

**Approved Minutes of the Cowes Harbour Advisory Committee  
Meeting held at Cowes Corinthian Yacht Club  
on Wednesday 4 September at 1000**

**Present:** Mark Southwell (MS) – Chair (RNLI)  
John Corby (JC) – Waterside Property Owners and West Cowes Boatyards  
Simon Davies (SD) – Cowes Yacht Haven (Cowes Town Waterfront Trust)  
Ross Edmunds (RE) – Isle of Wight Council  
Bob Holt (BH) - Cowes Water Taxis (Water taxis and commercial fishermen)  
Cllr Karl Love (KL) – Isle of Wight Council  
Giles Peckham – Cowes Clubs and Classes  
Lee Rayment (LR) – Solent and Wightline Cruises  
Cllr Tracey Reardon (TR) – East Cowes Town Council  
Mark Scholes (MSc) – Cowes High Street Businesses  
Julian Shawyer (JS) – Williams Shipping (Commercial Vessel Operators)  
Guy Shelbourne (GS) – Medina Clubs  
Mike Townsend – East Cowes Marina  
Stuart Tan (ST) - Red Funnel  
Gary Hall (GH) – Chief Executive, Cowes Harbour Commission  
Clive Blount (CB) – Commissioner, Cowes Harbour Commission  
Capt. Jon Kidd (JK) – Harbour Master, Cowes Harbour Commission  
Capt. Martin Phipps (MP) – Designated Person for Cowes Harbour  
Phil Hagen – Chair, Cowes Harbour Commission  
David Walters – Cowes Town Council

**In attendance:** Sue Matthews - Minute taker

**1 WELCOME, PAST MEMBERS AND APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Dan Jehan (DJ), Lou Newlands (LN), Leanne Lakes (LL), Bob Trimble (BT), Mary Scott-Jackson (MS-J), Rob Stewart (RS) and Lora Peacey-Wilcox (LP-W), Ben Willows (BW). On behalf of the Committee, MS noted the sad loss of Mark Rayment and Dave Casson and noted their service to CHAC and Mark's service as a Cowes Harbour Commissioner. MS also welcomed David Walters as representative for Cowes Town Council, Simon Davies for Cowes Yacht Haven and Mark Scholes for Cowes Traders.

**2 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 17 April 2024, having been previously circulated, were approved.

**3 CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT**

The main focus for the Chief Executive's Report was a presentation in which GH shared a new vision for Cowes Harbour and CHC's future harbour plans. He reminded the group of what CHC is and the regulations they have to comply with. It has three main priorities: promote and deliver a safety-first culture, ensure the harbour is "Fit for the Future" and any surpluses made must be reinvested back into the harbour. CHC must also comply with the Port Marine Safety Code (PMSC). The aim is to sustain economic growth, provide world class facilities, sustainable employment and meet environmental and sustainability targets.

GH emphasised that there is a demand and need to develop a new marina and one of the proposed projects is to create a new marina. It will have 135 berths, walk ashore access to East Cowes representing a 16% increase for berthing capacity for the whole of the Cowes Harbour. An independent economic assessment has estimated the marina will generate a £23m benefit to the Cowes economy over a 20-year period and aims to unite East Cowes and Cowes. The new marina will be south of the Shrape and will provide the ability to bring in large racing yachts and superyachts and attract big

regattas. Also, in partnership with UKSA, CHC is looking to develop the Gate House for shower and toilet facilities. The project will become an integral part of the regeneration of East Cowes.

