

Chairman's Report 2019

Once again, we find ourselves at the culmination of another 12 months period and as customary I am pleased to commit to record a brief review of the most significant matters the Crouch Harbour Authority [CHA] have tackled during 2019.

Llys Helig

Referred to locally by some as '*Burnham Titanic*' the saga continues. The new owners have appointed consultants to help them through the red tape associated with gaining MMO and NE mandatory approval and licences for the righting and eventual removal of the vessel.

Once these permissions are granted the CHA expect that an application to the Authority will be made for CHA '*Works Licence*'

This consent will be given once we are fully satisfied that the submitted RAMS are robust, appropriate and ensure the safety and minimal amount of disruption to neighbouring vessels, residents and the general public whilst the operation is in progress.

With renewed energy from all parties it is hoped the vessel will be raised during the 2020 season and moved away from our district for refurbishment.

RSPB

During late summer of 2019, Wallasea Jetty (Crossrail tunnel spoil) discharging facility was fully decommissioned and the two pontoons '*Crossrail Avocet*' & '*Crossrail Marsh Harrier*' were removed from the River Crouch along with all associated piles, walkways and equipment, both shore-side on RSPB land and from the adjacent waters.

The marine aspect of this work took place from mid-July concluding just before the end of September and was carried out by Bam Nuttall.

Several tugs including Portflair's '*Jean T*' and the large '*Jack-Up*' barge Forth Atlas were stationed in the river over this period.

Crouch Harbour Authority's pilot cutter '*Crouch Trident*' was also utilised for the duration, operating as personnel transfer and safety vessel.

Once released from their moorings the pontoons minus discharging equipment were towed to the Port of Ramsgate, although at present it is uncertain whether they are to remain there.

The removal of this structure brought to a conclusion, what for certain was one of the largest projects to take place within our district for many years seeing over 3 million tonnes of spoil successfully delivered and discharged onto Wallasea Island.

Last year a small subcommittee was formed to review the monitoring schedule within the Remediation Agreement due to changes from the original specification and the reduction of planned breaches.

This subcommittee proposed to the Authority that no change should be made to the Remediation Agreement.

The matter was discussed and voted on by the CHA and agreed that no change be made.

Meeting at DFT

In June Doug MacEwen [Vice Chair CHA] Ken Wickham [Chairman of CHA Advisory] and myself attended a meeting in London with:

Tom Oscrift [Policy Manage Trust Ports DfT] and Dean Muir [Technical Assistant Trust ports DfT].

The meeting was arranged to discuss in broad terms the future of the CHA

The Crouch Harbour Authority's income is derived from three sectors:

- Leisure
- Commercial traffic
- Leases and Investments

Leisure use of the river seems to be declining with a consequential reduction in revenue.

However, our responsibilities remain constant and costs increase, to give an example the cost of maintaining the navigation Buoys and Marks this year is in excess of £41,000.

In the short term the Authority's resources will bear the brunt of the deficit, however, our forecasts show that if the losses are allowed to continue the Authority savings will be exhausted by 2025.

The CHA '*Footprint*' is large, our district covers an enormous area but regrettably although beautiful the majority of the waters and bordering land is privately owned and inappropriate for any commercial shipping development other than the existing Baltic Wharf which continuing to deliver timber and steel products with an average of 2 ships per week.

The objective of the meeting was to discuss the areas where expenditure is at its greatest, explore alternative ways of funding the Authority and visit the possibility of revising some of our obligations.

The Dft advised as follows on some matters:

- In regard to our navigation marks carry out a risk assessment with stakeholders including Trinity House to ascertain whether any of the current marks could be removed without any safety implications
- CHA Byelaws need to be rewritten in order to include additional charges and fees, for pontoons and houseboats.
- DFT Are producing another Guidance publication shortly that will help CHA

A positive meeting but the underlying theme was the CHA must balance its books in future years.

Anglian Water Services Limited

Our next meeting was with the Coastal Catchment Manager Essex, from Anglian Water Services Limited.

Initially, we discussed outfalls into the rivers Crouch and Roach.

Water quality, E. coli Microplastics and how the water services are dealing with this.

We will also, in the near future, be meeting with Keep Britain Tidy representatives to understand how we and the communities can make a difference with plastic.

Further meetings will be arranged.

CHA Stakeholder Benefits

In my letter to our stakeholders circulated in December, I summarized our current situation outlining and explaining the reasoning behind new Harbour Dues Early Payment Tariff which is to be implemented in 2020.

I am aware this will be both unpopular and difficult for some of our users, however these steps are essential in order to be able to continue.

