

Minutes

Title of meeting: Dee Conservancy Consultative Committee Meeting (No.4)

Location: NRW Buckley Office and online (MS Teams)

Date of meeting: 25/11/25 10:00 - 1200hrs

Members present:

- Andy Judd (Environment Agency) - Appointed Representative
- Daniel James – RWE Offshore Energy (North Hoyle)
- Daniel Price – RWE Offshore Energy (Gwynt y Mor)
- David Parker (Dee Estuary Conservation Group) – Conservation Rep.
- Jim O’Toole – Port of Mostyn
- Kathleen Bealby – Natural England
- Neil Garnett – Wirral Council
- Peter Willett – Cheshire West & Chester City Council
- Roy Sheriff (Inland Waterways Association) – Recreation Rep.
- Sarah Bailey (West Cheshire & North Wales Chamber of Commerce) - Commercial Rep.
- Simon Bennett – Maritime and Coastguard Agency
- Tom Woodall – Flintshire County Council
- Trevor Jones – Fisheries Representative

Attendees present:

- Andrea Winterton – NRW Marine Manager
- Dawn Beech - NRW Senior Advisor Dee Conservancy
- Rob Jackson – Dee Conservancy Harbour Master
- Sian Hughes – NRW Senior Advisor Marine Services

Apologies:

- Alistair Smith – RWE Offshore Energy
- Andrew Challinor - Cheshire West & Chester City Council
- Jayne Ede – Maritime and Coastguard Agency
- Josef Hanik – Wirral Council
- Lisa McLellan – Flintshire County Council
- Stuart Thomas – NRW Marine Sustainable Mgt. Team Leader

Secretariat: Kath Roberts - NRW Environment Team Assistant

1. Welcome

Andrea Winterton opened the meeting of the Committee by welcoming everyone and asking those in attendance to introduce themselves. Members were invited to nominate a Chair for the meeting. As no one came forward Andrea explained that she would take the Chair role for this meeting, in lieu of a Chair being appointed from the Committee members for the next meeting.

2. Minutes of last meeting (20/05/25)

Actions arising from the last meeting as follows:

Action 6 – Open. Andrew Challinor (apologies sent) will present Cheshire West & Chester navigation jurisdiction and duties to members at the next Committee meeting 19/05/26.

Matters arising – Members agreed that the minutes of the previous meeting were a true reflection of the meeting.

Comment from Roy Sheriff regarding Agenda item No.4 Incidents & Near Misses - Roy highlighted that sailing clubs deal with boats that have broken free of moorings that they are responsible for. Therefore, if any boats are seen to be adrift, local clubs can be contacted and they will look to retrieve them. Club secretaries have contact information.

3. Harbour Operation, management & regulation

Duty Holder Report – Dawn Beech, NRW

Dawn highlighted one of the ways in which the performance of the Dee Conservancy Harbour Authority is managed and assessed in line with the Marine Safety Plan for marine operations in the Dee Conservancy and the Mostyn Operational Area.

- The Department of Transport publish a compliance code for ports and harbours called the [Port Marine and Facilities Safety Code 2025](#).
- NRW has developed the Dee Conservancy Marine Safety Management (DCMSM) Plan to meet these requirements.
- In line with the Code, harbour authorities must appoint a Duty Holder who has overall responsibility for the Safety Management System, and for ensuring we deliver our duties as a harbour authority in line with relevant parts of the Code.
- For example, as a Harbour Authority we must:
 1. Ensure that NRW can effectively regulate and conserve safe navigation within its statutory harbour area and approaches under modern legislation.
 2. Ensure that the DCMSMS is informed and maintained based on thorough and up to date risk assessments.

