

LYMINGTON HARBOUR ADVISORY GROUP

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 19th October 2021

At 1700 hrs at RLymYC

PRESENT:

Rupert Wagstaff (Marinas), Chairman
Roy Froud (Recreational users – RlymYC, LTSC, Sailability)
Don Mackenzie (Lymington Society)
Cllr Barry Dunning (Lymington & Pennington Town Council)
Guy Standley (local businesses)
Peter Lock (Recreational users – LARC, L&DSFC, LSS)
John Clarke (Lymington, Keyhaven and District Wildfowlers Association)
Steve Avery (NFNPA)
Al Mackay (RNLI)

ATTENDANCE:

Ryan Willegers (Chief Executive and Harbour Master)

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Peter Ferguson (NFDC Coast Protection)
Barry Smith (Wightlink)
Rob Thompson (Commercial boat owners)
Bob Chapman (Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust)

Minutes of previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 22nd September approved and published on LHC website

1. Matters Arising From meeting of the 22nd September 2020

1.a Town Quay Washrooms - On the 21st July after a three year process, NFDC took the decision to abort their plan for a new washroom / café / bar building due to public feedback and the financial effects of the pandemic. Instead, they will now refurbish the existing building with a view to it remaining in service for between 5 and 8 years. NFDC will now review the need for local facilities and their location as part of future Local Plan Part 2 work.

So LHC are now back with LHC's original plan to refurbish its facilities within the existing building. LHC have agreed a framework with NFDC for LHC's existing facilities to be refurbished as part of their wider building refurbishment this winter, albeit noting that this will be subject to contractor availability to conclude the works within the desired timescale. This will not be known until early November when tender bids are received.

1.b Commercial Pontoons – Works to reconfigure the commercial pontoons to create more space between berths and improve navigation space for Lymington Amateur Rowing Club vessels

transiting under the railway bridge were completed in April 2021. Peter Lock confirmed that this was a great improvement, removed previous safety concerns and thanked LHC.

RWill reported that the commercial fisherman have requested an electric davit on the quay and that this area of the quay is fenced off to better restrict access to the general public. Barry Dunning requested that if this progressed and there was the opportunity to install a power supply for the Christmas tree this would be of benefit to the council. RWill also reported that the pre app for barrier protection to the edge of the quay in areas that are not working quay was rejected by the conservation officer and so liability for this area of the quay is to revert to the council under a new agreement.

1.c Slipway Development - A project workgroup meeting was held on the 17th November 2020 where it was noted that the project was temporarily paused, pending receipt of Environment Agency (EA) information on flood defence levels (awaiting new sea level data) and the formation of their plans for sea defences in the slipway area (likely timeline 3-4 years). Also, to take account of the impact of the pandemic on the respective organisation's finances and the likelihood of the affordability of making funding contributions. Once the EA outline plans are known, LHC will initiate an option analysis to identify and cost prospective schemes.

In the interim, it was agreed for an interclub working group to give consideration to what low cost initiatives would provide greatest benefit to users experience and safety in the shorter term. Following further feedback and discussion, the following initiatives are in the process of being taken forward by the Commissioners:-

- LHC to progress a trial of using white thermoplastic lines (like used on roads but slightly more raised and mixed with grit) to offer a surface to step on in the lower part of the concrete part of the slipway that suffers the most from algae. This is underway and feedback has been requested.
- LHC will cover the upstream wall with vertical fender strips to protect boats tied off while owners collect their trailers. A quote has been received from Walcon Marine (supply and fix) and LHC are also looking at another potential supplier (supply only).
- LHC to lay new chain parallel with the slipway on its upstream side the slipway from the existing high water point down as far as the area where the slipway drops off. Two buoys will be installed using chain risers, one approximately at the end marking the drop off and one about half way between the end and the concrete slipway proper. This is to offer single handed dinghy moorings tie off options while users collect their trailers. This was installed on the 13th September 2021 and LHC are awaiting feedback.

