

Petition: PP21.01

CABINET – 24 JANUARY 2022

Re: Agenda item 21. Bristol City Docks - Fees and Charges Review

Petition submitted by: George Colwey

Title: Save Bristol Harbour community from Reckless City Council, give us our Democratic process.

Wording:

Bristol's harbour community needs your support. The council has just published new fees for the harbour to be implemented with just 3 months notice. There is a potential increase in mooring fees of up to 177% this year depending on the location and licence offered. These increases are potentially unachievable for many users and the dramatic change could significantly impact quality of life: health, education, or standard of living.

The ferries, the boat dwellers, community organisations, leisure users and vast majority of the citizens and businesses who live and work in the harbour were not consulted by the Harbour Review Board beyond an initial "introductory meeting". The Board also deliberately failed to conduct even a basic impact assessment. This represents a total failure in the democratic process to ensure the protection of people's livelihoods, homes and families. This is not through lack of trying as several of the above mentioned groups have been trying to initiate a dialogue for the past year.

We are concerned that Mayor Marvin Rees has approved the new charging structure without having the chance to understand how its implementation will impact harbour stakeholders.

Boat dwellers are not mentioned in Bristol City Docks-Fees and Charges Review North Bristol Local Plan. It is evident that there is no understanding of or consideration for the boating community in council planning and decision making.

The iconic Ferry companies and all businesses operating in the Harbour could now face severe financial impact thanks in part to being shut out of the democratic process.

ACT NOW and sign/share this petition to demand that Mayor Marvin Rees withdraws his support for the proposed fees until the community has been consulted and a thorough impact assessment has been undertaken by engaging with all impacted stakeholders.

[Petition · Save Bristol Harbour community from Reckless City Council, give us our Democratic process. · Change.org](#)

Number of Signatures: 1776 signatures to date, 941 from Bristol residents verified 23rd January 2023

Response:

- Thank you for submitting the petition
- The Harbour fees review follows benchmarking against harbours and docks across the country to make sure everyone is paying a fair rate. It is one part of the wider work we're doing to review the entire harbour estate and its governance to make sure it is an asset for the benefit of the whole city, financially sustainable, accessible and contributes to our wider aims of climate resilience and biodiversity.
- We accept we could have been clearer about the relationship of the harbour fees review to the wider work we are doing. The harbour review will correct decades of neglect to the physical infrastructure in the floating harbour, as well as the way it has been run. Consultations and equalities impact assessments, which support other pieces of work we have underway in the harbour have been prepared for the relevant parts of the work. The full EqIA carried out for the Harbour Operational Review found here: [GR052 EQIA - New Budget Proposal - Harbour Review.pdf \(bristol.gov.uk\)](#)
- We're determined to protect delivery of frontline services, so we have to make sure we're getting revenue elsewhere, while always balancing the concerns of those charged. As I explained in my recent [blog](#), bringing fees into line with rest of the country is the correct thing to do at a time of huge pressure on council budgets, and after decades of unclear practice in the harbour. The fact that some people are misusing leisure licenses and inhabiting the harbour should not prevent us charging a reasonable rate for those who have vessels in a facility all other Bristol residents currently have to pay to provide and maintain.
- As harbour authority we have the powers to increase fees without a formal consultation, but we do however know that people want to discuss the impact it might have on them, their businesses and their boats, and therefore we will be engaging with users between now and April when any fees commence. The harbour team will meet with users to explain the revised fees/charges, This will need contextual information about the harbour vision and why all this change is happening.
- We intend to introduce residential licenses which will mean people can pay the appropriate rate to use facilities and live in the harbour, while still giving the council the ability to run an economically vibrant and flexible asset. The details will continue to be worked through and we, of course, will welcome views as we do this. Again, the harbour team will consult with those holding leisure licenses about the potential for residential licences and if these will be made available. This will consider the number available, eligibility criteria and whether some vessels on a residential licence may have to move location.
- At the February meeting of the regular Harbourside Forum there will be a wider update on all the work underway.