

**Draft Minutes of the Cowes Harbour Advisory Committee Meeting
held at Cowes Yacht Haven, on Wednesday 11 January 2023 at 1000**

Present: Mark Southwell (MS) – Chair (RNLI)
Ben Willows (BW) – Deputy Chair (UKSA)
Cllr Michael Paler (MP) – Cowes Town Council
Cllr Anni Adams (AA) – Cowes Town Council
Cllr Tracey Reardon (TR) – East Cowes Town Council
Dave Casson (DC) – Medina Combined Clubs
John Corby (JC) – Waterside Property Owners and West Cowes Boatyards
Bob Holt (BH) Cowes Water Taxis (Water taxis and commercial fishermen)
Dan Jehan (DJ) – Cowes Yacht Haven (Cowes Town Waterfront Trust)
Giles Peckham (GP) – Cowes Clubs and Classes
Lou Newlands (NL) – Cowes High Street Businesses
Mike Townsend (MT) – Boatfolk
Alice Duncan (AD) – Captain, Red Funnel
Ed Walker (EW) – Harbourmaster, Cowes Harbour Commission
Phil Hagen (PH) – Chair, Cowes Harbour Commission
Clive Blount (CB) – Cowes Harbour Commissioner
Gary Hall (GH) – Chief Executive, Cowes Harbour Commission

In attendance:

Sue Matthews - Minute taker

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from: Rob Stewart (RS) – AMC (East Cowes Boatyards); Julian Shawyer (JS) Williams Shipping (Commercial Vessel Operators); Leanna Lakes (LL) Red Funnel; Cllr Carl Love (CL) Isle of Wight Council and Lee Rayment (MR) Solent & Wightline Cruises.

2 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the meeting held on 7 September 2022 were approved.

3 MATTERS NOT COVERED ELSEWHERE

The Committee were saddened to learn of the recent passing of David Riley, who had served for more than six years as a Commissioner and Chair of the Cowes Harbour Commission. He will be greatly missed. A memorial service will be held in London on 2 February 2023 at St Paul's Church, Knightsbridge. Further details can be obtained from John Corby.

4 HARBOUR MASTER'S REPORT

EW highlighted the following:

- The annual safety figures show that incidents have increased mainly due to propulsion failure (49) and speeding.
- Work is underway with the RNLI and RYA on a campaign to raise awareness which should be in place during February.
- No prosecutions, first time offenders only and no repeats. The weekday-weekend ratio is similar, with more incidents on week days, but it is consistent and split between commercial and recreational vessels. Some offending skippers have been invited on board the Red Funnel ferry in order to see the different perspectives.
- AD extended an invitation to all members to also go on board in order to view the channel from the ferry's point of view, and particularly when visibility is restricted at night-time. **MS** to circulate her email address so that members can contact her directly if they wish to take up this invitation.
- MS asked for comments on the Risk Assessment and whether it is available to the public. EW advised it is only available to CHAC committee members. No further comments were made.

- GP asked whether progress had been made on improved security on the moorings. EW reported that night vision equipment is costly for good quality cameras and that no further incidents had been reported for six months and had tailed off. All moorings are covered by CCTV but resources are not available for continual monitoring or monitoring footage when issues are reported to have occurred during a period of days.
- Regarding anchoring and Shrape mud, GP reported that CCYC asked if they could put a mooring down on the Shrape but this was changed in light of the seagrass issue and asked if they could moor up to a race mark instead. EW said he is in conversations with CCYC about options.
- DC asked if he could have copies of the soundings taken regarding the mud. EW said he will send these through when available and advised that it will build up if no maintenance is undertaken and that silt needs to be removed, not just washed away. EW has asked the stakeholder dredging group for their winter campaign plans. The Yacht Haven are not dredging and whilst two or three others would like to, there are no licences in place. EW confirmed that DC is included in the stakeholder dredging group.
- GP thanked EW for sorting out the race mark issues around Gurnard.

As this was EW's last meeting before moving on to his new post at sea, thanks were given to him for being an excellent harbour master who has always been positive and helpful. Members wished him well in his new post.

