



FOWEY HARBOUR - PORT USER GROUP

Tuesday 5th November 2019

Minutes of a meeting of the Fowey Harbour Port User Group held on this day at the Harbour Office, Fowey at 1400.

Present:	Apologies:
James Staughton - Chairman	Capt. Will Mitchell - Chairman FHC
Chris Ogg - RFYC/POFROC/RNLI (Vice Chair)	Andy Virr - Cornwall Council
David Johns - Golant Quay Users	Karen Toms - RYA
Mike Carter - Lanteglos Parish Council	Peter Robinson – Fowey Tourist Information
Graham Slack – FGSC/POFROC	Absent:
John Barker – Licensed Boatmen	Colin Wilson – Polruan Town Trust
Jeremy Crapp – River Fowey Gig Club	Andy Simmons – National Trust
John Pollard – Mixtow Residents	Mike Elliott – Pilot Boatmen
Dave Swiggs - Aquaculture	Jeremy Morcom – Imerys Minerals
Jeff Pearce – Fowey River Association (freshwater fisheries)	Sinead Hanks/Victoria Clark - Fowey Chamber of Commerce
Claire Hoddinott - Fowey Estuary Partnership	Phoebe Beedell – Lostwithiel Town Council
Capt. Paul Thomas - Harbour Master & Chief Exec.	John Berryman – Fowey Town Council
	Alistair Barr – Castle Dore Rowing Club
	Trevor Quail - Penmarlam Quay Users

MINUTES

The minutes of the last meeting were agreed as a true and accurate record.

MATTERS ARISING

- Upper Fowey & Pont Pill MCZ Conservation Advice – draft conservation advice was distributed following the last meeting. Claire updated that the conservation advice has now been formalised and is available via <https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/>
- Live Aboards – Captain Thomas updated that the local Marine Police Officer approached the vessels in question and all owners have a primary residence where they pay council tax. Although they appear to spend long periods onboard, as they have a home address they are not in contravention of the Harbour Byelaws. David Johns added that there is a feeling in Golant that they are freeloading on the village by leaving their tenders on Golant Quay, using free parking and leaving their waste in village bins. Captain Thomas said Golant Quay is not owned or managed by FHC and it is up to Golant Quay Users to manage it. Captain Thomas asked to be kept informed on this issue, especially if there are further cases.
- Chris Ogg again raised the safety concern that Fowey is covered by a single VHF aerial and when in use, no other channels are operable so there is a risk that a distress signal could be

missed. Chris asked for the PUG to lobby our MPs about this issue. **Chris to draft a letter to be sent to Sheryll Murray and Steve Double.**

REPORT FROM FHC - Captain Thomas

Commercial

The target for clay tonnage from Imerys for 2019 was 430K tonnes, volumes have fallen below projection since June. FHC have been advised that a UPM paper mill in Rauma will close at the end of 2019 and there has been a dramatic reduction in cargo as they use up stocks. This contract was serviced by the 'Lady' ships which are tug-sized and so there is also a knock on effect on towage revenue. Imerys have forecast a reduction in clay tonnage to 280K for 2020. FHC's costs for providing the conservancy, harbour facilities, pilotage and towage services are fairly fixed regardless of the number of ships using the Port. The Board are faced with challenging decisions and if the prices are raised there is a risk of deterring trade. There is particular pressure on the pilotage and linesmen services which are currently paid per tonne of cargo which makes current, and certainly projected, tonnages unsustainable for them.

Captain Thomas was disappointed that Imerys were not represented at the meeting and explained that Peter Prynne who was acting Port Manager has now resumed his retirement and Jeremy Morcom has taken this position having been moved from a different role within Imerys. Captain Thomas' hope remains that alternative cargoes can be moved through the Port either by Imerys or via a third party brought in to manage the dock facility.

Marine Services

This sector involves FHC vessels being chartered out to other ports, this sector has become increasingly important and is doing well recently with tugs regularly working in Plymouth and Falmouth. The pilot boat charters are lucrative but there are no fixed contracts so revenue is not consistent. A replacement digger is being sourced for the Lantic Bay. The spud leg barge mentioned at the last meeting was purchased and is being brought into service and coded. The digger which came as part of this purchase is currently at Brazen Island, there is the potential for it to carry out some dredging in some areas, it could also be rigged with equipment for piling which could be more cost effective for projects like joining Penmarlam pontoons and Caffa Mill.

Leisure

Winter storage in Old Station Yard car park has not been possible this year as the use of cranes has been suspended on No.5 jetty following a survey of the structure. Imerys are undertaking a tender process which has delayed a further survey. Most vessels have been accommodated in storage at other FHC sites.

