

**Approved Minutes of the Cowes Harbour Advisory Committee Meeting
held at Regatta House, Bath Road, Cowes
on Wednesday 24 January at 1000**

Present: Mark Southwell (MS) – Chair (RNLI)
Cllr Anni Adams (AA) – Cowes Town Council
John Corby (JC) – Waterside Property Owners and West Cowes Boatyards
Emma Davis (ED) – Cowes High Street Businesses
Ross Edmunds (RS) – Isle of Wight Council
Bob Holt (BH) - Cowes Water Taxis (Water taxis and commercial fishermen)
Dan Jehan (DJ) – Cowes Yacht Haven (Cowes Town Waterfront Trust)
Leanne Lakes (LL) – Red Funnel
Bob Milner (BM) – Cowes Clubs and Classes
Jess Olden (JO) – East Cowes Marina
Lee Rayment (LR) – Solent and Wightline Cruises
Guy Shelbourne (GS) – Medina Clubs
Mary Scott-Jackson (MS-J) – Cowes Week Ltd
Stuart Tan (ST) - Red Funnel
Bob Trimble (BT) – Cowes Week Ltd/Cowes Combined Clubs
Ben Willows (BW) – Deputy Chair - UKSA
Gary Hall (GH) – Chief Executive, Cowes Harbour Commission
Capt Jon Kidd – Harbour Master, Cowes Harbour Commission

Guest: Richard White – Island Careers Partnership

In attendance: Sue Matthews - Minute taker

MS gave thanks to Mary Scott-Jackson for hosting the meeting at Regatta House and welcomed the new Harbour Master, Capt Jon Kidd, and Guy Shelbourne representing Medina Clubs following the resignation of Dave Casson for health reasons.

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Clive Blount, Giles Peckham, Mike Townsend, Cllr Michal Paler, Cllr Tracey Reardon, Cllr Dave Priddle, Cllr Karl Love, Cllr Lora Peacey-Wilcox, Lou Newlands, Julian Shawyer, Rob Stewart.

2 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the meeting held on 6 September 2023, having been previously circulated, were approved.

3 HARBOUR MASTER'S REPORT

MS introduced Capt. Jon Kidd, who gave an overview of his role having joined Cowes Harbour Commission this month. On safety, he reported 59 incidents since the last meeting, including speeding and wash, and propulsion failure. There was no pollution from a recent sunken boat at the Folly. A boat with propulsion failure was towed to Cowes by the RNLI and an eastern channel mark went adrift. Replacements to channel marks have been made and maintenance tightened up. The CHC Newsletter features a Safety Topic which this month focuses on preparedness for foul weather beyond Cowes and the Solent, and a particular mention of avoiding propulsion failure. He is working with other Solent ports on an awareness campaign on vessel maintenance and will also be reviewing speed and wash and looking at signage at points of entry on the water.

A Port Marine Safety Code Audit will take place next month as well as DfT security audits, and a Trinity House audit in February. There will also be a formal risk assessment for the piloting service.

CHC now have a workboat register and Certificates of Compliance. JK referred to the Hazard Identity Group – there are 31 navigational risk assessments. Consultation should take place with other stakeholders, which has not been done before, so he will be contacting stakeholders to share the register and the mitigation used and conducting reviews of aids navigation. Some pontoons are not easily visible with poor lighting so he would like to discuss ideas for leading marks for foul weather. He has already contacted Red Funnel to discuss the potential for leading lights for the main channel. Regarding leading lights, in response to a comment that there used to be a fixed light that lined up with Watchbell slip, JK said he would look into this. He also reported that two Works Licences have been issued this year with sampling work taking place in April.

Regarding swimming in the harbour, whilst this is illegal and against General Directions, the swimmers return to shore when a patrol boat is spotted and he has no powers ashore to deal with culprits.

Flare disposal – a flare amnesty will take place again this year, probably in first week of July to coincide with Maritime Safety Week. Due to costs incurred last year, there will be a charge per flare of £6. No profit is made from this, and the charge covers costs only.

