

MINUTES OF FULL MEETING OF WELLS HARBOUR COMMISSIONERS (WHC)

HARBOUR OFFICE

25th January 2022 AT 6:30PM

PRESENT: Mel Catton (MC) – Chair, Nick Groom (NG), Chris Thomson (CT), Kevin Theobald (KT), Sally Wynne (SW), Josh Danziger (JD), Ashley Mullenger (AM), Andy McCallum (AMc), Brian Riches (BR), Denys Hickey (DH)

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

1. CHAIRMAN WELCOME

MC thanked all for attending.

First part of the agenda was to re-elect KT for a further term. MC asked KT if he wished to remain on the WHC for a further term which KT confirmed and all Commissioners supported.

2. APOLOGIES

Bob Ellis (BE)

3. YTD FINANCIALS

SAC reported that the accounts for the year had been completed in draft and were as expected, healthy albeit slightly off previous indications due to the Windfarm leaving in September. SAC emphasised to the WHC that next year the expectations will be very different as income lines from the Outer Harbour Diesel and Transport will disappear/ drop materially and costs lines will increase where the windfarm used to support.

SAC then went on to explain that whilst improvements in the Town Harbour area on the financials were seen, there still remains work to be done getting this profitable and dropping the reliance on other areas to cover the losses and with the windfarm leaving, this will become harder and therefore the current strategy to reduce costs and explore revenue opportunities will continue.

4. APPROVE MINUTES

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

5. HARBOUR EXECUTIVE UPDATE

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

1. SCIRA – Following the subsequent exchanges SAC had held, SCIRA have not reverted.
2. Dredger – whilst there were plans to hold a sub-committee prior to this WHC meeting, SAC advised that following approaching 4 companies, it was apparent that it looked likely at least in the short term that we continue to dredge as we do today but explore possibilities, options on making further savings wherever possible.
3. Car Park – The planning application had been submitted despite receiving no pre-application advice from NNDC. SAC then asked the WHC to review the paper circulated with the agenda headed 'Car park Barrier system – Rule implementation'. SAC advised the WHC that given the change in operating the car park, there would need to be changes on what and how we operate today and this paper was attempting to explain how the barrier system will work and identify potential impacted situations. SAC asked the WHC to review and whilst no

- decisions were required immediately, before the new system is implemented, decisions on those impacted areas would need to be finalised and our operations adjusted accordingly. MC asked why we were not installing a folder barrier which may help with the planning – SAC advised that he would need to revert to the supplier as to why we had not chosen this.
4. Albatros – An e-mail was received from the owner albeit only looking to agree dates for the return of the vessel. The first weekend of April was acceptable albeit a further reminder was issued regarding the permissions required. Since that reply WHC had heard nothing further. SAC therefore suggested that another email is sent advising that the last time before they wish to return in April would be the next WHC meeting in March which if there was any problems it would be too late for the vessels return. The WHC concurred that we needed to email then again as a further reminder.
 5. Flood Meeting – RS had been asked to attend a town council meeting to discuss the finding of the Flood reports commissioned by WHC. RS advised the WHC that he did not think this was a good idea as there was little to discuss and raising hypothetical solutions that the report investigated and effectively discounted as being viable, all that discussion would achieve is greater speculation.
 6. Heritage Harbour – RS reminded the WHC that a paper was circulated reviewing the options and background to obtaining 'Heritage Harbour' status. RS is planning to meet the organisers to discuss the options/ alternatives and in the meantime suggested a sub group was formed so as to explore and progress the most suited option. MC asked for any Commissioners to help form this group to which JD & AM both volunteered. MC then suggested that given SW looks after Heritage it would make sense for SW to chair which SW agreed.
 7. 360 years anniversary – RS said that after giving this more thought the WHC should look at a number of events for the anniversary which is next year (2023) and like the Heritage Harbour, it would be another opportunity for a sub group to start to come up with ideas/ suggestions and act as an organising committee too. In this regard JD/AM volunteered and with this also linking in with the Heritage harbour idea, having SW chair this and along with MC attending it will serve as a good representation of WHC.
 7. Harbour office plans – connected to the above RS suggested that whilst we continue to discuss a heritage hub/centre etc we could also look to revisit the redevelopment of the harbour office – in 2015 plans were submitted to NNDC to look to building new offices and redeveloping the current one. The plan eventually fell away due to doubts on costs however as an alternative solution for the heritage idea it may be something to re-approach. By way of example, ideas used in 2015 were circulated. Overall WHC were supportive and agreed it is something not to discount at this stage.
 8. East End Land. RS just reminded the WHC of the plan to look at the 'pods' idea was still the course to take and therefore continues to progress accordingly
 9. PMSC audit – the draft report had been received with a few actions arising from it but overall WHC received a good report. RS reminded the WHC that the purpose of the audit was to provide comfort to the Commissioners that the management of the harbour is being properly undertaken and in accordance with best practice. The auditor will attend Mays meeting to present to the commissioners and also provide the commissioners with more background/ understanding of the PMSC inc. their obligations.
 10. Barge – The working group continued to engage with RS on how the barge might be used and how talks with the current owners had progressed. At present they still had not finalised any proposal for the WHC to consider.

