Welcome to Brightlingsea. I said last year it’s amazing how many sailors visit Brightlingsea harbour once referred to as the best kept secret in Essex, I think the secret may be out, last season despite the weather we welcomed 2300 yachts, in May alone 468the highest May visitor number since our records began. Despite the high numbers, we still pride ourselves in never turning down a visitor in need of somewhere to tie up for the night. Visiting yachts will also be pleased to learn we now have a new shower, toilet, locker and laundry facility with superfast Wi-Fi, which is also available in the Marina and on some Harbour pontoons.

When arriving please call our Duty Staff on VHF CH 68, they will allocate and personally direct you to an appropriate berth for your vessel. That could be in the Marina or on the Pontoons in the Creek, your choice.

The harbour reception area is also a Tourist Information Point providing a variety of literature about local attractions, we plan to add interactive notice boards so information will quite literally be at your fingertips. Those who wish to explore can get ashore using our water taxi or travel to Rowhedge to enjoy the Pub cruise on Essex’s first seagoing electric ferry, cruise to St Osyths Boatyard to experience afternoon tea on a Thames Barge, travel further afield on one of our ferries or simply enjoy Brightlingsea on foot.

The water is what attracts visitors to Brightlingsea. You can hop on a ferry to Point Clear or East Mersea from Brightlingsea, with attractions at both locations or even tour the harbour and find out what the Romans did here. Unlike many towns Brightlingsea still has a high street and waterfront, the waterside fish and chips is now open all seasons, as are the ‘seaside stores’ and deli/café in the harbour area. The waterfront as usual offers a great selection of friendly, locally run, hostelries and shops, meeting the needs of residents, visitors and harbour users. It is also worth taking the time to explore the town, gardens, and promenade. There is also a museum, which has an enormous volume of material guiding you through an incredible maritime past. If you need a supermarket, Boots the Chemist, a haircut, cash machine or shops that you would find in a main street it’s just a short walk north. It is hard to believe that although located centrally within the Thames Estuary many visitors have only discovered Brightlingsea by accident. Brightlingsea has so much to offer!

The Port of Brightlingsea wharf loads and unloads shipping regularly, the harbour approximately welcomes 2700 visiting yachts, power boaters, paddle boarders, canoeists, other watercraft users, dinghy sailors and racers. It is a challenge to keep everybody safe so please help us. Our website is full of information to assist your stay in Brightlingsea, however anything else can be sought from the harbour reception. We wish to keep all harbour users safe at all times so please abide by the rules - they are there for everyone’s safety. In addition, please take the time to look at the safety information in this guide, and the map of the harbour. An easily accessible fuel berth is available for leisure and commercial users. Users should be aware that we may need some advance notice to meet your expectations. We only sell diesel; petrol is only available at the local supermarket forecourt.

Our new Harbour pilot/work boat is now in service. It will be used to conduct River patrols, some work activities and maintain security in the harbour and the River Colne, so keep an eye out.

Entering and leaving Brightlingsea has never been easier, we have even published a video demonstrating the best route, if in doubt the most water is to the south of the channel. Most boats will be able enter and leave at all states of the tide. When leaving the Harbour please keep to the south of the channel, it is much better to spend the day sailing than on the mud.

In addition to dredging the Harbour, we have re-used the mud working with nature to improve saltmarsh which as well as providing additional flood defence, attracts incredible wildlife, migratory birds from around the Globe and of course provides greater access to the harbour the channel is now a minimum of 1m below CD.

Keep a look out on our website, Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, X (Twitter) and TikTok for updates and events.

Everyone at Brightlingsea Harbour looks forward to welcoming you to Essex’s best kept secret throughout 2025.

James Thomas Harbour Master