

LYMINGTON HARBOUR ADVISORY GROUP

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 22ND SEPTEMBER 2020

At 1700 hrs on Microsoft Teams

PRESENT:

Rupert Wagstaff (Marinas), Chairman
Roy Froud (Recreational users – RlymYC, LTSC, Saiability)
Don Mackenzie (Lymington Society)
Cllr Barry Dunning (Lymington & Pennington Town Council)
Guy Standley (local businesses)

ATTENDANCE:

Ryan Willegers (Chief Executive and Harbour Master)
Tim Harford (Chairman LHC)

1. Apologies for absence

Peter Ferguson (NFDC Coast Protection)
Adrian Whinney (Wightlink)
Rob Thompson (Commercial boat owners)
Peter Lock (recreational users – LARC, L&DSFC & LSS)
David Illsey (NFNPA)
Al Mackay (RNLI)
Bob Chapman (Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust) J
John Clarke (Lymington, Keyhaven and District Wildfowling Association)

2. Minutes of previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 24th September 2019 were approved

3. Matters Arising from meeting of 24th September 2019

3(a) Town Quay Mooring Reconfiguration Project (Agenda Item 3a) - This project was completed on the 27th February and was opened for business on the 2nd March 2020. Unfortunately, the planned official opening was cancelled due to Covid-19.

3 (b) Town Quay Washrooms (Agenda Item 3b) - Much has happened in the last 12 months including a desire between Lymington and Pennington Town Council and New Forest District Council to try and improve the public realm at Town Quay through exploring options to create a viewing platform on the roof and incorporate a kiosk in the new building and there were further rounds of public consultation. Unsurprisingly, when the architect provided QS estimates on the 23rd March, the scheme was substantially over the combined budget. Because of this and in recognition of the Covid-19 lockdown and the potential implications for

each organisations finances, the project was paused. On the 7th September the project team reconvened and it was agreed that the currently costed scheme was not affordable. The budget was also reviewed in light of the impact of Covid-19 and LHC are still waiting for clarification on the amount that Lymington and Pennington Town Council can now contribute. In the light of Covid-19 LHC also believe that they should not progress with the communal lobby/reception area and revert to individual cubicles accessible through PIN protected doors direct from the pavement. This should significantly reduce the area of the building they will need and therefore cost.

3 (c) Seawall Adjacent to RLymYC (Agenda Item 3d) - The EA/NFDC have undertaken temporary remedial repairs to this section of the seawall wall.

3 (d) Provision of Dinghy Moorings (Agenda Item 3 e) – As indicated previously, consideration of the provision of non-tender dinghy moorings accessible from the shore has been incorporated into the ongoing review of mooring provision that forms part of the objectives of the current strategic plan.

3 (e) 2020 to 2025 Strategic Plan (Agenda Item 5) – As noted at LHAG’s September 2019 meeting, the Strategic Plan was approved at the Commissioners meeting on the 23rd September 2019. It was subsequently published on the 1st October 2020 and is available on the LHC website.

3 (f) W Class Ferries - Engine failures (Agenda 7 b) – As has previously been reported, following several engine failures on the W Class, most recently in December 2018, to reduce the risk of further failures, pending the outcome of MAIB investigations, the W Class were put into mitigation measures. Mitigation measures were agreed with the regulators and included a change to the operational engine settings. LHC were keen to ensure that this did not adversely impact on the wake produced which may affect the safety of small craft. LHC therefore monitored the effects of the new settings closely following their implementation last year. Following 18 months of safe operation and investigative work involving the MCA, MAIB, the engine manufacturers and Lloyds Classification Society, the vessels came out of mitigation at the end of July. Throughout this period, Wightlink liaised regularly with LHC and LHC also had a joint meeting with the MAIB. LHC are still awaiting the publication of the MAIB investigation report.

4. LHAG Membership

4 (a) On the 16th May, John Clark came to the end of his first 3 year term of office since being re-nominated to represent the interests of Lymington and Keyhaven Wildfowlers. Under LHAG’s constitution, John was eligible to continue for a further term and has been reappointed. His new term will expire on the on the 29th July 2023.

4 (b) On the 29th July, Peter Lock came to the end of his first 3 year term of office since being re-nominated to represent the interests of Lymington Amateur Rowing Club, Lymington & District Sea Fishing Club and Lymington Sea Scouts. Under LHAG’s constitution, Peter was also eligible to continue for a further term and has been reappointed to serve a further 3 year term ending on the 29th July 2023.

4 (c) Bob Chapman came to the end of his second term of office representing Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust Interests (HIWWT) on the 03/07/2020. As required under LHAG's constitution, after every 2nd term LHC reconfirm with the nominating organisation/s who they would like to nominate. HIWWT asked that Bob continue and he has been reappointed for a further three year term.

