

**MINUTES OF FULL MEETING OF WELLS HARBOUR COMMISSIONERS (WHC)  
HELD @ THE HARBOUR OFFICE**

**27<sup>th</sup> July 2021 AT 6:30PM**

**PRESENT:** Mel Catton (MC) – Chair, Nick Groom (NG), Chris Thomson (CT), Kevin Theobald (KT), Bob Ellis (BE), Sally Wynne (SW), Josh Danziger (JD), Ashley Mullenger (AM) (part)

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

**1. CHAIRMAN WELCOME**

MC thanked all for attending and had nothing specific to raise at this time.

**2. APOLOGIES**

Andy McCallum (AMc), Brian Riches (BR), Denys Hickey (DH)

**3. APPROVE MINUTES**

The Commissioners confirmed that they were happy for MC to sign the minutes from the last meeting.

**4. YTD FINANCIALS**

SAC was pleased to report that the accounts for the year were in good shape and above last years performance and now better than 2019 on a Profit before tax (pbt) basis. SAC informed that there was nothing exceptional to report on further.

**5. HARBOUR EXECUTIVE UPDATE**

RS/SAC then went on to run through the written update that formed part of the agenda item adding;

1. Albatros – SAC advised that the draft license agreement was being sent to the owner shortly for their comments. The gantry has arrived and paid for and is being stored in the yard until the Albatros return when it will then be installed by the manufacturer.
2. Car Park – SAC presented a paper to discuss the alternative options. SAC explained that the driver to review the system was the continued negative press/reputation the car park attracts with the current system which could be avoided if barriers were installed. There would then be no charge notices (PCN) and a simpler system where people would have to buy a ticket to exit. A debate then followed amongst the commissioners regarding the Pros and Cons of each system, the principle topics being;
  - a. the additional time the harbour staff would have to ‘cover’ looking after the car park, queries, management etc
  - b. the visual impacts of barriers being installed on the harbour front
  - c. costs associated with the change in set up and then the increase ‘ongoing costs’ which are likely to occur if the management is brought in house.

RS suggested that it was such an important topic and given there was a number of different views/opinions it was an important enough to set aside a dedicated meeting to discuss further and make a decision with all the commissioners present. SAC was therefore tasked to arrange a meeting for all commissioners to attend to debate/discuss and ultimately come to decision before the end of September when the chance to use the break clause would expire.

3. Cabby – RS advised that further meetings had taken place and understood the costs would be high to restore. JD added that he agreed the costs looked high but there were still discussions ongoing regarding aspirations to look at how the barge would be used etc. RS said that he had continued to maintain the message to the representatives that any involvement of the WHC would require a business plan and an understanding of exactly what the request is being made of the harbour before any commitments could be made.
4. Lobster Hatchery – SAC advised that the first hatch had occurred and that we are well underway with getting the wheels in motion. Both RS/SAC commented that the support and interest from the fisherman has been excellent. RS also suggested that the Hatchery is added to AMs Commissioner portfolio oversight to which the WHC all agreed.
5. Oil Pollution contingency planning audit – the MCA visited ourselves to conduct an audit on our planning and response to a potential spill. Whilst the final written report is still outstanding, they verbally confirmed that all was well and there were no issues to be raised. RS mentioned that he wanted to point out that SAC had done an excellent job in managing them and ensuring our documentation/ preparation for the visit was in order, to the point where the MCA commented that it was so far the best one he had undertaken this year.
6. SCIRA – whilst nothing formal has been communicated, they have been continuing to work up plans to move their operation to Great Yarmouth and thus they will be leaving Wells.
7. Beach Patrol – RS advised that given the passage of time and the lead in to recruitment/ training we won't run Beach patrol this year.
8. Letter from harbour user about motorbike parking - SAC reported that following the last meeting he had written to the person explaining how the decision came about. The person was not satisfied and believed that the WHC wasn't considering their point enough. After some discussion the Commissioners were satisfied that they had explained their rationale and that they did not feel anything further would or could be done. The WHC requested SAC respond along these lines.
9. Oyster – RS advised that the NNDC had messaged him regarding the potential lay of Oysters which RS thought had quite a negative connotation and had thus responded requesting further information regarding the process/ procedures that the NNDC continued to follow (on the basis the practices do not show accurate reports for water testing on the ebb etc). AM added that Oysters would provide a huge amount of filtering of water which would improve the quality further.
10. Heritage Harbour – A paper entitled Heritage Harbours – Wells next the Sea was presented providing some more in depth information about the title but also raised the question of whether the WHC should be considering this in a broader context than just the accolade by looking into a centre/museum to coincide with the WHC 360<sup>th</sup> anniversary. MC thought it was a great opportunity and that it was something to be seriously considered as it was an excellent idea. Given the potential size of the project it was agreed that between MC & SW a smaller committee should be established which they can decide on representation/scope and next steps.
11. Filming last week – RS commented that probably most would have seen the harbour team assisting with filming for a documentary in the harbour a week or so back. The exact details are to remain confidential however as there was so much activity around Bob Hall sands, RS thought it was important to ensure the RNLI and NCI were informed.
12. East end Land (Jordans) – whilst the groundworks had cleared the site, the lorry back had remained in situ despite the owner advising of its imminent removal. RS intends to follow up accordingly.
13. Mooring in Harbour – RS was pleased to report that the demand for moorings in the harbour had increased considerably, to the point that some new ones had been laid. As a consequence to this, RS advised that he had written to a couple of people who haven't used