11. Ski club – a call was made to the harbour from the ski club exploring if there was any chance of a discount/concession on their fees given the lack of use through the COVID period. After some discussion the WHC unanimously agreed that no such concession can be made so as to provide a consistent & fair approach to all users/ other clubs etc.
12. Rowing club – the email from the Kings Lynn Rowing Club was circulated for information as part of the agenda and the WHC noted its content. Overall the WHC were supportive as it was another method of reaching out to people who perhaps would not normally look to get out on the water which is what we encourage. The club though were advised that if they wished to remain and also be engaging with Wells residents more then a change in their name would be appropriate. With regards to facilities this would still need to be looked at but the WHC were comfortable in allowing the management organise/ sort and set the fees commensurate to other users
13. New rules for the use and supply of Rebated oils (red Diesel) – the paper headed ‘Guidance on changes to use ‘red diesel’ which was circulated earlier was supported. It was noted that this was really our only option given the new rules coming into force and thus no upside doing anything else at the risk of receiving criticism from HMRC.
14. Meeting dates – the revised meeting dates were circulated and agreed accordingly.
15. The Haven – RS asked the Commissioners to support the re-introduction of issuing The Haven which we suspended through COVID as distribution was difficult and also the purpose became more difficult. RS emphasised that he felt it was an important communication tool to the community but that he wished for contribution from the Commissioners for articles. KT thought it might also be an idea to provide an electronic copy rather than a hard copy. SW made the point that the demographics of Wells probably still calls for the need for Hard copy distribution but the WHC can do both without additional cost.
16. Replacement Tractor – SAC advised that after 18 months of searching we had found an appropriate replacement tractor which was on order and expected to arrive mid/late February. As part of the deal a part exchange had been agreed also. Whilst the capital investment was relatively high, it is an important part of our equipment and used very frequently.

6. COMMISSIONER UPDATES

JD advised that the work with Royal Haskoning for Overy Staithe would be a discussion for WHC at the next meeting.

DH said that the Albatros agreement as SAC mentioned was still outstanding but something we need to ensure is finalised.

AM updated the WHC that there was a discussion about a launch event for the Lobster Hatchery and that she had mentioned it to one of her celebrity followers who had shown an interest. Nothing concrete had been agreed but AM will continue to review/ follow up on.

No other Commissioners had updates or further comments.


7. Staff Matters

MC presented a paper of the Staff remuneration where a sub group had met and decided on pay rises for the staff. MC advised that the amounts given were commensurate to role/experience/amount to their peers or from a 'look across' to other similar roles at other ports.

The WHC unanimously agreed the proposal as presented by MC.

8. AOB

With no AOB meeting was then closed @ 20.40

Approved.....
Mel Catton

Date 29/3/22.....