

A SOLENT AREA

YARMOUTH HARBOUR COMMISSIONERS

An Act of Parliament in 1931 split the Harbour away from Yarmouth Parish Council and Town Trust. Its constitution and rules have since been developed in further legislation, culminating in important changes in 2001 to accord with the national Trust Ports Review. The Department for Transport is responsible for Trust Ports, the Commissioners must be independent of other bodies and are selected after advertisement and interview for the 8 voluntary posts with an independent person on the panel. The Chief Executive is also the Harbour Master and a Commissioner. The Harbour must be run as a business with any profit or surplus reinvested in the Harbour. In 2008 the income was about £2 million.

The jurisdiction of the Commissioners extends from the causeway at Freshwater, with control of all of the water in the river, the inner harbour and part of the Solent (from just east of the pier at Fort Victoria to just east of the pier at Yarmouth and half a mile or so out into the Solent). The Commissioners own property and land including Norton Spit, the Pier, Pier Square car park, the quayside including the ferry marshalling area, and some town properties. They lease the Green on a 99 year lease from the Isle of Wight Council.



MV Balmoral sailing past Yarmouth Pier © BCE

With 250 moorings let to residents and a further 250 berths to visitors, there is a mix of types of berths and sizes of boats, including fishing and other commercial boats as well as recreational craft, giving the small harbour its traditional balance. Annual visitor numbers include overnight stays of about 18,000 and several thousands of short lunchtime stays, giving an estimated 100,000 visitors per year, most of whom use the town shops, pubs and restaurants. Independent surveys indicate that the Harbour and its modern facilities are a very popular choice for yachtsmen of all types. In business terms, the major customer is Wightlink Ltd car ferry service with its contribution in 2008 of 39% of Harbour income.



Town Quay, Yarmouth © BCE

The Commissioners have an environmental responsibility for special designations within their jurisdiction and at least one Commissioner takes a specific interest in this aspect. They are also partners in the Isle of Wight Estuaries Project, which promotes integrated and sustainable use of the Island's estuaries through partnership and develops understanding of estuarine features and processes. A growing concern is the effect of future sea level rise.

WIGHTLINK FERRY SERVICE, YARMOUTH - LYMINGTON

The ferry service from Yarmouth to Lymington is an important gateway to the Isle of Wight and is vital for the economy of Yarmouth and the West Wight in particular. At 3½ miles, it is the shortest and most beautiful route across the Solent. Its development from local rowing and sailing boats to today's high-tech ships mirrored, and sometimes led, the national history of car and passenger ferries. The new "Wight" class ferries introduced in 2009 by the new owners of Wightlink, Macquarie European Infrastructure Fund Group, were built according to stringent and complex modern regulations for ship building, health and safety, environmental impact, fuel efficiency and lower emissions.

In 2008 this route carried 350,000 cars, 46,000 freight vehicles and coaches and 383,000 foot passengers.

Over recent years Wightlink has increased its promotional activity for the Island. In addition to a large and growing list of sponsorship of Island organisations and individuals, cultural and sporting festivals, Wightlink has issued and distributed in mainland tourist offices promotional leaflets, the most recent being "Wight History Trail" and a Yarmouth guide.



Harbour and Lifeboat © BCE