



King's Harbour Master Dockyard Port of Plymouth

Annual Report 2023



HMS Vanguard leaving Plymouth in May 2023 under the pilotage of the KHM Admiralty Pilotage Service. UK MOD © Crown copyright 2023

A message from the Port Duty Holder
**Naval Base Commander Brigadier
Mike Tanner:**



As Port Duty Holder for the safety of the Dockyard Port of Plymouth, I am delighted to introduce to you this Annual Report for 2023. The report has been compiled by the King's Harbour Master (KHM) and team. It contains a wealth of information including the role of the Port, activity levels, an indication of the diversity of activities, efforts to keep the port open for its primary role, and a description of the measures we take as an Authority to preserve the stunning natural environment in which we act as custodians.

Included in the report is a record of the top port risks and incidents; and the measures taken to ensure the Port is as safe as we can make it. This is the most important section and if you read no other part – please read this, it has some very useful and important information.

I am pleased to report a very satisfactory year for the Port, managed efficiently by a relatively new KHM Command Team. KHM, Rob Giles, and his team have performed well in 2023, culminating in an excellent audit report, and the compiling of this document. Managing a large port is not an easy duty, but one which the KHM team discharge with diligence and skill. My sincere thanks go to KHM for this.

My role as Naval Base Commander carries many responsibilities, but carrying the Duty Holder role for the safety of such a diverse and thriving port is one of the most focusing and rewarding. I warmly commend this report to you.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Mike' with a flourish underneath, enclosed in a black rectangular box.

Directorate



Change of Directorate

On the 2nd of October 2023, Naval Base Commander Devonport's organisation made the transition from Director Force Generation to Director Submarines.

HMNB Devonport is now formally part of the Defence Nuclear Enterprise, focused on delivering Submarine deep maintenance.

Pictured: Director Force Generation (FGen) Rear Admiral Steve Moorhouse CBE (right), and Director Submarines (SM) Rear Admiral Simon Asquith CB OBE (left), during their visit to HM Naval Base Devonport in Aug 23 to discuss the transition and finalise the move of the NBC(D) organisation

A message from
King's Harbour Master
Rob Giles:



2023 has been my first full calendar year as KHM Plymouth. This is one of my first opportunities to comment on the performance of the Dockyard Port of Plymouth (DPoP) in safety and in other vital areas that the KHM team are intrinsically involved. It has been a privilege to join the team.....

Some significant changes to KHM governance have come about in 2023. Within the MOD, the Naval Base has changed from being managed by Director Force Generation, to being managed by Director Submarines (October 2023). This reflects the growing amount of submarine support activity in the Dockyard. This administrative change will not affect Port Operations. Furthermore, within the Naval Base itself, KHM Plymouth now sits under the administrative umbrella of a new Operations Directorate. This is a very positive step, which will focus all operational activity in one place, and create a focused approach to safety across the Naval Base and wider DPoP. I remain accountable to the Naval Base Commander, the Port Duty Holder for port safety of the DPoP. There is no change to the primary roles of the DPoP (in descending order): preservation of the Port for military use, preservation of life, protection of property and the environment, and support to the business continuity.

Finally, none of the complex and diverse activities named above would be possible without the incredible support of the 35 KHM staff who all work very hard to deliver the stunning results that are evident in this report. I could fill another 5 pages with the individual achievements of my team – but it will have to suffice to thank the KHM staff for their outstanding professionalism in 2023 – there is no doubt that through their attentiveness and hard work they have maintained an exemplary level of safety and can be rightly proud of their achievement.

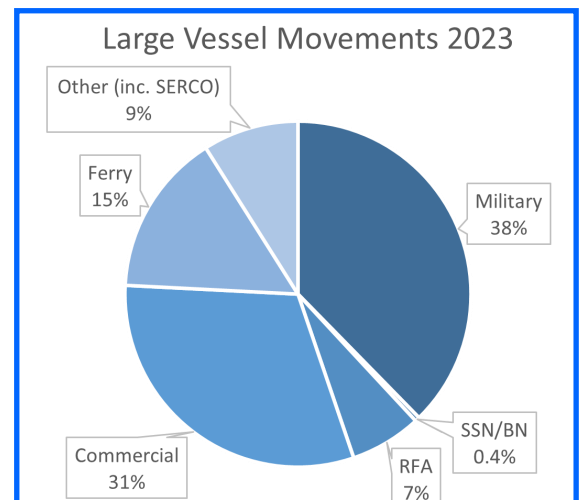
2023 was, although busy and challenging, a thoroughly satisfying and enjoyable year! I am very much looking forward to what 2024 brings. I hope you enjoy reading this Report.

