

**MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL MEETING OF THE RIVER YEALM HARBOUR
AUTHORITY HELD USING ZOOM ON 22ND APRIL 2021 AT 1800.**

Members and Officers in attendance:

Dominic Crawley – Acting Chairman
Mark Beighton – Harbour Master
Rodney Carter – Acting Vice Chairman
Helen Phillips – Office Manager
Dermod Drought
John Endicott
Martyn Oates
Mark Steggle
Peter Hinchliffe
Andrew Matthews
Steve Maltby
Nicky Tewson

Apologies for Absence

There were none.

Members of the public attending were: Jamieson Lee, Laurie Wilson, Alex Nell, Graham Carter and Graham Tomlinson.

01/21 MINUTES

The minutes from the meeting from the 19th of April 2019 were proposed by John Endicott to be a true reflection of what was discussed, seconded by Dermod Drought and unanimously agreed by relevant committee members who were present at the 19th April 2019 annual meeting.

Martyn Oates now joined the meeting.

02/21 2020 CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

The following is the text of the Chairman's Report provided by David Southwood, who was chairman in 2020 and continued until he stepped down at the end of February 2021.

As with all other organisations and businesses 2020 proved to be a challenging year for the Authority during which the Covid-19 pandemic has been a dominant feature. The Authority survived the turbulence it caused remarkably well. In 2019 we revised the job descriptions and contracts for the Harbour Master and Office Manager. New job descriptions were agreed for the Assistant Harbour Masters and new contracts were signed by them effective 1st January 2020. The Standing Orders were updated and put on the website. A new contract was signed for the RNLI lockers who retained ownership with the Authority responsible for maintenance and upkeep. The appointment of accountants was reviewed.

A meeting was held in the Harbour Office to introduce the “Life recreation ReMEDIES project” whose aim is to reduce and mitigate erosion and disturbance impacts affecting the seabed. The meeting was led by Angela Gall from Natural England and Fiona Crouch from the Tamar Estuaries Consultative Forum. Their main concerns were the seagrass beds in the area. It was agreed that the Yealm didn’t really lend itself to their suggested new eco-moorings and that there are very few moorings actually on the seagrass beds. It was suggested to them that the way forward was to educate people on the importance of the beds and their whereabouts. The Authority questioned the fact that they feel the site is in unfavourable condition when we are receiving conflicting reports from other organisations who say it is thriving. It was agreed that the HM should monitor the situation and see if any further action is needed.

One of the Yealm Steps pontoons developed a leak and was removed to Bridgend for welding repair. The outer sand bar buoy broke loose in a winter storm which was repaired and replaced. We requested the Queen’s Harbour Master to examine the poor condition of the Shag Stone navigation mark which was duly repainted by Babcock.

Our insurance programme was renegotiated effective 1st March with a small increase in premium. The bulk of the programme was placed on a three-year long-term contract at a fixed premium.

A review was carried out of the Authority’s current asset replacement reserving policy. The reserving concept was introduced as a transparent process of demonstrating the magnitude of “set aside” necessary to meet the costs of replacing essential fixed/working assets such as the harbour launch and pontoons. It concluded that the current provisioning policy, in terms of annual accrual, timing and magnitude was accurate. It did note that we should grow our cash reserves at a rate that ensures we have sufficient cash to meet replacement costs. We should ensure that depreciation is built into our future budgeting process. In March the Government established a Covid-19 lockdown. This resulted in Authority meetings for the remainder of the year becoming virtual/zoom. The Authority decided not to hold an Annual General Meeting in April. The Office Manager was suspected of contracting Covid-19 resulting in her isolation. The Harbour Master self-isolated but continued to work by telephone and email. The Harbour Office was closed for health and safety reasons. We are indebted to the Deputy Harbour Master, Mike Bowyer, for standing in superbly in such difficult circumstances.

The Authority authorised the Chairman, Vice Chairman and Harbour Master to make urgent decisions in regard to Covid-19 and to take such action as necessary. In line with all other ports and harbours in the UK we were obligated to introduce measures on the Yealm following Government advice. This was without any guidance from the MCA. HM Coastguard and the RNLI requested leisure boat owners not to put to sea as this would compromise lifeboat crews who would have to isolate in the event of a rescue. Unlike many other Authorities we did not close the harbour but requested harbour users to row or paddle, which could be justified as “taking exercise”, thereby allowing mooring holders to check their boats. The RYA supported this approach. Almost without exception the communities on the Yealm observed the Authority’s expectations of behaviour which was much appreciated. The Harbour Master, on return from isolation, set about a comprehensive risk assessment before introducing detailed measures in regard to the pandemic.

