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A new deputy harbour master is being sought for the ports of Scarborough and Whitby

[By Grace Newton](#)

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For centuries the harbour masters of Scarborough and Whitby have been the eyes and ears watching over some of the countries busiest ports.

These respected mariners ensured safety and compliance, and worked hard to provide the favourable conditions that would attract vessels to their harbours, guaranteeing trade and jobs for the towns they served.

For the past 20 years, the management of these two historic fishing ports has been amalgamated into one position - and Scarborough Council is now seeking a deputy harbour master to work under newly-promoted Captain Chris Burrows, who took on the role when his long-serving predecessor, Captain Ian Vasey, retired.

Both men are former Merchant Navy officers, and these master seafarers face new challenges as the function and usage of the ports - as well as Filey's coble landing - changes and evolves.

As the fishing fleet has dwindled, leisure yachts have taken the place of the trawlers, and vessels servicing offshore wind farms are expected to make up an ever increasing proportion of future harbour traffic.

Captain Burrows' new deputy is expected to be highly qualified and skilled - but also 'well turned-out' and able to enjoy a joke with a vast spectrum of different harbour users and visitors.

Since the job was advertised, over 40 people have applied, from local mariners to candidates living overseas. The council is offering a generous relocation package, having already heard from Captain Vasey last year how difficult it has become to recruit qualified pilots for the dredger that works both harbours, the Sandsend. Deputy harbour master is a coveted role, having last been

vacant five years ago when Captain Burrows was seeking a shore job to allow him to spend more time with his family in Bridlington. Captain Vasey held the master's position for two decades.

"There has been a lot of change in the past 20-30 years. Scarborough and Whitby were white fish ports - now the fleet has moved to shellfish so there has been a shift in fishing," said Captain Burrows, who is also a Filey RNLI volunteer.

"Around 10-15 years ago there was a big effort to nurture more leisure fishing, and there are far more leisure craft now.

"There is a big difference in the level of training the trawler crews and the amateurs have. In this country, it is easy to buy a boat even with few qualifications to sail it. Many of these people need guidance and we are happy to give basic advice.

"With the Dogger Bank wind farms, we expect to be able to take advantage of the increase in supply and crew vessels for offshore maintenance."

Captain Burrows describes the masters as 'custodians of the harbours', responsible for safety, maintenance and the enjoyment of boat owners and visitors.

They oversee the piloting of larger vessels into port and the operation of the Sandsend, a converted barge which dredges the seabed for sand and spoil and dumps it back offshore, keeping the harbours in peak condition for the boats that berth there.

"It's important that the new deputy fits into the environment. We're a small, close-knit team, and we deal with extremes of different customers, from experienced fishermen to newcomers. They all expect and need different things.

"They've got to be polite, well turned-out and with a good sense of humour, as well as being flexible. Every day is different. I often plan for tomorrow, but it never turns out like the plan!"