A handwritten signature in black ink, enclosed in a black rectangular box. The signature is stylized and appears to read 'Rob Giles'.

Why does Plymouth have a King's Harbour Master?

The Dockyard Port of Plymouth is the home of the largest Naval Base in Western Europe, HMNB Devonport. In order to support operational requirements connected to national defence, Plymouth has a King's Harbour Master (one of only 3 in the UK and 5 in the world). The role of KHM is written into UK Law in the Dockyard Ports Regulation Act (1865), which gives KHMs specific powers in relation to their respective ports for the requirements of HM Naval service.

The Dockyard Port of Plymouth Order 2020 is the Statutory Instrument specific to Plymouth and details further powers of KHM Plymouth. The combination of the Act and Order give KHM authority and responsibility to direct traffic within the port, to protect it and to ensure its safe operation while ensuring that Defence needs are given primacy.



Whilst Defence needs have primacy, KHM support enables a large amount of commercial and leisure traffic throughout the port. The Dockyard Port of Plymouth is at the heart of the City of Plymouth's identity and KHM operates responsibly and carefully, mindful of the needs of all port users.



KHM Facilities Manager Alice Duke manoeuvring the KHM RHIB in Plymouth Sound (Photo: KHM PCO Ben Mitchell)

KHM Port Operations

MOVEMENTS

3754 Moves

Total recorded large vessel movements throughout the Dockyard Port of Plymouth in 2023 was 3754. Of these, 1737 were commercial (including ferry) moves, supporting the city of Plymouth as a vital commercial port in the South West. 1681 were military (including RFA) moves, supporting the defence output of Plymouth as a key strategic military Port. Heading into 2024, a new method of recording smaller vessel moves is commencing which will give us a better understanding of the volume of smaller vessel traffic in the port. We look forward to sharing the results next year.

EVENTS

718 Events

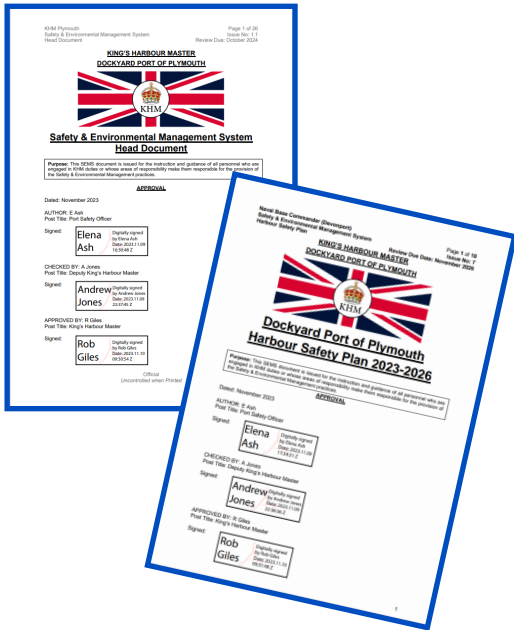
718 events took place in the Dockyard Port of Plymouth in 2023. These varied from sailing races to the hugely popular and very well attended British Fireworks Championships. KHM provides a large amount of support in the planning and delivery stages to enable these events to happen and we are excited to continue to support many more events in 2024.

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

34 Meetings

KHM is represented at 34 different regular meetings across a wide range of business areas. These range from attendance at the Port of Plymouth Sailing Association (PPSA) meetings, to attendance at Local Resilience Forum (LRF) meetings, to proactive engagement with the nuclear community. KHM also holds eight different regular internal meetings to ensure operations run as safely, efficiently and effectively as possible.

