

## **Cowes Harbour Advisory Committee**

Meeting held by Zoom on Friday 13th November 2020, 15.00 – 17.00

### **MINUTES**

Present

John Corby, Chair, waterside private property owners and West Cowes boatyards (JC)

Ben Willows, UKSA and Cowes Training Schools (BW)

Leanna Lakes, Red Funnel (LL)

Dan Jehan, Cowes Yacht Haven (DJ)

Gavin Ford, East Cowes and West Cowes business associations (GF)

Simon Walker, East Cowes Town Council (SW)

Mark Rayment commercial vessels operators (MR)

Giles Peckham, Cowes Clubs and Classes Association (GP)

Laurence Mead, Cowes Week Ltd (LM)

Bob Holt, commercial fishermen and water taxis (BH)

Peter Jackson, Medina Combined Clubs (PJ)

Mark Southwell, Cowes RNLI (MS)

Clive Blount, CHC Commissioner (CB)

Rob Stewart, East Cowes shipyards and boatbuilders. (RS)

Karl Love, East Cowes Town Council (KL)

Lora Peacy Wilcox, Cowes Town Council, (LPW)

David Riley, Chair CHC, (DR)

Mike Townsend, EC Marina, (MT)

Stuart McIntosh, Harbour Master (SM)

#### **1. Apologies for absence**

None

#### **2. Approve the minutes from the previous meeting.**

Approved.

#### **3. Matters arising**

None

#### **4. Harbour Safety and General Directions**

SM was pleased that there were no major harbour safety issues to report but there is still a lot of discussion within the port industry about jet skis. He repeated CHC's

intention to introduce a new General Direction requiring jet skis to have permits next year and he's working with the RYA on the details.

JC said that during a race this year he had been overtaken by a boat sailing inside the breakwater which he assumed was illegal. SM said that there is a GD outlawing sailing through the moorings but he might look at the wording to provide further clarity.

## 5. Maintenance of CHC pontoons

PJ said that one of his stakeholders had put his foot straight through the decking on B pontoon and that he felt that pontoon was suffering from a lack of maintenance and hadn't been scrubbed for a long time. The accident was reported to CHC.

SM expressed his regret and said CHC had carried out a full investigation and made some recommendations as well as fully inspecting all those pontoons. The general maintenance of the pontoons includes a two weekly inspection except they were behind on their cleaning regime on that pontoon. That pontoon is due for replacement next year anyway.

KL asked who was responsible for Bells Landing in East Cowes and SM replied that it was owned by and the responsibility of IWC.

JC asked SM to confirm the standard routine for checking the wood on the pontoons and SM replied that they are all walked every two weeks by the berthing masters. SM also explained that some of the older pontoons are double splined.

## 6. Red Funnel update by Opps Director Leanna Lakes

LL gave a short presentation with some slides about how RF are aiming to improve their operational safety standards, see below:

### Identify operational risk areas:

- Integration of pedestrians and vehicles
- BRM
- Vessel maintenance
- Shore infrastructure maintenance
- Safety Management System
- Safety Culture



### Focused actions to address the risks:

- Safe system of work for vehicle deck operations
- Safe system of work for loading yards
- Appoint new HoMS with clear mandate to improve maintenance standards and defect management
- Clear and simple framework
- Implementation of our plan to strengthen our safety culture



### The Result:

- A reduced number of accidents / incidents
- Less disruption to service
- Improved customer experience
- Improved reputation
- A cohesive and effective team working professionally within an established framework

JC mentioned the local dismay about the very reduced Red Jet timetable about to be introduced. LL replied that this reduction was in line with the volume which has halved during the lockdown, from 1300 passengers a day to just over 600.

MR pointed out that one of his vessels is standing in for the floating bridge and that several of his customers have had to launch small boats off the east Cowes pontoon because they say the public slipway at RF is locked, which it shouldn't be, and staff at RF have told them they can't use it. LL wasn't aware and said she would investigate.

KL said he was also getting complaints about this. He said his understanding was that it isn't locked but there is a new post which makes it too narrow for some boats to use.

