

Structures at Risk in Portsmouth Naval Base

Introduction

The Naval Dockyards Society (NDS) has for several years been expressing concern about the condition of some disused historic buildings and docks within Portsmouth Naval Base. A number of these structures have been listed as being at risk by Historic England, and are in a state of decay, ravaged by dry rot or water penetration. They are within the boundaries of the working naval base, and outside the heritage area to which the public has access. The Society has been lobbying through the press, its own publications and letters to the Ministry of Defence (MoD) for these buildings to be repaired and properly maintained, and for new uses to be found for them.

To help inform this campaign a series of freedom of information requests was submitted by NDS to the MoD, asking for itemised details of expenditure on surveys, inspections, repairs and maintenance for the structures listed as being at risk. Data for the last ten years starting in 2009/10 were requested and a further year (2019/20) has since been added. Responses to all these requests were received, although it was stated that for the first five years full figures for maintenance could not be supplied as detailed analysis of one category ("Additional tasking", or TAFs) was not available at short notice.

The data supplied showed that some of the work was undertaken on fixed price contracts. For *buildings* these covered:

Monthly closed building inspections (The Parade, Academy and Block Mills only).

- Biennial building technical inspections, every 2 years.
- Quadrennial inspections, every 4 years. Independent inspection by specialist conservation adviser. Concentrates on historical features of the building/maritime structure. The latest ones were 2016/17.
- Operations and maintenance (reactive and planned maintenance tasks) 364 hrs/annum. Included minor works identified in inspections.

For *docks and basins* these covered:

Quadrennial inspections, every 4 years (as above).

- Maritime inspection professional, includes underwater elements; every 4 years.
- Maritime inspection technical, above water elements; every 4 years.
- Culvert inspections, every 4 years.
- Operations and maintenance (reactive and planned maintenance tasks) 364 hrs/annum. Included minor works identified in inspections.

Other work was priced as dictated by one-off tasks, for buildings, docks and basins:

- Forward maintenance programme. This covered works arising from the inspections, usually non-urgent works, which were allocated in the following year's programme.
- Additional tasking (TAFs). These were usually large repair projects.

Data received

From the data received a summary covering the six years 2014/15 to 2019/20 has been compiled, as shown in the table below:

Structure		2019/20	2018/19	2017/18	2016/17	2015/16	2014/15
The Parade	Surveys & Inspections	-	2,184	1,584	8,184	1,584	2,184
	Maintenance	1,731,826 ¹	823,424 ²	12,012	110,025 ³	12,012	35,764 ⁴
5 Dock	Surveys & Inspections	-	11,683	-	3,696	-	11,682
	Maintenance	12,012	12,012	12,012	117,792 ⁵	12,012	12,012
6 Dock	Surveys and Inspections	-	9,571	-	7,848	-	9,570
	Maintenance	85,486 ⁶	12,012	12,012	12,012 ⁷	12,012	12,012
1 Basin	Surveys & Inspections	-	-	16,632	20,000 ⁸	6,864	-
	Maintenance	69,470 ⁹	29,262 ¹⁰	28,644	12,012	18,876	12,012
25 Store	Surveys & Inspections	-	792	792	3756	792	792
	Maintenance	214,698 ¹¹	81,684 ¹²	12,012	12,012	12,012	12,012
Iron & Brass Foundry East Wing	Surveys & Inspections	792	792	792	2274	792	792
	Maintenance	61,749 ¹³	26,796 ¹⁴	12,012	12,012	13,092 ¹⁵	12,012
Block Mills	Surveys & Inspections	-	2,184	1,584	8,184	1,584	2,184
	Maintenance	412,143 ¹⁶	12,012	223,214 ¹⁷	34,954 ¹⁸	12,012	12,012
Old Naval Academy¹⁹	Surveys & Inspections	768	768	768	11712	768	768
	Maintenance	256,730 ²⁰	101,817 ²¹	12,012	12,012	28,675 ²²	13,412 ²³
Totals	Surveys & Inspections	1,560	27,944	22,152	65,654	12,384	27,972
	Maintenance	2,844,114	1,099,019	323,930	322,831	120,703	121,248

Notes:

The Parade (Long Row)

¹ £1,699,408 Urgent repairs; £19,450 Future use; £956 Unplanned fade from 18/19 (RDEL); £12,012 Reactive and planned maintenance tasks; remainder is urgent repairs.

² Includes £48,958 Clear buildings of rubbish and furniture. £762,454 for Intermediate remedial treatment: enabling works – scaffolding. In preparation for remedial works 2019/20.

³ Includes £98,013 - Structural repairs, replacement boiler and decorations.

⁴ Includes £23,752 Crack in parapet wall to the building, repair cracked brickwork, coping and repoint to match existing. Include helical bar reinforcement as deemed necessary. Repair render to external boundary wall to match existing.

5 Dock

⁵ Includes £105,780 for Nos 5 & 6 Docks flood investigation.

