

Being Accountable to the Local Community

by Keith Southey, Public Relations Manager, Dover Harbour Board

I WONDER HOW MANY PEOPLE in the local community hold the view that Dover Harbour Board operates the port in isolation, taking decisions it sees fit without giving much consideration to others?

Certainly there is an historic perception that the Board functions in a world of its own perhaps with a degree of arrogance. In recent years we have been working hard to change this perception by consulting more and listening to the views of local people and our customers. We hope you are noticing a difference!

It is fair to say we started this process in the knowledge that trust ports were coming under scrutiny with specific regard to the accountability of their operations. Dover is one of over 100 trust ports dotted around the UK coast.

At the start of the year the Government published the results of the review in a document entitled *Modernising Trust Ports*. It sets out standards by which it expects trust ports - defined as independent statutory bodies run by independent boards in the best interests of all stake holders - to operate. The document covers the board members' appointment process, performance and accountability.

In July the Board held its third annual consultative meeting and published its third performance report. From our perspective, it was interesting to learn how many stake holders were interested enough to attend the meeting - the attendance was 70 - and which issues concerned them. Just as interesting were those issues we were expecting to be raised - and were not!

We opened the meeting with presentations on the port's future capacity, investment strategy and what we believe to be our strengthening relationship with the community. Thanks to our much-missed colleague and Dover Society stalwart, John Gerrard, I know you have been kept abreast of our strategies. The floor was then thrown open for questions.

What are you doing about the withdrawal of hovercraft services? Why can't you sort out freight traffic congestion? Why don't you operate a ferry passenger courtesy service on behalf of all the operators? Why are you not investing in additional cargo facilities? These are just a sample of the questions that rained in.

We were pleased it was not all brickbats, with praise for the Board in the way it maintains the sea front and its initiative to try to bring all the watersports clubs under one roof on the beach. And the vote of thanks for our retiring Chairman, Adam Broadbent, was well received.

A report of the meeting is available on our website (www.doverport.co.uk), where you can also view our 1999 Annual Report and Accounts and the 1999-2000 Performance Report. Alternatively we would be delighted to send you copies.

EDITOR'S NOTE

Those who log in to the Harbour Board's website will find all its news under fifteen headings and covering a total of thirteen pages, so there is a lot to read.

UNIFORMS: There is news of the new uniforms, which are to be in blues and greys,

20 with outer garments in red with a blue and green mark. They will be well-established by the time the Newsletter is printed.

MARINA: Dover Marina was awarded four anchors under the Yacht Harbour Association Award Scheme in recognition of quality and high standards of customer service. The Marina has a new amenity building offering shower and toilet facilities, sited on the north side of Granville Dock alongside the re-located Dover Yacht Company boatyard, workshop and offices. A new Dover lifeboat station opened in June on Crosswall Quay, providing workshop, training room, souvenir shop, offices and changing facilities for crew. The shop is open on Saturday and Sunday afternoons.

SECOND CRUISE TERMINAL: This opened on 26th May with the Marco Polo making the first call, which was a shore excursion visit. The first turnaround call was on 9th June when the Norwegian Dream berthed at the port.

CRUISE PASSENGERS: In 1999 the Port received a record number of passengers, 153,000, a 55% increase on 1998 figures.

DOVER FREIGHT VILLAGE: Dover Harbour Board is negotiating to sell or lease nearly two-thirds of the development land at its Port Zone at Whitfield, which is an extension of the White Cliffs Business Park. The Port Zone was declared officially open by the Member of Parliament for Dover, Gwyn Prosser, on 1st June.

DOVER TUGS: On 1st June Dover's new tugs were officially named DHB Dauntless and DHB Doughty in traditional maritime fashion, with champagne bottles broken across their bows. The new tugs replaced the Deft and Dextrous which were sold to Howard Smith (UK) Ltd. and are now in service on the Thames.

MARKET LEADER: The Port of Dover stayed ahead in 1999, as the leading cross-Channel road freight gateway and increased its coach business.

The number of freight vehicles increased by nearly ten per cent to 1,667,942. In coach traffic there was an increase of two per cent to 156,000 vehicles. The number of tourist cars dropped nine per cent and passengers six per cent.

Two more

MILLENNIUM PLAQUES

installed

Report by Terry Sutton

THE DOVER SOCIETY was congratulated both by the chairman of Dover District Council and by the mayor of Dover when, in October, two more of our blue plaques were officially installed.

Both Councillor Frank Woodbridge MBE, from the district council, and town mayor Councillor Gordon Cowan said they thought it was an inspired idea to erect permanent reminders of Dover's history during Millennium Year. The latest two plaques are now in place

on the outside wall of Dover Museum and on a wall at the corner of Castle Street and Stembrook.

The plaque at the museum recalls the day in April 1918 when the bodies of Royal Marines and men of the Royal Navy were brought back to Dover after the famous Raid on Zeebrugge.

The bodies were rested in the building - then the town's covered market - before being taken in honour to their final resting place at St. James' cemetery.