4 (d) On the 31st August 2020, Peter Upcher also came to the end of his second term of office representing Royal Lymington Yacht Club, Lymington Town Sailing Club, Lymington Sailability and Lymington RNLI. These organisations were reconsulted on their representation going forward. Lymington Town Sailing Club enquired if it was possible for the clubs to each have their own representation. Following consultation with Commissioners and the Chairman of LHAG, this was declined as it would upset the balance of the representation and also make the group too large. It could also lead to other similar leisure organisations also requesting individual representation. The RNLI also asked if they could have their own representation as their interests did not easily align and sometimes conflicted with those of leisure users. This was accepted by the Commissioners.

Accordingly, Lymington Town Sailing Club, Royal Lymington Yacht Club and Lymington Sailability nominated Roy Froud to be their representative. Lymington RNLI nominated Alastair Mackay to represent their interests. Appointment letters have been issued, with both taking effect from the 7th September 2020 for an initial term of three years.

4 (e) On behalf of the Commissioners and the advisory group, Ryan Willegers thanked all who have served on LHAG for their work on behalf of the river community.

5. Commissioners

Since LHAG's meeting last September, the following changes to the Commissioners have taken place:-

Alison Towler reappointment for a 2nd term – ends 31/10/2023 (proposal at 21/09/2020 meeting)

Mike Bowles new appointment – co-opted 01/08/2020 to 31/10/2020 then 1st term from 01/11/2020

Tim Harford reappointed for a 2nd term – ends 31/10/2022

Bob Mitchell reappointed for 2nd term – ends 31/10/2022

Jane Challener reappointed for a 2nd term - ends 31/03/2022

John Morrow new appointment – 1st term from 01/08/2020

Tim Harford elected chair from 01/06/2020

Alison Towler elected vice chair from 01/06/2020 (replaced Tim Harford who became chair)

Retiring Commissioners

Richard Jenner retired as chair on the 31/05/2020. Richard retires as a Commissioner on the 31st October after serving for 3 terms (9 years).

Paul Martin retires as a Commissioner on the 31st October after serving for 2 terms (6 years).

6. Commercial Pontoons (Fishing Boats)

The commercial berth area was modified as part of the Town Quay redevelopment plans following consultation, including with the commercial fishermen, Lymington Amateur Rowing Club (LARC) and Haven Quay. Both supported the layout which was changed from LHC's

original intentions because of requests from the commercial fishermen to increase the size of the turning space opposite their working berth.

However, following a period of use, LARC identified that particularly on ebb tides they were finding it difficult to safely transit under the railway bridge from their new premises because of the proximity of a commercial catamaran on the berth adjacent to the fairway. (Note: the fairway had been enlarged from when they did their sea trials before committing to moving to the new location).

The Commercial Fishermen also asked if the four pontoon layout could be altered to a three pontoon layout in order to create more space between berths. This would allow for more flexibility to change boats in future. To resolve the issue experienced by LARC and meet the request of the commercial fishermen, the number of pontoons would need to reduce from four to three, with two of the three being extended. A consequence of this is that it reduces the turning area opposite the commercial berths albeit the area is still larger than the pre-project area.

Following further consultation with the fishermen, LARC and Haven Quay to agree a revised three pontoon layout (two longer pontoons) and work to establish that the two longer pontoons can be achieved by reconfiguring the existing pontoons with some modifications, the Commissioners agreed to progress, subject to a marine licence being granted. A further benefit of the additional flexibility of the three pontoon spacing is that it will allow smaller boats to be berthed adjacent to Haven Quay thus improving access. The application for a licence was lodged in July and LHC hope to have a successful outcome in time to undertake the works this winter.

7. Slipway Development

At the July LHC meeting, Rupert Wagstaff (LHAG) indicated that in relation to the slipway development, he felt that LHC would need to invest in producing some design options to act as a discussion stimulus with other partners on financing. The Chair and Vice Chair of the Commissioners and Ryan had some further discussion on this.

They noted that none of the other parties have fulfilled their action point from the January meeting of the slipway working group, to consult their organisations and report back on whether there was a willingness 'in principle' to adopting the proposed partnership funding approach to develop a scheme to achieve the shared objectives. It was recognised that the delay was likely to be due to the impact of Covid-19.

It was felt that before LHC incur consultancy fees on developing this project, the question of financing 'in principle' needed to be resolved. There also needed to be a clearer acknowledgment that this was a medium to long term project (probably 5 to 10 years) given the likely impact on each organisation's finances and the timeline for the Environment Agency project to improve (raise) the flood defences in response to predicted seas level rise. The requirements of the latter could have a material impact on the design of a new slipway and any supporting infrastructure.

