

## **Thursday 4 June Members Meeting - Commodores Report**

### Covid-19

As you all know coronavirus is a very serious infection and our thoughts go out to everyone who has been affected. Thank you to the front-line workers who have battled this on a daily basis but also to all of you who have made to make substantial sacrifices to help keep us all safe.

Some of you may know that I am a Microbiologist and my day job is running clinical trials for new medicines, including respiratory and cancer treatments. Over the last 3 months I have worked with many hospitals around the world as they have juggled meeting the Covid-19 crisis with delivering routine health care. I have experienced first-hand the problems they face. My focus and that of the General Committee has been firstly to ensure the safety of Castle Cove members and then to provide sailing for this and coming years in a responsible manner.

Fortunately, we have been lucky here in Dorset to have seen very little Covid-19 infection. Nationally 280,000 cases have been reported with over 62,000 excess deaths compared with last year but Dorset has reported only 365 cases. This does not mean that we can be complacent as the Office for National Statistics has estimated that around 7% of the population have been infected and there is a very real possibility of a second spike unless we continue with careful measures.

### Cure

Going forward Covid-19 will be solved by a combination of focused containment and vaccination. There is very little prospect of a vaccine becoming widely available before the end of the year so the operating assumption for the club is that there may be fluctuating containment in force for the entire 2020 season and that lockdown may be relaxed then tightened, repeatedly throughout the year. We expect that a full sailing program will be possible in 2021.

The government has introduced the NHS Test and Trace process which will help identify and contain outbreaks. The first line of defence against Covid-19 is not to bring coronavirus to the club. It is very important that members remain vigilant when out and about in the community and do not come to the club if they have been at risk of infection. Please familiarise yourself with the NHS Test and Trace process. To supplement the official process and to emphasize the importance of containment, the club is also operating a voluntary and confidential system to inform members if they may have become exposed to coronavirus during a club activity. You can contact Grace Martin or Diane Fowler who will then notify relevant members. I stress again that this is complementary to the official system and does not replace it and that it is voluntary and confidential.

### Communication

Over the last three months the General Committee has worked tirelessly to manage the risks and I would like to thank all the club officers for their diligent work. We have sent out periodic updates by email and are now in the process of producing a number of documents detailing how the club can operate safely under Covid-19 restrictions. Thanks to John Pym the key communications and documents have been posted on the 'Coronavirus' page of the Castle Cove website so that you have one place to go to check the latest situation and the latest changes on how we can use the club facilities safely this year.

Tonight we will cover a number of members' questions and I will start with:

### Vehicle Access to the club

There has been a landslip on Old Castle Road and the approach road from the slip up to the front gate has suffered some subsidence. Both of these threaten access to the club.

Councillors Clare Sutton and Brian Heatley are working on behalf of the residents to resolve the issue. Dorset Council have appointed John Burrige as project lead to coordinate the response. The Council have commissioned Jacobs to produce a geotechnical report due in mid-June and will make recommendations based on that. Jacobs now incorporates Halcrow, who have a long history of involvement in coastal issues around Portland Harbour so understand the problem well.

Dorset Council through the Highways Agency has an obligation to maintain access to the 99 properties at risk of being cut off by the slip. They had hoped that the development of the planned new houses overlooking Castle Cove beach would stabilise that piece of the road however that development is not going ahead any time soon so the Council have an obligation to step in. Money is tight so options may be limited but a local residents group is applying pressure. The Council can either stabilise the land or create a new access through Boleyn Cres across the Rodwell Trail. The club has been kept in the loop and we have made our case but no decisions will be taken until the geotechnical report is available. Depending upon the results of the report and the Council's subsequent proposal we may want to form a more vocal action group from within the club to support the residents group and we are looking at that possibility.

The embankment that the approach road to the club was built upon was formed by tipping waggon loads of spoil from railway excavations elsewhere. There is a limit to what we can do to repair the approach road. Several years ago a report was prepared of what would be required for a full structural stabilisation of the embankment and the cost was over well £300k. It is not worth attempting a partial stabilisation of the road without addressing the embankment. In light of this, the best approach is to continue doing what we have done in the past. Every 10 years or so we skim with tarmac and accept that this will be a series of temporary solutions. We had agreed for the contractor to resurface the approach road in May at a cost of around £5k however Covid-19 has delayed that work. We are looking to reschedule that work as soon as possible.

Next I would like to address:

### Keelboat Lift-in for 2020

Last week we made the difficult decision to cancel the organised lift-in at the club using the 100T crane. The majority of the lift team and many of the keelboat owners are either clinically vulnerable to Covid-19 or shielding and as a result of lockdown we have not completed the annual inspections for a substantial number of moorings. In order to complete a lift we would need to train a new lift team as well as introducing new lifting practices to ensure Covid-19 Security. We did consider a professional lift team however that is prohibitively expensive and does not address the issues not associated with lifting. We would need to put in place protocols for; preparing and handling keelboats for those who could not attend, managing boats on the water during a possible subsequent lock down and lift out in September. We are also running out of suitable tides with just a few left in June and none in July.

