

OBAN COMMUNITY HARBOUR DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATION

Consultation on seaward Harbour Limits for Oban



Background

Following a wide-ranging consultation in 2017 & 2018 by the Oban Bay Management Group it was concluded that the preferred option for the future management of Oban Harbour and its approaches was the formation of a Trust Port. The Oban Community Harbour Development Association (OCHDA) was formed from the existing Oban Bay Stakeholders Group in order to explore further, and develop proposals for, the development of a Trust Port for Oban.

In October 2020 OCHDA started a consultation exercise regarding the seaward limits for the area that will be managed by the new Harbour Authority. The consultation was widely publicised through local media, including newspaper, radio and various social media. Information was sent to local businesses, with a particular emphasis on marine industries, and to local residents via Community Councils and other social media mechanisms. The consultation period ran from 10th November 2020 until 11th December 2020 and any late submissions, to date, have been accepted and incorporated. This report summarises the conclusion of that consultation and gives recommendation for future action.

The issues under consideration

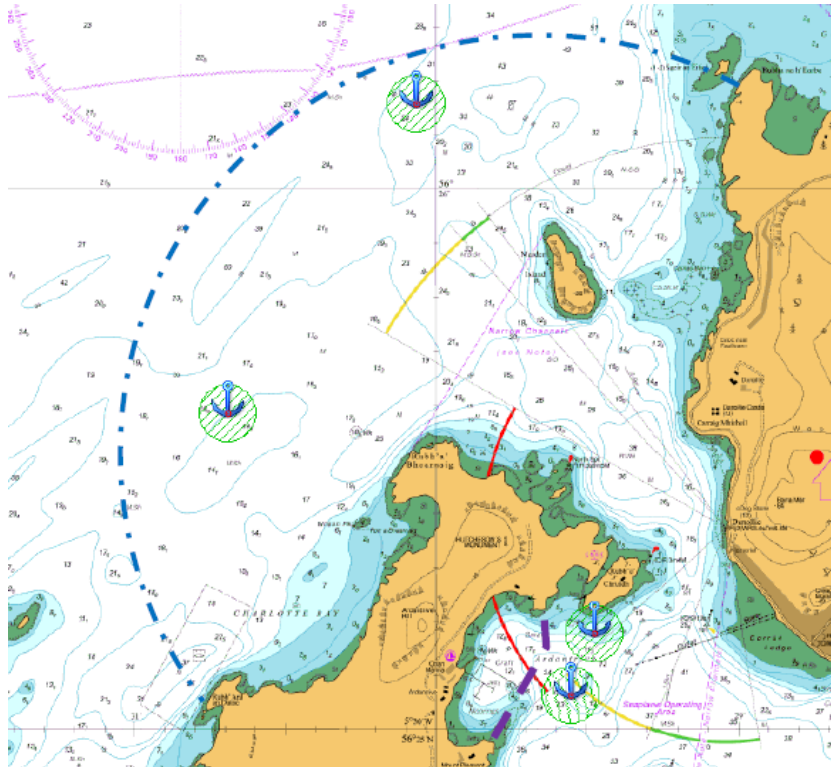
The consultation exercise covered two issues and included choice for the resolution of one. Oban Bay is accessed by two routes. The first of these is the narrow North entrance, the route usually used by ferries and most other vessels visiting the harbour. The second route is the South entrance, up Kerrera Sound, a route used particularly by leisure craft and fishing boats.

For the North entrance the consultation simply described the proposal to include the outer large-vessel anchorages in the waters covered by the Harbour Authority and to ensure safe approaches to the bay from the North and West. For the South entrance the consultation offered two alternatives, both based on including the whole of Kerrera Sound, one with a straight line boundary, and the other with an arc boundary. The consultation sought comment on the proposed position of the boundaries in both entrances and invited other comments.

