

Wells Harbour Commissioners (WHC)
Minutes of the Annual Public Harbour Users meeting
Wells Community Hospital
Tuesday 16th May 2017 7.00pm

Meeting opened at 7pm

- Present: Harbour Commissioners, Harbour Staff and members of the general public
- Apologies: Chris Greeves (Larking Gowen), Marie Strong, Bob Ellis

- Joan Price (JP) – Chairman WHC
 - JP opened the meeting and welcomed the public.
 - JP reported that the Wells Harbour Martime Trust (WHMT) had arranged kayak safaris for adults in 2016 to enjoy the water and three dates had been planned for 2017: 16th July; 13th August and 24th September. Bookings can be made via the Harbour Office
 - WHMT are looking for volunteers for the North Norfolk Triathlon on 10th September
 - JP then introduced Philip Moy from Larking Gowen to report on the financials

- Philip Moy (PM) – Larking Gowen
 - PM informed the meeting that Larking Gowen are independent advisors to WHC reviewing books and records and produce the annual accounts which have been prepared by WHC's admin team.
 - Larking and Gowen do not act as auditors but provide an independent review of the financials and prepare financial statements.
 - PM reported that Wells Harbour Commissioners are sound financially.
 - Accounts for the year ended 31st December 2016 had been approved and signed off.
 - Turnover from a variety of sources was £1.3 million which equalled the same as in previous year.
 - Direct costs remained at £679K resulting in a gross excess of income over expenditure of £648K for 2016 compared to £631K in 2015.
 - Overhead expenses were £742K a reduction from £781K.
 - Other operating income reduced from £359K to £298K.
 - There was a small amount of investment income in the year £3k similar to last year.
 - The excess of income over expenditure before tax was £207K compared to £212K in 2015.
 - Tax liability is £38K leaving £169K for investment.
 - The Balance Sheet is a snapshot of assets and liabilities as of 31 Dec 2016
 - Fixed Assets total £1.8 million and represents cost less depreciation.
 - Current Assets which are amounts held in the bank, stocks of diesel, and debtors, totalled £1.3 million an increase from £1.1 million in 2015.
 - Creditors have increased from £283K to £412K leaving an overall increase in net current assets from £789K to £907K. Net current assets are a measure of the liquidity of the Commissioners and shows that the financial state is very strong and healthy.
 - Net Assets after provisions are same as previous year £2.7 million.
 - Reserves comprise the accumulated fund £1.3 million which is the surplus accumulated excess of income over expenditure for use by the Commissioners. Other grant and

capital reserves come from external sources and relates to monies received for capital works which are written off over time at the same rate as the asset.

- Overall 2016 was another good solid year.
 - The Scira investment of £1.9 million is depreciated over time. The total included in the assets has fallen due to depreciation. The total amount included in assets is £742K.
 - There were no previously submitted financial questions to answer.
- JP thanked PM for his report and attending the meeting and passed over to the Harbour Master Robert Smith.
 - Robert Smith (RS)- Harbour Master Report
 - RS commented that the Port is only as good as its staff who are the Port's biggest asset. Terry Corbishly had retired from cleaning the car park due to ill health and has been replaced by Adam Birne who is autistic and the appointment has changed his life.
 - The Port is always upgrading the navigational aids. Dredging is carried out daily Monday to Friday mainly in the area of buoys 6 to 2. The channel is stable especially in the front of the beach.
 - The Port used to use the RNLI Talus tractor to go across the channel for buoy maintenance but when the new lifeboat arrives, the RNLI tractor will no longer be an option as the new lifeboat tractor is linked to the carriage permanently. The Port has therefore purchased an ex RNLI tallus tractor that can be submerged and has tracks. This cost £19K, when new it would have cost in the region of £200k.
 - The fishing fleet are a long standing tradition and the main stay of the harbour bringing economic benefits and employment and an asset for tourism. WHC receive many requests for fishing berths and around 90% are not Wells based. WHC policy is that as there are limited quay berths there is no room except if it is a Wells boat and it can find a fisherman willing to allow them to double up or is prepared to go on a mooring. This is to protect our own fishing industry.
 - The Port is considering installing a pontoon for the vessel *Albatros* which will have uprights fixed to the quay wall where the pontoon can move up and down with the tide preventing the vessel from lifting onto the quay during big tides. The pontoon will also berth the Port's vessel *Frank-T*. Plans can be viewed at the Harbour Office and project would cost in region of £70-80K. WHC will fund the project in full as with other pontoon projects.
 - The Tug Boat Yard pontoons have been installed to provide better access to the commercial angling boats. One berth has been allocated to Wells Sailing Club for no charge to support the club. Inside berths have not been allocated yet and will be evaluated at a later date after reviewing how the pontoons are working for the vessels berthed there. The piling was carried out using Port equipment and vessels overseen by Drake Towage of Wisbech. The Port is confident that enough knowledge has been gained that future projects will not require external consultants. A question was submitted from John Mitchell (not present) regarding water provision. RS confirmed that water can be provided but how to meter it and transfer supply from land to water is still being investigated.
 - WHC have acquired additional land at the East End and have built a new shed for boat repairs. The intention was not to put anybody out of business but to create employment and give job security to existing employees. Fred Whitaker has attended a GRP course.