Dredging – JK reported that he has spent some time checking the plans. Only the RYS and CYH licences are valid. CHC have a test licence with MMO for Kingston, so if that goes ahead the way CHC approaches licences will change in the future and he is hoping to work as a closer dredging community. GS highlighted that Medina mariners are concerned with issues by the Folly and the East Cowes Sailing Club slipway. The slipway at the Folly has started to erode and the primary issue is freedom of access to the water because of the significant increase in mud. JK said they are looking at reestablishing some of the salt marsh and looking for a licence with the MMO which it is hoped will be in place by the end of the year. JK confirmed he is happy to talk to the sailing clubs. With CHC hoping to have its own licencing powers if the licence at Kingston goes through, it will be a lot easier and cheaper. However, each area will still need to do their own samples and these can take two or three months. This is a set process with the MMO. BW said they use Lymington Technical Services who are very good and manage the whole process and he will supply contact details. BH, in relation to dredging at the Folly Scrubbing piles, asked who applies for this and it was confirmed that it is whoever owns the piles.

4 CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT

GH referred to the Port Marine Safety Code Audit and reminded the group that if they have an incident then it would be audited against this Code, so it is important to understand if they comply or not. CHC's Designated Person (Capt. Martin Phipps) gives an excellent presentation on this, which he will be invited to present at the next CHAC meeting.

Kingston update – planning permission has been received with current work focussing on nine planning conditions. This is the first stage only, but it is planned to complete by the summer of this year providing expanded boat storage capacity.

Whitegates pontoon – CHC has taken this over and work has been completed to increase the number of moorings available around the pontoon – 20 moorings for tenders only. Those who may be interested in these should contact the team at Shepards Marina. Regarding moorings, GH said he is aware that there is a significant shortage and high demand. He is working on identifying areas in the river. It is a lengthy process, but it is hoped there may be a business case later in the year, although it might not be workable without securing funding. In response to a question from BW, GH confirmed that the Council own the access and the pathway to access the Whitegates pontoon.

JC raised the issue of moorings not used for significant periods of time and with no boats on them. GH responded that the contract stipulates that if the mooring is not going to be used for any length of time, customers should let CHC know so it can be reallocated during the period it is not going to be used. Two moorings have been re-let as the customer did not want them this year but CHC is reliant on being informed.

Cruise ships - twelve cruise ships visited in 2023. The dates go on the website but not all cruise ships want to publicise this and so some details only go on the website once the ship has arrived. A dedicated member of CHC staff is now working with the cruise ship market in order to attract more ships into Cowes. A uniformed CHC team meet and greet on Trinity Landing with an interactive WebApp and physical town map which includes information not only about traditional tourist attractions but other opportunities above and beyond these which are attractive to 6* cruise ship customers. If possible, local shops are also told of visiting ships in advance as well. GH explained that the cruise ships up to 150m are usually 6* plus ships with exclusive customers - art galleries and such like do well as it is a specific market. If the ships are over 150m, or the weather is not good, anchorage is outside. In response to a question as to whether the Waverley paddle steamer could come in, JK responded that she is not able to turn on her own in the width available and so it is not feasible.

5 MARINE INDUSTRY

MS introduced Richard White of the Island Careers Partnership who explained his role in getting young islanders into marine related work. The partnership was forged in 2018 as a conduit between businesses and where the next generation comes from and education. It includes some primaries and all secondaries, private and special schools. ICP aim to create dynamic, exciting and stimulating opportunities. Each school needs to have a career curriculum but schools only have to demonstrate they have a careers plan and are not judged on this. He tries to share resources that will bring people together. Cowes Enterprise College have a nationally recognised curriculum around maritime and marine industries and shares this on a national scale but collaboration is low. IW College and UKSA offer academic support and qualifications with CeCamm offering engineering maritime composite courses. There are many people involved from the maritime and marine sectors, tourism sector, hospitals, the IW council and agriculture. His role is to find different ways of engaging the schools and headteachers.