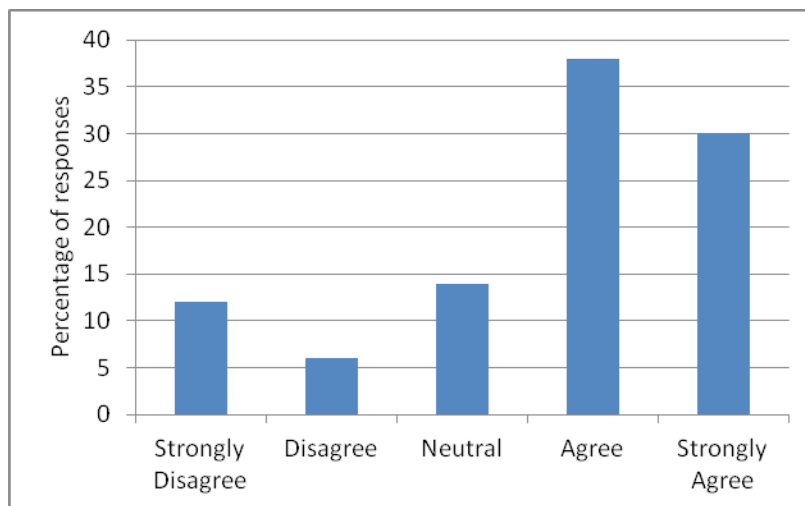
The North entrance

The proposed boundary at the North Entrance consists of an arc 0.75nm radius from North Spit light, as shown overleaf. This includes the two large vessel anchorages which already exist outside Oban Bay (all four are marked on the chartlet), thereby enabling the new Harbour Authority to manage the use of these facilities and the transfer of passengers between the shore and visiting cruise ships.

There was broad agreement with the proposed boundary at the North entrance, as shown in the histogram overleaf. Many respondents expressed the view that this was long overdue and would make a significant difference to safe passage through the waters of Oban Bay.



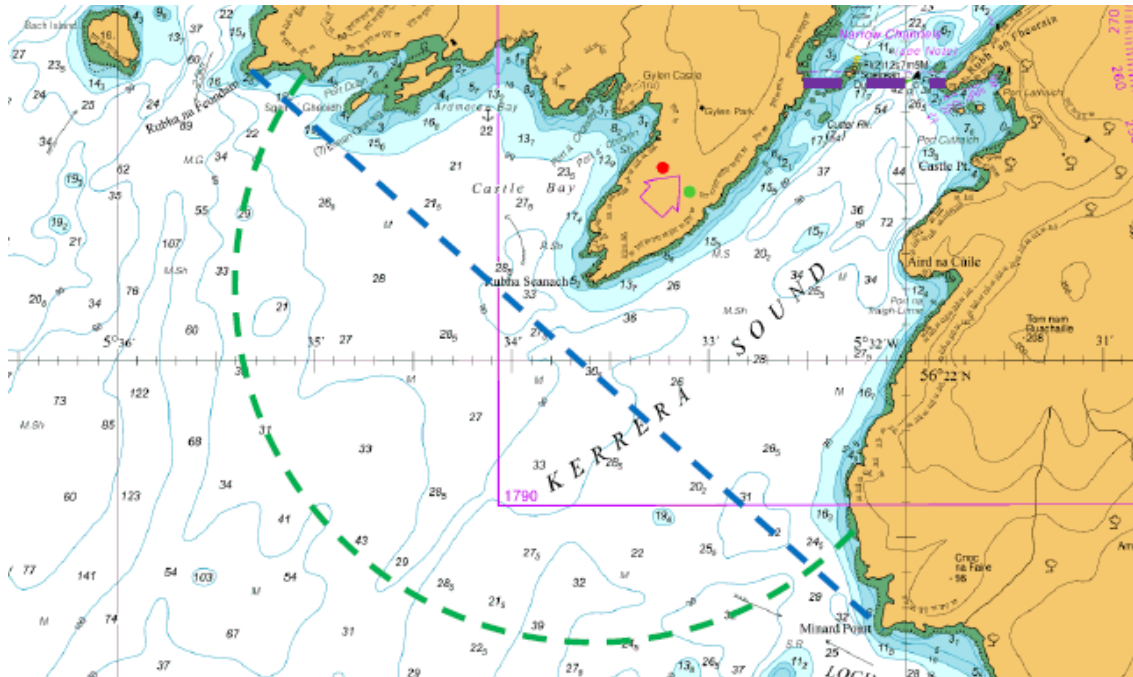
Individual comments included both that the area included was too small and that it was too large. A number of respondents indicated that they considered a 1nm radius arc to be more sensible, whilst others stated that that the arc should be drawn less far out, or that the boundary should be within Oban Bay itself. Comment also included perceived difficulty in assessing vessels' positions where limits are drawn on curves. Just nine respondents indicated that they disagreed with the proposed boundary - many of these also disagreed with both of the proposed Southern boundaries.



