2007 of £292k. The Director of Finance has agreed an accounting procedure via the General Fund to clear the asset balance and allow the Harbour account to make good the liability by way of an annual contribution over the life of the new borrowing.

3.5 The new debt of £1.2m will be repaid over 15 years commencing 2024/25 at a cost of £95k per annum, this cost to be met from the harbour revenue account. The total annual impact on the harbour revenue account will therefore be:

	<b>Annual Cost</b>
	<b>£</b>
New loan repayment, £1.2m over 15 years	96,000
Contribution to General Fund re: old debt, £292k over 15 years	19,500
Total cost	<u>115,500</u>

## 4. Legal Implications

- 4.1 We are currently at risk of some pontoons failing in bad weather which could lead to legal claims from owners of vessels who may get injured, or their vessels damaged because of failing or unsafe infrastructure.

## **5. Engagement and Consultation**

- 5.1 The TDA have been engaged to project manage this replacement and refurbishment work but due to procurement rules we are not yet able to engage with potential contractors who would carry out the works. We have however engaged with structural engineers and organisations such as the Yacht Harbours Association to establish current best practice and designs for floating infrastructure.

- 5.2 If the works are approved the Harbour staff will create a consultation and communication programme to inform existing customers of the project and how it will affect them. The aim is to keep the Town Dock open throughout the project.

## **6. Purchasing or Hiring of Goods and/or Services**

- 6.1 Not applicable.

## **7. Tackling Climate Change**

- 7.1 When considering the products and materials being used for this project the Council will consider all relevant opportunities to make a positive impact on the climate and to reduce carbon wherever possible.

## **8. Associated Risks**

- 8.1 If the capital work is not approved there is a very real risk that certain facilities will need to be closed due to the unacceptable health and safety risks that could occur.
- 8.2 Any pontoon closures will result in lost income and reputational damage.

## Equality Impacts

9.	Identify the potential positive and negative impacts on specific groups		
	Positive Impact	Negative Impact & Mitigating Actions	Neutral Impact
Older or younger people			There is no differential impact
People with caring Responsibilities			There is no differential impact
People with a disability			There is no differential impact
Women or men			There is no differential impact
People who are black or from a minority ethnic background (BME) <i>(Please note Gypsies / Roma are within this community)</i>			There is no differential impact
Religion or belief (including lack of belief)			There is no differential impact
People who are lesbian, gay or bisexual			There is no differential impact
People who are transgendered			There is no differential impact
People who are in a marriage or civil partnership			There is no differential impact
Women who are pregnant / on maternity leave			There is no differential impact

	Socio-economic impacts (Including impact on child poverty issues and deprivation)			There is no differential impact
	Public Health impacts (How will your proposal impact on the general health of the population of Torbay)			There is no differential impact
<b>10..</b>	<b>Cumulative Council Impact</b> (proposed changes elsewhere which might worsen the impacts identified above)	None		
<b>11.</b>	<b>Cumulative Community Impacts</b> (proposed changes within the wider community (inc the public sector) which might worsen the impacts identified above)	None		



# Appendix 1 – Torquay Town Dock Pontoon Layout