2. LHAG Membership

Since the last meeting of LHAG the following membership appointments have been made:-

Re-appointment

Rob Thompson (Commercial Boat Owners) - to 15/04/2024

Cllr Barry Dunning (Local People) - to 24/09/2024

Rupert Wagstaff (Marinas) - to 05/01/2024

Don Mackenzie (Local People) - to 04/07/2024

New Appointment

Barry Smith (Wightlink) – to 09/06/2024

Steve Avery (New Forest National Park Authority) – to 28/07/2024

Left Service

Adrian Whinney (Wightlink)

David Illsey (New Forest National Park Authority)

3. Commissioners

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

Reappointments/New Appointments

Chris Lisher reappointed for a 2nd Term – end 31/10/2024

Alison Towler was re-appointed for a 2nd term – ends 31/10/2023

Mike Bowles was appointed for 1st Term – ends 01/11/2023

Paul Harrison was appointed for a 1st Term – ends 30/04/2024

Philip Naylor was co-opted from the 01/05/21 to 11/01/2022 when he will succeed Andrew Richards who will retire in January. From the 11/01/2022 Philip Naylor is appointed for a 1st Term – ends 11/01/2025

Retired Commissioners

Richard Jenner retired on the 31st October 2020 after serving for 3 terms (9 years).

Paul Martin retired as a Commissioner on the 31st October 2020 after serving for 2 terms (6 years).

Bill Peach retired as a Commissioner on the 30th April 2021 after serving for 2 terms (6 years) plus a three month co-option period.

Bob Mitchell retired on the 20th September 2021 (partway through 2nd Term) after serving 5 years. This was an unexpected retirement due to ill health.

Recruitment

LHC has just advertised for a Commissioner with accountancy professional with commercial experience to replace Bob Mitchell. Also, at their September 2021 Board meeting, Commissioners agreed to co-opt a Commissioner with environmental credentials (marine ecologist or similar) to help guide and support LHC's management of the harbour environment and to help inform their climate change adaptation. This is also the subject of a current recruitment process.

4. Finance

LHC's audited report and accounts for the year ending 31st March 2021 were approved at the Commissioners July board meeting and are published on LHC's website. Key point to note is that like many businesses, LHC turnover suffered due to the pandemic but due to a focus on cutting (or delaying) all non-essential expenditure and taking advantage of Government support schemes (business rates/grants/furlough), LHC was able to significantly mitigate the impact of Covid-19.

The current turnover forecast for FY 2021/22 is positive, with income predicted to be substantially above last year and also above budget. This is largely due to the very good season for visitors, helped by the Covid staycation effect and the new walk ashore facilities at Town Quay.

5. Strategic Plan

Prior to the meeting attendees were forwarded an edited version of the most recent progress update report to Commissioners (September 2021) setting out progress to date on the objectives of the strategic plan. Questions were invited on the progress update. RWag asked for clarification on the decision not to take any more boats over 10.5m onto the waiting list.

RWill explained this decision to close the waiting list for new applications for berths/moorings, to boats above 10.5m was due to the very long waiting list (28+ years) and waiting list demand. He noted Boats under 10.5m represent between 80% and 100% of waiting list demand depending on mooring type. Anyone who was already on the waiting for a boat over 10.5m on the 15th March 2021 will be able to stay on the list for the size of boat requested. Anyone already on the river with a boat over 10.5m can continue to keep their boat on the river and can downsize but not up-size. Over the long term this will allow future Commissioners the option of converting larger moorings to smaller moorings thus increasing access to the water. Increasing access is an objective in the current Strategic Plan. Alternatively, if future circumstances change, Commissioners have the flexibility to open the waiting list for larger boats again.

RWill also described a scheme to go to public consultation to make all of the moorings in the Fortuna area walk ashore in winter 2026/27. RWill reported that the existing pontoons (including the tender pontoons) will have reached the end of their life by then and will need replacing and that the key reasons the commissioners decided to bring this project forward is to better align future mooring provision with current waiting list demand and to increase revenue to cover future increased expenditure. Presently, 62.3% of overall waiting list demand was for walk ashore berths with walk ashore berth supply representing 24.9% of all LHC moorings. Those boats berthed in this area who do not want to pay the increased rates associated with walk ashore berths will be offered moorings elsewhere on the river.

RWill indicated that LHC's intention was that the majority of the new berths would be 'no frills' and would use economy fingers in order to try and limit the increase in prices to align with the existing Fortuna walk ashore facility. Details of pricing will come forward as part of the public consultation on the Harbour Development Plan.

