COWES HARBOUR
COMMISSION

Minutes of the 'In Committee' Meeting of Cowes Harbour Commission held at Cowes Harbour Commission Office, Cowes on Friday, 12th September 2025, at 1000

Present:	Phil Hagen – Chairman (PH) Clive Blount (CB) Vanessa Clifford (VC) Fiona Fitzherbert-Brockholes (FF-B) Jason Losty (JL) Rupert MacInnes (RM) Giles Peckham (GP) Jackie Riley (JR) Gary Hall (GH) – Chief Executive
In attendance:	Jon Kidd (JK) – Harbour Master Roger Parrott (RP) – Finance Director

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Declarations of Interest and Declarations of Related Party Transactions for Cowes Harbour Commissioners are documented on the CHC website.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND INTRODUCTIONS

Apologies for absence were received from Mark Bew.

3. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES FROM THE PREVIOUS MEETING and PUBLIC REPORT

The Minutes of the meeting held on Friday, 25 July 2025, having been sent out, it was resolved that they be signed as a true and complete record of business transacted. The Public Report was also unanimously approved.

4. ACTIONS FROM THE PREVIOUS MINUTES

The Action Tracker has been updated to show completed and live actions. A further update was given below:

a. **Red Funnel Risk Assessment and recommendations** – PH gave a confidential update to the Board in that a potential investor has withdrawn, and there is no further information on the new electric boat, Artemis
b. **Odyssey Boat proposal –** GH has received an offer from RS Boats for a free electric boat for three years, which is funded by Innovate UK. After viewing two boats, it was agreed to go ahead and adapt one boat to CHC's specific requirements at a cost of £4k. After three years there is an option to return the boat or purchase it at the going rate for a used electric boat. It will have CHC branding, and RS Boats will maintain and service the boat, which will be delivered on 25 September 2025, with publicity being coordinated with RS Boats.

c. **Cowes200 Funding –** The group has been renamed 'Experience Cowes'. PH recently met with Jonathan Nainby-Luxmoore, the new Chair, on a personal basis and not as a representative of the Harbour Commission. Funding was not discussed and JNL was keen to understand the previous history of Cowes Week. The CHAC also had a briefing from Charles Egerton-Warburton on Experience Cowes explaining the vision and overarching objective. It is still clear that the focus next year will be on the 200th anniversary of Cowes Week.
d. **Fuel berth signage and app –** Following discussion, GH will contact Dan Jehan at CYH with a view to possible signage indicating that fuel is available at both Cowes Harbour and Lallows.
e. **Red Funnel payment terms and contract –** RP confirmed that August harbour dues are due at the end of September and Red Funnel are currently up to date with their account.
f. **Swimming area –** JK has drawn up some ideas which need to be costed and will undertake more investigations into liabilities and water quality.
g. **Water Taxi services –** The boats have been valued at around £10k for the two boats, and GH has offered £20k - £10k for the boats and £10k for goodwill and is awaiting a response. The boats are likely to be used by CHC for activities such as the IW Festival etc.

Actions:
GH to contact Dan Jehan at Cowes Yacht Haven re fuel signage.
JK /JS continue looking at possible swimming areas and undertake further investigations as to liabilities.

5. HARBOUR MASTER'S OPERATIONAL REPORT

The HM Operational Report was circulated with the papers for the meeting and fully considered by the Board. JS highlighted the following:

