

What the community thinks about Milford Haven Port Authority

Findings

December 2007

This study explores local views and opinions of the Milford Haven Port Authority (MHPA) in Pembrokeshire, Wales.

It focused on local perceptions of the role of the port authority and attitudes towards the authority at a community level.

The Research

Carried out by Cathryn Al Kanaan, Mark Proctor and Emyr Williams of Sazani Associates Ltd. A range of participatory methodologies were used to facilitate eight focus group sessions with a range of community groups in Pembrokeshire to provide a cross section of age, gender and socioeconomic status including: Bush and Park TARA, Milford Haven Round Table, Pembroke Dock and Milford Rotary Clubs, The Coastal Forum, Over Sixties Club, Soroptomists and Milford P&T group



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Key Points

- The community perceive MHPA's role in regulating all waterborne traffic on the haven together with health and safety as a vital;
- Members of the community that don't have regular access to the haven waterway for work or leisure activities don't know what MHPA do, but would like to;
- There is a growing concern that industrial development is prioritised over tourism and leisure activities;
- Regular users of the waterway have strong concerns around restricted access related to the LNG and the jetty development at South Hook;
- Pembroke Dockyard development appears to be at risk of neglect and abuse once completed;
- The people of Pembrokeshire want more involvement in planning and development decisions prior to their approval.

Next Steps

- To build on the positive perceptions to increase understanding and awareness of the role of MHPA;
 - To develop a community engagement strategy that enables and facilitates local involvement in planning and development.

Introduction

This study sought to give a voice to the community of Pembrokeshire and to provide an accurate and unbiased record of their views, thoughts and opinions towards the Milford Haven Port Authority. This was achieved through use of focus group discussions to find out what local people think the port authority actually does and participatory mapping exercises to gauge local attitudes from a spatial perspective .

regarding the participants perceived role of MHPA and what it actually does.

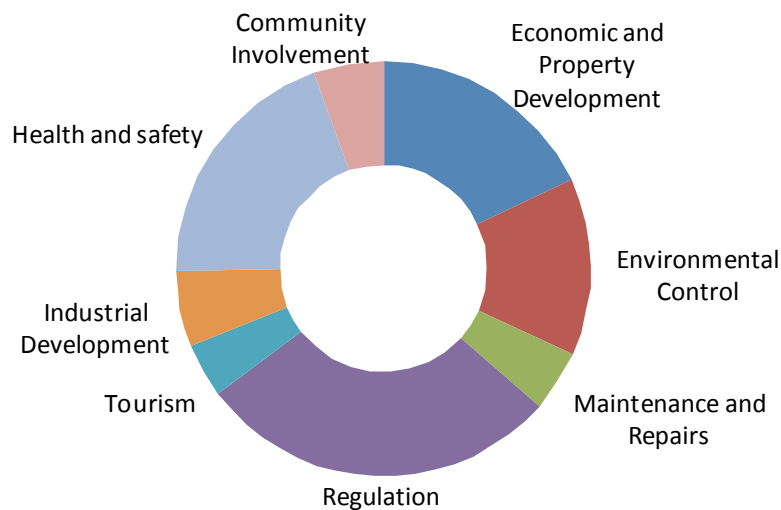
Eight broad activity areas were identified as follows.

Regulation

Regulation of waterborne traffic was the largest and most commonly perceived role of MHPA.

Responses centred around the navigation of commercial traffic in and out of the waterway. There was also a strong perception of MHPA's role in regulating recreational use of the Haven as well as regulating moorings.

What does MHPA do?



Focus Groups on Perceptions

During the focus group sessions, participants were requested to write individual lists of what they thought MHPA did, to compile a shared lists in small groups. The groups perceptions of the role of MHPA were then discussed and collated, using Sazani's 'interactive blue board', into activity areas or groups.

No prompting or corrections were made during the discussions

MHPA's role as a prosecuting authority was also included in this category, policing shipping on the haven and waterways to preventing drug smuggling and the prosecution of companies for oil spillages.

Health and Safety

MHPA's role in ensuring health and safety on the haven waterway was also considered to be of key importance.

Comments centred around the responsibility for general health and

safety in the area, however there were quite a few specifics mentioned such as the responsibility for risk assessing new projects (e.g LNG) and ensuring the safety of recreational users of the Haven including safe moorings and anchorage.

Pilotage was also included in this group, in particular the provision of pilots in the haven. Interestingly however these responses tended to come from those 'in the know' (i.e. those who used the Waterways personally or were directly involved with it). Coast guard and the navigation lights were also attributed to MHPA

Participants with little to do with the waterways had little perception of MHPA providing these services.

Environmental Control

Participants generally perceived environmental control and monitoring as a key role of MHPA. This was centred around the control and monitoring of pollution and the overall environment as well as reacting to polluting incidents. There were however thoughts that the MHPA was also responsible for wildlife, dredging and maintaining a high standard of water quality.

Economic and Property Development

Economic Development and property management was the third most popular role perceived by the various community groups. There were around 15 various economic factors that people perceived MHPA to be responsible for.