Maritime UK is holding a series of workshops where females get involved in the experiences of maritime and marine work. He is looking for 25 ambassadors who are willing to come along. They will also be running an Open for Business event on 23 March 2024 and some maritime and marine industries might want to get involved. MS asked whether those in the room who do employ young people, link in with these events. Both Red Funnel and CYH confirmed they do and DJ is meeting this week to talk about apprentices and getting young people in, and Red Funnel also get involved in the Careers Fair. GS asked whether ICP considered elite sport opportunities or programmes which could lead to them becoming professional yacht racers etc. AA offered RW an invitation to talk to local councillors.

6 COMMERCIAL VESSELS

LR said all was going well and they might be looking to change their pontoon. MS opened the discussion with Red Funnel representatives, LL and ST, concerning the recent bad weather and limitations on the frequency of the Red Jets. LL said it is solely about safe operations of the vessels. RJ6 and RJ7 have a two-metre wave height restriction and RJ4 a one-metre restriction and Red Funnel cannot operate outside of those boundaries. Ships are now built to a Code of Practice and Red Funnel might consider builds in the future with a higher wave height but also need to think about draft so it cannot be any deeper than 2.7m. Raptor replacements may take place around 2029 with the last one 2031. Electric propulsion – it would still be a hybrid and not until 2040. Red Funnel has to have a pathway to zero emissions and also has to know how carbon neutral their fuel is and where it comes from. Replying to a question on the safety of lithium batteries, LL said there is rigorous testing and whilst there is a growing number of cars with batteries, emergency training takes place. JK said CHC will also be having emergency training about how they would be involved in any incident. A comment was made on there currently being a campaign to have a regulator for services to the island and LL said Red Funnel has a regulator which is the MCA.

7 LEISURE ACTIVITIES

Cowes Week Regatta - Bob Trimble reported that there is now a more joined up approach with people realising that if it is to succeed everyone needs to pull together. Cowes Week Regatta is expected to be similar to last year which had around 480 boats although it is hoped to reach the 500 limit. Ultimately it is about the quality of racing and race management, which has been successful, but they now want focus on the onshore experience that competitors get for a festival week of sailing but this does need cooperation.

Cowes Combined Clubs - there are nine clubs behind the regatta, but there is also an interest in sailing throughout the year so there is a broader agenda in talking to partners about how to bring Cowes back up to being a premier destination for racing events of all types up to world class championships. Cowes Week 2026 is the bicentenary of Cowes Week. Competitors have indicated that they do not want it to be smaller or shorter. The racing probably will not be substantially different from any other year, but the vision is to make 2026 really memorable by attracting prominent classes throughout the season, such as the J Class yachts, 12m Class and the Fifes, for possibly four days of racing. They will also be equally concerned to put effort in now for 2027 and beyond. RT has been invited to be part of the discussion around the town council's place plan. He also confirmed that the race marks should be back during March and CHC undertake the work.

8 MARINAS, MOORINGS AND BERTHS

JO reported that bookings are good with a number of rallies booked in, as did DJ who confirmed club rallies and regattas are good, with increased numbers of bookings. JK confirmed that he is in discussion with Red Funnel about rafting, which is under review. For Cowes Week this is extended to 20m.

9 PUBLIC USE / ACCESS

East Cowes slipway – RE reported that his colleagues in Planning suggested waiting until it is known what is happening with Red Funnel in East Cowes and the closure of the slipway. There was agreement on the placement of where it should go but nothing further to report as yet. GS highlighted that the Folly Inn slipway is being undermined and that IWC and Newport Harbour have said the Folly slipway will be closed to motor boats. If it closes there will be no access. LL confirmed that there is still a place by the Red Funnel but not many people use it. It was thought that people do not know it is there or think it cannot be used. LL suggested approaching the Red Funnel staff directly – it is gated but few people ask to use the slipway, so it needs some co-ordination, such as not whilst the ferry is being loaded or unloaded.

10 CHAIR'S UPDATES

There were no further updates.

There being no other matters for discussion, the meeting closed at 1140.

11 DATES OF NEXT MEETINGS

17 April 2024 – 1000 – Regatta House, Bath Road.

September 2024 – date and place to be confirmed.

January 2025 – date and place to be confirmed.