

Marine Director's Annual Report

2013

Happily, the twelve months since my last Annual Report have been largely 'business as usual' with one or two notable exceptions.

For the first time for many years, we have not had any staff changes, apart from the usual crop of summer coxswains. This stability of staffing has been extremely valuable, enabling us to consolidate our regular training needs and implement new ways of working.

The Harbour Board has not seen any changes either, but the Management Committee has welcomed Nicola Walsh who replaced Mike Glanville as the British Marine Federation representative, David Le Mare who has taken over from Peter Middleton as the Association of River Hamble Yacht Clubs representative and Councillor Suzy Hamel who has taken over as the Eastleigh Borough Council representative.

On the financial front, we continue to drive down costs and to maximise income. The projected surplus for the financial year 2012/13 is £25,000 and the budget for 2013/14 has been agreed by the Harbour Board, showing a similar surplus.

Our compliance with the Port Marine Safety Code has been audited regularly by the Designated Person and I am delighted to say that there are no major incidents or non-conformities to report this year.

We continue to ensure that all staff are fully trained, to the required level, for oil spill response, and that our equipment stocks are maintained. All appropriate staff have also been updated with training in marine fire-fighting and first aid. We are conducting a major update of our Oil Spill Response Plan which will soon be sent for approval by the MCA and then published.

There has been a steady flow of applications for Harbour Authority works consent, with three significant applications during the last year:

Firstly, Deacons Boatyard – a re-configuration of pontoons and a capital dredge have been approved by the Harbour Board, the Marine Management Organisation and Eastleigh Borough Council.

Secondly, The Crown Estate – three projects were submitted. Of these, changes to the mooring arrangements in Warsash Pool were rejected; the installation of three pontoons just off Hamble River Sailing Club was approved; and the installation of three long pontoons off Mercury Gardens has yet to be finally determined.

And thirdly, a joint application by the Royal Southern Yacht Club and Royal Air Force Yacht Club to rebuild the sea wall, carry out a capital dredge and reconfigure pontoons has been received and consulted upon, with a Harbour Board decision expected in June.

This year has also seen a considerable amount of discussion about potential improvements to Warsash slipway. Initial ideas failed to find significant support, so a working group was established to look at some alternative ideas. The results of this are under review for feasibility and cost by a firm of consultants and the next steps will be decided shortly.

We have continued work on a programme of Asset Enhancement projects. 'River Hamble View' which is a multi-layer interactive mapping system for the River, showing maps, charts, aerial photographs, land registry data, bank photographs, environmental designations, moorings and much more is now available on our website. New slipway safety and information signs have been installed at Warsash, Hamble and Swanwick. The project to provide educational web-based resources for schools is now almost complete.

We have been working closely with the Police and Marine Police throughout the year. This has resulted in two important initiatives. The first was the procurement of body-worn video cameras for patrol staff, so that incidents can be recorded – the recordings are suitable for use in evidence if required. The second, just about to be launched, is the procurement of SmartWater forensic marking kits. Every boat owner who pays annual Harbour Dues for 2013 (including dry-sailed boats) on the Hamble will be entitled to receive a kit free of charge. When you get yours, please ensure that you apply it promptly to the valuable items on your boat and register your details with SmartWater. Kits are available from the Harbour Office for those with Crown Estate moorings, and from marinas and yacht clubs for everyone else. A major publicity campaign is planned, prior to the formal launch over the Easter weekend.

The provision of new storage and workshop facilities for the Harbour Authority has now been resolved, by renting premises at Stone Pier Yard in Warsash. This was, in the end, preferred to the option of installing a new workshop and store on the Warsash Jetty. We have also purchased a new RIB, to replace the Dory, and it is now in service.

Harbour Authority staff have been involved in many River-wide activities, including support for the Annual Harbour Master's Charity Pursuit Race for dinghies, the Bursledon Regatta and the Hamble River Raid. We also provided full support for the River Hamble Games on 21 July last year, which was a huge success. Particular thanks go to Harbour Board member Susie Tomson who Chaired the organising committee. It is hoped to run a similar event in the summer of 2014 to do our bit for the Olympic legacy.

Once again, we have worked with the Hamble River Combined Clubs on the preparation of the latest edition of the River Hamble Handbook and Directory which was published in February.

We have continued with the management of the mid-stream moorings and the moorings Waiting List, on behalf of the Crown Estate. The waiting list is still longer than we would like and very few moorings have been surrendered in the past year.

Members of staff have given a number of talks and presentations about the management of the harbour, at a variety of venues including sailing clubs, Rotary Clubs and a local school.

Visitor income over the year has been down, largely as a result of the poor summer, but we have been seeking to maximise the use of the visitor berthing facilities during the winter months – a facility enjoyed by many of the local sailing schools and fishermen – and we have again advertised the Visitor Pontoon for pre-booked events and rallies during the summer, which has attracted significant interest.

On the environmental and development front, the highly successful Streamlined Consents Group, recognised nationally as an example of best practice, continues to operate well and has been re-named as the Consents Advice Panel, which better reflects its purpose. The Panel is a chance for people wishing to undertake works in the marine environment on the River to meet informally with consenting organisations prior to an application being submitted and marine consents sought. We have also continued to support the work of the Hamble Estuary Partnership (HEP).

Overall, it has been a good year and we can be proud of our efforts to keep the harbour as safe as possible for those who use it.

David M Evans
Marine Director and Harbour Master,
River Hamble Harbour Authority