

Advisory Body to Gloucester Harbour Trustees

Navigation House, the Docks, Sharpness, Berkeley GL13 9UD Tel: 01453 811913 Fax: 01453 810381

Minutes of a meeting held on Tuesday 12 July 2011 at Navigation House, Sharpness

Present: See attached list
Apologies: John Christie, Martin Quaile, Fred Larkham

John Christie was unfortunately unable to be present, so Gordon Craig as Vice –Chairman took the chair and welcomed members to the meeting.

1 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the Advisory Body meeting held on 11 May 2010 were agreed as a correct record. (Proposed Don Sutherland; seconded Jean Hanks)

2 MATTERS ARISING

(i) Hovercraft

Don Sutherland commented that he was impressed by the responsible attitude of hovercraft users who would be holding events at Weston-super-Mare and Watchet during the summer. A group also rallied in the Severn each year, but they liaised with GHT beforehand and kept away from sensitive areas.

Other members commented that a number of organisations, including Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue, had acquired hovercraft after the 2007 floods, but had found that they were not particularly useful locally under normal conditions.

3 UPDATE FROM GHT

(i) GHT Annual Report

A draft of the text of the annual report had been circulated to members. The final version would be formally presented to the Trustees at their meeting on Friday and would then be made available on GHT's website.

Edmund Dorman commented that GHT had had another solid year and used a modest surplus to invest in the upgrade of two aging aids to navigation. This meant that all its aids to navigation were now modern, conformed to the highest navigational and safety standards and would require minimal maintenance for a number of years.

The level of traffic to Sharpness continued to be buoyant and GHT had been able to maintain its dues at the current level in the year ahead.

Problems in the Pilots' National Pension Fund, which had the potential to impact on GHT's finances, continued to be of concern but no liability, if any, had yet been quantified.

Members commented on a number of points from the report.

- **Severn Barrage**

Don Sutherland commented that another review on environmental development was due in 2015 and the Government would still need to meet the renewable energy targets to which it was committed. Two commercial groups were seeking private funding for a barrage and there was backing from the Welsh Government. Therefore, the barrage scheme might yet re-emerge. GHT's formal position was that it would provide relevant information to any organisation and work to keep Sharpness viable as a commercial port.

- **New Beacons**

Several members commented that the new tower replacing the buoy at Counts was difficult to see as it tended to blend into the background. Mike Johnson explained that it was properly painted as a north cardinal mark and intended to mark the main navigation channel for the benefit of commercial shipping. He conceded that the new beacon looked very different for leisure sailors used to the old buoy and was not as conspicuous as he would have liked. Some modifications had been made by adding boards to make it more visible and details of the new mark had been promulgated widely so that river users should know what to expect.

(ii) Marine Officer's Report

A report summarising some recent activities had been circulated. Mike Johnson also reported some other issues.

- **Fishing Engine at Aylburton**

There had been a number of incidents over the years when small vessels had come to grief on this large steel fishing structure. The owner had finally agreed to erect a conspicuous mark on the shore and this would be indicated on the relevant nautical chart and a Notice to Mariners issued.

- **Floating Debris**

Quantities of floating debris, including large trees and all sorts of rubbish, had been reported in the Wye, where it had damaged boats and moorings, and also in the Severn, especially in the Minsterworth area. It was interfering with the activities of canoeists, water skiers and SARA among others. The source of this debris was unknown – some fell in and some was deliberately thrown in. GHT was not in a position to take action as the main navigation channel was not affected, but would be happy to support other organisations. There was considerable discussion on the best way forward and a number of suggestions were explored:

- Generate publicity about the problem: eg BYCU newsletter
- Encourage groups eg local sailing clubs to organise 'litter picks'
- Involve the Marine Conservation Society* which campaigns to 'clear our seas of the rising tide of rubbish that is dangerous to sea life'

It was thought it would be best for each organisation to contact relevant organisations individually: a mass of correspondence on the same subject would perhaps have greater impact.

(iii) Stakeholder Lunch

Edmund Dorman asked what members thought of the Trustees' Stakeholder Lunch in January when there had been an opportunity for leisure and commercial users of the harbour to meet informally. Those AB members who had been able to come had found it very useful and had enjoyed networking with representatives from other organisations. They recommended a repeat performance if the Trustees decided to host a similar event next year.