Following a trial this season, there is a plan to convert further fore and aft visitor moorings in the mouth of Pont Pill to resident moorings for next season, this will give a positive move on the allocation of deep water moorings from the waiting list.

The devolution of Caffa Mill is no further forward, although it has been approved by the devolution committee, it remains with Cornwall Council's legal team. There continue to be safety concerns about the launching operation at this site. **Captain Thomas will come up with a proposed letter as well as contact details of the recipient for the Chairman to write to the Council to try and move matters along.**

Visiting yacht numbers were good this year and night stays continues to increase which is encouraging. Feedback from visitors on services and visitor experience is good.

Penmarlam

It continues to be very busy on site, an upgraded Wise Hoist has meant the storage space available has been used more efficiently. The work to upgrade the electricity points in the yard has been completed, there are more plug-in points and customers have a charge card to top up. Demand for inside storage remains high and in response to this FHC are hoping to purchase a unit in Fowey which will provide additional space for launch and recovery customers and will be

coordinated by the team at Penmarlam. The Board wish to continue their priority of investment in the leisure sector.

The Chairman asked for questions on Captain Thomas' report.

John Pollard asked if leisure charges will increase as a result of the predicted downturn in commercial revenue. Captain Thomas said the Board are yet to decide on their charges for 2020 but he would not want to see a dramatic increase in fees and we benchmark our charges against nearby ports and harbours. He has been working to ensure there is no direct subsidy of leisure costs by commercial activity.

Mike Carter asked about lighting on pontoons, Captain Thomas explained it was only the yard electric which has been updated so far, it is an aspiration to join the Penmarlam pontoons which may result in some further electric points and associated lighting but uptake has not been as high as expected on the pontoons.

AIMS & STRATEGIES

Captain Thomas wanted to make the group aware of some aims and strategies which were displayed at the Harbour Open Day in September. **Claire to distribute with the minutes.**

Some of these have been discussed already. Port diversification is seen as important but the transition period may be difficult, FHC aim to remain resilient in the provision of vessels and operatives.

Brazen Island remains fundamental in the servicing and maintenance of FHC craft and facilities (all except the tugs). The project to repair the main slipway and reinstate No.2 slipway was completed on time, unfortunately the wheels on the cradle were found to be deficient, these have been redesigned and upgraded. The cradle is now commissioned and the slipway is in use. There is a backlog of jobs to complete.

Berrills Yard porta cabin needs replacement, FHC received a £1500 donation from the community for improved CCTV at this site following vandalism to the lifeboat, the replacement will accommodate the infrastructure for this.

The Pilots Office will shortly be relocated to porta cabins in Fowey Docks as the current building is in need of repair and an aquaculture business has expressed an interest its current site.

Laundry facilities are lacking on the Fowey side for yachtsmen.

Captain Thomas said a Harbour Open Day has been held annually since 2014, this event is used to engage with harbour stakeholders and the general public about what FHC do, their vessels and team, and is always well received. The Department for Transport recognise this event as good practice but it isn't by definition a public meeting. Captain Thomas explained that the FHC constitution requires an annual public meeting, this happened formally until 2005 but stopped due to poor attendance. Captain Thomas asked the group for feedback on the idea that FHC use the Harbour Open Day as an annual opportunity for stakeholders to feedback. The response from the group was supportive of the new format and Chris Ogg added that with so many different ways of contacting FHC, stakeholders have a variety of opportunities to make their view heard.

FOWEY HARBOUR REVISION ORDER (HRO) CONSULTATION

Captain Thomas said that Fowey Harbour is a Trust Port and is given its powers under an Act of Parliament, this Act has been revised by HROs which are legal documents amending how the Harbour is run. The Harbour powers are currently managed using Byelaws (1996), amending Byelaws is a costly and time-consuming process and the whole suite of Byelaws have to be updated and for this reason it has not been undertaken for some time. The modern way of managing ports is through General Directions which are similar legally to Byelaws but can be formulated locally and amended individually. The formation or amendment of a General Direction

does require consensus of local stakeholders and will be subject to public consultation. It would allow FHC to be more reactive in the management of issues and new activities in the harbour.

Captain Thomas explained that a HRO pre-consultation application was submitted in August following an announcement from the Marine Management Organisation (MMO) that their fees would be increasing significantly for these applications. He apologised that it had not been explained to the group before this application was made. Useful feedback and engagement was gained from the pre-application which was used to shape the full application, which has been submitted to the MMO but is now held in a queue. A formal public consultation will be announced when the application is being processed.

