

Bideford Harbour Rerport for the TTEF:

Shipping:

- 3 cargo ships have made port calls at the Harland and Wolff Newquay at Appledore unloading approximately 3000 metric tons each of animal feed and imported by Mole Valley Feed Solutions for use in North Devon farms. Further ships are scheduled for mid-November and one per month after that.
- All vessels have so far, departed in ballast (empty) – Sibelco (clay exporter) and other potential exporters will be contacted to investigate the possibility of using the empty back cargo space.
- The animal feed cargo would previously likely have been landed at an East Coast UK port (typically Tilbury or Felixstowe) and then transported by road to North Devon.
 - It is estimated that each ship direct into Appledore will remove between 110 – 120 25-ton truck journeys from the UK road network.
 - From Tilbury with a journey of 246 miles, this is a reduction of 29,520 truck road miles per ship.
 - From Felixstowe with a journey of 325 miles, this is a reduction of 39,000 road miles per ship.
 - As a headline, the first 4 ships will have removed approximately 120,000 truck road miles from the UK road network by mid-November.
- “Why didn’t these ships go to Bideford?”
 - The navigational channel and the berth (when dredged) at H&W gives a much wider berthing window than at Bideford – typically 6 berthing days per spring tide versus 3, giving greater shipping flexibility.
 - The discharging of food stuffs is very dusty and was not considered suitable for a town centre location.
 - Cargo is worked 0600 – 2000 with trucks, the crane and ship equipment running though out this time; the noise and disturbance in the town centre was not considered suitable.
 - A39 bridge air draught (height clearance) is 24m and the 2nd ship “Rix Sail” was too tall to go under.
 - Options to explore possibilities with adjacent berths and to Bideford remains open.
- Despite HMs best effort over the last 2 years, it seems that many ships agents / shipping lines had forgotten that the Torridge estuary is a viable port for smaller “feeder” cargo ships. Having seen 3 successful ships into Appledore, we have now 3 separate enquiries in progress exploring options for the imports of steel, wood pellets and from a competing animal food stuff importer.
- The potential to bring 2 ships to H&W during each 6-day spring tide berthing window is open.

- **Harbour Users Group**

- The 2nd meeting of the Bideford Harbour Users Group happened on 25th September 2024.
- It was unfortunate that the HUG was poorly attended on this occasion, but a more concerted effort to ensure better attendance in the future will be made.
- Port of Bideford must have a HUG, and it is better for all concerned if the HUG is active, engaged and well attended.
- The timing of future HUGs will be such that it should meet before each Harbour Board and thus be able to provide meaningful input to the Board through the HMs report.
- The main items discussed at the second HUG meeting were:
 - Frequency of meetings – aligning with Harbour Board meetings.
 - Future dates of Harbour Board – none for 2025 were posted on the TDC website, shortly to be rectified.
 - Membership of HUG and attendance / ensuring it is relevant and kept alive.
 - M/S Waverley visits and plans for next year's calls – 2 in prospect for 2025, HM in dialogue.
 - Mytilus sinking – see below.
 - Fountains – Port staff continue to source grant funding and support to re-establish the Bideford Tidal Fountains.
 - Code of Conduct – HM agreed to write a Code of Conduct for harbour users. An example from another port will be used, the updated product discussed with the HUG and then presented to the Board in spring 2025 for discussion and possible approval.
 - Water Quality – Tom Humphries from North Devon Biosphere was requested to identify nearest water quality monitoring station to Bideford and then allow us to publish water quality figures for Bideford Harbour on the TDC website.
- The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday 8th January 2025.
- Future dates and meeting minutes will be published on the Harbour website.

Dredging:

The Kingsley Steps were dredged and cleared of mud accumulation for the 1st time in over 5 years.

Riverbank slipway was dredged and cleared of mud accumulation for the 1st time in 3 years.

The Fish Dock berth at Appledore was dredged to maintain vessel access.

Mytilus

The vessel “Mytilus” sank alongside the quay at Bideford on 9th August 2024. “Mytilus” belongs to the seaweed company “Algapelago” and it had only recently arrived in Bideford having been granted a single trip voyage clearance by the MCA pending repairs to the hull and machinery.

As the vessel sat on the bottom alongside in Bideford, one of the hull fittings holding the echo sounder failed, allowing free ingress of water when the tide returned.

Harbour staff attended within 10 mins of being informed and the vessel was quickly salvaged by Severn Seas Ltd and beached at Instow - waiting insurance company decision.

Wider applicability for Bideford – this incident serves to enforce the requirement as a condition of the 2025/6 berth licence renewal for the Port to insist on the owners providing evidence of a vessel and hull maintenance plan for their vessel. This is especially important for those that which are static / non-viable as sea going vessels.

Paul Brown
Bideford Harbour Master

Taw and Torridge Pilot