

Watchet Boat Owners Association
Meeting Monday 14th August 2017
The Esplanade Club, The Esplanade, Watchet

Minutes

Present: Bob Hitchings, Roger Lancaster, Iain Lambert, Ray Ventura, Martin Stevens, Bruce Scott, Rick Holt, Sally Holt, Cathy Yuill, Mike Yuill, John Bawhary, Marilyn Savory, Ken Savory, Tony James, Jonathan Pearman, Chris Danby, Harvey Bruguier, Caroline Bruguier, Loretta Whetlor, Roy Chave, and 2 others.

Apologies: John Abbott Garner

Bob Hitchings chaired the meeting.

1. Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes of the last meeting on 10th July 2017 were distributed by Bob, and agreed by all.

2. Matters arising

There were no matters arising not covered by the agenda.
All agreed with Bob's proposed change in the order of the agenda, to hear the Marina Manager report first, followed by a discussion of the proposals regarding the dredging/mud situation.

3. Marina Manager's Report - Iain

i. Update on the dredger:

- The dredger is currently out of the water, awaiting repair. Iain described the failure on the dredger, which relates specifically to a bearing on the impeller. This was taken for assessment and repair by a specialist company in Kent, who are now awaiting parts to be delivered from the USA. Iain has received reassurance from the company, that they will be able to repair the dredger within four days of receipt of the parts. In the meantime, the charger bar, hydraulic pipes and engine are all undergoing a refit.

ii. Dredging efficiency:

- Dr Rob Nunney has stated that the dredger is the best machine for the job, leaving Iain to ask why it hasn't been able to cut more mud this year.
- In view of this, Iain completed an exercise to consider the sale of the Marina's dredger and outsourcing the service to a dredging company. This, however, was not considered cost efficient (i.e. at a cost of £6,000 per day + £25,000 at the start and completion of the project), with the external company stating that 40 days were required to fully complete the dredge.
- Consideration was then given to the Marina dredging technique, and whether the Marina staff might require further training to improve efficiency of practice. Iain is to consider input from the IMS Training Team to review dredging efficiency and provide training as required.
- Iain stated that he is very disappointed with the current state of the Marina and dredging progress to date, and understands the concerns of the WBOA members.

iii. Plan:

- While awaiting the dredger repair, Iain is meeting with Dr Rob Nunney on Friday to review options. Iain described the challenges of managing a dredge where there is a

top layer of silt, with compacted mud below this, where a water injection system works better.

- Dr Nunney has advised the use of the cutter-suck dredger as the initial dredge during the winter (to shift silt over the Marina wall), followed by a maintenance dredge using a small WID (twin hull water injection dredger) system throughout the summer. The latter machine is smaller and therefore would interfere less with boats coming into and leaving the harbour.

iv. Questions to Iain from WBOA Members:

- 1) If there is a capital dredge of the outer harbour, will the dredger maintain an efficient Marina?
 - Iain reported that Dr Nunney was currently evaluating this and preparing a report, including the consideration of different types of dredging (such as a 'cutter-suck' process or agitation of the silt).
- 2) What is the 'Mini-WID' system of dredging?
 - Iain described this in detail. The purpose is to put the fine mud into suspension using water jets, so that it goes out of the Marina with the tidal ebb. This system works with the fine mud, before it gets a chance to settle on the harbour floor, and is very similar to the Van Ord system. However, the 'cutter-suck' dredging is required first, in order to shift the mud, which has compacted over time. The Mini-WID (water injection dredger) system can then be used as a dredging maintenance programme.
- 3) With the mud in the Outer Harbour is contributing to the problem in the Marina, what can be done to address this?
 - As the Council are unable to afford a dredging programme in the Outer Harbour, Iain has approached Hinkley to request that they might consider supporting this dredge. The Marina's cutter-suck dredger is not efficient in the Outer Harbour and therefore this will need a different approach.
- 4) Concern was raised about the level of mud in the Outer Harbour, in relation to health and safety.
 - Iain reported that, in light of concern about the mud in the Outer Harbour, he was now advising boats with a draft drawing greater than 2 metres to only enter the Harbour one hour either side of high water. Concern was expressed about this limited access.
 - West Somerset District Council are responsible for the Outer Harbour, and the safe navigation into this harbour. Martin reported that Councillor Peter Murphy and Chris Hall understand the concerns and the dangers of navigating the Outer Harbour.
 - It would be helpful initially to understand the Marina options, in order to present a clear view to the Council of what was required. The WBOA Mud Working Group is currently suspended, awaiting Dr Nunney's report. Iain is meeting with him on this Friday and, once it is finalized, the report will be circulated.
- 5) Further clarity was requested about the current Marina dredging machine.
 - Iain reported that this is definitely the right machine but requires efficient use. In line with this, he had considered employing a professional dredger driver, or the training options highlighted earlier. The dredger can cut 200 cubic metres of mud per hour if it is used properly.
- 6) If BCYA visitors have been offered a 20% discount to visit the Marina, should this not be offered to permanent Marina berth holders?
 - It was agreed that this was one of the proposals for discussion.

