

THE CROUCH HARBOUR AUTHORITY

MINUTES OF THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING

HELD ON

6th JULY 2022

CHAIRMAN: C Freeman

PRESENT: C Bailey, T Dann, R Fancy, R Hawkins, S Hollington, C Marfleet, N Parsons, P Pope, Z Shean, P Woodford

APOLOGIES: A Baker, B Calver, P Cottis, J Dagley, J James, R Pitt, I Radford, D Rawlinson, K Wickham

IN ATTENDANCE: E Buckley CHA Chairman; Susan Harrison Harbour Master

14 MINUTES OF THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 13TH APRIL 2022

It was proposed by Mr Woodford and seconded by Mr Dann to approve the Minutes as a correct record.

14.1 *Burnham Ferry*

The Harbour Master reported that Maldon District Council have said that the Insurance Company were not paying for any repairs to the Burnham Town Pontoon. The steps on the shoreside end of the jetty were also in poor condition and was the responsibility of the Environment Agency.

The Burnham Ferry is currently running out of Burnham Yacht Harbour and appears to be proving successful.

14.2 *Rubbish Collection Initiatives*

The Harbour Master reported that the Authority had undertaken to clear significant debris which had been reported as being hazardous.

14.3 *Reorganisation of the Advisory Committee*

The Chairman reported that Mr Wickham was currently working on a paper following responses he had received on the reorganisation of the Advisory Committee. Once the report has been prepared this will be presented to members to take forward.

15 Any Other Business:

There were no matters arising.

16 MINUTES OF THE CROUCH HARBOUR AUTHORITY MEETING HELD ON THE 17TH FEBRUARY 2022

16.1 *Hullbridge Slipway*

Mr Woodford said it was interesting that Essex Highways have said that the "Hullbridge Slipway" is nothing to do with them when it was showing on the Essex Pro Map as a byway.

Mr Pope pointed out that the problem was that everybody referred to it as a slipway when it was in fact a byway.

The Chairman responded by saying that this was currently up for debate as to who was going to claim ownership. Mr Buckley said he was unable to comment.

17 *Use of Jet Skis/PWC's*

The Chairman welcomed the Chairman of the Authority Mr Buckley.

Mr Buckley said that he had produced a document regarding jet skis which had been circulated to the Advisory Committee members prior to the meeting. He said that he had proposed to hold a joint meeting with the Advisory Committee members, together with some of the Authority members who also sat on the Committee to touch on some points with the intention of then opening the meeting for general discussion.

He went on to briefly report on the proposals.

The suggestion is that the Authority continue its education programme by working with the training schools, jet ski retail sellers with a co-ordinated approach for users to ensure users are insured and that they obey the rules encouraging a better standard for all.

He highlighted that there were hotspots in the river which posed challenges to everyone and how to provide opportunities for users to enjoy themselves without compromising the safety and enjoyment of others for future generations. The CHA objective is that PWC usage is carried out in harmony with other river users, the natural environment and with other amenities. PWC's can be used responsibly and without detriment to others.

There is a need for regulation and there is a proposal that the CHA join a PWC partnership. It is funded by jet ski manufacturers; the RYA and British Marine Federation are keen that it is supported and that other authorities are also supporting it.

New powers and regulations mean that all water sports participants must make every effort not to harm or allow damage to any protected wildlife or habitats.

The main problems relate to safety. PWC users can develop the skills and knowledge of experienced users through certified training schemes such as those run by the RYA. There is a local company who has been set up to carry out PWC training. The Authority need to encourage PWC users to launch from authorised sites only and to not approach roosting or nesting birds or sites, especially around high tide.

In essence what the Authority are attempting to address is all the issues concerning PWC's and to identify solutions by resolving them through proactive management and not an immediate outright ban.

Members were invited to ask questions:

Mr Parsons pointed out that a lot of time had been spent during the last 18 months putting together and submitting to the Authority views from CAYF and from other associations and he had not seen one reply that supported jet skis on the river. He asked again when the Authority would decide that not all vessels were suitable on such a small river. He said PWC's were solely a fun machine and were considered a nuisance even if they were operating within authorised areas. Mr Buckley responded by saying that the Authority would never make that decision, as PWC's had a right to navigate.

Mr Pope said that he had initially suggested looking to form a Club for the responsible jet ski owners to get together. Mr Parsons pointed out that this would not be supported by CAYF.

Mr Woodford went on to report that he had been looking into jet ski code of conducts and in many places in the UK and abroad that they control jet skis by keeping them away from the shore.

Mr Buckley said that any recommendations must be thought through logically and could only be done through consultation with the stakeholders. He stressed that caution was needed to ensure that the river was not spoilt for all river users, as what was decided for jet skis would also apply to other vessels.

He went on to briefly report on the issues that had arisen at Clements Green Creek concerning powered vessels which also needed to be looked at.

Mr Marfleet said that whilst he understood that jet skis had a right to navigate, they were still noisy and did interfere with the wildlife, however there could be stricter rules on speed. Mr Woodford said he had raised this before about there being no upper speed limit on the Crouch. Mr Buckley said this would be extremely costly to implement even if it were to get approved.