a. **Harbour Pilotage** – it is very quiet with only six acts of pilotage since July. This is unlikely to change. Scrap metal is now being transported on ferries at a lower price, and the only remaining export is grain. The Board discussed their serious concerns regarding the declining situation relating to the movement of aggregate by road and ferries, and other issues, and CB will gather data for discussion at the next Board meeting on harbour pilotage and movement of aggregates.
b. **Dredging** – this will begin in November for Shepards and will result in a loss of income whilst the marina is closed for two weeks.
c. **New Marina Dredging** – the dredging company have had a bad run of weather resulting in a delay which in turn will cause delays in starting the CHC dredging project. The UXO survey was cancelled at the last minute and is now expected to take place on 7/8 October, which fits in with the delayed dredging start.
d. **PMSC Audit** – this is about 60% complete under the new Code with no major concerns at this stage. Facilities is a major change in the new Code. Martin Phipps will return at the end of September to look at various sites and how they integrate into the facilities section of the Code. An external review takes place every three years.
e. **Chain Ferry** – JK attended a meeting on 10 September and there are now three options: a) do nothing and maintain the service as it stands, b) buy a new chain ferry (Floating Bridge 7) or c) modify the existing chain ferry with additional chains and thrusters. The next stage is for summary papers from the financial and economic aspects to go before the IWC committee on 16 September. JK has said that as long as the service is matched in terms of clearance then CHC, from a navigation and port safety point of view, would be happy.
f. **Change to General Directions –** JK has drafted a risk assessment for towage and will share it with the Clubs to use as a template so that it can be tailored to their own uses. They will need to confirm they have complied with the risk assessment and then announce on Channel 69 that some vessels are being towed. The only exception is for emergency tows.

Actions:
CB to draw up a paper for discussion on harbour pilotage and movement of aggregates.

6. HEALTH and SAFETY REPORT

The Health and Safety Report was circulated with the meeting papers and fully considered by the Board. The following was highlighted:

a. **MAIB/HSE Reports** – JK's report drew the Board's attention to some specific and relevant reports. RM referred to the Lundy Explorer incident and noted the information related to rib charter businesses, inquiring whether this was something that CHC should share with RIB businesses. Whilst most RIB charters are visits from the mainland, JK will pass on the information.
b. **DfT –** ISPS audit was passed with no observations or non-conformities.
c. **Trinity House –** an inspection will take place in October. No issues are expected as lights and buoys are inspected regularly.
d. **Statutory Document review** – JK and Jennie Smith will begin the annual review of all statutory documents once the audits are completed and ahead of reissue in January 2026. They will also look to update the MSMS to tie in more closely with the new Port Safety Code layout.
e. **SaRG** – Version 3 of the Health & Safety Policy is ready and will be reviewed at the next meeting.
f. **Safety video re speed wash** – an instructional video is being made to share on the social media channels to demonstrate compliance with the GDs and other instructional videos are intended.
g. **ISO 14001** – Ann Cromie is looking at this from an environmental view and JK will be looking at the health and safety side and management. He intends to take the ISO lead auditors course next year which will provide the internal ability and knowledge to deal with the ISO standards.

Actions:
None

7. CEO REPORT

The CEO report was previously circulated with the papers and fully considered by the Board. GH highlighted the following:

a. **Marina Update –** The environmental impact assessment being completed by ABPMer is going well. GH & JK have bi-weekly meetings with them and everything still looks good for completion at the end of December.
b. **Crown Estates –** CHC's counteroffer of 7% was rejected. The CE may consider 10% and GH will be discussing this further at a meeting with CE on 15 September 2025. He anticipates there will be some further negotiations and discussions, and following the meeting, he will take further legal advice from Ashfords (Solicitors) on how to counter whatever offers are put forward.
c. **Marina Design –**
   i. GH shared a reconfigured layout of the marina, brought about by discussions with Walcon and the requirement for 6m pontoons on the north and northeastern side. The new configuration caters to the number of 10-12m boats on the CHC waiting list and allows easier access for larger boats than the original configuration. The latest design should reduce costs although shipping costs from Ireland are still being challenged as they currently stand at £800k. Linear metreage is increased overall with the new layout.
   ii. CB asked if there was a halfway solution, given that currently the new marina will not be available for Cowes Week. GH confirmed he has spoken with Walcon about whether something could be done as an interim. This could be construction of the walkway, the southern run and then the 6m pontoons. However, this would require an order to be placed for the 6m pontoons early in order to have them delivered on time. An MMO Licence would still be needed for a temporary solution, which could take 13 weeks to be approved. GH pointed out that CHC would need to commit to a significant cost ahead of planning, so this

would be 'at risk'.

