

Marina / Yacht Mooring Project

1. Cllr D Blackburn has previously submitted a proposed resolution, appendix A to this report, urging that Berwick upon Tweed Town Council take leadership of a project to install pontoons on the quayside for the benefit of visiting yachts, our local businesses, and tourism generally.
2. The power to support an organization to provide a marina or yacht moorings would depend upon the construction of S.144(1)(a) of the Local Government Act 1972, which states,

(1)A local authority may (either alone or jointly with any other person or body)—

(a) encourage persons, by advertisement or otherwise, to visit their area for recreation, for health purposes, or to hold conferences, trade fairs and exhibitions in their area;

3. Council is invited to note that this would specifically limit any project to the provision of yacht mooring for visitors to Berwick, and that any change in the scope of the project would require a further decision by council.
4. Council is also invited to note that the sum being requested by Cllr Blackburn is to determine the viability of the project, and that a decision that the project is not viable will not lead to the return of the monies expended. Neither, at this stage, is the likely ownership of the yacht moorings clear, and funding at this stage does not appear to imply that BTC will see any return on this expenditure; for this reason members are advised that this cannot be described as an investment in the traditional sense of expenditure on which a return might be expected.

Recommendations

5. It is therefore proposed that council decide whether to adopt Cllr Blackburn's resolution in Appendix A, and
6. That council decide whether to resolve to provide, from existing reserves, the sum of no more than £15,000 to enable scoping reports to be prepared that will enable council to decide whether it wishes to proceed further with the project

7.

Appendix A

RESOLUTION

That Berwick Town Council take leadership and ownership of a new riverside project, that has the support of the Berwick Community Trust, the Berwick Chamber of Trade, the Harbour Commission and our local M.P., to install pontoons on the quayside for the benefit of visiting yachts, our local businesses, and tourism generally. The target for project completion is 2018.

AIM

To provide for the relatively rapid delivery of a low-cost alternative to a marina project, comprising a quayside berthing facility for upward of 12 visiting tourist yachts with support facilities. The main, and over-riding aim, is regeneration and growth of the underutilised tourism industry in Berwick.

BENEFITS

Regeneration of the quayside; this will demonstrate, to potential investors and the townspeople, the towns' commitment to developing its valuable tourism industry.

The provision of a berthing facility for the 'high-end' tourism market will attract big spenders and also other visitors to the town that expect to see vibrant river and quayside activity.

The rejuvenation of the quayside will make it an attractive and inviting place to visit and to invest in. It will provide additional income for existing businesses and additional jobs.

Successful completion of the project will represent just one component of a wider and greater regeneration of the quayside in the area adjacent The Chandlery.

It will complement other plans for the commercial growth of the harbour, berthing for tourists from visiting Passenger Cruise Liners, and riverside developments extending from Spittal, along Dock Road and across the bridges through to the town centre.

It will act as a springboard for the creation of new businesses that support tourism, and for the overall regeneration of a town that was once described as 'the Alexandra of the North'.

News that Berwick is an exciting, vibrant and welcoming place to visit will be extended across the waters to the continent, thus making the pontoon project a useful permanent marketing and advertising tool.

PROVISION

A berthing facility for 12-20 visiting ocean-going yachts including the usual ancillary facilities, eg water, electricity, security. The typical yacht will range in size from 8m – 14m, the commonest will be of around 11 metres in length.

RESEARCH HISTORY

In the Summer of 2015 several experienced ocean-going yachtsman living in the Berwick area kindly agreed to join a think tank to consider speedy delivery of a realistic low cost facility for visiting yachters from British and Continental shores.

The groups founding members first considered an expensive and ambitious plan, contained in a 2007 report, to construct a 100-200 yacht marina on the river at a cost (then) of £15-£25 million pounds. It was agreed that there would be inadequate demand for such a facility and, particularly given the current economic climate and likely increased cost, the plan was a non-starter. It was surplus to any level of demand that the yachters, end-users, could possibly envisage. Amble, already provides marina facilities for overwintering yachts.

The group considered 'the market' and defined it as up to 20 visiting yachts at any one time seeking to take on provisions, eat out and sight-see. These tourists would be expected to stay for one to two nights before journeying to the Caledonian Canal and the Hebridean waters on the west coast of Scotland. Many of these visitors would be from the continent.

The season could be expected to last over a 6 month maximum period peaking in July and August, very much in line with established and recognised tourism patterns.

ECONOMIC CASE

At present the economic contribution from recreational boaters is largely underestimated by policy makers and thus impacts of potential restrictions on boating activity are not fully understood. In 2012 the Total Economic Contribution for the UK marine leisure industry was £2.31 billion excluding the export and super-yacht sector.

The benefits of providing pontoon berthing facilities for visiting yachts is being increasingly recognised around our coastline with hundreds of locations around the coastline of Scotland and outlying islands. Most recently facilities have been provided by Ross County Council on the River Tay.

Research is to be undertaken during this winter to substantiate, or otherwise support, the common sense conclusion that Berwick Upon Tweed, a tourist town with a substantial tourism potential that has been seriously underutilised, would benefit from the provision of berthing facilities for wealthy visiting tourists.

The return on investment, specific to the project, would not justify the overall precautionary estimate of £400,000 needed for the two stage development, this is understood and acknowledged, but, income from £30 per night stays over the 'season' will likely cover operational costs. The key to recognising the important benefits of the pontoon provision is understanding the wider and long term benefits to the economy. The pontoons are expected to have a 30 year life.

Employment opportunities will arise as a result of a need to employ someone to collect fees and provide appropriate service, guidance and advise to yachting guests.

Close and detailed examination of the economic case is required but is unlikely to produce any detailed statistical proof, but it will provide some guidance. With this mind it is necessary to contact owners / councils with established pontoon facilities in order to frame a solid argument.

FINANCIAL RESOURCES

It is envisaged that local businesses will assist in providing shower, changing and washing facilities and metered connection to water and electricity supply. Interest in this regard has been expressed and this 'private investment' is indicative of the positive response received from businesses.

The MOTT (Mouth of the Tweed) organisation see significant benefits to their annual 'market on the quay' that is already expected to be extended to a 'seasonal monthly'.

The Berwick Chamber of Trade and the Community Trust are involved in this project and recognise the economic benefits to the economy of Berwick tourist industry.

Interest has been expressed in further development and private investment in land on the quayside. There is a sound expectation that private investment will supplement a public funding initiative.

The proverbial 'chicken and egg' needs attention and the public sector hold the key in this regard. The enthusiasm and initiative for this proposal should be embraced by BTC, and the benefits to the tourist industry in the town will flow.

OUTSTANDING

Marine Survey work; to finally confirm feasibility and scope of project.

Permissions; NCC, Crown Agents, MMO and Natural England.

Tendering; At least two specialist companies.

Financing; Public and Private.

It is suggested that a BTC committee dedicated to following up the outstanding issues represents the appropriate way forward.

Dave