

Chairman's and Commodore's AGM 2020 Report

It gives me great pleasure to present this report on the activities of the General Committee and of the Club's position for 2019.

Due to the exceptional situation we find ourselves in this year. I shall divide my report into two parts. Firstly, I shall present my report for the 2019 season and then I shall provide a Club update for 2020.

2019 represented the final year of our 3 Year Club strategy to return the Club to a successful, thriving and sustainable sailing Club. We developed an overall vision to be recognised as a leading sailing Club both locally and within the Solent.

To achieve this vision, we developed 4 main strategic objectives:

1. to increase the membership to 1100 by 2020
2. to establish the Club as a Centre of Excellence for Training and Development
3. to ensure the Club is sustainable going forward by investing in the Club's Infrastructure
4. to increase the revenue and profitability of our non-membership income streams.

We ended 2019 with just under 1100 memberships (about 2400 total members). This growth was in part due to successful Club Open Days and other promotional activities, including developing relationships with our two local marinas, by supporting their own open events.

This growth in membership has undoubtedly had an impact on our facilities. Our dinghy park is now also full, ticketed events are now sold out quickly and at times the car parking can be a challenge.

Therefore, the General Committee has changed its policy and decided to stop actively recruiting new members, but to rather focus on providing a positive experience to our existing members.

Our 2019 training programme, both formal and informal continued to develop under the leadership of Helen Green. The Club's formal RYA courses continue to be very successful and are usually fully booked up well in advance. The Club's informal development programme has encouraged more adults to take up sailing. The use of the Club's own boats has helped to introduce more members to dinghy sailing

Located on tidal water, the Club will always be limited as to the number of courses we can hold. However, we identified further opportunities for training and development through more one to one and informal coaching. To this end, the Club recruited its first Club Coach in 2019, Drew Gibson. I am please to say that he has settled in really well and has provided valuable support to the training team.

On the water, we had a very active season in 2019 with a comprehensive cruising programme for the Yacht and Motor sections with a good mix of shorter harbour cruising together with longer cruises to the West Country and the Continent. The Dinghy section continues to provide a large programme of Club races, open meetings and our very popular winter sailing programme.

In addition, to our traditional sailing activities, there is a growing interest in other water-based activities such as canoeing, supping and, more recently, rowing, with several other clubs in the harbour buying their own rowing boats. Currently we are keeping a watching brief on the rowing.

Off the water, the Club continues to provide an engaging programme of social activities, with our very popular first and second Fridays for the motor and yacht sections respectively. Club rambles and quiz evenings are also very popular, as too are the winter lecture series. In addition, in 2019 we have introduced a number of new interest groups, such as Yoga, Pilates, Art and, recently, Computing. A new Classic Car group is also proving very popular.

We continue to invest in our Club's infrastructure. Outside the Club, we continue to maintain the gardens and foreshore to ensure they are enjoyable and safe areas to use in the summer. We built the new Wheelhouse over the old patio. This allowed us to both provide an outdoor space for members to enjoy during our British summer and also extended the bar area for members with dogs. In November, I signed the contract with Walcon to start on the first phase of our waterfront project by replacing our western pontoon, which has been in need for major repairs for a number of years.

We are indebted to our Wednesday volunteer group, under the leadership of Andy Skyner, for their continued work in helping to keep the dinghy park and the foreshore maintained throughout the winter months.

Our external events activities continued to show good returns in 2019, generating nearly £240,000 revenue and over £100,000 profit to the Club. We have a number of loyal businesses who now regularly hold their business meetings at the Club. Lewis Brownlee refer to the Club as their office by the sea.

You will see from our Audited Accounts for 2019 that with our increase in membership and growth in our commercial activities the Club for the third year has revenues over £1 million, which in itself raises questions as to how much longer we can rely on volunteer efforts to perform some critical support activities.

The growing success of the Club is very much a collaborative and team effort. I would like to thank Manu Jenkin for her strong leadership and tenacity. She is ably supported by Lucy and Carolyn in the office and they provide a warm welcome to members entering the Clubhouse. Tom Dewey for his business leadership in developing our successful external events business. Josh and Tara for organising our year-round social programme, Andy and Keith and all the other chefs for producing varied and appetising menus throughout the year. In addition, the Club is supported by over 70 part-time casual staff and instructors.