Safety & Environmental Management System



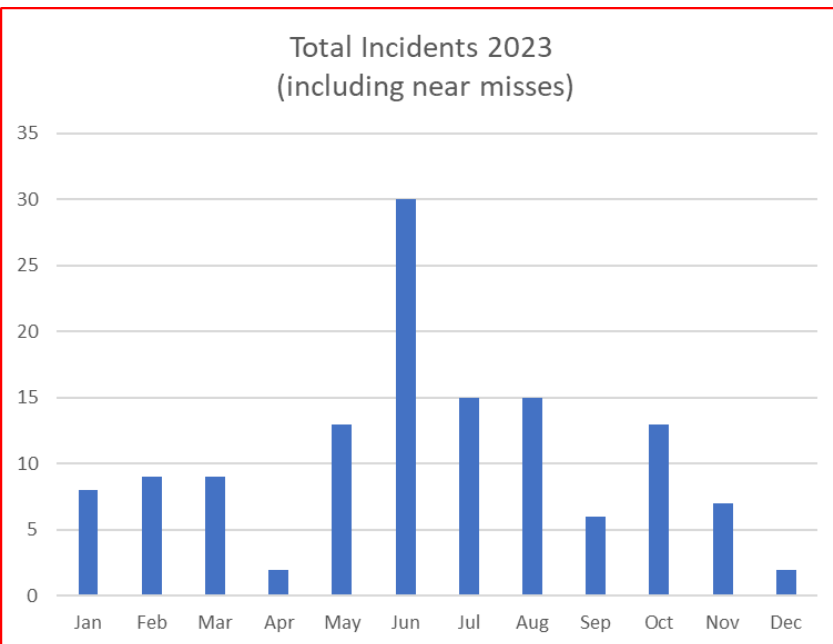
New:

SEMS Head Document & Harbour Safety Plan

The Safety and Environmental Management System (SEMS) Head document has been rewritten to incorporate the previous two volumes into a single document and is now published on the KHM Plymouth website. This provides clarity and makes the document simpler and easier to use.

The Harbour Safety Plan has been updated and published covering the period 2023-2026.

Incident Review



129 incidents were reported and recorded in 2023. At year end, 95% of these incidents had been investigated with appropriate action taken to reduce the likelihood of reoccurrence. The remaining open incidents have investigations underway. Pollution incidents appear to be the only increasing trend. Any pollution incident within the port is unacceptable and measures are being taken to prevent reoccurrence through education. Response measures are also being reinforced.

As may be expected, frequency of incidents peaked over the summer months when the port is at its busiest. Many of these incidents involve recreational water users. This highlights the importance of following safety advice, such as that issued in the Tamar Estuaries Consultative Forum (TECF) produced 'Personal Watercraft Code of Conduct'.

Any incidents that occur on the water should be reported to KHM, this can easily be done via the form on the KHM public website: www.royalnavy.mod.uk/khm/plymouth using the 'report incident' feature.

Risk Assessment

All incidents inform the HAZMAN II port risk management system. For 2023, the top 10 ranked hazards for the port were as the table below. All port risks are regularly reviewed by the Harbour Authorities Liaison Committee (HALC) (Harbour Authorities in Plymouth) chaired by KHM .

Risk Rank	Risk
1	Operational fuel/hydraulic oil spill
2	Vessel grounding/collision with breakwater/Mount Batten breakwater
3	Collision between small leisure or commercial vessel and larger vessel or vice versa
4	Small military / harbour support vessel loses stability during ship / barge handling operations
5	Nuclear submarine grounding port approaches and north of breakwater
6	Collision involving small military vessel
7	Collision involving non-seagoing (charter) passenger vessel
8	Grounding of warship or auxiliary in port approaches and north of breakwater
9	Unsafe recreational activity on the water involving use of kayaks, SUPs, etc and including inappropriate swimming activity
10	Commercial / military vessel fire alongside

Performance measured against the Harbour Safety Plan

Performance Indicator	Requirements/Remarks	2023 Performance
1. Incident Reporting	All reported incidents and near misses to be noted on the MarNis database. 80% of incidents to be investigated and closed out within 2 months of report.	All incidents and near misses were recorded on the MarNis database. More than 80% were closed out within 2 months of report. At year end, 95% of reports were closed.
2. Port Risk Assessments	All Port Risk Assessments to be reviewed annually.	All risk assessments were reviewed, the result of this is shown in the 'risk assessment' table above.
3. Maritime Emergency and Contingency Plan (Sound Off) Exercise Cycle.	"Sound Off" to be regularly exercised in a 3 yearly cycle: Year 1 – Cascade Call Out contacts check. Year 2 – Table top exercise, including validation of Sound Off Plan Year 3 – Live Exercise	The "Sound Off" Plan was tested in a table top exercise in October 2023. Planning is underway for a live exercise of Sound Off in Autumn 2024.
4. Tier 2 Oil Spill Response Plan	To be updated at least every 5 years	The Oil Spill Response Plan is valid and in date until 2025.
5. Tier 2 Oil Spill Response Exercise	To be exercised every 2 years, led in turn, by one of the Plymouth SHAs.	The Maritime Coastguard Agency (MCA) are satisfied with KHMs exercise arrangements for 2023.

