

Chairman's Report 2018

With 2018 rapidly drawing to a close, I take this opportunity once again to commit to record a summary of the most dominant and salient matters that have taken place during the past 12 months at the Crouch Harbour Authority [CHA]

Llys Helig

Referred to locally by some as 'Burnham Titanic' the saga continues. However as of August 2018 with a new accountable owner and in conjunction with a Contractor it is their aim to right the vessel in its current berth during the forthcoming 6 months. The mandatory licences required by organisations such as the MMO and Natural England are in the process of being applied for by a consultant and once these have been successfully granted along with permission to work on land belonging to the adjacent berths holders a Works Licence Application will be submitted to the CHA.

Once this has been achieved and the vessel has been methodically surveyed discussions will take place as to the safest and most practicable method of moving her to a berth away from the Crouch where she will undergo refurbishment.

Regrettably such consents and arrangements are of a protracted nature nonetheless, it is the best progress we have seen since the vessel capsized in March 2017,

Although the CHA will expedite the application of any Work Licences pertaining to the project, safety of the operation will be given paramount importance and all Contractors involved will be required to submit the most robust RAMS, insurance documents and use only equipment that has been certificated '*fit for purpose*'.

Captain Peter J McArthur was engaged by the CHA earlier in 2018 to assist the Authority in resolving litigation questions regarding our statutory function, matters that had been raised by Maldon District Council and in particular their misunderstanding that the vessel had been abandoned in their berth.

Peter is an accomplished lawyer, international arbitrator and civil and commercial mediator and experienced mariner, further roles include nautical advisor to the Admiralty Court of Appeal and technical advisor to Government Agencies and other small ports. He will continue to advise and work with us to resolve outstanding issues whilst the Llys Helig remains on her current MDC owned mooring on the Burnham River frontage.

RSPB.

The island project has seen some distinct changes to its original design with the last remaining cells waiting on the winter rain to flood the area to create the final lagoons.

With these alterations to the original plan, there is now a need to review the monitoring schedule within the Remediation Agreement due to the reduction of planned breaches. The Authority will undertake discussions on this matter at the beginning of 2019.

Although it had been anticipated that the commercial jetty was to be removed in 2018 it is now expected to take place in 2019 sometime before September, date still to be confirmed.

The CHA will continue to work closely with the RSPB team in the years to come.

Environment Agency

Following the presentation from Councillor Andrew St Joseph regarding the damage to river banks, the Harbour Master had a meeting with the Environment Agency to review the concerns to the land on the river banks in the Cliff Reach area. Discussions took place in respect to regulating the speed limit in the vicinity, but it was concluded that this would not be the most appropriate resolution to the problem and that it would be far better to try to educate river users as to the damage caused by excess wash/wake.

Once further information becomes available from the Agency it will be distributed via the Harbour Systems Database.

Havengore Bridge

Ken Wickham has been involved with much discussion about the bridges throughout the year and in November had a successful meeting with Rt Mark Francois MP (MF) follow the notes of the meeting.

Notes of Meeting held on the 27/11/18 15:00 with: -

Rt Mark Francois MP (MF)

Graeme Morrison – Director Operations Maritime, Land and Weapons (GM)

William Tew – Director of Government Relations and Public Policy at QinetiQ (WT)

Mike Sharp – Chairman, Shoeburyness Watermans Association representing the sailing concerns of the north Thames around Southend (MS)

Steve Adams – Manager Wakering Boatyard Wakering (SA)

Nigel Greest – Manager Sutton Wharf Boatyard Rochford (NG)

Ken Wickham – Chair of RAFCC, CHA Advisory Committee, CAYF. Representing the sailing/ boating concerns of the Crouch Harbour Authority and RYA. (KW)

Preamble: - Meeting was instigated by Mark Francois after concerns raised over many years by Ken Wickham representations over issues concerning the operation of the MOD site on Foulness Island in particular the access bridges to and from Foulness ranges. Issues came to a head this year with permanent closure of the Havengore Bridge for some months stopping any access from the Roach to the Thames.

Meeting was opened by Mark Francois and Ken Wickham was asked to start with an outline of the problems as seen by the river and seaway users of the area.

