

# Ports of Minehead and Watchet

Report of Safety of Navigation within the Watchet  
Port area.

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## **1. Introduction**

### **1.1 Investigation into Safety of Navigation in Watchet Harbour outer area.**

As Harbour Master of the Watchet and Minehead harbours, I was asked to carry out a safety assessment and report of the current mud and silt situation at Watchet harbour. Due to concerns raised to the Taunton Deane Borough Council and West Somerset Council by the Watchet Boat Owners Association. The Investigation concentrates on the mud and silt situation and its effect on vessel safety within the harbour area.

### **1.2 Initial survey**

Reports of safety related incidents to the council were requested to assess any dangers that have already been evident or occurred from the mud within the port area. This was followed by a visual assessment of the area on the 26<sup>th</sup> February 2019 looking specifically at the outer harbour area and the entrance to the Marina and the Marina itself.

### **1.3 Other Considerations**

A request was made to ask for specific safety concerns from the boat users association so that these observations can be suitably assessed.

## **2. Incident reports**

### **2.1 Incident Reports from Watchet Boat Owners Association to the Harbour Master.**

No incident reports regarding the safety of the outer harbour or marina have been sent to either the previous or the current Harbour master of Watchet and Minehead as regards the mud within the harbour area.

### **2.2 Incident Reports from Watchet Boat Owners Association to the Taunton Deane Borough Council and West Somerset Council**

No incident reports regarding the safety of the outer harbour or marina have been sent to the Taunton and Deane Borough Council and West Somerset council.

### **2.3 Actions following incident reports**

No actions following incident reports have taken place due to no reports filed.

### 3. Visual Survey of the harbour

#### 3.1 Tidal Considerations

The visual survey looked at the safe operation of the harbour with regards the mud collection within the outer harbour and marina area. It was seen that at a High Tide of 9.8m at 11:04 that the tide gauge at the marina was showing 5.5m. The tides were close to neaps on the 26<sup>th</sup> February and therefore the tidal level would go higher than this one as recorded. The highest tides in February were on the 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup>, which were predicted at 11.9m. A 11.9m tide would register 7.6m within the Marina with slightly less than prediction with an Easterly wind and would be further above prediction with a Westerly wind.

##### 3.1.1 Water depth in the Marina at High Tide.



#### 3.2 Draughts of craft using the Harbour

The largest draughts of the vessels utilising the harbour as seen from the larger sail yachts currently sitting on the dock-side on the East wall are in the region of 2.5m. The larger motor craft using the

marina have draughts in the region of 2.2 -2.5m. The average craft using the marina have maximum draughts of around 1.6m. This therefore would be a range of draughts from 1.6 to 2.5m for the majority of boats in the marina. Other smaller draught boats also utilise the marina.

3.2.1 Average sized Watchet Marina vessel leaving the harbour at 09.34 with the tide at 8.3m, showing 4m on the Marina Tide Gauge. Having safely navigated through the marina and outer harbour.



### 3.3 Mud situation within the Marina and Outer Harbour and available water.

The mud surrounds the tide gauge at 1.75m

#### 3.3.1 Level of the marina basin at which the mud has collected.



Anything above 1.75m on the gauge is therefore water. Taking 1.75m from this reading gives the boat operator the available water. A competent boat operator should therefore be able to assess the water needed for their craft. Bearing in mind that the outer harbour mud is lower than the mud in the marina a vessel correctly gauging the water level will be able to leave the marina safely and therefore navigate safely through the outer harbour.

3.3.2 Mud in the Outer Harbour is lower than the Marina.



#### **4 Conclusion**

Although the mud situation could be improved for social and commercial reasons, there is no reason to suggest that the current mud situation is a safety risk. The outer harbour refuge dries out regardless of the mud level and therefore any vessel seeking refuge would have to moor the craft such that the keel will touch the bottom.

All the vessels in the marina lay on the mud at low tide therefore going aground is no different. It would possibly mean that the boat occupants may have to wait for the next tide, but they would not be in any significant danger. Any competent boat operator would be aware of the tidal state and make sure they are back alongside with sufficient water.

Further the mud is currently higher in the marina than the outer harbour as seen in 3.3.2, therefore any vessel navigating the marina should safely navigate the through the outer harbour.