2nd Party Assurance Audit



*“... an outstanding audit which has resulted in **Full Assurance**”*

*-Captain Port Operations
Captain Susie Cloggie Holden MNM RFA*

The Dockyard Port of Plymouth's level of compliance with the Port Marine Safety Code (PMSC) was audited by the Designated Person for Director Force Generation (DFGen) on behalf of Director Submarines, in November 2023. The Port was assessed to be at Full Assurance, meaning 'an established system of internal control that is **operating effectively** resulting in full compliance with the PMSC'.

Risk Management was found to be 'of a very high standard', training planning and management was noted as being 'of an **excellent standard**', and document review was observed to be 'very good'.

The KHM team were commended for the '**extensive**' improvement over the last 12 months with improvements 'noticeable and praiseworthy'.

'The **collaborative and positive working environment** in KHM's Department is clear to see and new processes and ways of working are allowing the team to deliver more than ever before'.

“an excellent outcome ... Please pass on my thanks to [the team] for their dedication and excellence. BZ.”

*-Director Submarines
Rear Admiral Simon Asquith CB OBE*

Other Assurance and Audit Activity

TRINITY HOUSE

The annual review of KHM as Local Lighthouse Authority was conducted by Trinity House (the General Lighthouse Authority for the UK) on the 4th of December 2023. 'Everything was found to be **in good order** with no matters arising which require further comment'.

DET NORSKE VERITAS ©

KHM was audited by Det Norske Veritas © as part of a wider audit of the Naval Base Commander's Business Management System in October 2023. Audited areas were assessed to be 'in accordance with the ... PMSC' and showed '**PMSC compliance**'.

DEFENCE NUCLEAR SAFETY REGULATOR

The update to KHM Facility Safety Case 250 (Nuclear Powered Warships Berthing and Movement within the Dockyard Port of Plymouth) was forwarded to the Defense Nuclear Safety Regulator (DNSR) for proportionate regulatory review. DNSR did not identify any major concerns.

CHIEF ENVIRONMENTAL SAFETY OFFICER (ROYAL NAVY)

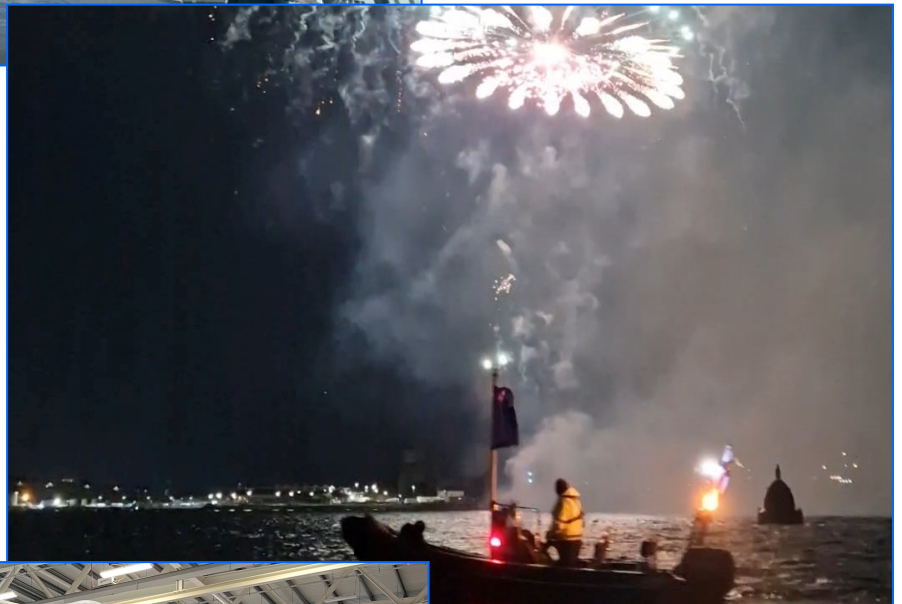
KHM was audited as part of the Chief Environment and Safety Officer Royal Navy (CESO (RN)) audit of NBC(D)s Safety & Environmental Management Plan in October 2023. There were no findings for KHM despite it being recognised that KHM has 'the largest AOR [Area of Responsibility] footprint'.