3. We must carry out performance audits of the DCMSMS.
 4. Aids to Navigation must meet the requirements of The General Lighthouse Authority (Trinity House), and IALA, the International Association of Marine Aids to Navigation and Lighthouse Authorities.
- Gareth O'Shea the Director of NRW Operations is the current Duty Holder. However, after a long and successful career with NRW and its predecessors Gareth is planning to retire in 2026.
 - Arrangements are being made to bring in the new Duty Holder, ensuring there is time to hand over responsibilities. We will introduce the new Duty Holder once they are firmly in place.
 - As well as a Duty Holder, harbour authorities must also appoint a competent Designated Person. The Designated Person provides independent assurance directly to the Duty Holder that the DCMSMS is working effectively and is compliant with the Code.
 - Chris Jones, NRW Health & Safety Advisor is the current Designated Person for the Dee Conservancy.
 - NRW's internal Dee Conservancy Management Board met on the 3rd November, with the Designated Person for the Dee Conservancy reporting to the Duty Holder, the outcomes of the formal review of the Safety Management System, for the period is 1st October 2024 to 30th September 2025. Rob Jackson provides a summary of those outcomes later in this meeting.
 - Based on the reported outcomes the Duty Holder produces a Report, which is published on the NRW website. A link to the 2025 Duty Holder Report will be shared with members.

Action 9 Dawn Beech – Speak to Jim O'Toole about the workshops being held for Duty Holders in January.

Dee Cockle Regulating Order – Sian Hughes, NRW

Why the new Regulating Order is needed – current Order runs out in June 2028, a new Order ensures transition of sustainable fishery regulation across the whole of the cross border area.

A joint management model with North Western Inshore Fisheries & Conservation Authority (NWIFCA) is proposed. Recommendation for a 30-year Order.

Issues arising from the initial stakeholder engagement survey indicates the following priorities:

- Licence Allocation and fairness
- Sustainability and management

- Local heritage and community impacts
- Enforcement and compliance
- Infrastructure and access to the fishery

Key Milestones include:

2025: Consultation and Drafting - Collate stakeholder feedback, draft new Regulating Order. Submit draft Order to Welsh Government and Defra.

2026: Ministerial Submission - Focus on stakeholder engagement (consultation workshops). Submit the final draft Order for formal approval including legal and policy reviews.

2027: Legal Process - Complete legislative formalities and ensure compliance issues are addressed to prepare for implementation of the new Regulating Order.

2028: Regulating Order Implementation - Enact the new Regulating Order ensuring sustainable management for ecological and economic stability.

Roy Sherrif stated that the Dee Sailing Club had not been made aware of the online survey when it was rolled out, and were unable to comment on the condition of the slipway at Thursaston. Sian Hughes stated that all members of this Committee were contacted about the survey. Dawn to check club contact details with Roy.

David Parker asked if the Order will have any flexibility in its proposed (30 year) term, with respect to review periods to respond to estuary changes (e.g. sea level, species, biodiversity) climate/species changes. Sian Hughes stated that the Order will not be flexible, but the Management Plan within the Order will be.

Tom Woodall – would like to discuss if there is any opportunity to include where and how cockles are landed in the order, e.g. cocklers must ensure landowner permission is in place. Tom reflected that FCC had the burden to repair wear and tear on council owned access points, used as cockle landing sites, with no funding. Sian and Andrea stated that the Order would not directly address maintenance of landing sites, but that they are open to having a discussion of how this can be improved via other routes.

Harbour Master update – compliance/regulation – Rob Jackson, Dee Conservancy Harbour Master

The PMSC has been revised and updated. The latest revision was introduced in April 2025 and is now call Ports & Marine Facilities Safety code. The Code is a government document published by the Department for Transport and Maritime Coastguard Agency as a Guide for all ports, harbours, marine facilities, berths and terminals. It sets out a national standard for ports and marine facilities to enhance the safety within ports, harbours etc.

The Dee Conservancy's Safety Management System has been updated and revised in line with the new Code and is currently under review with NRW. A letter of compliance to confirm compliance with the new code will need to be issued by NRW to the Department of Transport by 31st March 2026.

An audit of Safety Management System was completed in June 2025. The audit reviewed all sections of the safety management system and a score of compliance is achieved. This year the compliance score was 93.2%, minor defects were noted with some administration tasks which have been addressed.