PJ reminded everyone that the CHAC had supplied a risk assessment to IWC which indicated that the slipway wasn't fit for purpose for a number of reasons. He felt the barrier was sensible for safety reasons but that the whole discussion throws more emphasis on the ongoing plans to replace the slipway by refurbishing an older one to the north of the breakwater. This project has been delayed because of the Covid crisis.

SM said how important it was for the slipway working party to meet again. BW said he would organise a new meeting of the working group and get momentum again. LPW said that there was charity money available for public slipways. As to whether the current slipway could be used or not, SM said it was a decision for IWC, and he also asked LL if somebody from RF could join the working group. JC summed up the situation by saying that even though CHAC believe the slipway shouldn't be used, legally it still can be because the IWC have yet to close it. JC also said that access to the slipway is now narrower because somebody has fitted a new post, and asked who put the post in, but in any case the barrier shouldn't be padlocked. KL said he would follow that up with IWC.

MR added that it has always been a public slipway and he's never seen anything which says people can't use it. PJ said that things have changed though over the years and for example Ryde Rowing Club no longer use it and it would be questionable to encourage its use. JC then made the point that there is a difference between CHAC advising people not to use it and them being told legally not to use it so there is a grey area in the middle. BW added that CHAC is an advisory body not a regulatory body so can't stop people using it but does have the job of advising IWC.

JC finished the topic by saying that the long term solution was to build the new one. BW said he would set up the next meeting of the working group.

## **7. Taxis update by Bob Holt**

JC said he had one complaint about the hours being only from 11am to 3pm. BH replied that was only for Winter from September onwards. He went on to say that the business had taken a pounding without any of the major events like the Festival and the Round The island Race. CHC had stepped in during June with a further subsidy to maintain a skeleton service and made a contribution to the costs until the end of October. BH did admit that a few people had been overcharged but that had all been resolved. The next season will start at Easter.

PJ said he felt the taxi operators were always happy to put a boat on by prior arrangement and if it was just to check a boat, the taxi operators were always happy to do that for them, so there is flexibility in the system.

KL asked if there was an emergency number if somebody needed to visit their boat in the middle of the night. BH thought there was a number on the CHC website.

## **8 Kingston update by SM**

SM said he hoped everyone had seen the previously sent out summary of the proposed development at CHC Kingston. Having been on the site since around 2000, CHC had acquired the whole site in 2012. The aggregates business which had been on the lower terrace had been recently consolidated to the other side of the river and then IW Fuels had decided to end their tank storage at Kingston. Despite the deep water there had been no new significant interest in renting that area from CHC, so CHC had come up with a proposal to develop the site for yachting marine employment but still maintaining the DIY boatyard element. The paperwork sent out had 3D images of what the site might look like. Preliminary costing have been carried out and although the project has capital value, some grant funding might also be required. The project has strategic benefits for the Island and marine employment and CHC was looking for feedback from CHAC. JC asked if boats would fit in the smaller units or if they were more like workshops, for example, for engineers. SM replied that yes smaller boats would fit in them and they all had mezzanine decks in them for office space. The larger units on the bottom terrace would take an upgraded travel lift up to 100 tonnes and vessels up to 20m.

MR asked if the deep water berths would be maintained and SM said the intention was to keep the northern oil storage berth but add some heavy duty pontoons on the southern aggregates one, maybe with some resting piles as well. SM said that one of the problems was these berths are N.A.A.B.S.A berths (Not always afloat but safe aground) rated and only 2m depth at chart datum so probably wouldn't suit large private yachts.

KL really welcomed the plans and asked if some green measures could be incorporated, for example solar panels on the roofs. SM agreed with the point about sustainability and remembered that this has been a concern of the CHAC in the past.

JC asked if everyone would agree to CHAC officially supporting the plans, and there were no objections. PJ even suggested 'strongly supporting'. Everyone agreed.

## **9 Whitegates pontoon**

SM reminded everyone that the Whitegates public pontoon is owned by and the responsibility of IWC. It has been an issue for a long time and CHC is working to support IWC and has had several meetings with LPW (CTC Mayor) and Newport HM and come up with several initiatives, for example CHC have agreed to put up notices on all the various tenders left on the pontoon warning that they will be taken away. These vessels have now been removed to Kingston and will eventually be disposed of. They are also planning to install two CCTC cameras to cover that area to assist IWC and the Police as most of problems are associated with unsocial activities that originate from the land element, rather than the water.

