

# Oban Community Harbour Development Association (OCHDA) Newsletter 1 (December 2019)



## **Background: who we are and what we're doing**

OCHDA was established in 2019 to support the development of alternative harbour management arrangements for Oban Bay: the establishment of a new Statutory Harbour Authority to cover the un-managed waters in the middle of the bay and the entrances to the bay.

At present the Oban Bay Management Group (OBMG), a non-statutory body representing the major maritime interests, oversees safety in the bay. In March 2019 OBMG agreed that OCHDA should explore the possibility of developing a Trust Port to oversee the waters of Oban Bay as a Statutory Harbour Authority. This is the first newsletter from OCHDA to keep interested members of the public and supporters up to date.

OCHDA is the “operational arm” of the Oban Bay Management Group Stakeholders, representing all interested parties who use the waters of Oban Bay and the various shore-based businesses which support these. Membership of OCHDA is open to anyone with an interest. Details of how to become a member are on the Oban Harbour website just follow the Trust Port tab.

## **Why are we doing it?**

The original driving force for the establishment of a new Statutory Harbour Authority for the waters of Oban Bay, and the approaches, was safety and this remains paramount. The increasing level of marine traffic and the complexities of the North entrance to the Bay were considered to be creating considerable risks. Since then new buoyage has been placed in the north entrance (in 2019) and a sharp reduction has been observed in dangerous incidents in the Harbour entrance. However traffic levels continue to increase and significant risks remain.

Since becoming established OCHDA has undertaken a great deal of work exploring options available and the implications of the alternatives. OCHDA believes that it is vital for the long-term development of Oban and the waters of the Bay, that the new Harbour Authority does not represent any interest group or business to the detriment of others. OCHDA seeks to represent all users of the Bay, the businesses that support them and the wider community surrounding Oban.

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## **What we have done and what happens next**

Since it started OCHDA has:

- focused on preparing legal documents to establish the new harbour authority
- started raising funds for the submission of the Harbour Order with legal advice and
- held discussions with Argyll and Bute Council regarding partnership working.

We have already made good progress.

Money has been donated by organisations representing fishing, leisure yachting, tourism and local businesses and the Community Council. This will go some way towards the costs of the legal advice that will be required for the submission of The Harbour Order to the Scottish Government but a great deal more fundraising will be necessary as we progress.

While OCHDA have been working hard on the draft Harbour Order, a shortlist of legal advisors is being drawn up and we expect that, before the end of January (2020), we will have identified our legal partner for the submission process. We are being supported, in these preparations, by the RYA (Scotland).

Discussions have been held with Officers and Elected Members of Argyll and Bute Council regarding the extent to which partnership working can be established and, earlier this month the Argyll & Bute Council Harbour Board agreed to work with OCHDA to develop more detailed proposals. Argyll & Bute Council is a significant stakeholder in the harbour area and has a major strategic interest in the potential of Oban Harbour as a driver for local development. The development of this partnership is, therefore, central to future arrangements in Oban and we hope that there will be a joint plan early in the new year.

## **How you can contribute and/or find out more**

There is a dedicated area of the Oban Harbour website which covers much of the work of OCHDA, including essential documents and minutes of meetings of the Management Committee. These are available at <https://www.obanharbour.scot/trust-port/>

If you are interested in becoming a member of OCHDA - you don't have to come to meetings! - or you think you have knowledge or skills that would help in our work, please let us know. You can write to us directly at [ochda@obanharbour.scot](mailto:ochda@obanharbour.scot) or via the web page (above).

If you are in a position to offer financial support to the work of OCHDA, however small a sum, please contact us at [ochda@obanharbour.scot](mailto:ochda@obanharbour.scot). At this stage our urgent need is for financial support to allow us to prepare and submit the Harbour Order required to set up the Authority.

Finally, to help keep everyone informed about the latest news, there will be a public meeting in Oban in early February. Watch the website and the local papers to see the details.

John MacAlister (Chair, OCHDA)