

Commodore's Report - AGM 2019.

Your Committee has been quite busy during the past year. A Club Development Strategy session looked at the challenges likely to face the Club over the next few years. To some extent we anticipated the results of the recent RYA Club Satisfaction Survey and initiated a number of projects and developed some new ideas a few of which I will mention in this report.

Looking at the papers for this AGM you may have been struck by a number of aspects. Firstly, that the Club is in a strong financial position and yet we are proposing to raise fees annually by the annual rise in the CPI beginning in 2021. Secondly, you may have noticed that there are some vacancies for key positions such as Bargemaster and Bosun.

An important contribution to our healthy financial position is our low operating costs. This is thanks to the work of our volunteer officers and managers. In future, if we have to outsource activities, such as mooring and clubhouse maintenance, either our fees would have to rise very substantially or our annual surplus would fall dramatically. Commodores' reports over the last several years have said much the same but I feel that we are approaching the time when we will need paid staff.

Many of you told us through the satisfaction survey that the clubhouse requires improvement in a number of respects. The building is of timber construction and is now 25 years old. We are commissioning an intrusive survey to properly understand the present condition of the building and we anticipate significant expenditure in order to provide the improvements which you have suggested.

Your Committee has long anticipated the need to build a substantial sinking fund and for a number of years the Club has made a comfortable annual operating surplus. If we can continue to do so, we should have a fund sufficient for a major redevelopment or even a rebuild of the clubhouse within the next 15 years. Prudence in 'good' years will stand us in good stead if our operating costs have to rise in future.

The age demographic of our membership is skewed towards the older member and, in common with many other clubs, we need to attract younger members and encourage them to volunteer.

We are keen to expand the range of water sports that we offer and are looking to attract canoeists, kayakers and paddle boarders who may be attracted to our location within an area of great beauty. We need someone to lead on this initiative so, if this interests you, please speak to a member of the Committee.

Feedback from the Satisfaction Survey showed that you would welcome more organised events that bring members together such as the Man Over Board recovery exercise that we ran in May.

Sailing Cruises-in-Company have been popular in the past and perhaps motor boaters would like similar events. Ideas and offers to organise such occasions are most welcome.

As I reported at the last AGM there has been a national fall in the popularity of swinging moorings.

Currently the club has a vacancy rate of approximately 14% and yet we have, for the first time in some years, a waiting list for deepwater moorings. To secure our future we need to ensure that we have new active sailing members joining the Club.

Chris Bowyer has been reviewing the moorings operation. His ongoing review includes a consideration of whether the Club should move to a position where the majority of moorings are owned by the Club and let to members and he has also been considering a rationalisation of allocation so that there is a better match of the draft of the vessel to the depth of water at the mooring allocated. To this end a comprehensive depth survey of our mooring positions has been undertaken by Chris and Mac Armstrong. Chris also has to wrestle with the time consuming matter of attempting to move long standing members closer to the Causeway consistent with efficient matching of draughts, depths and sinker weights.

Your Committee is also considering for 2021 a new pricing structure for moorings based on depth of water and proximity to the Causeway.

Jill has organised a full and successful social calendar during the last year and is currently planning our Winter Talks series. Last year she introduced Club suppers before the talks which proved very popular; she plans the same this winter but places will be limited so, lookout on the website and on email for details and book early.

Peter Plume has continued to welcome new members and has analysed the Satisfaction Survey. You can find his analysis on our website and I would encourage all members to read it.

I am grateful to all members who completed the survey and the Committee will be carefully considering your comments and suggestions during the coming year. Amongst many other comments you have told us that the Causeway needs improvement and indeed your Committee had set up a Causeway Working Party to consider this very issue and my hope is that we will be able to make improvements during 2020 but much bureaucratic work needs to be done along the way.

We may well undertake the necessary work 'in house' so any builders, dumper or digger drivers please step forward!

I consider Cadet activities to be a very important aspect of our Club.

David Wheatley, Vice Commodore, Training Officer and RYA Principal has ensured that we continue to be approved by and affiliated to the RYA. He has ensured the continuing success of our Cadet section.

Mac Armstrong was adopted as our Rear Commodore during the year and has been leading our thoughts on refurbishment/redevelopment of the Clubhouse.

If any of you have professional experience as an architect, building surveyor or architectural technician we would be very grateful for any assistance you could give us.

Steve Dennis works tirelessly, and often behind the scenes, as our Clubhouse Officer. Our ageing, clubhouse needs a fair amount of care and attention and Steve both reacts to the immediate and plans for the future to ensure that our facilities are fit for purpose.

Our Regatta at this year was again a resounding success. Those involved were rewarded by many comments to the effect "the best regatta in the area" and much of the credit for this lies with our Sailing Officer - James Gent, with support from Jill, Steve and Tony Head and Nick Head.

No organisation such as ours can succeed as well as we have without committed and competent Secretaries and Treasurers.

Ian Oram has been my right-hand man in the smooth running of the Club and we all owe a great deal of gratitude to him for fulfilling, in addition to Hon. Secretary, the roles of Company Secretary, Webmaster and IT consultant. We need to offload him of some of these duties - any offers?

I would like to record my deep appreciation of the contribution to the Club given by our outgoing Hon. Treasurer, Ron Edwards. Ron has given freely of his time and expertise in the role for a number of years and I am very grateful to him. You will have seen from the accounts that our Club has a very healthy balance sheet. I shall miss his business acumen and his loyalty.

The Committee looks forward to working with Janet Stone who brings her professional experience as an accountant to bear on the role of Treasurer.

I would also like to recognise and bring your attention to the contribution of the Managers of various functions within the Club.

Charles Evans, as assistant Bargemaster, has continued to fulfil the full duties of Bargemaster and has again masterminded the annual mooring service. This role does not necessarily require the skills of a Barge Skipper and I would encourage anyone interested in taking over responsibility for ensuring that our Mooring Barge is maintained and organising the annual mooring service to come forward. The longer we can service our own moorings the longer we can keep our mooring fees among the lowest in the area.

Mick Flanagan has looked after our dinghy park, helped Tony Head with the White Sail Challenges and continues to be involved with cadets; the Boatwatch scheme runs smoothly with the technical scrutiny of Martin Worth.

Allen Pack and Con manage our very popular bar which contributes significantly to our balance sheet.

There are others who make important contributions to the well-being of the Club, particularly with the Cadets and with social events, and I apologise for not naming them individually.

I make no apology for describing the contributions of the familiar faces who give their time to the business of the Club because I would like to celebrate the ethos of volunteering that they have demonstrated.

I would say that the core values of our Club are informality and friendliness and feel that our website claim that we are "The best little yacht club on the Tamar" is justified. However we should not rest on our laurels but make an extra effort to engage with our upcountry sailors and to be supportive of those new to sailing.

One of my New Year's resolutions will be to make an extra effort to introduce myself to those that I do not yet recognise. Perhaps if we all do likewise we will also become....

"The friendliest yacht club on the Tamar".

JD Oct 2019.