Points raised were: -

- a) Revenue loss to the yards in the area of small and medium craft coming in for servicing and haul out. Loss of access by smaller fishing boats to traditional grounds for fishing.
- b) Lack of communications of when the bridges/ranges were operational or not. Use of social media to convey messages which were not available at sea. Suggested use of VTS and Coastguard broadcasts as the real means.
- c) Concerns of the lack of bridge preventative maintenance for both Havengore and Potton and the time taken to instigate repairs. It was noted in the past that excuses for closure for maintenance sometimes hid the fact of lack of operational staff.
- d) Suggested methods of allowing through access under Havengore Bridge when it had failed in its down position. Possibility of raising the boom at those times was asked to be considered
- e) Lack of navigation and control lights on Potton bridge
- f) Possible Bye Law changes to allow possible movement of the ranged northern boundary in the Crouch also the opening of the Inner seas and the Havengore Bridge during the night for through passage.
- g) When the bridge is working it takes 1 hour to steam the 14 miles from Southend foreshore to Rochford yard. When the bridge is closed the same journey takes 2hrs 40 mins and increases to 41 miles. This also requires vessels to take the route around the Whitaker Beacon on the tip of the Maplin Sands. This can be quite difficult in moderate south easterly winds and it becomes impossible to access Rochford and Wakering yards at low tide.
- h) The issue of the RNLI being restricted by the lack of access when an emergency was called requiring access through a closed bridge. An example was given when an injured person was required to be moved from Wakering Boatyard by sea.

On the communications section we also agreed that medium to long term closures, including maintenance closures, should be published via a Notice to Mariners with the PLA. This is important for vessels steaming from outside the Thames area.

Lengthy well-meaning, constructive dialogue and discussion was had on these points. QinetiQ representatives going to some length to put their concerns of lack of understanding how and why the ranges worked in the fashion they had too.

QinetiQ conceded that after their own investigation of our correspondence and their own records for just the past 3 years they had failed in a few quarters.

Primarily the bridges were not preventatively maintained, just repaired on breakdown. Havengore had original design faults which had been known but have only recently been accepted and more issues are ongoing with the new Contractors as fault finding continues. They are instigating a new regimen with Bridge Keepers, Maintenance Staff and Contractors. Breakdown call out times should be cut but they realise there will still be issues with the bridges due to their age, design and previous poor maintenance which was generally accepted by the meeting.

Communications with local marine users and residents was not good. They had investigated their main e-mail system server and found faults in held transmissions of messages. They had assumed social media was the best method of communication. They were now prepared to investigate standard means of marine communication such as the VTS system operated by PLA and as suggested recently Coast Guard message systems. Operational status of the bridges would also be transmitted on the media rather than just closures. These proposals will be investigated as to whether those who operate the systems would be prepared to transmit the information. We also agreed that medium to long term closures, including maintenance closures, should be published via a notice to mariners (NTM) with the PLA and Coastguard. This is important for vessels steaming from outside the Thames area.

The proposal to investigate raising the boom under the main section of the Havengore only when the bridge had failed down and the range was not in operation would be investigated and costed. If acceptable MF will present the case to the MOD for action.

The alteration of boundaries of the ranges alongside the Crouch may be a safety issue. Some experiments require a wide arc of clearance. Along with night opening of the Havengore and inner sea would if acceptable need a change in the 1936 Act which was agreed by all needed urgent updating. QinetiQ will consider this and will report back. MF agreed that if a consensus could be achieved, he would be prepared to raise this with the MOD and in Parliament.

Thus, at this time it was agreed by all that a 3-monthly meeting of all parties would be convened to consider the workings of any problems including the updating of the Bye Law. This in time could become 6 monthly but it was felt needed to be held as to stop any further misunderstandings and solve issues which may arise. A continued dialogue is required by all. Also, the Bridge Maintenance Contractors should be invited along so a full understanding if any issues could be relayed.

The navigational issue of no navigation lights, a suggested Trinity House requirement, on Potton Bridge will be investigated and again costed. If acceptable it again would be presented by MF for sanction to the MOD.

Notes prepared by Ken Wickham Agreed by Mark Francois MP

Grateful thanks to Ken Wickham for championing the Havengore Bridge for many years.

CHA 5 Year Strategic Development Plan.

We thank Doug MacEwen for continuing as 'Champion' of this Plan. It is a live document and Doug is always keen to debate the document at the various Committee meetings and update it as and when required.

I once again reiterate that: -

- The Crouch Harbour Authority is the Statutory Harbour and Navigation Authority for the Rivers Crouch and Roach.
- It has its own Act of Parliament (Crouch Harbour Act 1974) and is a 'Trust Port' that is one that holds its assets and uses its powers for the benefit of its stakeholders.
- It is a not for profit Organisation.

The CHA is responsible for marine safety and managing all marine activity within the rivers Crouch and Roach. Including

- Managing and Directing movement of regulated vessels
- Provision and authorisation of Pilots and provision of pilotage
- Licensing of boat moorings
- Surveying and publishing navigational information and dredging if necessary
- Buoyage and Marking of Channels
- Removal of Hazards, Dangerous Wrecks and Obstructions
- Licensing of Marine Works and Dredging operations
- Making and Enforcing Harbour Byelaws
- Speed Limits and Regulation of Water-skiing and Personal Water Craft (PWC)
- Collection of Harbour Dues and Charges
- Oil Spill Prevention and Clean-up
- Management of Waste from Vessels
- Consulting on General Directions and Harbour Directions.

