

Minutes

Title of meeting: Dee Conservancy Consultative Committee Meeting (No.5)

Location: NRW Buckley Office and online (MS Teams)

Date of meeting: 19/05/2026 10:00 – 12:00hrs

Members present:

- Andrew Challinor – Cheshire West & Chester City Council
- Carol Dolan (West Cheshire & North Wales Chamber of Commerce) Commercial Rep.
- Daniel James – RWE Offshore Energy (North Hoyle) Commercial Rep.
- Ellis Humphreys – Port of Mostyn
- James Douglas (Dee Sailing Club) – Incoming Recreation Rep.
- Josef Hanik – Wirral Council
- Kathleen Bealby – Natural England
- Lisa McLellan – Flintshire County Council
- Liz Felton - NRW Wrexham and Flintshire Team Leader
- Mark Easedale - Environment Agency - Appointed Representative
- Neil Garnett – Wirral Council
- Peter Coffey - Dee Estuary Conservation Group – Conservation Rep.
- Roy Sheriff (Dee Sailing Club) – Outgoing Recreation Rep.
- Simon Bennett – Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA)
- Tom Woodall – Flintshire County Council

Attendees present:

- Andrea Winterton – NRW Marine Manager
- Dawn Beech - NRW Senior Advisor Dee Conservancy
- Rob Jackson – Dee Conservancy Harbour Master
- Stuart Thomas – NRW Marine Sustainable Mgt. Team Leader

Apologies:

- Alistair Smith – RWE Offshore Energy
- Andy Judd – Environment Agency
- David Parker – Dee Estuary Conservation Group
- Elsie Grace – Natural Resources Wales
- Sarah Bailey – NW Chamber of Commerce
- Trevor Jones – Fisheries Representative

Secretariat: Kath Roberts - NRW Environment Team Assistant

1. Welcome

Andrea Winterton opened the 6th meeting of the Committee by welcoming everyone and asking those in attendance to introduce themselves.

The role of Chair was discussed. As there is no Chair from the membership, Andrea agreed to stand in for this meeting. A Chair must be in place for future meetings. The Dee Conservancy Harbour Revision (No.2) Order 2023 states that the Chair of the Committee will be appointed from members.

A new and more detailed description of the Chair role for this Committee will be circulated. All agreed that if no-one comes forward in advance of the next meeting (17/11/26), an annual rotation of members for the Chair role will be implemented.

Action – Dawn to circulate Dee Committee Chair Role description.

Action – ALL to contact Dawn Beech with queries and nominations.

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

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

Actions arising from the last meeting are all closed.

3. Navigation in the Upper Dee – An Introduction

Delivered by Andrew Challinor, Cheshire West and Chester Borough Council

The Cheshire County Council Act 1980 provides for safe navigation in the River Dee, from Wilcox Point downstream of the Chester Wier, up-stream to Shocklach Green. Cheshire West and Chester Borough Council (CWaC) is the Navigation Authority for this part of the River Dee.

Navigation responsibilities include:

- Keeping channels free from obstruction
- Maintenance of Council structures on the waterway
- Regulating the use of the waterway (byelaws)
- Licensing of powered vessels and pleasure boats for hire
- Protecting the waterway from harmful developments

River Dee Byelaws exist between the Chester Wier and Farndon, they include:

- Conditions for licensing power driven vessels
- Navigational rules
- Maximum speed limit for power driven vessels (and exemptions)
- Exemptions for regattas on navigation rules
- No jumping off the suspension bridge

River Management activities are as follows:

- River patrols, clearance and maintenance.
- Compliance monitoring and engagement with river users.
- River Dee Courtesy Code is being developed as a guide for users.
- Tree Management Action Plan developed with land owners and partners.
- Removal of derelict and abandoned boats.
- Risk Assessments reviewed with the help of the Royal Life Saving Society.
- Emergency Plan for Passenger Vessels is reviewed annually.
- Sandy Lane ferry operating between Whitsun (May) and September.
- Sandy Lane has now been given bathing water designation as of 15/5/26.

Simon Bennett enquired about pollution response plans for the navigable area of the River Dee. Andrew stated that larger passenger vessels carry oil spill response kits, and liaise with the Environment Agency and other partners on pollution control.

Action – Simon to find out if CWaC have responsibilities under the OPRC Regs (Merchant Shipping (Oil Pollution Preparedness, Response and Co-operation Convention) Regulations 1998).

Action – Andrew to send presentation to Dawn to share with Committee members.

4. Harbour Operation, management & regulation

Duty Holder Report – Dawn Beech, NRW

In March the NRW Board has appointed Dominic Driver to the role of Duty Holder for the Dee Conservancy. The Designated Person for the Dee Conservancy, Chris Jones, will continue to report to Dominic regarding compliance with the Ports and Marine Facilities Safety Code (PMSC) and broader harbour authority performance.