INTERNAL AUDIT

KHM operates a **comprehensive internal audit regime** to review all KHM documentation and procedures annually. All internal audits for 2023 have been completed and all identified areas for improvement have action plans in place.



RFA Proteus arriving in Plymouth in October 2023 under the pilotage of the KHM Admiralty Pilotage Service. UK MOD © Crown copyright 2023



View from the KHM RHIB during the British Firework Championships in August 2023.



KHM Rob Giles (3rd from right) pictured attending the South West Regional Ports Association Meeting in October 2023.

The Tamar Estuaries Consultative Forum (TECF)



The Tamar Estuaries Consultative Forum (TECF) comprises all of the organisations with statutory powers or functions relating to the Plymouth Sound and Tamar Estuaries Marine Protected Area. The forum is chaired by KHM Rob Giles, supported by an independent coordinator, Amelia Sturgeon, DKHM Andrew Jones and the PCO Ben Mitchell.

It oversees the Plymouth Sound and Tamar Estuaries Management Plan, which delivers statutory compliance and best practice of the management of Plymouth Sound and Tamar Estuaries MPA. In 2023 work began on the review of the plan. The renamed 'Plymouth Sound and Tamar Estuaries Management Plan', is currently out for review by key stakeholders. In 2024, it will go through a period of public consultation before being adopted by the forum and published.

TECF is supported by the **Port of Plymouth Marine Liaison Committee (PPMLC)** (also chaired by KHM) which provides a mechanism for consultation and collaboration with port users .

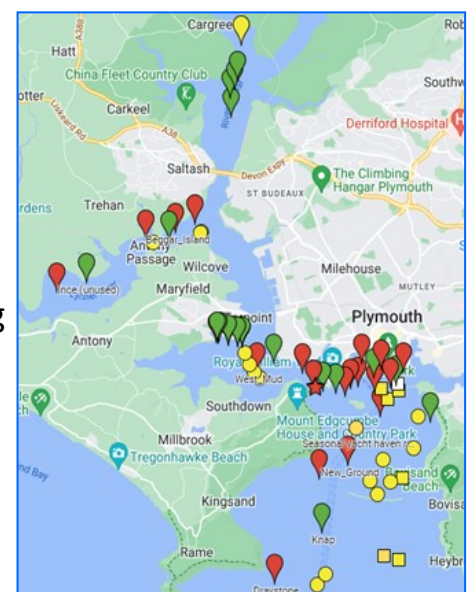
Autonomous Vessels

The waters of the Dockyard Port of Plymouth remain at the forefront of developments in autonomous technology and remotely operated vessels. KHM continues to play a key role in this innovative industry through the management of two designated areas for Unmanned Remote/Autonomous vessel trails supporting both military and commercial developments in this area.

