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ST HELIER BOAT OWNERS ASSOCIATION

BACKGROUND TO THE 2023 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING (“AGM”)

Your committee has recently reviewed the objectives of the association and has also assessed its performance in achieving these goals. You will recall that the objectives are: -

- a) To represent the interests of owners who keep or launch their boats in St. Helier Harbours or Marinas
- b) To seek continued improvements to and maintenance to a high standard of, those harbour facilities available to St. Helier boat owners
- c) To ensure a fair and open system of berth and mooring allocation.
- d) To maintain close liaison with the Harbour Authorities and with other Harbour Users

The committee, including the Association officers, has reluctantly concluded that it is no longer effectively meeting these objectives and that it should stand down *en masse* as a committee at the AGM. In these circumstances, the committee can only identify two future courses of action.

1. New Officers and a new committee are appointed to assume the future running of the association.

Or

2. The Association is wound up and ceases to exist, with the residual funds being distributed to the charities it has previously supported.

Obviously the first option is the preferred way forward.

The challenges in meeting our objectives are explored in greater depth below.

To represent the interests of owners who keep or launch their boats in St. Helier Harbours or Marinas

We believe that there are some 1,350 berths in St Helier Harbour, yet our membership is only about 225 and shrinking. All the while, boat ownership has been growing. A very high proportion of our members are quite elderly, and our many attempts to recruit new and younger members have borne little fruit. In short, it is quite difficult to argue that we effectively represent the community of boat owners in St Helier, in fact rather the reverse.

Moreover, our membership is very passive. Typically, in the past hardly anyone has come forward when we have been seeking new committee members and new officers. As we have noted above, the entire committee will resign at the AGM. While we would obviously strongly prefer the Association to continue in existence in the future, we fear that it may not be easy to find willing replacements from among the current membership. Nevertheless, we believe that we must raise this at the AGM and provide the opportunity for fresh blood to come forward and that the association should only be wound up as a last resort.

To seek continued improvements to and maintenance to a high standard of, those harbour facilities available to St. Helier boat owners

Your committee has worked closely with PoJ over the years and this is an area of some progress. PoJ has developed a long-term vision and has an appetite for high profile capital projects when funding is available. Moreover, they also seem to recognise that the marine leisure sector is worth some genuine focus and expansion. The Harbour Master Plan is a good example of this, although, currently, most of it is more in the planning stages than tangible. The recent refurbishment of St Helier marina, and the new berths on Albert pier, provide some more visible evidence of this commitment.

However, the long-term future is not really the primary focus of St HBOA; we are more concerned with the here and now. It is our view that the improvement and maintenance of harbour facilities is being given insufficient attention. (See below).

To ensure a fair and open system of berth and mooring allocation

Your committee is aware of a significant number of examples where the allocation of berths is, at face value, not quite as one might expect it to be, given the existence of waiting lists. We have repeatedly requested that PoJ make available to us a written berth allocation policy but at the time of writing we do not even know if one exists. We have certainly not seen one. In an environment where demand for berths has, in recent times, significantly exceeded supply, there is a strong argument for the application of an open and transparent approach to the allocation of marina berths as a strong antidote to the rumours that otherwise tend to circulate. Sadly, on this objective, your committee cannot claim any success.

To maintain close liaison with the Harbour Authorities and with other Harbour Users

Your committee has worked very hard in recent years to maintain close liaison with PoJ but find that our efforts have achieved few

meaningful results. We have frequently raised issues with PoJ concerning, for example, the management of the various marinas in St Helier, and we have always engaged with them on a constructive, polite, and friendly basis. Nevertheless, we have found that while we invariably receive well-intentioned assurances from our PoJ contacts, these are all too often followed by little or no effective resolution, presumably due to other internal constraints. Some of our concerns have been in existence for years rather than months, and there have been multiple assurances that they will be resolved, yet still they persist.

A good example is the failure for the last three summers to sort out the tide and depth gauges, the storm gates, and the traffic light problems in Elizabeth marina. During this last summer the Elizabeth berth-holders had, once again, to put up with a great deal of inconvenience. This is simply one example, and we can cite others.

There are also some new topics emerging, such as the allegedly increasing population of live-aboards on boats in the marinas. Many of them are no doubt absolutely legitimate while some are rather less clear-cut. However, we have not been granted access to the information which would allow us to reassure ourselves that this is a matter that is being appropriately managed.

Conclusion

In summary, your committee finds that it has little reason to congratulate itself. There are too many areas where, despite its very best efforts and a lot of hard work, little of note has actually been achieved. Most importantly, we find that we have no real leverage to apply when we feel that our legitimate concerns serially remain unresolved. We feel ineffective and impotent, and this is why we feel that the time has come to stand down, hopefully to make way for fresh talent.

We would therefore strongly encourage members who may wish to assume the roles of Chairman, Treasurer and Secretary and of committee members, to put themselves forward at the 2023 AGM, or otherwise face the possibility of losing the Association. In the absence of new candidates for the Association officers and committee, we see little alternative but to bring the Association to an orderly conclusion.

**Will Simpson
Chairman
St Helier Boat Owners Association**

