



FOWEY HARBOUR - PORT USER GROUP

Tuesday 3rd November 2020

Minutes of a meeting of the Fowey Harbour Port User Group held on this day at 1400. The meeting was conducted virtually on Zoom.

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

MATTERS ARISING

- Chris Ogg asked about the progress of the VHF aerial. Captain Thomas said there had been a good response to the letter from this group to MPs and work by the MCA is now complete on the installation of a second aerial at Polruan, this means that Ch. 16 can be monitored

continuously whilst working channels are in use. There are still potential issues with the physical coverage of the aerial, but HM Coastguard have assured that re-broadcast units would be deployed if there were coverage issues during an incident. Chris Ogg said the progress is good but there are still some operational issues with Falmouth Coastguard about switching channels and would welcome input from FHC. **Captain Thomas to contact Falmouth Coastguard (James Instance) to highlight issue.**

- Devolution of Caffa Mill – Captain Thomas said that the good progress that had seemed to be being made had again stalled, mainly due to Covid as Cornwall Council officers are re-deployed to other roles for the Covid response. FHC have had no further update.

The Chairman to write again to Cornwall Council to re-state the importance of this devolution on safety grounds as well as the delays in getting community use.

John Pollard asked if there would be a barrier system for launching similar to Penmarlam, if so, there is concern about payment deterring people from using Caffa Mill and putting pressure on smaller facilities such as Golant and Mixtow. Captain Thomas replied that all boats launching and using the Harbour are already liable for harbour dues, there is a challenge to FHC in collecting these dues from launching boats and currently rely on the honesty of the boat owner. Once devolved, liability for the slipway falls to FHC and so safe operations at the site will be priority as well as improving dinghy storage, the public amenity area and possibly installing a small boat pontoon to aid launching. A barrier would be a way to collect fees which would go towards the cost of running the site, but a barrier may not be best way to do this and he can understand John's concern. Caffa Mill is also a launching point which has been associated with marine crime and poaching and CCTV will also be important. The PUG will continue to be consulted on this project as it moves forwards as some members, such as the Gig Club, will require access for launching.

- Aims & Strategies – Captain Thomas said documents had been circulated from the previous meeting, also the FHC Board were currently redefining the medium- and longer-term strategies for the Port (plans for the next 5, 10 and 15 years). The FHC Vice Chairman, Nick Gill is leading a focus group.
- Memorandum of Understanding – Captain Thomas said that when the Harbour Revision Order (HRO) is complete, the PUG will form an important part of the statutory consultation process for forming General Directions. The idea of a MoU or Terms of Reference for the group would give a clear understanding of the role of the group, especially for new representatives as they join. **Captain Thomas to draft for the group's comment.**

REPORT FROM FHC - Captain Thomas

Overall, 2019 had been a good year, a restructuring of the business in view of the forecast reduction of the commercial sector was effective. Leisure costs have had to increase to allow this sector to become financially independent and less reliant on the commercial sector income. Outside port work and charter of FHC vessels continue to be critical to the viability of the commercial sector. There are no formal contracts for the outside towage work, mainly in Plymouth, but current levels of routine work are welcomed.

The leisure year for 2019 was also good, the weather helped and our annual average for visiting yachts is between 5500 and 6000 boats.

Financially, there was a turnover of £2.5M with a surplus of around £20K. The full accounts are available on the FHC website as well as the Annual Report.

The Chairman asked for questions on Captain Thomas' report:

Richard Kirkham commented that visitor numbers in July and August this year seemed high, with the visitor buoys well used. Captain Thomas agreed that it seemed that way, but statistics show generally average numbers. Some visitor moorings (especially the fore and aft moorings in Pont) have been converted to resident berths as part of FHC's drive to bring down the numbers on waiting lists for deep water moorings. This has been well received by resident boats.