their moorings/vessels for a long time and being in such strategic positions had given them notice to leave by year end. This will then enable more use of the area and allow for people that will actually use the harbour better moorings.

14. Tern Barge – RS was pleased to report that he had counted 21 chicks from 10 nests – which he seemed to recall was the best result ever achieved.
15. Pontoon projects – SAC presented a paper outlining various pontoon ideas around the harbour that could be used to increase the number of pontoon berths plus in some cases improve facilities/ safety as there is an ever increasing demand for pontoon berths. The various options were discussed and RS/SAC agreed that they would analyse further the potential to install pontoons near the sailing club land, a temporary jetty type structure running parallel to the public slipway, installing pontoons along the fishermans quay and looking at improving/increasing the outer harbour berthing options.

## **6. COMMISSIONER UPDATES**

JD provided an update on the coastal futures forum advising that Royal Haskoning had been tasked to report and investigate Burnham Overy Staithe and thereby provides insight further along the coast again (from Holkham).

CT asked if there was any more news regarding the seaweed farm to which RS responded there wasn't. CT then remarked about the rubbish produced by the fish & chip shops and whilst Serco had improved it, they have nowhere to store the rubbish so in the evening the seagulls are still able to pull it all apart. When the owners have been approached both have held firm that they view it as not being a problem (or if there was it wasn't their problem).

MC reminded the WHC that the Christmas Tide this year would be held on the 4<sup>th</sup> December. RS was asked to confirm if the Tender S would still be used for the fireworks which RS confirmed it would be. MC then questioned if there were intentions for the WHC to build the lobster pot tree again which RS said there was. Further MC queried if any progress had been made about using solar panels. SAC confirmed that the consultancy talked about at the last meeting would be asked to come and conduct a survey across the whole estate and would not be limited to just solar but other forms of sustainable energy which might be available to us. Once the report has been written, the results can be shared with the WHC.

MC then confirmed that shops like the co-op are now offering recycled crab lines and so are other shops like Natural East. SAC also mentioned that Natural East had started to rent out equipment from their shop and we have provided them with a box of 'Billy the Gilly' guide books which we have agreed to go 50/50 on all sales done under a gentleman's agreement. SAC said it was better trying to use the guides which otherwise are stored at the office and that given we don't have the same footfall as them, it is more likely they will get better distribution.

No other Commissioners had updates or further comments.

## **7. WHMT**

SAC advised that we had recommenced kayaking events and to date had proved very popular.


## **8. AOB**

RS advised that the coastal futures forum had approached the WHC looking for a contribution towards setting up a website for £200. After voting on the topic there was a majority agreement to do so and as such RS would revert to them to agree.

## **9. Staff Matters**

None

Meeting was then closed @ 20.37

Approved.....

Mel Catton

Date.....28/9/21.....