



MEETING MINUTES

Monday 26th April 2021

Minutes of a meeting of the Fowey 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	Colin Martin – Cornwall Council
John Pollard – Mixtow Residents	Edwina Hannaford – Cornwall Council
Philip Henson – RFYC / POFROC	Phoebe Beedell – Lostwithiel Town Council
John Berryman – Fowey Town Council	Mike Carter - Lanteglos Parish Council
Flynn Pearce – St. Veep Parish Council	St Winnow Parish Council
David Johns - Golant Quay Users / St. Sampson Parish Council	Adrian Fisher – Polruan Town Trust
Karen Toms - RYA	Andy Simmons – National Trust
Victoria Clark - Fowey Chamber of Commerce / Readymoney Beach Shop	Mike Elliott – Pilot Boatmen
Capt. Paul Thomas – FHC Harbour Master & Chief Exec.	John Barker – Licensed Boatmen
Claire Hoddinott – Minutes Secretary / Fowey Estuary Partnership	Andrew Dellow – FGSC / POFROC
	Jeremy Crapp – River Fowey Gig Club
	Alistair Barr – Castle Dore Rowing Club
	Trevor Quail - Penmarlam Quay Users
	Peter Robinson – Fowey Tourist Information
	Dave Swiggs - Aquaculture
	Jeff Pearce – Fowey River Association (freshwater fisheries)

MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting were approved as an accurate record of the last meeting.

MATTERS ARISING

- VHF coverage - Captain Thomas had contacted Falmouth Coastguard (James Instance) to make operators aware of the issue of switching VHF Channels.

- Devolution of Caffa Mill – Following the letter from the Chairman in November 2020, Captain Thomas was pleased to report an improvement in engagement with Cornwall Council with monthly update meetings. Discussion is underway about the material state of the assets including the toilets at Whitehouse and licensing arrangements for the boat spaces at Caffa Mill. Captain Thomas is hopeful that the devolution process will be completed this year.
- Memorandum of Understanding – to be covered under HRO agenda item.
- Lostwithiel Railway Bridge works – Captain Thomas updated that the works have been underway for several weeks and are coming to completion. John Berryman said that the new bridge was in operation but the works area and road closure to Coulson's Park remain in place.
- Penmarlam Pontoon Extension Project – Captain Thomas was pleased to report that the project is complete and the additional resident berths provided are fully subscribed.

REPORT FROM FHC - Captain Thomas

Leisure – 2020 saw unprecedented levels of activity on the water from July 4th when Covid restrictions were lifted. Visiting yacht numbers were broadly similar to previous years but there was a big increase in small craft (dinghies, kayaks and SUPs) and FHC may need to consider managing these small craft which are often inexperienced water users. Resident boats were fortunately all away for the winter by the time Lockdown 2 was enforced.

Commercial – the export of china clay continued at a slightly reduced rate in 2020. Pleased to report the much-awaited export of aggregate cargo has started and is delivering on forecast levels. This is an exciting opportunity for the Port and the income generated supports the operation of the wider Harbour. The cargo is being transported to SE England for use in construction and infrastructure projects. Captain Thomas reported that there had been some negative comment from residents about increased lorry traffic on Passage Lane, but these vehicles are those that cannot transit the Pinnock Tunnel on the private haul road and are very much in the minority of vehicles. This issue should be balanced against the positive impact this diversification has on jobs and income for the Port.

Financially, FHC can gladly report a break-even situation for 2020 and the Government's Furlough Scheme went some way to aiding the financial position.

Captain Thomas wanted to acknowledge the Fowey Town Council's support in the devolution project as well as in the Town Vitality Project which will improve Fowey for the community and visitors alike. FHC will continue to work on the Whitehouse Pool project and toilet block to improve the Whitehouse area. Caffa Mill waterfront (not the car park), when devolved to FHC, has the potential to be a great community space and point of arrival for visitors. FHC also see improvement of water access and safety as a key issue at Caffa Mill.

