

LYMINGTON HARBOUR ADVISORY GROUP

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 12th JANUARY 2016

At 1700 hrs at the Royal Lymington Yacht Club.

PRESENT:

Andrew Wilkes (Business Interests) Chairman
Rupert Wagstaff (Marinas), Vice Chairman
Sandie James (Wightlink)
Barry Dunning (Lymington & Pennington Town Council)
Bob Chapman (Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust)
David Illsey (New Forest National Park Authority)
John Clarke (Lymington, Keyhaven and District Wildfowling Association)
Andrew Colenutt (NFDC Coast Protection)

IN ATTENDANCE:

Ryan Willegers (Chief Executive and Harbour Master)
Peter Mills, (Hrbr Commissioner and Chairman of Moorings Sub-committee)

1. **Apologies for absence**

Geoff Holmes (Lymington Harbour Commissioners Chairman)
Peter Upcher (Recreational Users)
Rob Thompson (Commercial Boat Owners)
Peter Lock (Lymington Rowers)

2. **Minutes of previous meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on 19th October 2015 were approved.

3. **Matters Arising:**

(a) Strategic Plan Progress

At their meeting on 12th January, LHC considered revised options for enhancing the walk ashore visitor facilities at Town Quay as part of a general reorganisation of the area. They also looked at alternative options for increasing resident berths without impacting on the width of the small boat channel in Horn Reach. LHC would now like to consult with LHAG. RW outlined the new plans and a discussion followed. The following points are noted:

- The number of residents', commercial and fishermen's moorings remain unchanged. The number of "walk ashore visitors' moorings in the Town Quay area increases from 19 to 51 and the number of "non-walk-ashore visitor's moorings decreases from 97 to 33.
- Concerns raised about the fairway width have been addressed by changing the moorings on the proposed north pontoon to a single row of "alongside" berths. The minimum width is now 25.2m which is greater than the downstream approaches and greater than the current minimum width between the visitor pontoon and the commercial fishing berths. By moving

the proposed commercial berth further downstream and by reconfiguring moorings the new plans also increase the available navigation space for fishing vessels maneuvering to access the commercial quay. The width of the channel between the slipway and Haven Quay also increases.

- At Graham Butler's request, RW & CF attended Town Quay after a sustained period of heavy rain to observe the tidal flows in the location where the previous proposal showed the fishermen's berths. Although under the new proposal the fishermen's berths had been relocated in line with feedback received, GB wanted officers to see that the previously expressed concerns were genuine. RW, CF and Graham Butler monitored the tidal flow where the fishing berths and channel access had been proposed under the previous plan and RW reports that the tidal flows were minimal and not sufficient to be a cause for concern for manoeuvring boats as, while there was a lot of flood water coming under the bridge it was further out towards the existing channel before the flow turned south east to follow the bend in the river.
- The southern berths on the north pontoon have yet to be allocated - they may be used for visitors, sublets or residential moorings. LHC will consider the pontoon usage and make their decision following consultation. Vessels will not be rafted on these berths.
- LHC plan to apply for full planning consent for the scheme. It is uncertain whether or not this is necessary but it is to be done in the spirit of consulting as widely as possible with all stakeholders.
- The funding and business case calculations have yet to be finalised.
- JC asked about dredging in the proposed fishermen's area - RW confirmed that the area is already dredged and would continue to be under the any new proposals.
- RW proposed that AW and he had a meeting with fishermen to discuss the scheme

It is also proposed to install a pontoon with 13 finger berths for small yachts on the northwestern side of the southern wave screen. These berths would be used for annual resident moorings (11 berths) and to help manage the movement of sublets around the river (2 berths). It is noted that space to keep tenders to serve these berths is limited. The small boat channel is unaffected.

LHC have requested LHAG's views on the proposals and, if possible, would appreciate them by the beginning of March. Members agreed to consult with parent organisations and endeavor to send their responses to AW by the last week of February so that he can collate them and advise LHC.

(b) Harbour Infrastructure - LTSC showers

Work commenced on the showers on Monday 4th January and is expected to be completed by the end of March. As previously reported LHC will contribute up to 50% of the refurbishment costs up to a maximum of £70k towards the development of these facilities. This will be in the form of an advance service fee for visitors using LHC's Dan Bran pontoon to use the facilities for a fixed number of years – the number of years to be calculated based on an agreed formula.

(c) Scoot Ferries

Unfortunately the new Scoot ferry service between Lymington and Yarmouth which started on the 1st September ceased trading on the 19th December. An official receiver has been appointed. LHC has filed a claim with the official receiver for outstanding harbour dues in the sum of £4.3k excl VAT. Harbour dues revenue received from Scoot during the trading period amounted to £11.6k plus VAT.

It was noted that there is now no late night ferry service which is a loss for both the Lymington and Yarmouth communities. LHAG would support any efforts LHC's might make in future to encourage and support a new service. It was noted that LHC have to be fair and even-handed to all operators.