Mrs Fancy clarified her understanding from the RSPB point of view regarding SPA's and SSSI's around the Coast.

The Chairman finished up by saying that Mr Buckley had considered the Committee's feelings and that an update would be provided going forward.

18 *Fees*

The Chairman reported that the fees were for information of what had been agreed by the Trustees.

Mr Buckley clarified that the fees had been based on RPI as it was a recognised figure that could be looked up on the internet to get the annual or monthly RPI. It was the intention that when the October RPI figure was released around the 20th of October, the Authority would then look at the figures on the 31st October.

Mr Parsons pointed out that the current predictions were coming in the region of ten per cent and queried if it was the intention to put the fees up by ten per cent. Mr Buckley responded by saying that the Authority would have to consider that because costs were probably going to rise at the same time as everyone else's.

Mr Parsons said he trusted that the figures rather than being rounded up would be rounded down. He also went on to say that many of the harbour users would not be happy at the large percentage increase. He said they would be looking for assurances from the Authority that the costs were justified.

Mr Buckley said he did not know what other options the Authority had as they were obliged by the Department of Transport to balance the books annually.

He went on to report that this year the Authority were spending a lot of money on surveys to see if there is sufficient water at the Swallowtail. If there is insufficient water both the leisure and commercial users would need to be notified.

The Harbour Master led on to say that the PLA had completed one survey, however it was felt it was not sufficient so a second survey has been commissioned of the Raysand Chanel, which would be solely for the use of the leisure users as there have been reports that the sands have changed. This will be completed within the next 2/3 months to identify that area of water.

Mr Buckley confirmed that the RPI figure would apply across the board to all fees and included the mooring fees.

19 *Open water Swimming*

The Chairman informed members that reports had been coming in that open water swimmers were endangering themselves and vessels by swimming in the Fairway. He said he had been in contact with Zena Shean and Imogen Radford the Advisory Committee representatives for swimming.

Mrs Radford has provided the Authority with some suggestions for inclusion on the CHA website and in the Harbour Guide regarding useful information on swimming

Mrs Shean then went on to briefly talk about the swimming group that she was part of and the safety precautions they had in place. She pointed out that open water swimming was on the rise, however the Crouch was not overly popular for open water swimming because of the tide and the fact that her group mostly swam half an hour before high tide.

She raised concern about the difference between open water swimmers and swimmers who were not sports swimmers who frolicked in the water with no regard to safety and gave the groups a bad name. She said she knew of several swimming groups up and down the Crouch, one being at North Fambridge and a couple at Burnham, all of whom were very careful.

Mr Parsons reported that there was a small group that regularly used the slipway at north Fambridge and tended to swim at the end of the quayside and headed nearer to the shore. He said he had raised this before as it was quite dangerous, as the coloured mooring buoys could be mistaken for a swimmer.

Mrs Shean pointed out that there was a Triathlon in September held at North Fambridge and suggested contacting the Marina who organised the event to put out some information on their board stating that swimmers should stay near to the shore not into the Fairway.

She also went on to say that the information board at Hullbridge provided a lot of information and again suggested a note pointing out that anybody in an unpowered sports craft i.e. canoes; paddleboards etc it was not advisable 10 minutes after high tide.

The Chairman queried whether it was worth reviewing all signage up and down the river. Mr Buckley said this could be done but felt it was getting to the stage where caution was needed as providing too much information to river users would be ignored.

The Harbour Master pointed out that to a certain extent information could be put out on the CHA Website and the Harbour Guide. The CHA Tide Tables provided tide times and the average speeds etc. however, it was up to the individual to carry out their own research beforehand as it was not feasible to give out daily information, as it varied.

Mr Pope said that the more information available to all swimmers albeit sports swimmers or recreational swimmers to make them aware that the Crouch was a potentially dangerous river and that if they were going to swim in the river, they must bear some responsibility was not a bad thing.

20 *Harbour Master's Update*

20.1 The Harbour Master said she had already reported earlier on the continued survey work that the PLA had been commissioned to carry out on behalf of the Authority.

20.2 The Harbour Master reported that everyone was aware of the restrictions that had been placed onto Russian owned/managed vessels that were applying to UK Ports. As of yesterday, this now applied to any vessel that had connections with Belarus.

Minutes of Advisory Committee Meeting 6th July 2022

21 *For Information - Works & Dredging Licences Issued*

21.1 *Works License Mr T Coe, Hullbridge – The Installation of Mooring Piles to Support Versadock Pontoon*

Works License issued 27th April 2022.

21.2 *Works License Bridgemarsh Marina – To Replace Existing Piles and pontoons*

Works License issued 17th May 2022.

21.3 *Works Licence Essex Marina – Emergency Repair Works to Install New Pile to Replace Broken Pile*

Works License issued 6th June 2022.

22 Any Other Business:

22.1 Next Meeting Date:

Wednesday 7th December 2022

It will be decided nearer the time whether to hold a Zoom meeting or a fact to face meeting.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 8.39 p.m.