Dee Cockle Regulating Order – Stuart Thomas, NRW

The new regulating order has been submitted by NRW and the North Western Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority, to Welsh Government prior to the recent elections and is now with DEFRA. Welsh Government and legal teams and confirmation is pending. Informal consultations have been completed on Citizen Space and approximately 50 members of the public responded. There will be a further round of consultations over the summer, looking into the questions/issues raised during the first consultation.

Harbour Master update – compliance/regulation

Rob Jackson, Dee Conservancy Harbour Master

A letter confirming Dee Conservancy compliance with the PMSC was submitted to the MCA by the newly appointed Duty Holder, Dominic Driver in March 2026. This is a routine requirement (every 3 years) of Paragraph 1.8 of the PMSC.

The revised PMSC applies to any club or organisation operating moorings, pontoons, slipways, quays and jetties. It covers safe navigation within and use of the facility. Although the Code is voluntary and acknowledges that small clubs may not be able to manage documentation to the same standard as large commercial ports, they should be able to show evidence of risk assessment and reasonable safety management details. A club, training centre or small facility is expected to appoint a 'Duty Holder' responsible for the code. This may be a role adopted by an individual, the whole management committee or a sub-committee. It should also appoint an independent person or organisation to monitor its safety policies.

As the Statutory Harbour Authority for the Dee Estuary, it is our job to make all facilities on the Estuary aware of the requirements of the Code. An email will be distributed soon highlighting what has just been said to all Estuary facilities.

The annual audit of the Dee Conservancy Safety Management System is about to commence.

Last year's audit was completed in June 2025 with a compliance score of 93.2%, defects noted were minor administration tasks which have since all been closed out.

The Trinity House annual Aids to Navigation (AtoN) inspection is due in September.

Our Marine Contractor is currently undertaking the annual maintenance of all the AtoN on the Estuary of which we have 46 in total. The Marine Contractor also carries out inspections of the AtoNs, and the Harbour Master carries out a 3 monthly afloat inspection with a documented report. As of 18/05/25 the 3-year rolling average for AtoN availability is 99.88%.

Regular audits and inspections are carried out jointly with the Port of Mostyn Harbour Master in order to ensure the Port remains compliant with the joint Marine 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 (GyM) operations. The current Plan remains valid until October 2030. The next scheduled Tier 2 Incident Exercise is due before October 2027.

5. Incidents & Near Misses

Harbour Master updates – Rob Jackson

There have been 5 incidents within the Dee Conservancy Statutory Harbour Authority area since the previous meeting, some being very minor such as flares being released from off land which then has to be investigated.

- Flint RNLI launched – flares sighted by funship set off from land (Oct 2025)
- Flint RNLI launched – life raft adrift near Flint bridge, no persons onboard (Oct 2025)
- Oily water sighted at Connah's Quay Dock – accidental release of dirty bilge water from moored boat (Oct 2025)
- RNLI Flint attended persons stranded at West Kirby Marine Lake wall (Feb 2026)
- Person in water Connah's Quay (Feb 2026)

One incident occurred (Feb 2026) within the Port of Mostyn jurisdiction, which was investigated by the Harbour Master for the Port of Mostyn, RWE Gwynt y Mor, and the contractor involved.

The incident involved a Crew Transfer Vessel, which had entered the harbour on a strong flood tide, earlier than procedures required. The skipper lost control of the vessel and struck the GyM linkspan causing damage to the vessel and the linkspan structure. Fortunately, no injuries or environmental damage occurred.

As a result of the incident the company concerned have not had their contract renewed and are no longer operating in the Dee Estuary.

6. Harbour Maintenance & Improvement

Midway Berth – Dawn Beech

- The Midway Berth, which comprises 5 steel mooring piles with fenders, located off the Corus Jetty, is now owned by the Dee Conservancy, and is part of the routine inspection and maintenance regime.
- NRW is engaged in a number of conversations with developers and logistics suppliers regarding future use.
- The Committee discussed the commercial benefits of the Midway Berth with respect to regional investment in transport infrastructure and advanced low carbon manufacturing.

Action – Dawn to arrange a meeting with West Cheshire & North Wales Chamber of Commerce: Carol Dolan and Sarah Bennett, to discuss networks and opportunities.

Marine Licence Applications – Andrea Winterton

Not much change since last meeting.

Discussions continue with respect to the Hynet Carbon Capture development, currently focused on dewatering plant and cabling.

7. Member Comments

Cheshire West and Chester - No updates.

Commercial Rep. RWE – No updates

Commercial Rep. West Cheshire & North Wales Chamber of Commerce

Carol: [Flintshire and Wrexham Investment Zone](#) funding is available for Deeside and West Cheshire. If plans are successful approximately 640 new businesses and 6000 new jobs will be created.