CHC will commence the licencing proposals and planning applications and it is hoped the new Marina will open in 2026 to coincide with the 200<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Cowes Week. MS asked if an additional slide within the presentation could be added to show the overlay of the new marina with existing moorings to provide context. GH will be meeting with the Town Councils for Cowes and East Cowes and information for the public will come through the planning process. GH confirmed that there will be some wave breaking pontoons to protect the marina although the detail is yet to be completed. Referring to the walk-ashore jetty, JC commented that large competitive boats bring 40ft containers with them. GH confirmed that these would not be able to be parked at the end of jetty but hoped to work with them to provide the infrastructure elsewhere. GP asked if day boats will have access to the same number of moorings. GH responded that some swinging moorings will be lost but he will be doing a complete review of the main harbour which will only be used by day boats once the new marina has been constructed. KL commented that it is an exciting project and ties in perfectly with the Albany Green area. GH confirmed that an Economic Impact Assessment has already been undertaken and is positive.

Regarding development at Kingston, GH reported that there has been a redesign of the lower tier and new drawings have been received. It is hoped that tenders will go out next week for final pricing and the programme is four months to complete the work.

#### **4 HARBOURMASTER'S REPORT**

JK reported on the following:

- Incidents: 143 this year, with 37 propulsion failure, 29 wash, 14 close quarters and 12 swimming. The numbers of incidents are lower than last year, this difference was investigated and found to be mostly due to lower visitor numbers. After a review of the incident reporting parameters and process, there has been an increase in the number of reports submitted and there have been 20 near-misses recorded under the revised system since June. This month's newsletter Safety Topic was Navigating in Restricted Visibility.
- The PMSC audit is now completed, and the Harbour is fully compliant. A Trinity House audit passed successfully and a physical Trinity House 'Aids to Navigation' inspection will take place at the end of the month.
- Post-season wash-up meetings will be taking place over the next few weeks, and he will be contacting clubs to find out what incidents have occurred and looking at if the risk assessment formatting can be approved and aligned for future events.
- Power Boat festival – the safety cover was of a much higher standard this year and there were no incidents that he is aware of, although the pre-event communication will be improved ahead of next year's event.
- Dredging –There are issues with timings for the dredge contractor so there will be reduced dredging this year, for CYH and RYS, in October/November, with the rest taking place in February/March.
- The CCTV system is now seven years old so looking to review the system over winter, with investment earmarked for improvements and upgrades in 2025.
- Six piles have been replaced in the river and another 12 have been identified to be replaced over the next two years.
- He is working with IWC on a Public Space Protection Order on Trinity Landing. This will give the police more powers as the Harbour authority have no powers on land.
- There is a project underway to recategorise waters for the outer harbour in Cowes to Cat C to allow club classes and operators to operate more freely in the area. It is hoped this will be completed by next summer. JK commented that the MCA are more amenable this time around, data has been gathered and he will be providing them with a report which will meet their needs.
- Trinity House mooring buoy – this is scheduled to move in November and JK will be contacting clubs to talk about a seasonal race mark to replace it. The Trinity House buoy will retain its

name and the new buoy will have a name yet to be decided. JK explained the reasons for moving the Trinity House buoy which is to try and encourage larger cruise ships.

## **5. PORT MARINE SAFETY CODE**

Capt. Martin Phipps, as the CHC Designated person, gave a briefing to the group and explained how the PMSC affects harbour users and members of CHAC. The PMSC is written by the Department for Transport and is a Code for all ports. It is being revised and is due out this year. The big difference now is that it is the Port Marine **and Facilities** Safety Code and so applies to anyone who has a business on the water. JK will be sending a letter to all asking for confirmation that each business is following the relevant parts applicable to their business. The Code is written for the duty holders i.e. CHC commissioners, and they have overall responsibility. MP reiterated that it is a serious business, and a weak link is the facilities in the port which CHC may not know about. Accompanying the Code is the Guide to Good Practice, and it is this guide which gives all the detail. The documents can be downloaded from MCA website.

MP is independent of CHC and has direct access to the duty holder. He outlined some of the major parts of the Guide including risk assessments, competency, training and aids to navigation. MP also looks at MAIB reports for recommendations. There will be a new regulation of port craft and it will be for JK to determine what this is. In Southampton it is commercial businesses, but potentially it could include yacht club facilities, ribs etc. Recent MAIB reports have also focused on towage and training. Towing relates to non-routine towing, and it is important to let the harbourmaster know if this is being undertaken.