- The slipway hoist will be arriving at the end of June. It has been funded by a grant from the EMFF with WHC also providing funds as well as the Fisherman providing a grant of £20K towards the project. This grant was needed from the fisherman in order to obtain the EMFF grant. The hoist will lift 35 tonnes and is self propelled. WHC are looking at whether there is a need to widen the slipway and lessen the gradient.
- RS continues to sit on the Blue New Deal initiative which is for coastal communities and how to protect them for the future.
- WHC are members of the BPA. RS attends meetings in London and also sits on the UKHMA committee as the small Ports East Coast representative.
- The Port is permitting Cancer UK to use the quay for the "Walk for Life" event on 2nd September. WHC also organises the North Norfolk Triathlon via the WHMT, permits the use of the quay for the Lifeboat Service, sets up the raft race course and gives permission for Newfoundland dogs. Since the start of Christmas Tide the Port has always brought Santa in to the town for the festivities. There is a committee that organises the remainder of the event and this year the committee are looking for funding ideas for the fireworks which in previous years has been paid for by Wells Carnival.

The Harbour Office extension project has been withdrawn in favour of installation of glass flood panels on Office perimeter wall. This has met with some initial objection but WHC feel this is the best solution for the flooding risk at the Office.

- Louise De Lisle (LDL)

- Apologised for the technology issues and lack of overhead presentation for the meeting.
- LDL reported that the hiring of eco friendly buckets and reels had been more than expected in 2016 with nearly 1800 hires. The initiative is not intended to prevent the sale of plastic items from retail outlets but to give the public an alternative to single use plastics and reduce plastics ending up in the sea.
- The hut provides employment to 3 seasonal workers.
- This year the Port is introducing a recycling initiative via Terracycle whereby those members of the public who do purchase the plastic crabbing items can bring them to the Harbour Office after use rather than sending them to landfill. This is part of the Terracycle beach plastic recycling programme which will take any beach rigid plastics for up cycling into other plastic items to help rid our beaches and sea of plastic items.

- JP thanked RS for his comprehensive report.

- Questions and Answer session:

- 1) Martin Kemp

Will the proposed Albatros pontoon cause any restriction to the inside of the pontoon and the launch?

Answered by Robert Smith:

The pontoon will be attached via piles on the quay wall and the width will be the width of the pontoon of 2m. It is intended that the *Albatros* bowsprit will be raised so should not be an issue.

2) Nigel Ely

Last year the Commissioners reported on a project to straighten the channel on the West side, is this still an on-going project?

Answered by Robert Smith:

The feasibility study of straightening the Run from the Skredge to the Quay is still being considered as the water is channelling to the west side more than ever before and is trying to make down the west side naturally. The Commissioners are hoping to encourage this natural movement and are taking external advice on how best to do this and what the likely success rate would be. It is possible that WHC could do this work under their own powers and if so could be looked at by September but if an MMO licence is required this could take time to obtain and could prove too costly and could delay the project or make it unviable.

- Joan Price
 - Thanked all those who had attended.

- Robert Smith
 - Encouraged people to apply to become Commissioners when vacancies arise and closed the meeting.

Meeting closed 8.30pm