iii. Following discussions, CB asked whether it is worth building the walkway and an L-shaped pontoon as an interim, as reputational risk also needs to be considered.

iv. GH explained he is working towards the end of April for the MMO licence approval and planning permission approval. In parallel, the design is being finalised and quotes are being sought from the other suppliers needed to help build the marina. He advised that as soon as the licence is received, CHC should be in a position to go ahead and then either, from that point, accept that there is a manufacturing time period before starting the construction of the marina, or the Board decides to commit to placing the orders earlier than the end of April so that the manufacturing has already started and the marina build starts very quickly after the end of April. Either way, it will not be ready for Cowes Week but there will be something happening. Reputationally, he would rather see the marina built in full rather than partially. The completed marina is expected to be available by September 2026, pending a smooth execution of the plan.

v. PH asked that a full discussion be set as an Agenda item for the next board meeting and a presentation be given on the options. All commissioners are requested to send their questions and thoughts to GH so that a detailed and informed discussion can take place.

Vanessa Clifford left the meeting.

d. **Visitor Numbers** – it has been a good year, and the year to date is up by 8%. It was agreed to modify the format of the Visitors Year-to-Date chart in the CEO Board Report.

e. **Fuels** – GH has been contacted by another company looking to set up a fuel facility on the Island. They have encountered some difficulty with IWC planning and asked GH if there is any opportunity for them at Kingston. GH advised the Board that there is potentially a space which would suit their requirements on land partly owned by CHC and SGN. They will meet on 16 September 2025 to explore this further.

f. **Cruise ships** – the Orient Express familiarisation visit went extremely well and bookings have been secured for 2027. Harbour dues are likely to be in the region of £20k for each visit. JK is in discussions with Southampton colleagues relating to the length of the vessel and anchorage options.

Actions:
GH to add Agenda item to the next Board meeting: Discussion on marina build options.
ALL to forward questions and thoughts on the new marina build and layout to GH.

A break took place at this stage

8. FINANCE REPORT FOR JULY 2025

Copies of the Financial Management Report for July 2025 were circulated with the papers for the meeting and fully considered by the Board. RP highlighted the following:

i. **Year to Date** – As an overview, the underlying business is close to being on budget and at the end of July the YTD was £3k behind budget. The forecast is still for £250k operating profit although RP is conscious of the commercial shipping situation and the variables with the new marina.

ii. **Afloat Team** – more external income needs to be generated and a marketing drive is being developed.

iii. **Fuel income** – following some analysis of fuel pricing along the south coast, a number of the marinas with fuel facilities have an inflated price for selling fuel which they then discount by circa 30p per litre for annual mooring holders. That preferential rate is more than Cowes Harbour charges, so a one-month trial has been set up by increasing the price by 5p a litre, which is still comparable to the south coast, and GH will be interested to see whether Yarmouth Harbour and Lallows follow.

iv. **90+ day debtors** – All four of David Foster's boats are now listed for sale, and to be sold together, with Cowes Yacht Agency. Other agencies were also consulted.

v. **Analysis of working capital movements** – Fixed assets show a £578k input and a net movement on the bank account of £16k showing good investments in the business.

vi. **Pension fund –**

a. At the last valuation in March 2025, there was £1.17m surplus in the pension fund; however, it is proving extremely difficult to ascertain from IWC what CHC's option is in terms of exiting and looking after the one remaining member. GH reiterated that it is not about redundancy or early retirement and has concerns that IWC think that is the case.

b. CHC wish to exit from the pension fund, and there will be no impact on the employee's employment status. GH has now written to Hymans, clearly setting this out and requesting prompt and clear responses to the questions that have been raised. JR advised that the trustees of the pension fund will pay the tax and CHC would receive the net cash.

c. The employee has been assured that they will not lose out as a consequence, as CHC will be looking to pay their pension up to normal retirement age, and they would also have the opportunity to join CHC's new pension scheme.