- 7) If the Council cannot afford a dredging programme, perhaps a fund-raising initiative could be set up?
- This was agreed, but it was necessary first to develop an agreed dredging programme with associated costs, in order to put forward a business case for any such initiative; facts are needed to address any challenges from funding bodies and this should largely be covered by Dr Nunney's report.
- 8) Will the report also include the dangers of the mud to the general public, berth holders and children? Concern was raised about pontoon safety at low tide.
- While the Marina holds its own risk assessment, it was thought that the view of an independent Health & Safety expert would hold greater weight to any report (and potentially an evaluation of the economic impact of the mud on the local community).
 - Iain will discuss with Dr Nunney to ascertain if his report will contain aspects of health & safety, or if it will be possible to include this with the scientific report. **Action: Iain**

4. WBOA Proposals for Discussion

A. That marina fees be based on the current state of the pontoons and retained water.

Proposed: Jonathan Pearman

Seconded: Tony James

- Discussion that berth holder Marina fees are based on boats being in a water berth. Most boats now sit in mud at low water and much concern was expressed about the negative impact on the boats from this. It was stated that berth holders are not paying for their boats to sit in mud.
- If visitors are being offered a 20% discount on fees, then this should be afforded to permanent berth holders. It was raised that there is a historical precedent for such a discount, which was previously offered in relation to mud in the harbour. It was thought though that this was funded through the Marina insurance for the broken gate.
- One longstanding member reported a previous concession received from being on pontoon A, due to the poor quality of the pontoon. He pays the Marina £2000 per annum for his berth, and has had to purchase a new engine as a result of the mud.
- As berth holders are customers of the Watchet Harbour Marina, it was thought necessary that they should be able to deal directly with Tim Taylor, as it is thought that the Marina is in breach of their contract.
- Iain reported that he would take all of this to Tim Taylor for discussion and consideration. **Action Iain**

Vote Result: 16 members for the proposal

No members against

One member in abstention

Proposal A was therefore carried.

B. That the WBOA request a clear public statement on the timescale of the remedial work.

Proposed: Tony James

Seconded: Ray Ventura

- Discussion that, while the minutes of this meeting summarize the discussion, Iain will prepare a public statement on behalf of the Marina for Tim Taylor, regarding timescales and the action being taken by the Marina to address the mud. **Action: Iain**
- Concern was also raised about if the dredger will remain in Watchet in the future, in view that it has previously been taken to Swansea to support their dredging programme. Iain gave his assurance that, so long as it was required in Watchet, the dredger would not leave the marina.

Vote Result: 18 members for the proposal
No members against
Three members in abstention

Proposal B was therefore carried.

C. **That the WBOA reserve the right to seek legal advice from the RYA, acting on behalf of members seeking redress from the Marina Company, pending the outcome of Proposals A and B.**

Proposed: Tony James

Seconded: Bruce Scott

- Iain reported that he would like to give Tim Taylor the opportunity to reflect and respond to this meeting, prior to the WBOA considering legal action.
- Following discussion, it was agreed to amend the wording of this proposal to include 'reserve the right to' (instead of 'consider whether to'); and to add 'pending the outcome of Proposals A and B' at the end.

Vote Result: 18 members for the proposal
No members against
No members in abstention

Proposal C was therefore carried.

Outcome of Proposals

- Firstly to await the report being prepared by Dr Nunney.
- It was agreed to send a statement summarizing the concerns of the WBOA members to the proprietor of the Watchet Harbour Marina about the level of mud in the Marina. Ray agreed to write to the Marina Manager and state the position of the WBOA. **Action: Ray**

5. Officer's Reports

i. Chair

Nothing further to report.

ii. Treasurer/Membership Secretary

Martin reported on the following points:

- The WBOA remains low on members.
- Concern was expressed that some payments for yard storage remained outstanding, and that action is required from the WBOA to address this, as was discussed at a previous meeting.
- Some people have left the WBOA because they are now less able to slip boats from the slipway in the Outer Harbour due to the mud situation, and as there is less time available to sail from the outer harbour. There is now two metres less water in the Outer Harbour at high tide, due to the mud, than when the marina opened.

iii. Secretary

Ray reported that progress had been made in relation to the disability hoist, and including the sea scouts. A meeting with Iain Lambert and the Somerset Disability Coordinator has been arranged on Thursday to discuss this further. Further information is required, together with options for funding. Ray will report back to the next meeting.

Action: Ray

iv. Commodore

Bruce is continuing to seek prices on a new poly-tunnel cover. The Boat Museum is likely to contribute to the cost, and Bruce will discuss with the WBOA Treasurer regarding funding proportions. **Action Bruce.**

v. **Other Officers**

- **Safety Officer** – there has been no inspection this month, and therefore nothing to report.
- **Yard Officer** – nothing to report; all is fine.
- **Cruising Officer** – some members have been on a cruise over the past month.

6. **Any other business**

- Tony James, who is the Chief Reporter for the West Somerset Free Press, requested agreement that he write an article on the content of this WBOA meeting, to be published in the next newspaper. This was briefly discussed and put to the vote to all present. As the majority were in favour, with four abstentions, and no members against the request, the motion was carried. Martin reported that the WBOA minutes are available as a matter of public record.
- Jonathan Pearman proposed that a separate 'Bertholders Subgroup' of the WBOA be formed, to address issues specific to people who berth vessels in the Watchet Harbour Marina. It was agreed that this would be placed on the agenda for the next meeting.
Action Ray
- A new member of the WBOA reported that he is offering to upgrade the WBOA workshop, as he has a lot of equipment that others might find useful. It was agreed to place this on the agenda of the next meeting for discussion. **Action Ray**

7. **Time meeting closed:** 20:31 hours