JC asked about transferring ownership to CHC but SM replied that because of the shore based problems this might not be appropriate. Also because of what might happen in the future with the IWWAC building and Medina Yard it makes more sense for IWC to retain it. To sum up, it's actually quite a complex situation

## **10 Cowes Week update by LM**

LM has a few subtle changes planned for next year. He had a key stakeholders meeting with reps from the major hospitality sites plus the councils and JC from CHAC, and then also a 'put the fun back into the high street' sub-committee meeting which GF (CBA) is very active in, to reinvigorate the event back into the Town for both the spectators and the competitors. The biggest changes revolve around the schedule of the entertainments including looking at moving the fireworks from the last Friday to the first Saturday, the strategy being that having both the Red Arrows and the fireworks on the last evening packs the Town once but doesn't run the entertainment through the course of the week. This will also make it easier to hold the prizegiving on the final Friday without the town full of fireworks spectators. The first Saturday would also be the night of the opening party at the Yacht Haven. There is also a suggestion, that he is hoping to get feedback about, of not racing the Black Group boats (yachts not dayboats) on the first Saturday, ie start the big boats on Sunday. White Group (dayboats) would still start on Saturday. The rationale being it's harder for a big crew to get organised for the whole week by the Saturday race. So far there has been a strong positive response for this and he is about to send out a note to all Back Group competitors asking for their opinion.

Next, LM said he had put in a bid from the Department of Culture, Media and Sport for funding to install a 5G network over the Solent, a project called Connected Cowes. If they get the money, which they will hear about at the end of November, they will be able to put five masts, three on the mainland and two on the Island, to

provide a 5G network over the Solent as well as funding for the spectator app which would enable about sixty camera feeds from various boats. These boats would be fitted with high definition 360 degree cameras which would feed, via the 5G network, live pictures back to the app. So anywhere in the World somebody would be able to pick a boat and see the view from onboard. LM is very excited about this and feels it could be transformational for the event. He is also getting good feedback from potential new sponsors.

KL said this had opened up Pandora's Box with references to 5G because, being on the IWC, he is inundated with complaints about 5G and there is a big campaign on the Island against 5G. He then said he was all for splitting the fireworks and the Red Arrows but right now it was a really good winning formula so why not put the Red Arrows on the first Saturday. Maybe EC could put on some fireworks on the Friday but his main concern is the political fallout from the 5G plan. East Cowes is going to be having an elephant festival that week.

LM said that the Red Arrows can't come earlier in the week because they are on annual leave.

JC asked if KL was talking about flak from conspiracy theorists who are convinced that 5G is a way for the CIA and Bill Gates to inject us all with mind-controlling brainwaves. KL said that LM needs to think how he's going to handle this. JC said we can either be the first to have 5G or the last to have 5G but one way or another it's coming. LM said he is as concerned as everyone else about 5G but this is a 'test and create' project rather than a permanent 5G network and the funding is for two and a half years. He added that he has been in touch with all of the land owners about putting the masts up and the IWC about licensing but he accepted that there may well be some negative response after it is announced.

LPW said that the anti 5G groups continually attend all the Council meetings but that according to one of the local Councillors who is well informed in these matters, 5G is nothing compared to the radio waves at BAE systems when they are testing one of their radars.

MS said that he has always felt that Cowes Week has dragged on far too long so that LM's proposals are far more sensible.

PJ said it made sense to him too and asked if it also might be a good idea to move the Cowes Town Regatta to the first Saturday, LM said yes he was looking at it.

BW said he had to leave the meeting early but he thought it was great how LM and Cowes Week Ltd were looking at innovations to invigorate the event. He also asked if it was possible to get two races a day. LM replied that they are going to launch a strategy of making up races so that if a day has to be cancelled because of too much or too little wind, they will make up that race for classes where they can.