Actions:
None

9. ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY REPORT

The Environment & Sustainability report was previously circulated with the papers and fully considered by the Board. FF-B highlighted the following:

i. **ISO 14001 accreditation and EcoPorts** – Whilst there is a long way to go to achieve ISO14001 accreditation, the EcoPorts is a good starting point using their self-assessment method. The Council's Green Impact Scheme is also an excellent first step. It was acknowledged that achieving ISO 14001 is not necessarily essential and involves a significant amount of work.

ii. **Report layout** - The commissioners complimented Ann Cromie (AC) on the layout and content of her report. FF-B reminded the Board not to lose sight of some of the high-level conservation work and confirmed that AC continues to attend some of those meetings.

Actions:
None

10. CHAC MEETING

i. The meeting took place on 10 September 2025. GH, JK and AC all briefed the group. Much of the meeting was taken up with Charles Egerton-Warburton's brief on Experience Cowes. It was a good meeting and no specific issues were raised.

ii. GP raised that he has received some kickback in that there is a lack of information from commissioners and wondered whether this was because CHAC representatives are not communicating onwards. As a consultative body the CHAC is a good size, but as an information body it is not necessarily working if members are not fulfilling the brief of disseminating the information. GH confirmed that the CHAC minutes are published on the CHC website.

iii. GH will issue to the Board some detail and information which Board members can use when being asked publicly about the delays to the new marina. The newsletters are excellent at communicating information, and it was also suggested to put something on Facebook saying that people should talk to their CHAC representative.

iv. PH asked that commissioners should be made aware of any incidents quickly, possibly by just a one-liner via WhatsApp, so that they are not put on the backfoot.

Actions:
GH to provide information to commissioners for use when publicly questioned on the new marina build.

11. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

a. **App Taxi numbers and floating toilet block** - FF-B raised that there are two water taxi numbers on the App, which are not always answered.

b. **Flare disposal facility** – JK updated on the miscommunications from the Council on the requirements under HSE. It is hoped to have the facility ready at the end of September or early October, and he will inform the Board of the opening date.

c. **Lloyds Bank loan** - RP sought approval from the Board to pay off the loan, details of which are set out in the Executive summary. The Board approved unanimously.

d. **Auditors** – Harrison Black have informed RP that they will be unable to continue as CHC's auditors. Although turnover is less than £15m, CHC will continue to be independently audited because of the nature of the organisation and it is good practice when taking into account the guidance within the Ports Good Governance Guidance document. RP will now look at alternative audit provision and report back at the next meeting. Harrison Black's fees were £9k for 2024, but RP advised that it is likely to be at least £15k going forward, and this has been built into the forecast.

e. **Fishing on Trinity Landing** – PH has been made aware of two incidences of fishing lines being entangled with boats. JK advised that the GDs allow for fishing, so any change would necessitate revising the GDs, but it does not appear to be a regular problem, and fisherman are asked to draw their lines in when boats pass.

f. **Red Funnel discount for staff** – RP advised that there are corporate books of Red Jet Saver Tickets which can be purchased directly from the Harbour Office, Shepards or through Kingston Boatyard and are available for all staff, commissioners, family and friends.

g. **Post-season gathering for staff** – the next staff gathering will be at the Sugar Store at 2.30pm on Friday 24 October and all commissioners are invited and welcome to go along. GH thinks this would be a good opportunity for the Board to interact with the teams and for them all to meet.

h. **CHC Cowes Week Reception** – FF-B commented on the excellent evening and in particular the food provision. Commissioners agreed that feedback is very positive and its success is possibly due to the wider range of people invited to the event and not just those from the yachting community. There is a marketing cost but it does enhance the perception of the Harbour Commission.

i. **Annual Mooring Holders reception** - GH shared that he is currently looking at having a similar event for annual mooring holders next Spring, which would also give them an opportunity to provide direct feedback on their worries and concerns.

Action:
RP to seek alternative audit provision.

The meeting closed at 1300.

Date of next meeting: Friday 24 October at 1000 at Cowes Harbour Commission Office, Cowes, Isle of Wight

24/10/2025