

MINUTES OF FULL MEETING OF WELLS HARBOUR COMMISSIONERS (WHC) HELD AT THE HAROUR OFFICE ON 19TH NOVEMBER 2019 AT 6:30PM

PRESENT: Andy Frary (AF) – Chair, Chris Thomson (CT), Mel Catton (MC), Alan Bushell (AB), Brian Riches (BR), Avril Lill (AL), Kevin Theobald (KT), Nick Groom (NG), Bob Ellis (BE), Denys Hickey (DH)

EXECUTIVE MEMBERS: Robert Smith (RS) Harbour Master, Simon Cooper (SAC) Harbour Administrator

1. APOLOGIES

None

2. MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

Minutes of the last full meeting of 17th September 2019 were agreed and signed as a true record of that meeting.

3. CHAIRMAN – Andy Frary

Chairman's Report

- Harbour Channel

AF acknowledged that the channel entrance is a little difficult at present and was hopeful that nature will take its course to make it more accessible and easier than it is in the current state. AF went on to acknowledge that the harbour team are doing their best to pick out a channel that remains fit for purpose as they possibly can. Following conversations with Robert, the team are keeping a close eye that it remains the best passage and any opportunity to improve it they will do so.

- Complimentary Letters

AF was pleased to inform the commissioners that the harbour team were in possession of 2 complimentary letters from the Kings Lynn workfolk boat trust which complimented the team for their kind hospitality, friendship and support during their recent stay. Secondly, a letter on behalf of the Wells Parochial Church Council thanking the Commissioners for their generous donation that has gone to the restoration appeal.

- Further Points

AF commented that a number of other points he was intending to raise are within the agenda, so given they are going to be discussed later in the meeting, will hold back for now.

4. FINANCIAL UPDATE – Simon Cooper

- Preliminary results for the 10 months to the end of October 2019 were circulated and presented at the meeting.
- The second paper tabled relates to reviewing options for the ways in which the cash reserves held by the Commission could be more effectively attributed by looking at taking alternative positions than just holding on a deposit account. SAC requested the Commissioners review this paper and provide feedback on any points of clarification or particular interest/concerns that might be made. **Action ALL.**

5. HARBOUR MASTERS REPORT – Robert Smith

- Seaweed Farm

RS advised the committee that he and SAC had a follow up meeting with the Seaweed Farm proposers as well as one of their financial backers. The proprietors are still very keen to operationalise their plans although RS was unsure if it was going to happen given the number of challenges they still have to overcome. RS reiterated that given the proposal will offer jobs and benefits to the community we continue to be supportive. Whilst having the meeting with the operatives, it became clear that Wells will be their only option to operate from due to the harvest requiring to be ashore in the shortest possible time and given the location of the proposed farm site. RS/SAC have had some thoughts about the way in which we operate and support them should their plans come to fruition, but until we know if it will go ahead they should remain thoughts rather than us doing anything firm or spending money. BR requested that RS put him in contact with the operative as he would like to meet them once again. AF raised the point that we were already thinking of/considering installing floating pontoons near the skredge and that maybe a point from which they could operate. RS concurred. The committee supported this view and asked RS/SAC to price up and work out what would be required to install some pontoons for the next meeting. RS pointed out that we would also require MMO approval if we were to proceed. We would also be having to think about how we would install water/power and perhaps look at alternative power solutions also. **Action RS/SAC**

- West Side of Harbour Office

The glass panels were now in place and the other defences have all now been completed as per the plan. Longer term RS was keen to improve the sea defences on the west side by extending the wall and if this was undertaken it would be the opportunity to landscape the area as well. This may also include the possibility of moving the Life Boat Memorial to the area, although RS emphasised nothing has been formalised or agreed in any way in this regard. AB reminded the committee we talked about installing bike racks as part of the tidy up.

- Tug Boat Yard Gates

RS took an action at the last meeting to look at building a gate at Tug Boat Yard to prevent public access. Having visited the site with the gate manufacturers, the only possible solution/installation would be down on the jetty rather than up the top. This was actually seen as an improvement given that the gate would now be much lower than previously thought and would still work in stopping the public on getting on to the pontoons. Predicted timescales are that it should be installed in the new year.

- East End Jetty Near Slipway

Architects drawings were drawn up, however they failed to include technical specifications which is what we were after. We are therefore procuring an alternative that will provide us with the specifications rather than the “artists impression” that we currently have.

6. DISCUSSION POINTS

NG and CT both left the meeting given their conflict for the next agenda item.

a. Water Taxi

The meeting reconvened to allow discussions to continue without the two conflicted commissioners being present. BR raised that he still had concerns that the operator is solely responsible for the

business given the exchanges in communication and thought there is an alternate backer/investor that we are not privy too. RS asked the committee of what steps we should now take either responding to the operatives request for a further meeting as per their letter, or whether or not we want to debate it further and make a decision now. RS then went on further to say that perhaps in hindsight knowing the subject would be contentious whatever decision was made we should have been more formal in our approach and demonstrate the governance clearer in the minutes.

