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December 2020

Dear Stakeholder,

As we approach the end of 2020 we reflect on a very different year for us all. Wick Harbour, in common with most businesses in the country, has felt the adverse effects of the Coronavirus pandemic and as a result, a reduction in harbour activity and income was seen during 2020.

The Covid 2019 pandemic presented us all with significant new challenges but the harbour remained open throughout, with staff on call during the lockdown and clerical teams working from home. Along with many other businesses we have had to make changes to our working practices and procedures to continue to work in a safe and efficient way.

FISHING

Once again the Covid pandemic had a negative impact on the industry. Fishermen have found markets very challenging especially in the shell fish sector. Fish and shellfish landings by value have decreased due to the Covid 19 pandemic. Many markets for shellfish have disappeared and prices for landings have been severely affected. This is unlikely to alter until there is a marked improvement on the Covid front. There also remains concern and uncertainty surrounding a No Deal Brexit. Despite the gloom it is encouraging to note new 2 fishing vessels (Saltire and Emulous) arrived at the harbour during 2020 . We wish them and all our fisherman a more successful 2021 and thank everyone for their continued support at the harbour.



OFFSHORE WIND

Work on Beatrice Windfarm O&M carries on as normal, and 5 vessels were working from March through to October, carrying out scheduled maintenance. This has now dropped back to three vessels for the winter months as days at sea can be severely restricted due to adverse weather.



Non-essential maintenance on the BOWL windfarm was shelved this year due to the Covid19 pandemic. We expect this work will be rescheduled to begin in Spring 2021 and hopefully this will involve a number of extra vessels working from the harbour next year.

Construction on the Moray East windfarm has gathered pace and there is a hive of activity on the windfarm. Although Fraserburgh was selected as the O&M base for this project Wick Harbour has also benefitted, with construction and survey vessels working from the harbour for several months now. Again, they have downscaled for the Winter, but have indicated that they will return in the Spring of 2021 and will, in all probability be utilising several more vessels than used this year.



We are already receiving enquiries from various companies with regards to the next rounds of licencing for the Crown Estate, Scotwind leases, which gives us great confidence that this is going to be an ongoing industry for Wick Harbour, as our location is right on the doorstep of some of the areas scoped for leasing.

CARGO

The harbour had a busy spell with numerous deliveries of pipe cargo for Subsea 7 contracts throughout 2020. Seven shipments of on-shore windfarm components have recently been discharged at Wick and previous to that 3 shipments of towheads for Subsea7's pipeline projects arrived at the port and were transported by road to their base in Sinclair Bay. Other cargoes received have been lime, coal, and road salt.



MARINA

The leisure sector was also adversely disrupted due to the Covid pandemic. It was not until mid-July that a limited yachting season got under way. Despite this there were around 100 visiting yachts which visited the marina (a drop of around 70% on our usual numbers). Most notably, there were very few foreign arrivals, also average lengths of stay were down. Locally, the number of vessels using the marina was down, with many owners deciding to keep their vessel out of the water for the 2020 season.

Although Wick is not really a recognised cruise port, we normally get a limited number of visits from a some of the smaller operators during a year. Again, due to Covid, this fell away completely this year.



The yacht Good Dog was in at the beginning of September as part of the Seafarers UK Harbourmaster Charity Challenge. Mark Ashley Miller met up with our own Malcolm who was the 100th Harbour Master to be interviewed during the challenge . Mark is helping to raise much needed funds to support Seafarers UK a charity helping people in the maritime community for over 100 years, by providing vital support to seafarers in need and their families.

HARBOUR IMPROVEMENTS

Work to replace the marina decking was finished during the year, we also took the opportunity to renew the services at the same time. Concreting works took place over at the Commercial Quay entrance with the removal of the retaining wall bordering the old slipway area. These works have resulted in a large expanse of quay space now available for laydown and for the turning of vehicles involved in large scale cargo manoeuvres. A new kiosk is now located in this area and an electronic barrier will be installed sometime during 2021. This improvement will ensure that un-authorized access to Commercial Quay is greatly reduced during cargo operations.

HIGH WATER PROTECTION GATE

Progress has been slower than anticipated due to a variety of circumstances, not least Covid19 , however, we are still advancing, and a firm of Business Consultants has almost completed a wide ranging review of the benefits the gate will bring to Wick Harbour and the wider community. The installation of the High Water Protection Gate will be a game changer for the harbour as we can safely berth vessels in both the Inner and Outer Harbours all year round and in all weathers.

OUTLOOK

The business outlook for Wick Harbour remains buoyant. We are expecting a busy year in 2021, with the Beatrice Windfarm catching up on work which was scheduled for this year. The Moray East windfarm is likely to contribute a notable increase in business for the harbour with the on-going construction of the field, and the likelihood of several vessels using Wick as their base. Moray West is still a year or two down the line, and Wick remains hopeful of more work for this windfarm. The developing offshore renewables industry has created a number of opportunities for the local supply chain ranging from accommodation to engineering. It is clear that these opportunities are likely to increase as the industry off our coasts develops further. Cargo numbers are forecast to be stable as per this year, with fishing and leisure unlikely to improve dramatically, until the Covid pandemic is under control.

The team at Harbour Office extend our Good Wishes to you all for a happy, healthy and prosperous 2021.

Yours faithfully

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