6 Dock

⁶ £4,700 Remedial – continue to monitor movement; £8,075 Cofferdam/Sea Wall (pre-works); £60,699 Cofferdam/Sea Wall (main project); £12,012 Reactive and planned maintenance tasks.

⁷ Work on flood investigation included in figure for 5 Dock.

1 Basin

⁸ Includes quadrennial inspections of 5 and 6 Docks.

⁹ £38,892 Silt removal; £8,500 Remedial – monitor crack/displacement; £1,741 Analytic CCTV; £8,325 Works; £12,012 Reactive and planned maintenance tasks.

¹⁰ Includes £17,250 for survey by Royal Haskoning regarding replacement of 1 Basin caisson. (Although a survey this was listed as maintenance).

25 Store

¹¹ Includes £202,686 - Make good demolition of courtyard buildings; £12,012 Reactive and planned maintenance tasks.

¹² Includes £12,642 – Professional structural appraisal; £10,000 – Removal of furniture and floorboards to allow air circulation and asbestos check; £12,012 – Reactive and planned maintenance tasks; £792 – Monthly closed building inspection; £47,000 – no description given for this item.

Iron & Brass Foundry East Wing

¹³ Includes £49,737 – Roof truss repairs (in conjunction with building 1/140); £12,012 Reactive and planned maintenance tasks.

¹⁴ Includes £5,000 – Temporary propping of external staircase; £9,784 – Professional structural appraisal.

¹⁵ Includes £1,080 – Repair/paint entrance doors Old Iron Foundry archive.

Block Mills

¹⁶ £200,143 External repairs preliminary enabling works; £200,000 Quadrennial repairs; £12,012 Reactive and planned maintenance tasks.

¹⁷ Includes £211,202 – West chimney repairs.

¹⁸ Includes £22,942 – Structural instability of west chimney, enabling works.

Old Naval Academy

¹⁹ Buildings 1/014, 1/016, 1/017, 1/018, 1/019.

²⁰ £12,012 Reactive and planned maintenance tasks; remainder is Stabilisation – external enveloping (N.B. earlier report in mid-year stated £187,785 – Internal strip out of damaged 20th century materials and repairs to roof on cupola.)

²¹ Includes £89,805 – Architectural proposals of external works, enabling works and listed building applications, and detailed design and tendering documentation.

²² Includes £16,594 – Removal of wooden porch (wet and dry rot contaminating main building substrate); £69 – asbestos survey.

²³ Includes £1,400 – diagnostic survey west range, east wall/external door.

In the period 2009/10 to 2013/14, although an incomplete list, because of the lack of TAF data, it is worth noting the surveys, maintenance and repairs for which data was received:

The Parade

2010/11 Additional street lighting £9,821; Dry rot survey £8,100.

2009/10 Conversion of 1 Parade to mess £13,325; Roof repairs £8,690.

25 Store

2012/13 Construction costs estimate- condition survey.
2011/12 Removal of pigeon fouling £7,740; clearance of 1st floor areas and courtyard buildings £24,225; Clearance of vegetation £5,330; Demolition of courtyard buildings and glass atrium £86,562; Dry and wet rot survey phase 1 £24,435.

6 Dock

2010/11 Fix leaks to dock gates £6,127.
2009/10 Supply and fit dockside safety barriers.

Old Naval Academy

2012/13 Condition surveys £3,900.
2011/12 Damp/dry rot survey (included in figure for The Parade 2010/11).
2010/11 Dry and wet rot survey phase 1 £17,070.

In a letter to the Chair of NDS, dated 24 April 2019, the Navy Command HQ Policy Secretariat stated that active studies were under way to identify targeted disposals to bring redundant historic buildings into sustainable use. Further, the letter reported that,

“While this analysis is undertaken, we are actively investing, as funding allows, in stabilising structures and arresting decline. In 2018 we refurbished and re-occupied the upper floors of Rodney Block in the Personnel Centre and commenced stabilisation work on the structure of 25 Store and Long Row (The Parade) which will continue into 2020. This year we will install a tidal cofferdam around No 6 Dock gates so that they, and the associated dock walls, are protected from threatened tidal impact. This will then allow us to work safely within the dock to repair the masonry and eventually replace the gates.

Having recently stabilised the decline in the Old Naval Academy, we will this year undertake a programme of asbestos removal from the buildings, with a view to making its subsequent development and regeneration both quicker and safer. By March 2020 we will also bring historic buildings across Watering Island back into full use as the new regional Royal Naval Reserve Headquarters.”

Comment

It is evident that there has been a big increase in maintenance work in 2018/19 and 2019/20, which, in part at least, may have resulted from NDS lobbying on this issue. This is encouraging since it starts the process of reversing years of neglect. The works in The Parade, Old Naval Academy, Block Mills and 25 Store have been the most significant. However, there is still much more to be done and the Society will continue to lobby for further conservation work to be undertaken. We hope that The Parade can now be re-purposed and occupied once more.

Though the cost of remedial work is high these buildings cannot be left to rot – they are part of not only Portsmouth’s heritage but also the nation’s. Within their walls lie hundreds of years of history, and imaginative ideas for their re-use must be found.

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