Port Conservancy

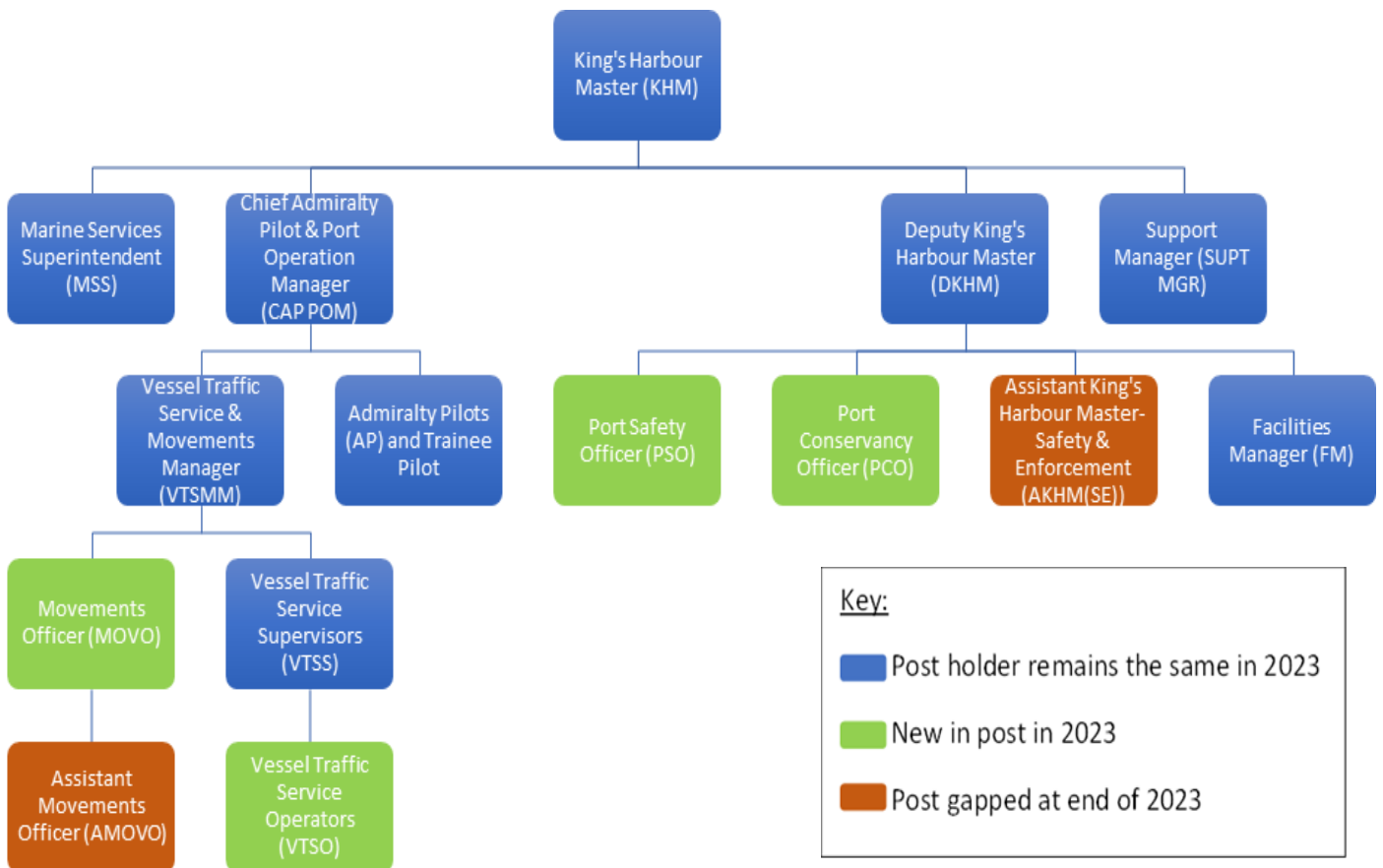
KHM's Port Conservancy department ensures that the Dockyard Port of Plymouth remains available to all vessels that wish to utilise it. As the Local Lighthouse Authority all Aids to Navigation (AtoNs) are maintained and monitored, including regular checks by the PCO. KHM is responsible for approximately 55 floating AtoNs and 40 fixed AtoNs including Cardinal and Lateral Marks, Port Entry and Sector lights and the Western Breakwater Lighthouse.

KHM also oversees the ports dredging activity to ensure that all depths are maintained to ensure the safe passage and berthing of vessels.



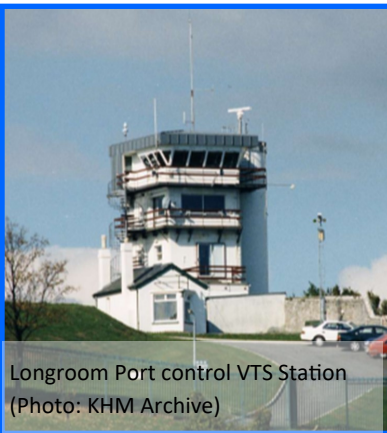
KHM Floating AtoNs

Our People



2023 saw some staff changes at KHM. Two new members of staff, a new Port Safety Officer (Ellie Ash) and a newly appointed Port Conservancy Officer (Ben Mitchell) started their roles in July, filling posts that had been vacant for some time. In December the Assistant Movements Officer (Maria Parkinson) was promoted to the role of Movements Officer. The Vessel Traffic Services team saw 2 trainees (Ben King and James Cunningham) complete their training and qualify as VTSOs in February and July respectively. A further 2 trainees are currently undergoing Operator level training which, when complete, will bring the VTS team to full complement.

