

Enhancing sustainability in smaller ports

February 16 2015, by Alan Williams



Researchers have created an 11-point checklist which they believe could become the vital tool which enables the UK's smaller ports to ensure they are working sustainably.

Covering topics including environmental practice and management, proactive partnerships and [strategic planning](#) for the future, the system breaks down some of the major sustainability challenges harbour masters face on a daily basis.

The idea is to help them fully appreciate its importance to their operations, but also to find ways of making the many associated challenges easier to identify and solve.

The checklist system has been devised by Dr Andrei Kuznetsov and Professor John Dinwoodie, from the Plymouth Graduate School of Management, in partnership with the University of Hull and the Falmouth Harbour Commissioners.

To aid its development, Dr Kuznetsov engaged with more than 20 harbour masters in small ports across Devon and Cornwall over the space of three years, establishing their views and opinions about the challenges they face and how these might be overcome.

Dr Andrei Kuznetsov said: "Sustainability is of vital importance in the maritime industry, and the harbour masters across Devon and Cornwall are committed to safeguarding local employment and commercially important but sustainable local operations. But while larger ports have teams addressing these issues, the smaller ones cannot commit the resources and time. By providing them with an easy-to-use system, we are taking away many of the challenges and barriers and enabling them to focus on the key actions and decisions that are needed."

The study, published in the '*Marine Policy*' journal, features a full breakdown of the key pillars which researchers say need to be focussed on as part of a port's sustainability agenda.

They are: asset management and maintenance, safety management, environmental knowledge and awareness, [environmental management](#), stakeholder engagement, business planning and management, effectiveness of management processes, customer service and satisfaction, proactive partnerships, change [management](#) and strategic planning for the future.

Under each heading, there are then five statements through which harbour masters can rank their current performance and earmark areas where they can improve their practices.

The system has already been successfully trialled at ports in Devon and Cornwall, with adopters reporting a more proactive stance towards sustainability and the safeguarding of local communities, improved understanding, and more effective discourse with stakeholders.

Professor John Dinwoodie, Professor of Maritime Logistics at Plymouth University, added: "Every port and every harbour master is different, and while this research focussed on Devon and Cornwall, the resulting system provides a basic framework that can be applied anywhere in the UK. Working proactively to ensure [sustainability issues](#) are addressed – and having a mechanism in place to mitigate against any challenges which arise – is integral to safeguarding jobs in the long term, something which is vital to maritime communities right across the country."

Provided by University of Plymouth

Citation: Enhancing sustainability in smaller ports (2015, February 16) retrieved 14 August 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2015-02-sustainability-smaller-ports.html>

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