There have been cancellations of cruise bookings for the start of 2021 due to Covid restrictions but domestic UK cruises will resume soon with UK residents visiting UK ports. Fowey is expecting its first cruise visit in late June.

The Commissioners are working with Polruan Town Trust to reinstate the lighting at Polruan Blockhouse for safety and aesthetic reasons.

FOWEY HARBOUR REVISION ORDER (HRO) UPDATE

Captain Thomas said that the Fowey Harbour Revision Order was laid before Parliament in February 2021 and has been brought into force. Currently it is in the 6-week appeal period which ends at the end of April.

Captain Thomas thanked the PUG members for their input to the consultation process.

The PUG will be a statutory consultee to the process of producing General Directions and a Constitution or Terms of Reference for the group is important to outline the role of the group.

Captain Thomas to develop Terms of Reference for comment by the members.

MODERNISATION OF BYELAWS

Captain Thomas explained that the HRO gives FHC Powers of General Direction which allows General Directions to replace Byelaws which are a more reactive way to manage harbour activities. All existing Harbour Byelaws will be repealed and replaced with General Directions. There will be full consultation with statutory consultees (which includes the PUG) and there will also be a public consultation. Captain Thomas said this would be a good opportunity to review our byelaws and bring them up to date, reflecting current activities.

Captain Thomas asked that the members review the current Byelaws and identify areas for improvement, or if additional regulation should be introduced.

Fowey Harbour Byelaws (1996) to be distributed with the meeting minutes and comments to be sent back via Claire.

The Chairman asked for questions:

Chris Ogg asked if the current 6-monthly period between meetings would affect the consultation period. Captain Thomas replied that the consideration of General Directions will require extra engagement with the group over the next 6 to 12 months. The Chairman said extra meetings may be convened if discussion is required but consultation could take place via e-mail.

WILD SWIMMING

Captain Thomas explained that there has been an increase in wild swimming in the Harbour in recent times and there is a safety concern, with a few near-miss incidents recorded. A recent report from the MAIB outlines an incident where a small open boat passenger ferry collided with a swimmer causing severe injuries. The recommendation of this report was to limit the possibility of interaction between swimmers and vessels.

Popular swimming locations in Fowey include Readymoney, Whitehouse, Polruan, Carne Beach (Pont Pill), Lerryn Bridge and Lostwithiel Bridge. Readymoney Cove has a buoyed swim line to prevent boats entering the swim area. Captain Thomas feels there is improvement to be made to the current Byelaw around swimming in the Harbour and asked for opinion from members.

Victoria Clark said there are issues with swimmers going out beyond the swim line as the area is not very big, but she feels there are other places locally for swimmers to achieve longer distances. There is an issue with boats entering from sea and also launching from the beach. She suggested some signage to be displayed at the beach to inform users.

David Johns suggested having designated areas for swimming.

Karen Toms felt it was important to continue to give the opportunity to swim in the harbour but agreed that education around safety was important for swimmers and boat users.

Captain Thomas added that a suggestion had been made by a local resident of a 'swim lane' between Readymoney and Whitehouse beaches. Members did not think this was a viable or safe option. Captain Thomas wondered if a distinction could be made between swimming and bathing (if legal definitions are available), our beaches are suited to bathing but not extended vigorous swimming.

HARBOUR ACCESS

Captain Thomas outlined an increase in enquiries about replacement ladders and steps to access the foreshore from private properties. FHC own the majority of foreshore in the Harbour so FHC permission is required as landowner. The Commissioners support facilitating access to the water and this should be safe, but structures need to be sympathetic to the aesthetics of the area.

Captain Thomas shared a drawing of an initial proposal for a multi-tiered steps arrangement from a property on the Esplanade, near Whitehouse Quay and asked for comment from members.

Chris Ogg said the large scale of the structure would change the aesthetic of the area and it would probably only have occasional use.

John Pollard felt that precedent was important, if this scale of project were allowed then others would follow.