These ranged from commercial development and building rental to

fee collection, the dry docks and the promotion of inward investment. The biggest grouping within these responses however was the development of MHPA areas for commercial premises. In particular the Milford Marina and the Old Royal Dockyard in Pembroke Dock.

Industrial Development

MHPA was seen as responsible for the industrial development along the haven way, in particular the oil refineries and more recently the Liquid Natural Gas terminals and pipeline development. They were also attributed with the presence of engineering companies and rope running

Community Involvement

There were only a small number of respondents who perceived MHPA to have any sort of charitable or social responsibility role around the Haven. However those who mentioned MHPA's role in the community emphasised the giving of grants to community groups and scholarships for students and were very positive about MHPA's role in this area.

Maintenance and Repairs

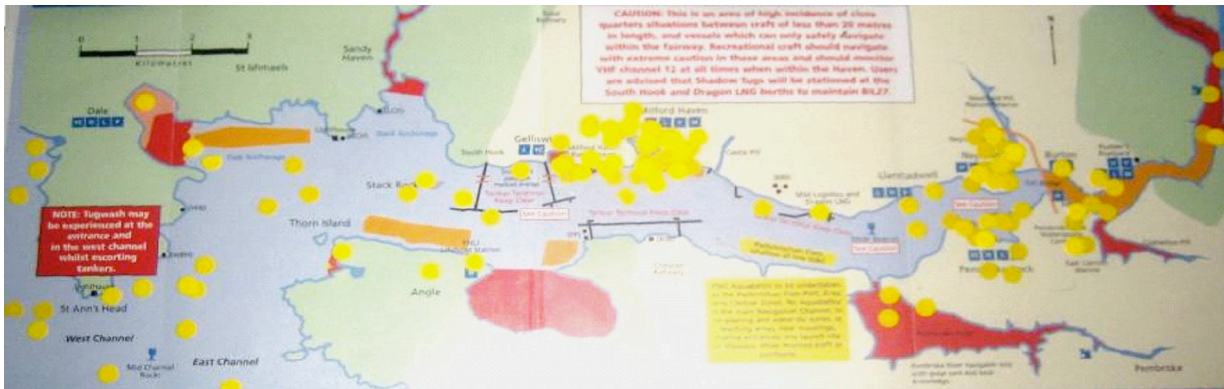
This was only brought up by a minority of respondents and referred to the ownership and use of the dry docks, ship repairs and maintenance of the weather station and lights along the river including channel markers.

Tourism

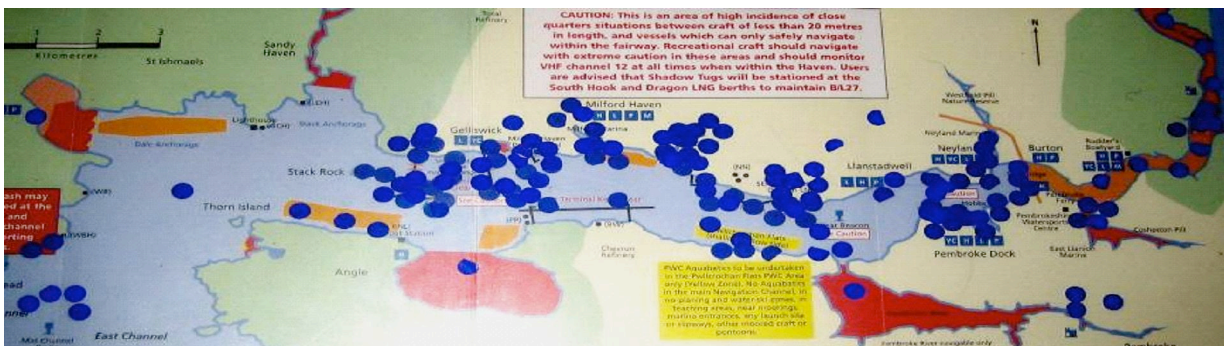
There was very little comment about the MHPA's role in promoting or encouraging tourism. Those who did mention tourism believed the MHPA's role was to promote, encourage and enable tourism to develop locally, nationally and on an international scale.