A Trinity House Audit of the Aids to Navigation (A2N) within the Dee Estuary was completed in September. Three defects were noted from a total of 47 A2N, they have been addressed and rectified. The Marine Contractor carries out weekly afloat inspections of the A2Ns, and the Harbour Master joins these inspections once every 3 months. As of 30/10/25 the 3 year rolling average for A2N availability is 99.87%.

Regular audits and inspections are carried out jointly with the Port of Mostyn in order to ensure the Port remains compliant with the joint Safety Management Systems.

The Dee Estuary Oil Spill Response Plan is maintained by a partnership which includes the Port of Mostyn, NRW, RWE North Hoyle/Rhyl Flats operations and RWE Gwynt-y-Mor operations. The Plan has recently been revised and approved by the MCA. The current Plan remains valid until October 2030. The next scheduled Tier 2 Incident Exercise is due before October 2027.

NRW had doubled its number of competent personnel with respect to MCA 4P Oil Spill Manager certification, following training 25-28th November 2025.

4. Incidents & Near Misses

Harbour Master updates – Rob Jackson

There have been 3 incidents with in Mostyn's SHA within the year, involving:

- RWE land based truck and trailer used for carrying equipment for the windfarm vessels entered the water off the pontoon. After investigation, more robust maintenance activities and procedures have been introduced to prevent future incidents.
- Allision (vessel striking a stationary object) during berthing Crew Transfer Vessel manoeuvres on the pontoon, due to mechanical failure.
- Grounding (low speed) outside the buoyed channel due to human error.

The allision and grounding incidents were fully investigated and further procedures have been put in place to prevent future incidents. No injuries to personnel or environmental damage occurred.

There have been no major incidents within the Dee Conservancy. A number of smaller incidents have occurred.

1. May 2025 - Flint lifeboat rescued 2 persons walking who had been cut off by the incoming tide near Greenfield.

2. October 2025 - Flint lifeboat was called to report of flares being seen off the Duke of Lancaster. It was later discovered to be personnel onshore.
3. November 2025 - Flint lifeboat was launched to reports of a drifting life raft near Flint bridge. No personnel onboard.

5. Harbour Maintenance & Improvement

Airbus Midway Berth – Dawn Beech

- Following the surrender of the NRW lease, Airbus have transferred the Midway Berth to the Dee Conservancy Harbour Authority (NRW).
- The Midway Berth comprises 5 steel mooring piles with fenders, located off the Corus Jetty, next to Tata Steel on the Deeside Industrial Estate.
- The piles were installed by Airbus in 2010 to support their A380 wing shipments from Broughton to the Port of Mostyn and onto France.
- Production and shipments of the A380 wings has ceased, and so the berth is now available for wider use.
- NRW is engaged in a number of conversations with planners, logistics suppliers, and developers regarding its future use.
- NRW has embedded the Midway Berth into its inspection and maintenance schedules, and has met with Tata Steel regarding future use of the Midway Berth for potential land over activities. Work to review relevant risk assessments and Safety Management Plan is underway, to reflect future operation of the berth.

Derelict Boats update – Dawn Beech & Neil Garnett

- The NRW Marine Project, funded by Nature Networks, has ended on the Dee Estuary but continues to develop processes and guidance in the Milford Haven. Guidance for operational staff and external stakeholders (e.g. landowners, councils, ports etc) is in progress.
- Flintshire County Council have used funding from the Our Dee Estuary Project to remove derelict boats from its land at Greenfield, and Connah's Quay.
- Wirral Council are currently engaged in a project to remove derelict boats from the saltmarsh in Heswall. Neil Garnett explained they are at the procurement stage, and hope to remove derelict boats early in 2026.

Action 10 – Tom, Trevor and Dawn to share details of boat removal suppliers with Neil.

Dawn Beech highlighted issues arising from the derelict boat removal work with respect to the management of moorings and also the need to develop a better relationship with boat owners and increased awareness of boat ownership within the Dee Conservancy.