Captain Thomas said that Covid has inevitably had a consequence on income for 2020, initially commercial operations held up, but July and August were very poor but have improved again since. During the first lockdown period, budgets indicated a £350K deficit but thankfully this has improved and now expect a £20-50K deficit. It is hoped that the next period of lockdown will not significantly affect commercial business.

Jeremy Morcom added that there had been an increase in ships in the last few months and November seems strong as ships have already been fixed for this period, but with exports to Europe, a close eye must be kept on their situations. There is some uncertainty, but the short term looks ok.

FOWEY HARBOUR REVISION ORDER (HRO)

Captain Thomas said that this process is now nearing completion with pre-application and application consultation conducted and feedback addressed with the Marine Management Organisation (MMO). It is expected to be laid before Parliament in February 2021 with a result between March and May 2021.

One of the main aims of this process is to enable FHC to update their Harbour Byelaws, these will be repealed and replaced with General Directions which are more modern and fit for purpose. The overall purpose of these Directions will remain the same as the Byelaws, but they can be amended individually moving forwards so can be more reactive to harbour issues. The RYA and PUG will be statutory consultees to General Directions. There will be initial work to draw up and approve the General Directions but templates from other ports will help.

Captain Thomas thanked the members for their contributions to this process to date and is looking forward to continued collaboration.

LOSTWITHIEL RAILWAY BRIDGE WORKS

Captain Thomas was advised earlier this year by Network Rail that works are planned to the railway bridge at Lostwithiel in early 2021, this bridge crosses the river in the vicinity of Brunel Quays and Coulson's Park and will close that part of the river to boat traffic. There has been no update of the timings of the project, but users will be notified when more information is given, and relevant Notices published.

Richard Kirkham asked if there would be an alternative landing provided if access to the landing point in the town is obstructed. Captain Thomas replied that a berth would be made available on the wall at Coulson's Park, which FHC administer.

WHITEHOUSE POOL PROJECT

Captain Thomas wanted to make the group aware of a community project to repair the saltwater pool at Whitehouse. There has been a successful community fundraising campaign and FHC have met recently with the organisers, Alan Giles and Matt Akrigg. Ownership is by Cornwall Council and this asset is part of the devolution package to FHC, under which the infrastructure needs to be handed over in a fit and useable state. This project cannot move ahead until the devolution is completed and it another reason to chase it up. There is an aspiration by FHC to improve the wider site including the toilet block, in a similar way to that done at Readymoney with perhaps a café and public toilet facility.

PENMARLAM PONTOON EXTENSION PROJECT

Captain Thomas is pleased that FHC are in a position to move forwards with this project and it is hoped to install ready for next season subject to licence approval. The proposal was distributed prior to the meeting but to summarise, the existing trot moorings and separate pontoon sections will be replaced by new pontoon sections which will join it to the shore. There is demand for walk-ashore berths and this project will increase the berths available by 11. Customers will have the benefits of being able to walk ashore as well as electricity and power. By making these berths shore-linked there may also be an added benefit of less tenders. There will be an increased cost for these shore linked berths and customers will be offered an alternative berth if they do not want to remain on this facility.

John Pollard commented that it seems to be a good project, he asked whether further dredging would be required for the project. Captain Thomas said there would be no new areas of dredging although ongoing maintenance dredging would take place when Lantic Bay is back in action. Several pontoon configurations had been discussed in the drawing up of these plans, but it was felt this additional single stretch of pontoon was the most aesthetically sensitive and practical.

Chris Ogg (Fowey RNLI) said that Berrills Yard pontoon also requires dredging for access to the inside. Captain Thomas said that was another key area to address when Lantic Bay is back in action following work to replace hull plating and the excavator which are commencing imminently. Chris also commented that the use of Berrills Yard pontoon this year had been extremely difficult with congestion on the inside and resulting damage to boats. Captain Thomas agreed that demand exceeds capacity on these facilities and there is a similar problem at Albert Quay and Polruan pontoons. It may be solved by better policing of hire boats and boat size (which should be less than 4m for tenders) and encouraging coverings for props to prevent damage. There has been discussion about trying to increase capacity at Berrills Yard pontoon, but it is probably not viable and increasing space will only bring more users.

