



**REPORT of  
CHAIRPERSON OF THE HYTHE QUAY DESILTING TASK AND FINISH WORKING  
GROUP**

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**to  
STRATEGY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE  
23 JANUARY 2025**

**HYTHE QUAY DREDEGING PROJECT**

**1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

- 1.1 For Members to consider and support the recommendations of the Hythe Quay Desilting Task and Finish Working Group (HQDWG) as set out in this report.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- (i) That a project to desilt the Hythe Quay and Visitors Pontoon (as shown in the map at **APPENDIX 1**) proceed, and

To the Council:

- (ii) That subject to (i) above, a budget provision of up to £135,000 is created for desilting the Hythe Quay and Visitors Pontoon.

**3. SUMMARY OF KEY ISSUES**

- 3.1 The Council currently provides alongside berths for 'Fully Rigged Thames Sailing Barges' as previously agreed by Committee. These are a mixture of Commercially operated vessels, those which are operated and have Charitable Trust status, one of which is privately owned and a static Thames Lighter which is owned by a charity and does not qualify as a fully rigged sailing barge but has Committee approval to remain. There is also a visitor pontoon for visiting vessels.
- 3.2 There has been no significant dredging work in the main areas occupied by the Barges since around 2000.
- 3.3 The Council previously undertook a limited dredge in 2016 when extensive works were undertaken to pile the front of the Hythe Quay (the Quay), but this work did not extend to those berths further out from the edge of the Quay. A further project to remove silt from the visitor berths was undertaken in 2019. Since then, the silt has built up again, and without some intervention the current issues will only get worse and will make it increasing challenging for both the Barges and other vessels, particularly smaller vessels.
- 3.4 There is currently no budget provision made for any dredging or desilting work to the Hythe Quay or Visitor Pontoon. Whilst the Council does receive income from Wharfage fees this would not be sufficient to fund a dredging project.

- 3.5 On 26 September 2024 the Strategy and Resources Committee supported the Motion of the Chairperson to undertake a dredging project as follows:
- (i) That the Committee confirms support for the Motion “to secure safe access to the quay by Maldon’s historic Barge fleet, support visiting barges and other types of vessels to the town, and secure safe moorings of the barge fleet at Maldon”;
  - (ii) That a time limited Member Task and Finish Working Group is convened;
  - (iii) That the Committee appoints six Members of the Strategy and Resources Committee to that Working Group, reporting back to the Committee by 23 January 2025.

(Minute Number 317 refers.)

- 3.6 The HQDWG has met on three occasions and carefully considered a wide range of matters and issues related to this project. Its final key conclusions and recommendations related to the proposed project are as follows:

- (i) To proceed with an Outcome based Procurement for the capital dredge of Quay and a partial dredge of Visitor Pontoon as per map at **APPENDIX 1**;
- (ii) To seek an agreement with the National Trust to receive the sediment removed by the dredging project as part of their ongoing BUDS project on Northey Island.
- (iii) A Consultant to be appointed to support delivery of project and provide specialist advice;
- (iv) The project to be completed by November 2025 (subject to advice from Specialist);
- (v) Budget provision be made of up to £135,000 (subject to advice from Specialist);
- (vi) That the options for future maintenance and budget implications, including fees and charges would be considered as part of the 2026 / 27 Budget process.

- 3.7 Due to the challenging timescales to deliver the project within the next 12 months Members were supportive of starting the pre-planning / feasibility work as quickly as possible and a consultant has now been appointed to lead on that work, funded through the Council’s Feasibility Reserve.

- 3.8 As it has been possible to draw down some funds to support that pre-planning work, the budget set out at recommendation (ii) is for the delivery phase of the project only.

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

- 4.1 The Thames Barges are an Iconic and vital part of the District Heritage. Undertaking the Dredging at Hythe Quay will help support their continued presence in the District, which supports Tourism and our local businesses.
- 4.2 The build up of mud in the area of Hythe Quay and the Visitor Pontoon is making it increasingly difficult for the Barge Operators to safely and effectively move their vessels and is also creating challenges for other vessels to use the Visitors Pontoon.

- 4.3 Undertaking a full dredge of these areas (as shown in **APPENDIX 1**) will help to support the continued presence of the Thames Barges in Maldon, as well as encourage greater use of the Visitors Pontoon by visiting vessels.
- 4.4 This project will be delivered by working closely with the Maldon Harbour Improvement Commissioners, the National Trust and other stakeholders. This will ensure the project is delivered in the most expedient and cost-effective way to provide value for money for the Council's residents.

## **5. IMPACT ON PRIORITIES AS SET OUT IN THE CORPORATE PLAN 2025 - 2028**

### **5.1 Supporting our communities**

- 5.1.1 Delivering a solution to managing the issues caused by silting would specifically support both the users of the mooring at Hythe Quay, but also the benefits to the district from the impacts of Tourism which is supported by the Historic Barges based at Hythe Quay.

### **5.2 Growing our economy**

- 5.2.1 The continued presence of the Thames Barges in the District supports local businesses, through both the direct and indirect impacts of tourism.

## **6. IMPLICATIONS**

- (i) **Impact on Customers** – None specifically, however having a solution will manage the issues caused by silting will benefit all users of the river, including visiting vessels and existing Barges moored at Hythe Quay.
- (ii) **Impact on Equalities** – None.
- (iii) **Impact on Risk (including Fraud implications)** – There are a number of potential risks related to this project, including Health and Safety, reputational, environmental, and financial. These risks have been explored by the HQDWG and will be captured within the project risk log and managed as part of the project.
- (iv) **Impact on Resources (financial)** – The HQDWG has proposed a budget of up to £135,000 to undertake this work.
- (v) **Impact on Resources (human)** – A project Management resource will be required, and steps are being taken to appoint a consultant to undertake feasibility and pre-planning project work, funded through the feasibility reserve. There will also be officer resource to support and oversee this project.

Background Papers: None.

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