Dee Estuary Conservation Group

Peter: Confirmation that the Group is monitoring progress of the Hynet and Mersey Tidal Power projects.

Environment Agency

Mark: Highlighted that the EA has been approached by the Chester Hydro Hub with a proposal to reinstate hydro-power generation on the Chester Weir.

The EA are looking into water quality issues on the River Dee, particularly on the Alford Brook, with a team responsible for water compliance checks. Farm inspections are being carried out by a specialist team who have seen an improvement in silage and slurry containment and management following investments.

Fishing pegs (x10) in Farndon have deteriorated past the point of repair and have been condemned. EA Fisheries staff still patrol the area regularly.

Bathing water areas will be sampled throughout the summer. Some areas have declined from excellent to good. Sampling is taking place to determine why this has happened. Some samples have indicated the pollution to come from birds rather than ruminant or human effluent.

Flintshire County Council

Tom: Removal of derelict vessels is ongoing, with more formal management procedures now in place following the initial removals. The slipway at Greenfield is to be improved once funding is secured. Dockside infrastructure at Connah's Quay Dock is being assessed, this includes improvements to safety equipment and signage, and the development of rules/conditions of use.

Maritime and Coastguard Agency

Simon: The Western UK Counter Pollution and Salvage Officer post has been recruited, with Ben Feeney taking on the role. Ben is based in Southampton and works closely with the other 6 team members to protect the marine and coastal environment by managing the response to maritime incidents.

Action – Mark to share contact details with Dawn, to invite Ben to future meetings.

MCA Beach Supervisor Training will be held in the near future. The courses run over 2 days (theory and practical), and are designed to support local authority responders. Other stakeholders can attend, in partnership with their local authority contact if appropriate. There will be a Strategic Responder Training available in due course.

Action - Simon – circulate details of courses.

Simon asked for any information on the removal of derelict boats.

Action – Dawn to contact Simon with information on the NRW derelict boat project.

Natural resources Wales

Liz: Place based water quality and agricultural teams are investigating water quality of rivers entering the Dee Estuary. Capital Works have been approved for work on Gronant Dunes. Similar to EA, the Control of Agricultural Pollution team are carrying out farm inspections, with a priority on higher risk farms. There have been more slurry related incidents reported during the closed period in the last year.

Natural England

Kath: Work to update conservation advice, and resolve cross border issues is in progress, in conjunction with Natural Resources Wales. Time frame for completion 2030.

Port of Mostyn

Ellis: An incident occurred in January which resulted in damage to one of the pontoons. Damaged piles are now back in position, and the pontoon is back in service. The Port continues its work to develop the old Warwick Chemical Site.

Recreation Rep. Dee Sailing Club

Roy: Stepping down as the Recreation Rep on the Committee handing over to James Douglas.

The Committee welcomed James and thanked Roy for his contribution to the Committee over the past two years and wishes him all the best with future ventures.

Partnership work to identify and obtain assent to manage the growth of Spartina grass on and around the Thursaston Slipway. The Dee Sailing Club, with the support of the Dee Conservancy Harbour Authority has been working with the land owner, Wirral Council to gain necessary permission for manual removal of grass blocking access.

Wirral Council

Neil/Josef: Blue Marine Point Marine have been appointed to remove derelict boats on the foreshore at Heswall. Removal of 3 boats has been postponed to the end of August to protect nesting birds.

Work has begun at Hoylake to improve access to the water, while protecting and enhancing sensitive environmental features. Daily checks of the work areas, for natterjack toads and birds are being carried out.

Armour stone has been delivered to the Dawpool coastal work site and will be put in place as soon as possible.

Wirral Council's Shoreline Pollution Plan is in progress.

8. AOB

Dawn – The Tidal Dee Catchment Partnership has started work on a **Marine Code of Conduct for the Dee Estuary**. The new code will align with Wild Seas Wales and DEFRA Marine and Coastal codes of conduct. The aim is to provide easy to access, site specific information for those living near, working on and enjoying the Tidal Dee. This Committee will be consulted on the development of the Code.

Stuart – NRW has sought feedback on its Marine Area Statement through the "**Ocean Literacy in Wales**" survey. Initial results show that over 80% of people in Wales believe marine visits are beneficial to mental and physical health. However, the survey also found a disconnect, with almost half of respondents believing their lifestyles had no impact on the marine environment.

To find out more, you can read or download the complete [Ocean Literacy Headline Report](#) hosted on the NRW website.

9. Action Confirmation

Actions confirmed.

10. Next Meeting(s)

17/11/26 – hybrid (NRW Buckley Office & MS Teams online)

18/05/26 – hybrid (NRW Buckley Office & MS Teams online)

11. Closing remarks

Andrea thanked members for attending and for the presentation from Andrew Challinor, Cheshire West and Chester Borough Council.