RWill highlighted that a lot of harbour infrastructure will need replacing in the next ten years and that the existing income from moorings was not sufficient to cover these costs. RWill explained that the charges for subtidal mid river berths and moorings did not cover the cost of provision and were subsidised by Dan Bran and visitor mooring income. The Commissioners were currently reviewing options to increase income and the proposal to increase the number of walk ashore berths in the Fortuna area would mitigate the increased income needed from other areas, while addressing the waiting list demand.

6. Environment

The latest information on LHC's harbour protection strategy including breakwaters, beneficial use of dredged arisings, and information on the collaborative Solent Forum project called 'Beneficial Use of Dredge Sediment in the Solent' (BUDS) which is looking at wider beneficial use options is available on LHC's website. A good introduction to the project and the potential receptor sites (including at Lyminster) is available in the Phase 2 feasibility review.

Some of the marsh areas under consideration as part of the BUDS project include the saltmarsh that protects Lymington Harbour. LHC are an active participant on the BUDS technical advisory group. LHC is also independently exploring if it is feasible to use the bottom dumping technique used in Boiler Marsh to fill the creek that has split Cockleshell Island to the west of the river entrance in order to try and slow down the wind / tide erosion in this area.

This can only progress if LHC can obtain confidence that placed sediment will not lead to an increase in the natural rate of accretion leading to additional dredging. It may be that in order to achieve this, some form of containment boom/structure is required which may render the scheme too expensive for LHC to progress in isolation. This may be an option that is also short listed for incorporation into the BUDS project but even with LHC support, this will ultimately be a decision for Solent Forum informed by their technical advisory group and consultant. Finally, LHC will also explore the merits of a small mud placement programme between the landward ends of the existing breakwaters and the marsh to slow down the risk of 'outflanking'.

Because of the important environmental designations of the saltmarsh and intertidal mud habitat, it is important to stress that any new beneficial use schemes will require a Marine Licence which will be expensive and difficult to achieve. The regulators will be very cautious in their approach to ensure that whatever schemes come forward, they can be confident that they will not have an adverse effect on the site, either alone or in combination.

7. Eastern Wave Screen

Following receipt of a marine licence, a contract has been awarded to Walcon Marine Ltd to replace the existing life expired eastern wave screen this winter. The overall cost including marine licence and engineering consultancy fees will be of the order of £370k.

8. Safety Item – Guards on props

Roy Froud raised concerns that there is a risk involved in transiting the area shown outlined red in the below plan in dinghies due to the unguarded props on the moored vessels. RWill reported there was some resistance from mooring holders to the idea that they should always have a bucket covering the prop as this would just encourage dinghy sailors to get even closer to their boats and potentially cause damage through collisions. LHC will further consider the feasibility of making this a condition of berthing.



10. AOB

a. Every year Lymington Harbour Commissioners (LHC) arrange an Annual Public Meeting, inviting river users and members of the local community to attend and receive an update of the work carried out by the Commissioners on behalf of river users, including an update of financial performance. The 2021 meeting will take place on Thursday 18th November 2021 at 19.30 in the Gates Hall at the Lymington Community Centre, New Street, SO41 9BQ.

The meeting will commence with a presentation followed by a Q&A session. Thereafter there will be an opportunity to mingle with Commissioners over refreshments. In order to ensure room number limits were not exceeded, there was a need to pre-register on LHC's website.

b. Santa to the Quay event this year will be on the 19th December 2021 where Father Christmas arrives at the quay on board the Lymington lifeboat.

c. Redrow have submitted an application to remove certain section 106 conditions from their planning application, including not building the footbridge and not providing a restaurant and gallery, rather another 26 apartments. LHAG strongly urged that this application be dismissed as the Section 106 agreement it formed an integral reason for granting the original permission.

d. The recent works on the toll bridge were discussed, the work is being carried out by Hampshire highways and The Environment Agency and is just routine maintenance.

Date of Next meeting

Date to be confirmed for February to consult LHAG in more detail on LHC plans to redevelop the Fortuna mooring area into walk ashore marina berthing.

Minutes taken by R. Wagstaff