Captain Thomas said that the Board regard highly the status of the Port User Group (PUG) and want the group to be actively involved in the production and review of General Directions. Usually within a HRO, there are only two statutory consultees (RYA and Chamber of Shipping), FHC have included the PUG as a statutory consultee in their application. There will also be the opportunity for public representations also.

The Chairman suggested that a Memorandum of Understanding be drawn up for the group to outline aspects like quorum and consensus. The Chairman asked for examples from other ports for guidance.

MMO SOUTH WEST MARINE PLAN

Claire Hoddinott explained that FHC has been part of the development of the SW Marine Plan, which still remains in a production phase. The process has been lengthy involving several workshops run by the MMO. Other marine plans are already in place for the South East and South of England. There is an interactive map which can be used to show various layers of information about designations and activities.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/south-west-marine-plan>

Claire said that the MMO have offered a training session for key stakeholders who would be involved in implementing the SW Marine Plan, this is planned for mid-February and **further details will be distributed.**

STAKEHOLDER'S FEEDBACK

David Johns (Golant Quay Users) said that the Cormorant Hotel is being demolished and there may be some funds available via the Community Infrastructure Levy for a project to benefit the village. A project has been previously discussed to position a small pontoon by Golant Quay, David asked FHC to help them with a potential plan and costings. **Captain Thomas to advise of appropriate structure and potential costs.**

David said that speeding was still an issue on the river but has not got worse, an increase in the number of speed limit buoys has helped.

David asked about the progress of the Pacific Oyster project. Claire replied that monitoring and control will continue over this winter period and there have been encouraging discussions about larger scale ways in which to deal with this issue. Claire added that she had recently hosted a Non-Native Marine Species workshop where biosecurity planning was discussed.

Mike Carter (Lanteglos Parish Council) said that some vehicles were not adhering to the speed limit in Penmarlam Boat Park. **Captain Thomas to organise sourcing additional speed limit signage.**

John Pollard (Mixtow Residents) passed on a complaint that the light levels on the docks seemed to have increased. Captain Thomas sympathised but said sufficient light is needed for safety and security purposes, he suggested further contact with Imerys to see if the lighting could be made more directional. **Claire to put John Pollard in touch with Jeremy Morcom.**

John said previous issues with noise levels from the Commercial Diver Training operations have improved but there are still issues with the noise and behaviour of the students. **Captain Thomas to remind CDT to be a considerate neighbour.**

John also reported that some fallen trees were overhanging the river opposite Coulson's Park in Lostwithiel. Captain Thomas said it is the responsibility of the owner of the riverbank to remove them.

Captain Thomas added that FHC have been consulted on some major works due to take place in March 2021 on the railway bridge which crosses the river above Coulson's Park.

John Barker (Licensed Boatmen) said there had been some issues this season with the cleaning of the steps at Town Quay. Captain Thomas said that FHC are contracted by Fowey Town Council and additional cleaning must be authorised by them.

John commented that Toms' pontoon at Grid Irons was unsightly and now filled with water, Captain Thomas explained it is on land owned by the Boconnoc Estate and he has tried to make them aware of their obligations as land owner. John had similar frustrations about the wrecks up Penpol Creek. Captain Thomas said it is a frustrating and costly issue to deal with.

Graham Slack (POFROC/FGSC) thanked FHC for their assistance with this year's Regatta and the afloat events. The committee ship, the Helen Mary R is part of the Morvargh Sailing Project which currently operate from Plymouth. They would like to relocate their sail training project to Fowey and Graham asked if the PUG would be in support of this project. Captain Thomas said that encouraging young people on the water is excellent and could work well alongside existing opportunities at FGSC and with new initiatives being encouraged by Fowey River Academy, he could see it as a positive project for Fowey. The overall feedback from the group was positive. Captain Thomas said a mooring would need to be found for the Helen Mary R which is a 60ft ketch, this request would affect the allocation of moorings to those on the waiting list and asked how the PUG felt about this. Chris Ogg said a condition could be put on the mooring so that it would be given back if they ceased trading. Captain Thomas thanked the group for their feedback, the Board also want to clarify some further aspects with them before making their decision.

Chris Ogg (RFYC/POFROC/RNLI) said there had been some tampering to the lifeboat, it is suspected that people fishing from Berrills Yard pontoon were the culprits.

The RNLI pontoon is due out for maintenance in September 2020. Captain Thomas added that Berrills Yard pontoon will need some maintenance before next season, he will liaise with the RNLI to arrange alternative access.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business

DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be on Tuesday 28th April 2020 at 1400 in the Harbour Office

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 1550