Despite the lovely weather we have been having recently, we are still subject to Phase 2 of the government's lock down rules and now is not the time to be pushing the rules and taking additional risks when the boats can sit safely on the boat park for 12 months. I know that this will inconvenience the dinghy sailors and cause disruption with storage, preparation and launch of the dinghies. The keelboat sailors will be disappointed to be missing a summer of sailing and some are worried about the keelboats becoming stranded at the club but I ask you all to be tolerant in what are exceptional circumstances.

The 100T crane is the most efficient way for the club to operate keelboat storage and is the preferred solution going forward. If access restrictions along Old Castle Road prevent the return of the 100T crane, then there are a number of smaller cranes that can do the job for lift in, although this will result in double handling of boats. The lift team has developed several alternatives to the 100T crane including a Hiab on a small lorry or a crawler crane on a barge. The nature of any restrictions placed on the road would determine exactly which method we would use. In any event, I am confident that there will be a method for launching the keelboats in Spring 2021.

I expect that most keelboats will stay ashore at the club until next spring then be lifted in. Smaller keelboats like the Sonatas can be lifted in this year by the club crane as they were at lift out. The feedback from keelboat owners that I have received is that there is insufficient appetite for a partial lift of the larger keelboats however if there is a surge in interest in lifting in June, we are open to any solutions that also protect the membership from harm.

It is of course possible to run a lift in for larger boats however this cannot be run as a club event as this year we are unable to meet our obligations from the Health and Safety Executive as well as the current Covid-19 Secure working practises. Lifting all the keelboats would involve professional contractors and would require robust solutions for members who are shielding.

The current approach for keelboat storage at the club is to continue with the 100T crane for the present. If, or when, that is no longer possible then there are other storage options in the area. I have spoken with Sailing Academy and they have the capacity to take all club boats for winter storage if required. The details would be negotiated nearer the time if we decide to go down that route. If the larger keelboats went to the Academy we would also develop a system to continue to store smaller keelboats at the club. Individuals have also suggested other plans for keelboat storage at the club including;

- smaller hired crane
- cradle hoist
- straddle hoist
- crawler crane or,
- upgrading the club fixed crane

There are however constraints on our site including:

- depth of water,
- nature of slipway,
- boat park surface,
- boat park size,
- managing antifoul,
- stepping masts and
- capacity of volunteers.

All options have been evaluated and several approaches would work as one-off solutions to relaunch keelboats in exceptional circumstances but, the conclusion is that for the current fleet of keelboats the 100T crane or storage at the Academy for larger keelboats are currently the two best options. If circumstances change we will revisit this approach.

We are making no charge for summer storage of the keelboats.

... which brings me on to:

### Finance

I am well aware that people will have lost a season of sailing and as we aim to offer the best value sailing I would hope to minimise costs going forward. We do have to keep the club financially viable for future years so we will have to cover the fixed operating costs of 2020 but I expect any future charges to be as low as possible and ideally recognise the loss of sailing in 2020.

Provisional figures as of the end of May are:

YTD net expense is £112k which is £9k less than last year.

YTD net income is £131k which is £19k down on last year.

Currently we have about 44 fewer memberships than at the end of last year which has contributed to the drop in income. Ian Green will go into the membership figures shortly.

Overall that puts us YTD in a net surplus position of £19k.

From June to August our expenses last year were £61k. For the same period this year we will manage our costs carefully but our Year End net expense will grow. Unfortunately, our income over the same period will be limited with an estimate of £4k.

The projected operating loss for 2020 is approximately £38k unless we take action.

Last year we had a Year End net operating income of £13k so the actual position in comparison to last year is £51k adverse.

To reduce that operating loss of £38k we can manage our discretionary spend to save approximately £5k of expense between June and August. Additionally, we have received a grant of £25k from the Council and will receive furlough relief from the government of around £2k. Through these actions we aim to achieve an operating loss for 2020 of approximately £6k with an actual position in comparison to last year of £19k adverse.

We are exploring other options for further grants and other cost improvement measures to further reduce the loss.

We have £48k of reserves to meet the £6k loss so we should start the 2021 season in a reasonable position but we will have to be careful with our spending this year and look to replenish our reserves over the coming years. All these figures are provisional and the detailed accounts will be validated and presented at the AGM.

Of course we all want to know when we can get back to sailing, so to cover the on-water aspects I will hand you over to our Rear Commodore, Sailing - Ian Green who can give an update on progress.