Participatory Mapping of Attitudes

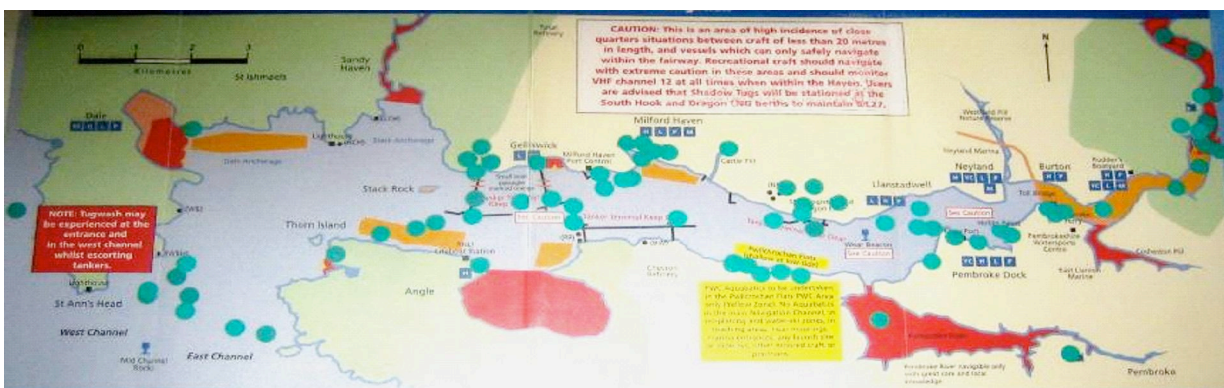
Participants were each given nine dots: three yellow, three blue and three green. They were asked to use the yellow dots to show where on the haven the port authority were doing a good job, the blue dots to highlight areas of concern and problems and the green dots to highlight where they thought change was needed. Round each map informal discussions were held and peoples comments recorded. Participants were asked to individually record changes they wanted onto sticky notes and place them by the change map.



Locations where participants thought MHPA were doing a 'good job'.



Areas where there were problems and or negative issues with the MHPA



Areas where participants wanted change.

Positive Attitudes

The main spatial areas identified during the mapping exercise that prompted a positive response were Milford Marina and development, Neyland Marina, Pembroke Dock and an area located beside Pembrokeshire Water Sports.

The marina developments have on the whole, been well received and the work undertaken in the Royal Dock Yard was viewed as high profile and very positive. All of the positive feedback regarding MHPA and utility concerned the essential work undertaken in relation to both pollution control and maritime regulation

Negative Attitudes

There were four main problem and or negative issue areas, identified through the mapping exercise, these were:

- Waterways and Jetties associated with Milford Docks, South Hook LNG works and Castle Pill.
- The area of waterway and land associates with LNG works (referred to as Dragon LNG)
- The waterway and corridor connecting Pembroke Dock seafront and Neyland Marina
- Upper reaches of the Cleddau.

Changes wanted

LNG Development

Participants focused a large element of negativity on the LNG developments both because of their scale and impact on their lives. Participants perceived a lack of benefit for the population of Pembrokeshire and a sense of "otherness" developed by MHPA, dislocating its interests from those

people who live locally. It was felt that local peoples concerns about LNG safety had not been taken into consideration prior to the development or during. There were heated discussions about the effort taken to get the risk assessments into the public domain.

Water Way Activity

While MHPA role in policing pollution in the Haven was acknowledged, there were requests for a stance to be taken against pollution from tankers and fishing fleets being washed up along the south west coast of Pembrokeshire outside the haven,

Current restrictions on sailing activities and uncertainty regarding future restrictions, combined with a perception that tourism and local users of the waterway were seen as a "nuisance", permeated the research. This was compounded by particular issues such as no boat refuelling facilities outside Milford marina and a perceived lack of access to and from the waterway for those, south of the river.

Hobbs point was seen as inadequate with no other pontoon facilities available and the Point House in Angle was highlighted as the only water front pub on the Haven without a slipway or pontoon for access from the water.

Pilot boat operations were not seen as taking due regard to mooring and leisure craft. A paternalist and high handed approach to both developments and operations with out due regard for local people was a strong perception that was recorded.

Participants identified issues associated with speeding and insensitive waterside developments

along the Cleddau's upper reaches
Land Based Developments

There were concerns regarding perceived neglect of the land and pier adjoining Castle Pill and associated health risks.

The lack of public consultation regarding the proposed Bio diesel plant at Black Bridge was also an issue. People want to be involved or given the chance to be involved in what industrial and commercial developments are planned along the waterway.

Dock yard developments in Pembroke Dock and Milford Marina were welcomed but it was felt that MHPA failed in the challenge to make the best of their assets. The dock yard pavements are a "lorry park for Nolan Transport" restricting pedestrian access and visually detracting from the refurbishments. Milford Marina lacked a sense of civil space and some viewed it as "industrial" in design.

Lack of Understanding and Involvement

Many participants did not know what the exact role of the MHPA was concerning a range of activities; planning, maritime safety, conservation or where their responsibility started and finished.

There was a significant body of

participants who viewed MHPA as overly paternalistic and at times 'arrogant' in their operation both regarding developments and in interacting with both their own staff and the wider community.

MHPA was viewed by many participants as prioritising the interests of large industry and private developers over residents and local communities. It was felt that there was very little community interest or investment by MHPA although there was a perception this may be starting to change .

Next Steps

In order to build on the strengths of the positive perceptions and attitudes and address the concerns voiced during the research, MHPA will need to review how it engages with the different sectors of the community in Pembrokeshire. It should also review how and what information is provided to ensure that it is accessible and appropriate to the different sectors. Both of these steps should be monitored and continuously evaluated to ensure their validity is sustained.



Sazani Associates is a not for profit research and development consultancy specialising in community engagement and integrated solutions for rural development both in the UK and overseas.

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