This was a huge task undertaken together with the AHMs. He also managed to carry out the Bridgend lift-in in June.

Without visiting yachts to overnight for three months there was little or no income from visitor's fees until the end of lockdown on 4th July. However, the Authority received a £10,000 grant from South Hams which was much appreciated. Immediately after lockdown the river sprang to life with visiting yachts returning in good numbers and in larger yachts. The summer months were very busy and extra staff were employed on a temporary basis to patrol the harbour during the day. One issue was the increasing number of paddleboards and kayaks on the water. Wild swimming also caused concerns. On reviewing our season the Authority determined that in future all users of the harbour should make a financial contribution for the facilities provided including those using paddleboards and kayaks. Secondly, a third staff member should be employed in addition to the Assistant Harbour Masters. The budget agreed for 2021 provided for a 5% increase in harbour dues, a 5% increase in visitor fees and an annual charge for **all** small craft using the harbour.

A review of our compliance with the Port Marine Safety Code was carried out with the assistance of our Designated Person Captain Keith Hart. His recommendations were accepted by the Authority and action taken. Several members attended a British Ports Authority zoom training session on Port Marine Safety Code Duty Holder awareness. Subsequently, an Aide Memoire was produced for all Authority members. The Authority agreed to take account of the Department of Transport's 2017 advisory guidance "Ports Good Governance Guidance", wherever applicable, in conducting its affairs.

During the year negotiations continued to rectify the Land Register entry in regard to land below Yealm Steps and the acquisition of the Yealm Steps Quay and Slipway from South Hams District Council. The actual steps remain owned by Devon County Council and are a Public Right of Way.

I would like to thank the Harbour Master for his sterling efforts during this very difficult year. He worked over 151 hours more than normal forgoing 15 days' holiday to see us through. The Office Manager has also been very active with one of her main achievements being to set up a system for contacting all mooring holders by email. The Deputy and Assistant Harbour Masters responded well to a busy season while subject to Covid-19 procedures. I am most grateful to all Committee members for their loyal support this year.

David Southwood

03/21 AUDIT REPORT AND SIGNING OF THE 2020 ACCOUNTS

Dominic Crawley handed over to Peter Franklin from Franklins Accountants Ltd to talk to the 2020 accounts. As to be expected visitor figures for 2020 were down £16k. There was an overall loss of £12.5k after depreciation was taken into account. There was a significant increase in repairs to sites around the river and the harbour launch, so costs were up in both these areas. There was also an increase in wages as more staff were needed to manage the huge influx of visitors as lockdown from Covid 19 ended. There will be a refund of Corporation Tax of around £1k this year. The VAT flat rate scheme has continued to be beneficial although a lot less than in recent years directly impacted by the high repair costs. The bookkeeping has been carried out to a satisfactory standard. Currently the Authority have good retained earnings and a stable amount of cash in their bank accounts.

Rodney Carter proposed that we accept the accounts as presented, this was seconded by Dermot Drought and unanimously agreed. Peter Franklin is to provide a bound copy of the audited accounts for the Acting Chairman to sign and then be posted on our website.

04/21 OPEN FORUM

No questions were asked.

It was noted that there is a replanting project for Seagrass beds in Jenny Cliffe Bay.

05/21 ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

Andrew Matthews proposed that Dominic Crawley become Chairman of the Authority with immediate effect. This was seconded by Peter Hinchliffe and unanimously agreed.

06/21 ELECTION OF VICE - CHAIRMAN

Dominic Crawley proposed that Rodney Carter become Vice – Chairman of the Authority with immediate effect. This was seconded by John Endicott and unanimously agreed.

07/21 APPOINTMENT OF BANKS

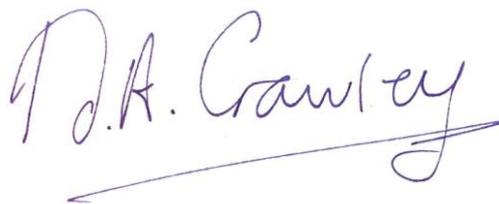
Dominic Crawley proposed that we continue to use Santander Bank, Barclays Bank and the Nationwide as our banks. This was seconded by Dermot Drought and unanimously agreed.

08/21 AUDITORS

Dominic Crawley asked Peter Franklin from Franklins Accountants Ltd our auditors if he was happy to continue acting on our behalf, he affirmed that he was, and Dominic therefore proposed that we re-appoint Franklins. This was seconded by John Endicott and unanimously agreed.

09/21 DATE OF NEXT ANNUAL MEETING

The next annual meeting is due to be held on the 21st of April 2022 in the WI Hall Newton Ferrers.



Chairman