Given the above, it was proposed that the next meeting with LHC's project partners seeks to firm up on these issues for the main scheme, but also opens a discussion on whether there are some lower cost changes that LHC could make in the short term that would provide a material benefit/improvement to slipway users until such time as a bigger scheme can progress

8. Covid-19

Financial

Like most businesses, back in March the Commissioners had to take prompt action to safeguard the harbour given the unknown implications of lockdown and the potential financial implications this entailed.

From a financial perspective they took advantage of various Government support packages available including the furlough scheme and made decisions to cut all non-essential expenditure to protect their cash position given the significant uncertainty surrounding future income at that time.

This included taking an early decision to try and guarantee some income from the visitor berths during an unknown lockdown period through allocating approximately two thirds of the visitor walk ashore berths at Town Quay to full season summer lets until the 30th September. The mid river visitor moorings were also allocated on this basis. There was a delay in getting some of these long term visitor lets onto the moorings because of the restrictions in the initial lockdown period.

The Dan Bran pontoon berths were kept in reserve in anticipation of opening at some point in future and in recognition that a large number of rally's had already been pre-booked. Although restrictions were partially relaxed in May allowing short stay visits, in practice LHC had very few short stay requests. It was not until the 4th July when overnight visitors were permitted that visitor business picked up and since then, like elsewhere in the Solent, they have been full on most days with an unprecedented level of demand.

Next season LHC will not allocate long term lets (LTV's) to the walk ashore visitor berths at Town Quay on a full season basis. If we enter a lockdown period again where overnight visitor stays are not permitted, they will attempt to fill some of the berths with LTV's, but only on a monthly basis so that they can revert back to normal visitor use when restrictions are eased. If we do not enter into a lockdown period, all walk ashore berths will be kept available for normal visitor use.

Use of the mid river visitor moorings will be closely monitored and judgements will need to be made balancing overnight visitor demand with Covid risk management (including wash-room capacity) and it may still be desirable to let some of the mid river visitor berths to LTV's.

Covid-19 Operations and Covid Safety Planning

Since March LHC have been working to a risk mitigation plan that was produced to keep staff and customer safe and comply with the Governments Covid secure workplace

guidance. The plan is based on risk assessments of activities and is reviewed when there are changes to government guidance.

A further reason for restricting visitor berth numbers was a concern about maintain social distancing, including within washrooms. To minimise this risk, LHC encouraged all boats that had onboard facilities to use them. LTSC notified LHC that they would not reopen their washrooms when lockdown ended because they did not feel they could make them Covid secure. This meant that any Dan Bran visitors that needed to use shore facilities had to initially use the public toilets at Bath Road or LHC's washroom facilities at Town Quay. LHC subsequently agreed to lease the two unused showers and one toilet in the Bath Road toilet block from NFDC until mid October when the Dan Bran pontoon will close for dredging.

For the initial weeks in July LHC did not permit rafting on the Dan Bran pontoon so they could monitor social distancing and the demand for/use of the washrooms. As they got more confidence that rafting can be managed in a way that mitigated Covid risk, LHC allowed a raft of two. In the case of rallies, where the organiser accepted responsibility for ensuring the published safe rafting protocol was followed, a raft of three was allowed in exceptional circumstances.

A further key risk mitigation measure to provide resilience against a Covid infection in the workplace over the summer season was to split outside staff into two separate teams that work on a days on days off roster pattern that ensures they do not meet. To achieve this extra seasonal cover was needed. While this achieved the objective of mitigating Covid risk, the actual number of outside staff available on most days was lower than under the normal roster pattern. The contingency for office staff was to put measures in place to facilitate home working if needed.

It is fair to say that both the office and outside teams were under resourced for the unprecedented level of activity experienced since lockdown restrictions were eased and they will need to plan accordingly for 2021.

9. Any Other Business

Don Mackenzie asked if it had been a missed opportunity for a study to identify any effects of the ferries not running and thought it had been visibally noticeable that the water had lower than normal turbidity and would this lead to a higher dredging requirement to keep the navigational channel at the required depth. Ryan Willegers responded that as no baseline data was available and the period in which the ferries didnt run at all was limited, it was felt a study would not have any benefits.

It was noted that it was good to see the sea wall area adjacent to the RlymYC was now open again to the public and that the repair was in the end cheap to effect and how daft it was that the area had been closed off for years for no good reason.

The rowing club have issued permits to Redrow residents who join the club to allow access to the Lymington Amatuer Rowing Club (LARC) pontoons in a response to high demand in the summer as an attempt to control who uses the pontoon.

Minutes taken by R. Wagstaff