MP asked members to ensure that the letter from JK is responded to as the Code looks for assurance and written confirmation of the relevant sections applicable to individuals. In response to a question from JC regarding liability, MP said it is about providing a facility, so waterfront homeowners may want to put up 'Private Jetty' notices which then clearly indicates there are no commercial or paid services for any jetties or cranes on private waterfront residences. SD said that HSE are working with British Marine on a White Paper for marinas and boatyards, probably to be launched next year, which will focus on how boats are lifted and chocked etc. MP confirmed that all Cowes Harbour Commissioners have duty holder training and he offered to hold some two-hour training sessions to explain further the implications of the Code.

## **6 MARINE INDUSTRY**

JS reported that it is fairly quiet at the moment and that the proposed new Marina would not affect them.

## **7 COMMERCIAL VESSELS**

ST reported that Red Funnel is currently raising funds for new vessels. Red Kestrel was unfortunately out for the Festival period with a bent propellor and Red Eagle also had propellor problems. All are under review and each incident which causes a cancellation is investigated for lessons learnt. It had been a challenging August. Some berthing trials have been taking place and ST outlined the Artemis project for a new electric foiler which will operate as a third vessel., Power is always the issue, but it is expected to run off the existing grid. The challenge is the draft, so they are hoping to solve those issues. A retractable foil would be a solution but there is no design yet. ST reminded the group that there is a standing invitation to join the Captains for a view from the bridge. He suggested going out on the raptor and coming back on the Red Jet to give the height perspective. Those interested should contact ST directly.

## **8 LEISURE ACTIVITIES**

Cowes Week 2026 plans are in place and MS asked the group for their observations on this year's Cowes Week. MT said it was busy from the point of view resident berth holders and full for Cowes week although they have struggled to accommodate visiting berths for the last three or four years. Cowes Yacht Haven was quieter than in the past. MSc said trading on the street was down and

continues to be tough. DW commented on the growth of Northwood House events where footfall appears to be higher. PH commented that there were over 1000 entries in 2005, but that this year many people have said it has been a lovely little regatta. He acknowledged the Harbour has failed to deliver in terms of facilities for some classes of boats, so it is important for the Harbour to step up and deliver and bring the classes back. Dartmouth is doing well, and it seems that Cowes now provides the boutique experience. JC commented that race management had been outstanding with good courses and racing each day, even if it started later in the day, so there was emphasis on racing and not the beer tent. KL said that Waverly Park want a discussion on fireworks.

The general feeling was that it was better. There may be less people available to crew, but there are also more regattas now. The Admirals Cup in July 2025 will have a huge impact on Cowes with crews likely to be in Cowes for more than a month.

RE updated the group on a pilot project for families that was run as part of the Cowes and Northwood Place Plan and funded by Cowes Town Council. It was a two-day event to bring more families and children into Cowes and to be more involved in the event. It was held during the day and received fantastic feedback. There is a report available on this and it is hoped to develop it further. Learning outcomes showed that it could have been advertised more widely but Cowes Town Council had put in some advertising stipulations. MS agreed that there was little happening in the way of advertising for events and suggested that for the next meeting a discussion could be had on who should channel this information. CB commented that people appeared to be much more engaged now in watching the sailing and not so much wanting to be in the town. It may be that the clientele has changed, hence the appeal of Northwood House.

#### **10. PUBLIC USE / ACCESS**

New slipway – TR confirmed that nothing will happen until Red Funnel plans go forward. The Esplanade is looking good at East Cowes and KL said they do differentiate from what is happening in Cowes and once all developments come together it has the potential to be really good.

#### **11. CHAIR'S UPDATES**

There were no further updates from MS. He will approach the RNLI Lifeboat Centre in East Cowes as a possible venue for the meeting in April 2025.

Date of next meeting: 8 January 2025 at 1000 – Corinthian Cowes Yacht Club

The meeting closed at 1130am