Richard Kirkham (RFYC) agreed that use of landing pontoons had been particularly difficult this year with the outside of the pontoons being used by small boats preventing access by yachts and larger vessels.

Captain Thomas thanked Chris and Richard for their comments and would feedback to the Harbour Patrol team and consider specific policing of the pontoons during peak periods.

Captain Thomas asked for the view of members about crabbing on pontoons, this activity was banned this year due to Covid and social distancing concerns. The members thought crabbing on the outside of the pontoon should be prohibited for the safety reasons.

STAKEHOLDER'S FEEDBACK

James Staughton (Chairman) asked about the progress of the Brazen Island Project. Captain Thomas said the slipway project is complete and this facility is instrumental in the maintenance of FHC vessels and facilities, the fuel pontoon is currently on the slip followed by Lantic Bay.

There remains a vision to link Brazen Island and Penmarlam to better utilise space at Brazen Island and alleviate congestion at Penmarlam with the possibility of boat racks at Brazen Island. The improvement of the workshop area is the next project and consultants are developing potential plans for renovation of the existing workshops or replacement. The PUG's input will be sought once plans have been formulated.

Chris Ogg (Fowey RNLI) raised concerns about the amount of hire boats using the river and potential incidents, particularly with the Bodinnick Ferry which is in view of Chris' house. Chris asked about the briefing given from the hire company to the customers and also noted an increase in Stand Up Paddleboard use and the fact there is often a lack of experience. There are also incidences of speeding at Caffa Mill as people launch and 'test' their engine. Captain Thomas

replied that hire boat operators are licensed by FHC and he is satisfied that the verbal briefing gives adequate information to the customer. The numbers in use this year at any one time have been extremely high and FHC are not looking to licence any further boats. Harbour Patrol may need to act more to educate, guide and instruct users. Any near miss incidents, including any with the Bodinnick Ferry are reported by the Ferry Company to FHC where they are logged.

Captain Thomas added that indications are that 2021 will also be very busy with people on 'staycation' so we must be prepared.

Chris also raised some issues with Lifeboat crew vehicle access to the boathouse through the town with added pedestrianisation of Fowey Fore Street as part of Covid planning.

Richard Kirkham (RFYC) – Thanks to FHC for looking after RFYC Club Tender during lockdown. It was commented that not having Lantic Bay on her berth on the silver mooring was advantageous for sailing. Richard also enquired about the changes at North Street Yard (NSY). Captain Thomas replied that NSY is FHC owned, the building is leased, and the dinghy spaces and racks are rented with an allocation to FGSC for junior sailing. It came to FHC's attention that the pricing structure at NSY was not aligned with storage at other FHC sites and so the storage periods and tariffs have been amended to bring it into line. All customers have been contacted.

John Pollard (Mixtow Residents) asked about Covid restrictions for the forthcoming lockdown period and whether use of boats will be allowed for access to Fowey for groceries and medical reasons. Captain Thomas said that the Government department responsible, the Department for Transport, had not issued guidance yet. From information released to date, the chandlery at Mixtow and the Harbour Office will be closed to the public but currently unsure of the guidelines around the use of the river but it is hoped that it can continue but it must be safe.

(Post meeting note: FHC's position is now available on the news section of their website).

Jeremy Morcom (Imerys Minerals) asked when FHC will publish their commercial charges for 2021. Captain Thomas replied that charges are discussed and approved at the November Board meeting. Many of the commercial costs to FHC are fixed and cargo levels affect revenues so a forecast of cargoes from Imerys would also be welcomed to aide the Board in their decisions.

Graham Slack (POFROC) although not present at the meeting, passed on thanks to FHC for their part in the sailing provision and arrangements this season.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business

DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be on Monday 26th April 2021 at 1400 in the Harbour Office

The Chairman thanked everyone for their input and there being no further business, the meeting closed at 1530.