

**ANNUAL REPORT FROM THE CHAIR FOR 2021**

I would never have thought that having switched to zoom meetings in May 2020, we would still be operating no better than a hybrid meeting format in December 2021.

Port Users members have continued to show resilience and leadership throughout this last 12 months whilst dealing with Brexit and Covid as huge challenges alongside the daily business of doing business. You should all be congratulated for that.

In 2021 our membership has increased to 59 companies, those members employing over 3500 people in the Tees Valley, with a local turnover of close to £1 billion. Our members collectively assist the movement of approximately 30 million tonnes of products through Tees and Hartlepool.

The Teesside Freeport is now up and running and is the first and the largest in the UK. This presents a fantastic opportunity for our members to form relationships with new inward investors and technology sectors, many of which are part of the Net Zero agenda such as offshore wind, green fuels, and carbon capture and storage. The recently announced hydrogen plants that are to be built on Teesworks are alone expected to bring several million tonnes of additional shipping into the Tees.

Our North and South Tees Missions and Stella Maris have been well supported again this year and they continue to deliver for the maritime community and seafarers visiting our ports. We created a guest member category to ensure their continued recognition and we are pleased to see them represented at and reporting to our monthly meetings.

The role that THPUA plays representing river interests has been recognised by local and national Government in this 12 month period. We were consulted in shaping the bid and establishment of the Freeport, and via its members within freeport tax and customs zones we will participate in the future stewardship of the Teesside Freeport.

PD Ports’ sale process has been halted for the time being. This reduces immediate uncertainty and some risk. We will of course continue to make our members wishes known to the PD hierarchy. It’s fair to say that relationships have been strained during 2021 by the challenges that we have laid at PD’s door as we represent the views of our members. We hope for a more collaborative approach in 2022. Ultimately we all need the river to prosper with our members in an environment that encourages investment and growth.

We have a fresh new brand and have launched a new website where all members have new profiles and access to contacts and resources. We are in the final stages of developing a dredging portal to encourage members with such requirements to collaborate in an effort to reduce mobilisation costs and benefit from collective knowledge and best practice.

Regarding sports and social events, unfortunately our cricket was once again thwarted by Covid at the last minute, but we did manage a very successful golf day on a sunny October day at Wynyard. It was very well attended and once again Kev Ness did a fantastic job pulling it all together. I for one am looking forward to next year already.

We finally manged to hold our 23rd annual dinner last month. It was amazing to see 250 members and their guests enjoying a proper night out and we had great speeches from Rishi Sunak and Maggie Simpson OBE and were thoroughly entertained by The Chase’s Paul Sinha. Next year will be a joint Port Users and ICS Tees shipping dinner, our members having agreed overwhelmingly to merge the dinner in discussion and polling carried our early last year.

Thank you again to Mandy Shoosmith and Alexe Finlay for organising the previous 20 dinners and for helping pass the reins to our new dinner committee which is currently being established.

We have also set up a new committee to ensure a pipeline for new THPUA Officers as well as a fair and transparent process. This committee is chaired by Neil Martin (Casper Shipping), and it has successfully identified and recruited the THPUA dinner committee members and our new Vice Chair Matthew Ord (LV Logistics).

Your secretary Charlie Nettle (AV Dawson Port of Middlesbrough) and treasurer Christian Melvin (GP Shipping) have done an outstanding job again this year and I’m delighted that they are both happy to remain in post for 2022. I will be handing over the role of chair to Garry O’Malley, I am comfortable that the association will be in very safe hands. I also know he will be well supported as I have been by Charlie and Christian, and I wish him every success over the next 2 years.

During my term as chair I was keen to see the membership grow, for everyone to work more closely together and to raise the profile of the group and the river as a whole, and I was keen to promote a commercial mindset. Through the introduction of member presentations, guest speakers and regular dialogue with PD Ports I feel we have done this and I’m pleased with what we have collectively achieved.

Finally I wish you all and your loved ones a happy and healthy Christmas and a prosperous new year.

Your Chair



Gary Dawson