GF offered his support for LM's proposals said that having the fireworks on the Friday makes trading very difficult for many of the high street shops

## **11. Customer service by marina staff**

JC said that somebody who had tried to get an overnight mooring in Cowes over the summer had received a rather blunt and unhospitable 'no room here' reply from both the Yacht Haven and Shephards Wharf, but that although East Cowes Marina had also been a no, they had at least been extremely polite about it. JC then said that this is very rare because Cowes had a very good reputation for welcoming visitors. He admitted he goes on and on about the importance of this and didn't see the need to discuss it any further.

## **12 Recruitment of new CEO update**

JC explained that the process was happening right now and he had written to CHC asking what involvement CHAC would have. There had been over 200 applications and CHC had then invited JC to be an observer during the final five interviews which were all held remotely on Teams. JC said that as far as he could tell any of these final five would have been excellent but he deliberately opted out of further involvement in the process meaning he had no idea who was going to get the job. JC complimented Phil Hagen on doing a terrific job of managing the process. The new CEO will be announced in early January.

JC also admitted that he might have been wrong in a previous meeting to suggest that the successful applicant had to come from the marine industry because one of the final five wasn't from the marine industry and was clearly a very strong candidate for the job.

## **13 CHC policy regarding acquiring club pontoons.**

JC explained that three clubs, the RLYC, RTYC and RYS all own their pontoons off Whitegates and that he had been told by one of the members of what appeared to be an approach from CHC offering to take them over which hadn't been well received. He was sure this was a misunderstanding and asked SM to explain the situation.

SM said he was disappointed to hear about this. Some of those pontoons are towards the end of their lifespans and the RYS had carried out significant work to their pontoon. CHC are also planning to replace some of their own pontoons in the same row so had been talking openly to the RTYC and RLYC about their ones too, making sure they inspect and maintain them and offering to include their pontoons in the CHC replacement programme. There might then be an opportunity for the clubs to move to a leasing arrangement rather than ownership if that suited them. CHC is very open minded and one of the clubs might be interested in moving to a long term leasing arrangement. SM said that he would get back in touch with the clubs to make sure everyone was happy with the discussions.

JC asked if the clubs have to pay rent to the Crown. SM replied that they have to pay CHC a license to cover harbour dues and the Crown Estate regulating cost, but this arrangement pre-dates SM.

DR said he was a member of one of those clubs and he knew this was a huge misunderstanding.

#### **14 CHC annual meeting on 16th December**

SM said that CHC has a statutory requirement to hold a meeting once a year, not to be confused with the AGM, to which all stakeholders are invited. Traditionally this meeting is in May at the ISC. The annual report is available on the CHC website and he hoped everyone would have a look at it.

Due to Covid this years meeting had been postponed but with still no hope of a face to face meeting being possible it had been decided to invite people to a Zoom meeting instead. Invites will be sent nearer the time. There will be a short presentation, maybe ten minutes, and then opening up into a question and answer session. He then said it would be helpful if as many of the questions as possible could be sent in beforehand. All this information will be sent out in an E-newsletter. JC asked how many people would be able to attend. SM said they would be extending their Zoom license to 500.

MS already had a question to ask CHC regarding who in the new setup of both a CEO and HM would have the responsibility for safety in the harbour and would strategic and commercial concerns be able to override safety ones. SM replied that the HM will be reporting directly to the board of commissioners. DR also added that the overall responsibility for safety and closing the harbour rests with the HM not the commissioners, as per the incident in October 2018 when SM had closed the harbour. PJ then mentioned the Designated Safety Person who is also there to make the board aware of any safety considerations and if necessary refer up to the Secretary of State.

SM said that all ports that are the size of Cowes or larger will have a separate HM who reports to the duty holder, either the port manager or the managing director, and from a governance point of view it was sensible to split the safety and commercial statutory functions.

#### **15 Solent Protection Society**

JC said this magazine was more interesting than people might expect and had valuable information about the coastal paths, pollution and the new proposed town at Fawley, and he recommended a quick read by anyone who happens to see a copy lying about.

#### **16 AOB**

LPW said that hot off the press an agreement about Medina yard was close to being signed regarding the planned development.

PJ asked LL about navigational equipment.

KL has seen the latest plans for the Norris Castle development which has a landing platform just outside the harbour.

**Next meeting in March**