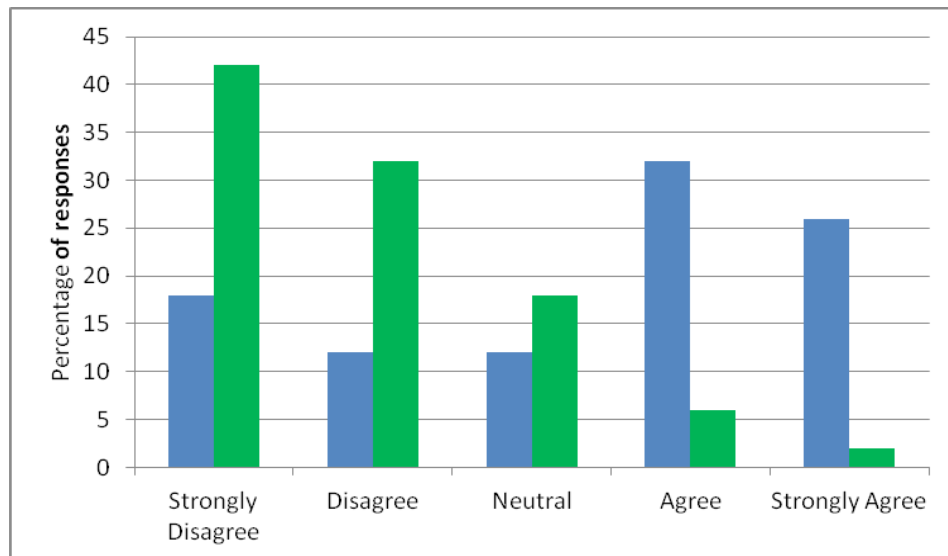
Summary of responses relating to the proposed harbour boundary at the North entrance to Oban Harbour.

The South entrance

Two options were given for the proposed Southern boundary, as shown in the figure below. Both limits will enable the Harbour Authority to manage the movement of large vessels before they enter the more confined waters of Kerrera Sound, as well as providing the opportunity to create a further large vessel anchorage at the south end of Kerrera.



There was a wider range of views and more comment in relation to the South entrance, as confirmed by the summary response histogram below:



Summary of responses relating to the proposed harbour boundary at the South entrance to Oban Harbour. Green bars represent the green arc, whilst blue bars represent the blue straight line.

Summary points are:

- 90% of responses expressed a preference for the straight-line boundary rather than the arc.
- A small number of respondents would have preferred a larger area to be included; this would both 'future-proof' the Harbour and allow more effective management of larger vessels.
- Others expressed the view that a more modest area was required, and made suggestions such as moving the north-western boundary limit to Rubha Seanach or further up the Sound.
- A number of respondents expressed concern regarding the potential for restricting fishing or other traditional activities within this area. Similar comments were made regarding the Northern entrance by a smaller number of respondents.

Consultation outcomes

Overall the consultation showed a high level of satisfaction with the proposed limits.

The Northern boundary is acceptable to the vast majority of respondents, with a similar number of comments saying that the proposed area should be enlarged or reduced. **It is therefore recommended that the proposed Northern boundary is used as the basis for the drafting of the Harbour Order for the new Harbour Authority.**

The Southern boundary consultation demonstrated a clear preference for the straight line boundary as proposed, although it is noted that there were also comments in favour of other alternatives. **It is therefore recommended that the proposed Southern boundary as shown by the straight blue line is used as the basis for the drafting of the Harbour Order for the new Harbour Authority.**

The consultation also highlighted that more needs to be done in helping users to understand why a new Harbour Authority for Oban is being formed. Whilst some of the responses and comments appeared to be well informed and showed an awareness of some of the historical and legislative background, other comments suggested that there is scope for more information to be provided. Similarly, some comments suggested that there may be some confusion between the roles of the Harbour Authority, Marine Scotland, Transport Scotland and Crown Estate Scotland in managing the waters and seabed within a Statutory Harbour Authority area.

A number of individual comments specific to the residents of Kerrera were also submitted as part of the consultation. Many of these related to foreshore ownership and existing agreements. OCHDA has already started to contact some of these respondents to discuss their specific concerns.

OCHDA

13 January 2021