Spotlight on VTS



Longroom Port control VTS Station
(Photo: KHM Archive)

What is VTS?

VTS stands for Vessel Traffic Services. The team direct, regulate and organise shipping movements within the port to facilitate the safe, efficient and effective running of the port. In the simplest terms, they are similar to air traffic control, but for waterspace. They operate 24/7 year round and are delegated authority to act on of behalf of KHM .

Who makes up the team?

The VTS team consists of 6 VTS Supervisors and 12 VTS Operators. They are overseen by the VTS and Movements Manager. Typically, at any given moment, there will be 1 VTS Supervisor (duty) and 2 VTS Operators on watch. 1 VTS Operator at Flag Port Control Station will monitor the Hamoaze and Dockyard. The other VTS Operator at Longroom Port Control Station monitors the port approaches, Plymouth Sound and commercial areas. The VTS Supervisor is responsible for all areas covered by both stations.

What does a typical day look like for a VTSO?

The VTS team work 12 hour shifts on a roster that covers day and night. Typical tasks range from recording vessel arrival and departure information, to deconflicting traffic movements to ensure port safety, as well as liaising with both commercial and (KHM's) Admiralty Pilots. They also co ordinate diving and sonar transmissions. The team monitor the port via radar, VHF (radio), CCTV and visually, among other means. Relevant information is then disseminated appropriately and recorded electronically into the VTS system.

How do you become a VTSO?

To qualify as a VTSO, onboarding staff (who are not required to have a maritime background) will undergo a period of in house training, shadowing current VTSOs to understand the job and its requirements. Formal training is then completed off site to complete internationally accredited courses. This training is consolidated back in the port control stations and then, following a local knowledge test, the new VTSO can join the team as a watch holder.

Further highlights

Destination Plymouth & National Marine Park

KHM and the Naval Base Commander continue to work closely with both Destination Plymouth and the National Marine Park. This work has facilitated a rise in the number of cruise ships visiting the Dockyard Port of Plymouth, supporting the local economy of the City of Plymouth and improving engagement of local people with the Port.

Nuclear Safety

KHM's Facility Safety Case for Nuclear Powered Warships Berthing and Movement within the Dockyard Port of Plymouth was reissued in September 2023 and was noted by the Regulators representative to be "functioning well and as intended".

Sound Off Exercise

In October 2023, KHM conducted the a tabletop 'Sound Move' Exercise. This exercised the Dockyard Port of Plymouth Maritime Emergency and Contingency Plan, Sound Off. The exercise was very successful with positive engagement and feedback from a wide range of stakeholders.

Pollution Response

KHM's had a 'very good' audit in line with the Oil Pollution Preparedness Response and Co-Operation Regulations in January 2022. The Tamar Estuaries Oil Spill Plan was reissued as Issue 7.2 in February 2023. In September 2023, as KHM's Tier 2 Pollution Responders, SERCO successfully conducted an oil pollution response re-accreditation exercise.

Positive Feedback

KHM actively seeks feedback through a wide range of stakeholder engagement. All feedback is used to improve the service we provide. We would like to take this opportunity to highlight and celebrate some of the positive feedback that the KHM department has received in 2023.

“The KHM Plymouth Movements team were of great support... throughout the process the service provided by the team was consistently excellent.”

*- Navigating Officer
HMS Northumberland*

*To Longroom Port Control
“My most sincere and humblest thanks for your amazing and professional work...”*

*- Skipper
Local Dive Vessel*

Looking ahead to 2024...

KHM is already looking forward to 2024. We expect some staff changes, as three key members of staff have indicated their retirement.

Planning is already underway for some exciting events in the port. To name a few, the return of the British Fireworks Championships, a Breakwater swim for the Chestnut Appeal and Armed Forces Day. There are more than 600 planned events for 2024.

Towards the end of 2024, KHM will conduct a live exercise of the Sound Off Plan. This will be the first live exercise since KHM, DKHM and the PSO have been in post and so is an exciting opportunity for the KHM team and an important test of the plan.

Finally, KHM looks forward to continuing to build on the positive audit results from 2023, implementing any recommendations and continuing to improve the port for all its users as well as continuing to grow the KHM outreach and engagement opportunities.



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