(d) New Website

The new Lymington Harbour website has been launched which LHC hope users will find attractive, informative and of more use than its predecessor. The new web site will allow LHC to keep people informed of changes and news more easily and improve customer communication. The new site also offers the opportunity to subscribe to receive electronic newsletters, local navigation updates and details of special offers. LHC will shortly circulate an initial eNews letter to make customers aware of the new site and associated features.

LHAG members who had seen the new site thought it was very good.

4. Commissioner re-appointments and recruitment

Interviews took place in November and December to fill the vacancy arising from John Shiner's retirement as a Commissioner at the end of October.

The interview panel, which included the Vice Chairman of LHAG and Cllr Michael White as an independent person, have made recommendations for two appointments which were approved by the Commissioners at their meeting on the 11th January. Two people have been offered positions: one to fill the immediate Commissioner vacancy and a second, with a strong finance skill-set, to be co-opted to have a handover period with Clifford Jakes (who chairs the Finance Committee) and who retires in October prior to full appointment.

At their meeting on the 11th January the Commissioners re-appointed Geoff Holmes as Chairman and Clifford Jakes as Vice-chairman.

5. Dredging and Habitat Recharge update

(a) Wightlink Ferries Mitigation Scheme

The EMP (Environmental Management Panel), who are responsible for monitoring the scheme, met on the 19th November 2015 to consider the findings of the latest monitoring report which was issued on the 4th November. The key conclusions of the meeting were:-

- It was agreed that the recharge had worked very effectively. Since March 2013, the sediment had been retained and was ecologically functioning. Based on this evidence, and the result of the separate ferry monitoring work, there was confidence that there was no adverse effect on the integrity of the Solent European Marine Site (EMS) and that such an effect would not occur over the coming years.

- As a result, a 5-year pause in the monitoring programme was agreed and it was concluded that the next meeting of the EMP should be held in November 2020. The Panel was confident that the European Marine Site integrity would not be affected based on the evidence collected over the last seven years.

- The Panel accepted that, should any ferry effects arise (none had been seen to date), they would be slow and progressive over the 30 year lifespan of the ferry operations. Any unforeseen issues could be addressed in the future as they occurred.

- In 2020 the EMP would be able to consider monitoring work undertaken by NFDC and the Environment Agency as part of their routine coastal monitoring work and advise on further data collation and monitoring requirements. The EMP will also consider the need for mitigation measures if required. The Panel noted that, by that time, it would be able to evaluate more clearly the stability of the recharge against the changes that will have taken place in the Lymington Estuary.

The minutes of the EMP meeting and the monitoring report are published on the Wightlink website.

(b) LHC Boiler Marsh Bay Recharge

LHC's application to increase the quantities of mud licenced for placement as part of the three year bottom dumping trial at Boiler marsh was successful and a new licence was granted on the 13th November. The new licence totals have increased from 4,170 tonnes to 7,000 tonnes (year 2) and from 5,920 tonnes to 10,000 tonnes (year 3). Between the 2nd November and the 1st December 63 barge loads (6,883 tonnes) were placed for the year 2 allocation.

LHC are continuing to liaise with regulators on the monitoring requirements they would like to see in place to provide reassurance that intertidal mudflat communities around the deposition site will not be impacted should in the long term and will have chance to recover between dredging campaigns.

R Wag asked about the current status of the Boiler Marsh replenishment scheme. AC said that much of the mud has been retained and is being re-colonised with plant growth.

(c) JC asked about the maintenance dredging currently taking place in the southern part of the river. RW explained that the navigation marks were re-aligned in 2010 to the edge of the channel. At that time it was agreed with Natural England that the waters within the channel would be dredged to maintain the channel. The waters outside the channel are within the SSSI. Dredging on the west side of the channel has been completed and the east side should be completed in the next two years or so. It is planned to dredge the east side of the channel south of Tar Barrel navigation post next year.

6. Any other business

- (a) In response to a question from AW, RW outlined planned changes to the mooring holders payment systems:

Direct debits - receiving payments by direct debits was investigated by LHC. Initial costs would amount to approximately £1,200 plus transaction charges for the first year. LHC have decided to gauge the demand and viability for this form of transaction by sending out a questionnaire to mooring holders. This will take place in May 2016.

Credit card charges - credit card companies charged an average of 2.55% + Vat commission for transactions in 2015 and LHC's charges last year amounted to £11,200. The majority (£8,700) related to the payment of mooring holder invoices. LHC plan to levy a 2.5% + Vat charge in future when receiving credit card payments for annual and sublet moorings in order to recover their costs for these transactions. Payment by debit card will remain commission-free as will credit card charges for other transactions such as visitor and slipway fees.

- (b) JC asked if a decision had been made about the proposed Solent Marine Conservations Zones - no decision has been announced to date.

7. Next Meeting: Tuesday 12th April 2016