5 CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT

GH reported on the following:

- Cowes Harbour Survey Results 2022. In total 210 people completed the survey. A high proportion were from visitors and for future surveys he would like to see a higher proportion from those based in Cowes. The Survey was about perception and in terms of the harbour authority, safety and management scored highly and 76% rated these as 4 star or higher.
- Key issue is more berths and visitor pontoons. CHC do constantly look at this but costs are high and not always viable. A request for improved signage and maintenance has already been taken on board for the this winter.
- Some individual comments within the surveys have been responded to.
- MS asked about the pontoon nearest to the floating bridge and if there is a possibility for berths there on the east side of the river. EW said this had been looked into in 2018 with East Cowes Sailing Club but it had not gone any further. People are now more interested in walk-ashore.
- BW asked about increased signage around safety and speed and where they might be located. EW confirmed there are 25 signs already in place.
- There had been a large number of comments re the chain ferry but this is the responsibility of Isle of Wight Council, not CHC.
- MS asked if CHC will offer a flares disposal service of again this year. GH said a decision has not yet been made but it is being reviewed and CB pointed out that the biggest problem is the storage of explosives.
- BH asked about speeding which happens late at night. People need further education on this and possibly flags could be used. He also reported that he thinks it is shallow just past E pontoon.
- Planning permission for change of use and to make changes to Kingston for marine related business has been received. There will be a staged approach to building works, and the first phase will be to store boats on the lower tier. Further information will included in the CHC Newsletter as more detailed proposals are agreed.
- The 125 Year Anniversary of CHC took place on 7 December last year. As part of the celebrations, CHC in partnership with UKSA has launched a workboat apprenticeship scheme and CHC has also launched a bursary scheme. They have committed funding to support young people who do not necessarily have academic skills but have good hands-on skills. CHC will

provide the funding to attend UKSA courses to give insight into the marine sector and specifically courses that potentially lead to employment.

- A schools art competition has been launched for Island schools, to design what they think Cowes Harbour could look like in the future. The winning design will be displayed in the Harbour Commission's office.
- UKSA are putting in oyster beds and looking at how to install them. CHC have agreed to fund the cages for this project.
- GH asked if anyone had heard anything further about the new film studio at Kingston Marine Park as it had gone very quiet but no-one has.
- Shane Wood has been appointed as the new Harbour Master. He will be supported by all at CHC including Jason Lofly (CHC Commissioner) and the deputy Harbour Master. He is ex-RFA and has extensive experience of dredging and piloting. There were 26 applications in all.

6 MARINE INDUSTRY

MS referred to the acquisition of the Harrison site and recently spoke with one of the directors. The site is currently being cleared up. It was suggested that Diverse Marine could be invited to a future CHAC meeting, but overall it was thought that they are probably not in a position yet to share any future plans.

7 COMMERCIAL VESSELS

MS asked AD |(Red Funnel) for her views on the harbour. She said she has good communications with the yacht clubs and there is less disruption from racing yachts than three or four years ago. Yachtsmen understand them and vice versa. She has not noticed any difference between days and weekends but yachts with foreign flags tend to have more problems. MS referred to the new east channel being deeper and straighter and AD agreed that more smaller boats appear to be using it.

8 LEISURE ACTIVITY

Lots of activity on the water and associated activity around the river. There have been some incidents with youngsters swimming from Trinity Pier. GH said CHC are aware and send patrols plus there is signage but there is not much they can do beyond that. There have also been some problems in other areas and MS said if there is hot weather again this year people will need to be vigilant. EW has talked to other harbour masters who experience the same problems.

9 MARINAS, MOORINGS AND BERTHS

Covered in previous reports but MS said it is clear that there is not much likelihood of increasing these. MT reported he is starting a project to see if it is viable to go further south but they only really take visitors on Friday and Saturday nights. They do encourage rallies but only in the shoulder season. BH said The Folly Inn folly drop off has reduced significantly due to lack of hen and stag nights or corporate visitors. MT thinks that with this year's big race regattas overlapping (Fastnet and Cowes Week) there will be pressure on the river. Cowes has a finite amount of space and boats are getting bigger. Some racing yachts do not always stay in Cowes but MP did think the season was looking positive.

10 PUBLIC USE and Access

MS referred to the Norris Castle development and the public slipway on East Cowes Esplanade. TR has been monitoring this but there has been no planning application yet. It is likely that it will become a main road and with no public slipway. BW asked people to object strenuously as it will affect their access to the Shrape. TR will notify all of the deadline for comments as soon as the application comes up.

BH said the more people who comment the better and to try and cover a different selection of reasons. CB said so many slipways are now not available which is sad for a leisure harbour. BW said one of the

challenges on the esplanade is that north and east of the Shrape wall is not protected by IWC flood defences so is unprotected and he has asked the Council to look at the policy again.

11 CHAIR'S UPDATES

MS gave thanks to EW and extended a warm welcome and invitation to Shane Wood for the next meeting in April. Martin Phipps will also attend to share the results of the Harbour Audit which is happening in February.

12 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Wednesday 19 April 2023 at 1000 at Royal London Yacht Club, Cowes. The dates for the next two meetings will be decided at that meeting, together with venues, and it was agreed by all that the January date worked well, as did starting at 1000.

There being no other matters for discussion, the meeting closed at 1110.