Whilst we had followed due process and not contradicted the good governance guide, our explanations and actions could have been better portrayed. The commissioners then debated about how the water taxi would operationally work, given the business plan states relatively large volumes of traffic, the frequency of the taxi being under passage being 3-4 times an hour in the channel, how fixed would the timetable be and with all this additional activity, consideration to health and safety is what the WHC is most concerned about and thus needed greater information and detail. It was thus decided we should write to the operative suggesting a further meeting, pointing out these items of consideration so that when we have the meeting they would have some more information in order to consider how they might alleviate the additional risks with the water taxi being in operation. SAC took an action to help AF to construct a letter to be emailed to the water taxi proposer. **Action SAC/AF**

NG and CT were then invited to rejoin the meeting.

b. Albatros

A discussion was held regarding the Albatros and noting that it was currently closed.

c. 2020 Charges

SAC asked the commissioners to review the 2 page attachment headed 'Charges for 2020 Assessment'. SAC pointed out that previously applied inflation numbers were slightly wrong over the last 2/3 years although the impact would have been nominal in any of the decisions previously made and for the 2020 season also. SAC pointed out that the percentages used and the pricing changes would be very small, but would keep us aligned to inflation that impacts us on our costings so recommended to the commissioners that a 3% increase is applied to all charges other than the visiting commercial vessels and service areas, which are either rarely applied or still appropriate, such as the car park. The commissioners ratified the paper and asked SAC to implement a 3% increase for those areas as indicated in the report. **Action SAC**

d. Shipwright Land

The right of way request still remains outstanding and has been delayed given our solicitors were having to correspond with the land registry extensively to prove ownership which we understand has now been completed.

e. HUAC

RS advised the committee that he had written to all members of the HUAC laying out it was a dying practice and the BPA had confirmed very few harbours now approached the topic in this way given the advances in social media and other forms of communication available. The letter explained the pros and cons to the members and asked for their opinion. Overall the opinion was relatively benign with only 2/3 members feeling it important to continue as is the case. RS then suggested that perhaps we could perform an annual meeting ahead of our AGM where those people were likely to

be present given the similarity in their interests and use of the harbour. Commissioners thought this was a good solution and we will therefore offer this to the HUAC. **Action SAC**

f. Car Park Resurfacing

SAC advised that he had received a quote to replenish the tarmac areas of the car park which were in places needing repair. The cost came to £26k which would include surface preparation and re-tarmac to a depth of 40mm rather than the 10mm which is currently in situ and which is breaking up. We would also need to add the cost of painting the car park lines back on once the tarmac had been laid. No further action was taken at this point, but the commissioners were asked to consider whether we wish to proceed.

7. Any Other Business

a. Commissioners Reports

- AB advised that the repairs to the Kari H had been undertaken following the Mecal report requiring redress of the spud legs.
- BR advised there was nothing to report, other than that AF had mentioned regarding the harbour entrance but there is little that can be done in the current conditions.
- NG advised there is nothing to report.
- CT requested that RS review the lighting of buoys in the channel as we have a number of curves and turns in the inner channel that are not lit at all and if you miss them you would go aground. RS agreed to look into it and report back **Action RS**
- MC complimented the new railings along the quayside looked very good and congratulated the team in the installation.
- DH advised there is nothing to report.
- KT (without portfolio for now) had nothing to report.
- BE advised that the annual H&S policy statement had been refreshed and signed by himself and RS as Harbour Master. All other safety management requirements were up to date, although the mooring checks were now out of date. RS advised that the moorings are being constantly checked and repaired and it was the shortcomings of the team not keeping the administration/notices up to date rather than moorings falling into disrepair. RS was to remind the team to ensure this was undertaken. **Action RS**
- AL advised the next AONB meeting was tomorrow and was going to be an all day meeting. AL asked anyone to raise any points with her and similarly AL will pass on to the committee points of relevance.

b. Growler

Growler is a thames barge which was originally used to transport cargo in 1922. It has been left in disrepair for a number of years, however since August 2018 Ash Faire-Ring had taken possession and was looking to restore it to its former glory. It was noted there was quite a lot of interest in the barge and that other parties had provided funds in supporting the restoration. Ash had approached the commission given he thought that once the barge was completed it might be of interest being used for WHMT purposes and perhaps other pursuits in and around Wells. RS advised that the proposed £2k was going to be used to procure the hull planking in order to get the vessel afloat next season. The commissioners all thought it was a worthy cause and as such AB proposed to support the donation, seconded by RS and approved by all. CT did raise that the 'crossing the bar' proceeds was to go towards the WHMT or charities and wasn't sure that this cause was a charity. RS explained that we had opined previously that good causes that benefited the community were always considered falling under the spectrum of those needing help rather than just the formal definition of a Charitable Organisation. **Action SAC**

c. AGM

SAC advised the commissioners that the AGM would be set for 12th May 2020 @ 7pm and that the WSC had kindly agreed again we would be able to use their facility. SAC advised that he will also make note that we will start by holding the HUAC first.

8. WHMT

- SAC advised that we are required to hold the next meeting and as such would be reaching out to book in a time next week to hold.

With regards to the latest activity, Janice Whitaker (JW) will provide a fuller update at the next WHMT meeting however wanted to advise the pilot taking 6 children to use the Whitlingham lake facility had gone extremely well, was very good value and will thus be looking to use its services much more in the future.

SAC and JW have also been in discussion procuring some wetsuits in order to extend the season especially for kayaking. They had received quotes but were keen to point out that the local 'Wet dog' shop had been very competitive and had beaten online quotes. The Commissioners agreed and requested SAC to organise and support JW accordingly in the purchase. **Action SAC/JW**

- CT raised that he was unsure, following the article in the latest version of 'The Haven' as to the governance followed for the approval of the diving course undertaken by the granddaughter of RS. RS advised that when the subject arose, he declared an interest and took not part in the agreement of providing the funding and was as such minuted in that regard. CT acknowledged but wasn't sure the minutes were as clear as they perhaps ought to be and in such instances we should bear in mind this point when agreeing future requests and to ensure the minutes were sufficiently detailed. SAC agreed that he will make note for future minute taking. The Commissioners all agreed though that the matter had been conducted properly and that they recalled RS declaring an interest as the minutes reflect.

9. Staff Matters

RS advised that there were no items to discuss for this meeting.

The meeting ended at 9pm

Approved.....

Chairman Andy Frary

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Date