I highlight a few of the benefits to our stakeholders that Harbour Dues are put toward;

- Distribute tide tables free of charge to the community
- Public access to the CHA website, a wide range of CHA information
- Free Crouch Harbour Guide to the public
- Free presence during Burnham Week
- Presentation to the Clubs on PMSC
- Support for filming Ormiston Rivers Academy, on the rivers Crouch and Roach
- Maintaining Navigation and speed restriction marks and signs
- Employing Tier 2 oil spill contractors, taking part in associated drill and courses as required by the MCA

CHA 5 Year Strategic Development Plan

We thank Doug MacEwen for continuing as 'Champion' of this plan.

The CHA faces several challenges and initiatives in changing legislative requirements, sourcing new income and changing environmental concerns. The Strategic Plan is a formal way of the CHA addressing those challenges.

In 2019, 23 items out of a total of 30 were fully implemented. The UK dilemma about Brexit and staff shortages affected the majority of those not achieved

Havengore Bridge

We thank Ken Wickam for continuing as "Champion" of this work

The Stake holder groups representing the marine users of the Roach and Crouch, CHA, PLA and Coast Guard have attended 4 stake holders consultative meetings with QinetiQ at their Shoeburyness Facilities.

QinetiQ have during the past year had to close marine access via Havengore bridge on 5 occasions and since August have only succeeded in opening it manually on prearranged dates. Since September and up to December due to this restriction only 6 craft have managed to use this important small craft route by the bridge being manually lifted, saving a sea journey of 41 miles.

During October 2019 a full survey by a new engineering consultancy, engaged by QinetiQ, has been completed. It highlighted major control and hydraulic problems and work started in October to redesign and replace the electrical control systems. Major hydraulic parts were placed on extended delivery times for a February start. From then till an anticipated full commissioning date of early April the bridge cannot be opened, due to the two main lifting rams and much of the hydraulic control system redesigned and having to be being replaced.

It is programmed that the bridge should be back in full operation from early April for the 2020 season along with Potton swing bridge which was found to have age related operational problems. Potton will not be closed whilst such works are being completed. They have said the new electronic control system software will be able to be accessed by engineers off site, thus any emergency problems should be better facilitated.

The Stake Holders group were given a written undertaking that QinetiQ / MOD have no intent to close the waterways to marine traffic once this extensive costly work has been completed even on a long term bases.

Also raised at these meetings are various problems such as navigation buoys in the Crouch, this is an ongoing discussion which will be resolved in 2020 and one buoy No 4 will be returned to its correct position outside the range boundary.

Port Marine Safety Code

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

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

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 2020.

CHA Vessels

Throughout the year our vessels have served us well

Crouch Trident was predominantly used for commercial pilot transfers, however during 2020 she was also invaluable during the Bam Nuttall Project and was further used on 3 occasion for PLA Pilot training and survey work in the Blackwater associated with information gathering for the potential building of a new power station at Bradwell. It is anticipated that there will be similar roles for the vessel in the coming 12 months.

The vessel also serves as a necessary back up and support in river patrolling and safety related issues.

Watchful and the **rib** continue to fulfil the important roles of patrol and support to all river users. Susan and Malcolm maintain our vessels to a very high standard, doing most of the general maintenance work themselves.

Prosecutions

A prosecution was heard in court at the end of January resulting in the successful conviction of 2 speed boat operators who were exceeding the 8-knot limit in and around the Burnham moorings.

Our Staff

Elaine's maintains a steadfast loyalty to the CHA and remains our champion of 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 professionalism, hard work and assistance.

Roze, is an extremely capable and positive part of our small team. She embraces all aspects of her ever-expanding role with skill, competence and refreshing personality.

It is hoped that she will commence the next segment of training in Professional Accounting during 2020 a course of 18 months duration.

James Vannuffel [Assistant HM] left the Authority in July of this year.

We will be discussing the matter of replacement during the next 12 months.

Susan our Harbour Master has given outstanding support to the Authority and its members in all matters, giving very generously of her time to work on the Bam Nuttall and other marine projects and takes every opportunity to further the Authority's revenue through use of our fleet this is sincerely appreciated by not only myself but all other CHA members, we cannot operate efficiently without her and all members of our small team's continued goodwill.

The Future

My term as Chairman is coming to an end it has been an interesting journey. I have shared some memorable moments with the students of the Ormiston Academy whilst filming for the Coastal Community Project. I have met with many people who have the same desire to ensure our Harbour remains in good condition environmentally and financial.

This leaves me only to wish everyone a healthy and prosperous 2020.