

N e w s R e l e a s e

For immediate release

4 September 2021

Hundreds take to the water at the Gosport Marine Festival

Over 350 people took to the water today (4 September 2021) as part of the Gosport Marine Festival, while many more visitors packed the waterfront, enjoying the onshore entertainment and refreshments.

This free community event aimed to inspire local families to connect with the sea and encourage people, especially children and young adults, onto the water to try out watersports such as sailing, kayaking and stand-up paddleboarding.

Opened by former First Sea Lord and Chief of Naval Staff, Admiral Sir Jonathon Band, with the Mayor of Gosport, Cllr Mark Hook, the festival was deemed a huge success by organisers, sponsors and attendees.

"We're delighted with the turn out today," says Barry Easton-Corke, Gosport Marine Festival chairman. "Now in its fifth iteration, the festival is as popular as ever with hundreds of young people and their families getting out on the water and over 3000 people coming down to enjoy a fun-filled day out, making the most of the onshore activities and experiencing Gosport at its best."

The festival commenced with a Sea Cadet and Scout parade in the Millennium Timespace with the Rose and Thistle Pipes and Drums. Throughout the day visitors enjoyed an eclectic array of entertainment from local artists including swing music, sea shanties and rat pack crooning with the Military Wives Choir performing to at the end of the day, closing the festival.

Activities on offer included dinghy sailing, stand-up-paddleboarding, kayaking and sailing trips. All activities and safety equipment were generously provided by local organisations and sailing charities including the Andrew Simpson Foundation, Stokes Bay Sailing Club, Wetwheels Solent and Spirit of Scott Bader.

Mike Wood who owns Spirit of Scott Bader and runs the Disabled Sailing Association comments: "We love coming here. It's nice to give back to the community and take people out on our boat, which is the only wheelchair accessible sailing boat in the world really."

“This event is about giving local people the chance to get out on the water, which they might not normally have.”

As well as the on-the-water activities, visitors were able to get aboard several historic vessels moored in boatfolk’s Haslar Marina for the festival, including *Medusa*, one of the first vessels to arrive at the Normandy beaches ahead of the D-Day landings, the junk yacht Boleh designed and built in 1948, WW2 High Speed Launch 102 and a landing craft.

In addition, in Holy Trinity Church, there were nautically themed arts and craft activities for younger children at Little Shipmates, while Circo Rum Ba Ba women’s theatre troupe and its enormous inflatable sperm whale highlighted challenges to the marine environment to 300 spectators using puppets, comedy and music.

“The kids got out sailing and kayaking today,” said one attendee, visiting with his family. “It’s been a great day out, with lots to see and do.”

New to this year’s event was the Inspiration Zone in the Trinity Church. This area brought together local marine companies offering careers advice to young people wanting to work in the marine industry. Companies who exhibited included, the Royal Navy, Marine Concepts, Seldén Masts, Qinetiq and the Andrew Simpson Foundation.

“We’ve had in excess of 400 people come into the Inspiration Zone and they’ve engaged really well with the marine industries here,” says Christopher Groves, underwater business development lead at Qinetiq. “It’s been a fantastic opportunity for companies to show what they do and to expose to young people what the opportunities are from a career perspective on the Gosport peninsula, and Portsmouth Harbour more generally.”

Barry adds: “This event just wouldn’t have been possible without the brilliant support of the many local businesses, charities and volunteers who have so generously donated their time, money and resources. Today’s success is down to them, and I’d just like to say a massive thank you.”

Organised by Portsmouth Harbour Marine in partnership with Gosport Borough Council, this year’s Gosport Marine Festival was supported by the Andrew Simpson Foundation, boatfolk, the owners of Haslar Marina, Hampshire County Council, Wates Residential, Gosport Hospital Radio, MAA, British Marine Trades Association, ASDA, Seldén Mast, Lee-on-the-Solent and Stokes Bay Sailing Clubs, Gosport Sea Cadets, Gosport Scouts, Master Mariners, Victoria Quay, Qinetiq, Regional City Airports (Solent Airport), SubSea Craft, Trafalgar Properties and Premier Gosport Marina.

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Media enquiries:

For further information and requests for interviews, please contact:

Susannah Hart

Tel.: 023 9252 2044; or mobile 07760 851197

Email: susannah@maa.agency

Notes for Editors

About Portsmouth Harbour Marine

Portsmouth Harbour Marine promotes and supports the development of Portsmouth Harbour, its facilities, marine businesses and their networks, to stimulate economic growth, marine employment and inward investment for the sector.

In addition, it works with charities and other providers of local on-water activities to promote water-based activities to schools, groups and individuals as a means to improve health, develop life skills and increase marine career awareness.

Portsmouth Harbour Marine is the organiser of Gosport Marine Festival

More: <https://portsmouthharbourmarine.org.uk>