2020

I would normally stop my report at the end of 2019 but given this year's extraordinary circumstances I will provide a further update on the Club to date.

We started 2020 in a very strong position. We had the highest number of members at the start of the year, together with the lowest attrition rate for many years. Also, the forecast for our external events business was the strongest we have even had.

However, at the end of March when the country was forced into lockdown, due to the Coronavirus, the Club had to close all its operations for the first time in our history.

I activated the Club's Major Incident Protocol, which allowed us to establish a Major Incident Committee to provide leadership and management for the Club.

Overnight, the Club became a virtual Club. I was impressed by the way our members, through their creativity and innovation, developed new ways of keeping everyone engaged. We discovered Zoom meetings to replace our physical section meetings. New eRacing took the place of our dinghy racing series and new social groups were established, including Quizzes, Book Clubs and Coffee Mornings.

As soon as Government restrictions were lifted, the committee developed a phased Pathway Plan to open the Club ensuring we provided a safe and secure Covid environment for our members and staff alike and that we were compliant to the latest legal requirements.

By July we were able to reopen the Club fully with our restaurant service, yacht and motor cruises could start again, together with dinghy racing and cruising. Our RYA training programme started, albeit with reduced numbers to ensure social distancing. However, our external events business was, and still is, a major concern.

We were also creative and started up a new takeaway service from the Club to provide drinks, snacks and meals to members and the public.

Throughout the last 6 months the loyalty of our members has been outstanding and the numbers returning to the Club since re-opened was higher than we predicted. However, the next 6 months will be critical to the future success of the Club. But I am sure with your continued loyalty and support to our winter initiatives we will all get through this crisis together.

This has undoubtedly been a very hard year for the General Committee. I do not think anyone who stood for the committee last year could have guessed the year we are having.

I would like to thank the all the Rear Commodores for an outstanding effort in engaging with their sections and keeping everyone up to date with excellent communications. We maintained our regular monthly magazine throughout and our training programme restarted with only a short delay.

I must give particular thanks to the members of the Major Incident Committee, who have all put more commitment into keeping the Club going than would be normally expected.

Roger Marshall and Liz Adlington, our accounts manager, ensured we successful received all the business grants and loans we are entitled to. Plus producing regular updates on our financial position.

David Pearce for keeping on top of the Government Guidance and Restrictions and ensuring our risk assessments and guidance were compliant.

Philip Brown for his knowledge of health services and systems, together with expertise in HR.

Tom Dewey for keeping the Club ticking over during the lockdown and preparing the Club for its reopening in July.

Manu Jenkin for converting guidance into practical procedures within the Club, plus liaising with our HR partner to ensure our staff received the correct advice.

At this time, communications are key to keeping our members updated and informed. Manu and Lucy worked tirelessly to ensure our regular On Board communications went out on time. Also, Lucy regularly called our more vulnerable members to ensure they were ok.

Finally, as you will see as you are about to vote for the new General Committee for 2021, there are a number of current committee members standing down from their duties.

Helen Jupp and Alistair Jenkin as standing down as RC Yachts and Dinghies respectively. I would like to thank them both for their leadership and engagement with their members through this difficult time. In addition, Alistair has been the Club's Principle Instructor for the last two years, ensuring we kept our training accreditation from the RYA.

Johnny Johnston, our Vice Commodore, who is also this year Chair of the RYA Southern Region, has kept the club regularly updated on the latest Covid guidance from the RYA.

Also, Philip Brown is standing down from the General Committee. He has been responsible for leading a number of key initiatives such our GDPR and Governance projects. And of course he has supported the Club on our Major Incident Committee since March.

The role of the General Committee, and in particular, that of the Commodore, is to ensure the Club grows and progresses to the benefits of our members. I hope you will see despite the current Covid crisis we have developed the right strategy and made the right decisions to ensure the Club is in a good position to ensure, with your support, we will remain viable into the future where we will be once more in a position so that the Club continues to develop and grow, offering a welcoming and friendly environment, which provides an exceptional experience for all our members.

Thank You

Tony Mobbs
Commodore.