Roy Sherrif and others suggested the Small Ships Register may provide an existing framework for recreational boat registration in the Dee Estuary.

Simon Bennett requested an update on lessons learned to date with respect to derelict boat removal. Dawn will arrange for a future meeting.

Marine Licence Applications – Andrea Winterton

- **Connah's Quay Low Carbon Power Project:** Proposal for the construction of two low carbon power generators on land adjacent to the current power station. Relevant Reps has currently been submitted to PINS through North Planning. The applicant will be required to mitigate for the permanent loss of potentially functionally linked land for overwintering birds (e.g. curlews).
- **A494 River Dee Crossing:** WG proposal to build a new crossing over the River Dee and replace the existing span. Currently going through the planning application process.
- **HyNet:** Proposal to repurpose existing Eni offshore assets in Liverpool Bay, which will include the natural gas import pipeline from the Douglas platform to Point of Ayr (PoA) Gas Terminal. Existing pipeline to transport CO₂ to a newly constructed Douglas Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS) platform. A new electrical cable will also be installed from the Point of Ayr gas terminal to the New Douglas offshore platform, and the cable route will be drilled under the dunes system and will then be buried across the intertidal part of Talacre beach (Eni land).
- **Mersey Tidal Power Project** – Not in the Dee, but has the potential to impact on migratory fish features of the Dee, as well as potential impacts on physical processes.
- **Port of Mostyn:** Marine License has been granted to build a new 350 metre quay and reclaim 13 acres of land behind it. The applicant has completed compensatory scrape back works in Warwick Bay, to account for the permanent loss of estuary feature.

6. Member Comments

Peter Willet – Cheshire West and Chester Council are busy processing applications for licence fees.

Daniel Price – requested updates and advance notice of dredge activities from Port of Mosty.

David Parker – Para-motor activities are becoming a problem in the Dee Estuary, especially with regards to disturbance of bird life and public safety. Dawn to speak to Josef Hanik regarding his success engaging the Civil Aviation Authority. Kite fighting events were also discussed as a similar issue, with RWE commenting that cut kites carry problematic kite lines onto and inside the housing of the motors on top of the wind turbines. Code of conduct to be discussed with the Tidal Dee Partners.

Trevor Jones – Cocklers have concerns over the continued impacts of Brexit and what it means to them with regards to exports.

Tom Woodall – Reported on a successful £100K Marine and Fisheries grant secured for improvement work around Greenfield dock. Work will improve public safety around cockle landing activities, and determine work required to repair the slipway. Work to be completed by the end of March 2026. Tom added that FCC will continue to look at dock safety work at Connah's Quay.

Jim O'Toole – A notice to Mariners has been sent out for dredging activities. This is most likely to take place next year for about 2 months. The notice will have details for mariners about how to move around the dredgers.

Mostyn Docks are in the process of removing 10 abandoned boats near Warwick Bay. They will most likely be removed through the civil courts.

Roy – concerns about the amount of Spartina. The growth is getting difficult to manage, especially with constraints around consents and permissions to carry out removal work. The rise in the mud levels around West Kirby and Thursaston appears to be exacerbating the problem.

Dawn asked David if Spartina was discussed in the Conservation groups. It is and the mud levels are probably contributing to the growth of Spartina. Dawn to ask Josef Hanik for an update on Wirral Council work to share to members.

7. Action Confirmation

Actions confirmed.

8. AOB

Welsh Fishing Association and Seafit are running a welfare event for the fishing community 10am-4pm 19/03/26 on Dock Road, Connah's Quay. The event offers free health (e.g. blood pressure and cholesterol) and dental checks, mental health support, stop smoking resources, weight management advice, cancer information and occupational health services. Dawn to share weblink to event details for members to share where relevant.

9. Next Meeting(s)

19/5/26 – hybrid (NRW Buckley Office & MS Teams online)

10. Closing remarks

Andrea thanked members for attending and for the presentations.