In carrying out these responsibilities the Harbour Authority must abide by a very wide range of laws and regulations, including the Port Marine Safety Code which sets out the standards and principles for ensuring that all marine risks are managed so that they are '*as low as reasonably practicable*'.

There is also an increasing amount of environmental and water quality legislation with which the Harbour Authority must comply.

The plan is available as a down load.

Port Marine Safety Code

I am pleased to report that we continue to retain the services of Capt. Mike Roberts of Ocean Ensign Ltd.

Mike in conjunction with the Harbour Master continues to be both invaluable and supportive and guide us through the sometimes-complex Code.

Over the course of the past 12 months the team have completed:

- Tier II Marine Pollution exercise held [with gratitude to the marina staff] at Essex Marina.
- A 'Fire-on-Board' exercise and persons reported missing also at Essex Marina in conjunction with Rochford Fire Brigade and CG
- A person stranded in the mud at Farnbridge Marina
- Quayside safety training at Baltic Wharf

Mike also attended an event with the local sailing clubs to present Risk Assessments, a great deal was covered in the evening and the Clubs and Mike will continue to meet to update on aspects of PMSC in 2019.

CHA Vessels

All our vessels have served us well throughout the year:

Crouch Trident undertaking predominantly commercial pilot transfers but also being brought into service as and when required for back up and support with river patrols and safety related issues.

Watchful and the **rib** continue to fulfil the important roles of patrol and support to all river users.

Susan and James maintain our vessels to a very high order doing most of the general maintenance work themselves and keeping the fleet ready and available for future demands

Prosecutions

During the early Autumn months, the local Marine Police apprehended two boats speeding excessively past Burnham Yacht Harbour entrance and into the Burnham moorings

The owners/skippers were cautioned, and statements taken in-line with correct police procedure and copies passed on to the Authority.

A prosecution is being processed and the cases are due to be heard in court at the end of January.

Revenue and Harbour Dues.

Every effort has been made once again by the entire staff to ensure Harbour Dues are paid and collected and evasion is at a minimum. This has resulted in a slightly greater revenue from leisure craft dues during 2018.

Commercial revenue remains as expected despite the uncertainty of Brexit.

Baltic Wharf has invested in upgrades to some of its storage facilities over the past 12 months and is optimistic that the coming year will see a slight increase in its imports of timber and steel.

Our Staff

Elaine's dedication and steadfast loyalty to the CHA remain as ever pivotal to the smooth running of all CHA related matters.

As P.A. to the HM and Office Manager, I know I speak on behalf of all the Authority in sincerely thanking her for her continued unswerving support.

Roz has become an extremely competent and positive part of our small team. During 2018 she has achieved exemplary exam results culminating in achieving success in AAT advanced diploma, level 3. We recognise the hard work that has gone in to this achievement and offer our congratulations.

We very much hope that she will continue to the next phase being that of Professional Diploma in Accounting which is a course of 18 months duration.

James has become a very well respected and valued Assistant HM undertaking his varied and busy role with skill and capability.

He continues to advance in both competency and proficiency under the guidance of the HM.

James enrolled on a 12-month distant learning MCA approved Harbour Master's course to begin in January of the New Year.

Susan our Harbour Master has given extensive support to the Authority and its members in all matters, giving very generously of her time and encouraging the other staff members to do the same, this is sincerely appreciated by not only myself but all other CHA members, we could not operate as efficiently without their continued goodwill.

Susan has also been instrumental in encouraging both James and Roz in their studies and is adroit at passing her extensive nautical skills on to the Assistant HM.

The Future

It would be refreshing to conclude this report with an overwhelmingly positive prediction for the future for both the CHA and the Harbour in general, regrettably this is not the case.

At a recent conference it was confirmed there is a National change/alteration, not specific to our own rivers within leisure sailing activities.

Such changes in the sport manifesting themselves in a reduction in demand for traditional leisure boating and an ageing demographic among those taking part. Put simply we see more paddle boards, rowing boats fewer sailing dinghies and cruisers.

What we should do about this is less easy to define.

Therefore, I suggest perhaps we need to find and focus more on less traditional means of revenue. This is all very easily said, but much less simple to achieve.

Nevertheless, in the coming year we must as an Authority look seriously at what is realistically possible for us to accomplish and be open minded to all suggestions, whilst looking for other alternative ventures to assist with maintaining our rivers into the future, always being mindful of our duties towards the environment.

Strange as such a notion may appear to us, this thought process is already becoming the reality in many waters around our coast.

This leaves me only to wish everyone a healthy and prosperous 2019.