The Chairman said he could understand the safety implications of vertical ladders from properties, but they have considerably less impact visually.

John Berryman explained that Fowey Town Council have to consider the view from the river in terrestrial planning applications and thought the proposed structure was out of proportion to that of neighbouring properties. Captain Thomas explained that this was a pre-planning enquiry by the owner/contractor to FHC as landowner.

Captain Thomas thanked everyone for their useful comments which will be fed back to the FHC Board for their response to the applicant.

STAKEHOLDER'S FEEDBACK

Chris Ogg (Fowey RNLI) said the RNLI and MCA are predicting a very busy season and have updated their water safety messaging. He asked if Harbour Patrol could intervene if an unsafe vessel or practice was seen in the Harbour.

Jeremy Morcom (Imerys Minerals) agreed with Captain Thomas' earlier comments about the positive impact of the aggregate cargo on the Port. He asked if there were any impacts expected as a result of the G7 summit in June. Captain Thomas said Police and other Security Agencies were engaging and discussions are underway. FHC will continue liaison with Imerys about any possible impacts to Port operations.

John Pollard (Mixtow Residents) commented that tree cover at Penmarlam had been reduced with less visual screening for the residents and noted the site was in an AONB. Captain Thomas said a plan was underway to replant screening, particularly some evergreen hedging for the car park areas.

John Pollard said there had also been comment from residents about increased levels of noise from people on the water. **Captain Thomas to investigate options to highlight the issue and ask people to consider the waterfront residents, especially in the Penmarlam area.**

Philip Henson (RFYC/POFROC) explained that the increase in storage charges at North Street Yard had caused a number of young sailors to remove their boats due to unaffordability and there has been a knock-on impact on sailing entries. He asked if this could be reconsidered to encourage young sailors. Captain Thomas said the charges had been reviewed to bring this site into line with other FHC storage facilities, but this valuable point is acknowledged. An initiative is being introduced to encourage young sailors that are competing in the racing by offering a 50% discount on storage at North Street Yard. It should be noted however that the yard is over-subscribed and that discounted storage rates are already offered to the storage of FGSC's club

sailing boats. The yard does have a limited capacity and a steep slipway, Caffa Mill boat storage may offer some more opportunities in the future.

Philip Henson also asked for continued consultation about Caffa Mill improvements as a resident of that area of Fowey.

Karen Toms (RYA) said the RYA had been leading on disseminating Covid information to boat users which is ongoing and engaging with clubs as they re-open for business. Captain Thomas commented that the RYA guidance had been very useful and has been shared with Harbour users.

Karen Toms said that the RYA had been involved in the consultation for change of use of part of the St Austell Bay mussel farm to help harvesting.

John Berryman (Fowey Town Council) said that a £40K Town Vitality Grant has been applied for under a collaborative project between Fowey Town Council, Fowey Town Forum, Fowey Chamber of Commerce and FHC. The project plans to improve areas of the town including Town Quay and Caffa Mill. There will be feasibility studies into pedestrianisation of the Fore Street during the summer to improve public safety and air quality. The amount of money which can be applied for is limited to the resident population numbers. There has been no feedback yet from Cornwall Council regarding the application.

David Johns (GQUA and St Sampson PC) said that lack of parking in Golant remained an issue, especially during the summer. An area for storage of resident's kayaks was being explored near to the slipway which is currently an overgrown area. Land Registry indicates it is FHC land. Captain Thomas replied that he would be happy to explore this idea further.

Captain Thomas added kayak and SUPs are liable for Harbour Dues like any other vessel using the Harbour, but this is not often collected. Other Harbours are stricter at enforcing this and not only does it provide revenue but also a way of identifying craft and engaging with users about safety. David Johns added that the Norfolk Broads have a good permit system and agreed that Harbour Dues should be paid by all users.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business

DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be on Tuesday 2nd November 2021 at 1400 in the Harbour Office or in a virtual format.

The Chairman thanked everyone for their input and there being no further business, the meeting closed at 1525.