(iv) Future of Advisory Body

Gordon Craig initiated a discussion on the future direction of the AB and how best to support and challenge GHT.

Members were reminded that the AB had grown out of the User Forum. This had been created in 1996 to bring together a large number of organisations and individuals with an interest in the creation of GHT's byelaws, which were eventually confirmed in 1998. The forum had morphed into the Advisory Body under GHT's 2002 Revision Order and had agreed the following aims and objectives at that time:

Main Objective

To bring together representatives of bodies who use, operate in or have an interest in the Gloucester Harbour within a framework which enables them to consider matters substantially affecting the management, maintenance, improvement, conservation or regulation of the Gloucester Harbour and its navigation.

Objectives

- *Be a focal point for Gloucester Harbour-wide interests and the public in order to convey information and advice to and from the Gloucester Harbour Trustees*
- *Encourage and facilitate close working relationships between all those involved in the management of or with an interest in the Gloucester Harbour*
- *Provide information and recommendations to the Gloucester Harbour Trustees which will further their primary statutory conservancy duties (including the provision of pilotage services and the provision and maintenance of navigation aids) and generally to ensure the safety of navigation within the Gloucester Harbour*
- *Create mechanisms and provide opportunities for improving communications, understanding and co-operation between managing agencies, users and local people.*

Members were to be drawn from representatives of the following organisations:

- *riparian local authorities including riparian parish and community councils*
- *water recreation users*
- *commercial shipping, port, docks, wharfingers and shipping agents*
- *sand dredger operators*
- *environmental agencies*
- *fishing and angling interests*
- *owners and operators of major infrastructure adjoining or adjacent to the Harbour.*

GHT confirmed that these interests/organisations were invited to the meetings, though many did not respond any more. AB members agreed that it would be useful to circulate representatives asking whether or not they still wished to be involved with the AB. A leaner, more targeted body would perhaps be more effective.

Edmund Dorman and Mike Johnson explained that GHT's work mainly impacted on commercial shipping and GHT tended to liaise direct with the port operator when problems arose. However, particular leisure-user interest groups were often contacted when issues affecting them arose, for example in the drafting of the safety guidance notes for small craft. Stakeholders did not have to wait for AB meetings to raise issues. GHT welcomed direct contact from members and would take appropriate action if required.

In addition, when appropriate, more general issues, such as GHT's safety management plan or consultations from other organisations on which GHT had been asked to comment, could be brought to the AB for a view.

AB members agreed that the AB would be more effective if it reverted to the original pattern of six-monthly meetings in May and November, with the possibility of the stakeholders' lunch as an extra bonus.

They would discuss these issues further at the next meeting in November.

4 OPEN FORUM

- **Weirs at Llanthony and Maisemore**

Stephen Phillips, as a canoeist, was concerned about the state of these weirs and the Upper Partings which were overgrown. Mike Johnson confirmed that the river beyond the weirs was the responsibility of the Environment Agency and British Waterways who should be reminded of the public right of navigation of both partings and volunteered to help Stephen with his approach to these agencies.

- **Blue Book**

Don Sutherland reported that a new edition of this publication, which gave details of harbours, anchorages and other useful information about cruising in the Bristol Channel, was being prepared. BCYU would be promoting a Blue Book Challenge this summer to encourage sailors to visit more unusual parts of the area by awarding points for different trips. Sailors would increase their knowledge of the upper Severn for example and be made aware of its more challenging environment.

- **Bristol Channel Challenge**

BCYU would also be promoting a local 'Three Peaks Yachting Race' next summer when teams would sail from Portishead to Minehead, climb Selworthy Beacon, sail on to Mumbles, climb Arthur's Seat, then on to Lundy for a yomp round the island, before finishing at Ilfracombe. Apart from being a fun challenge, it was hoped that this would raise the profile of the Severn Estuary as an exciting sailing destination.

- **SES**

Don Sutherland reported that he had been involved in the making of a short video film promoting stakeholder involvement in the Severn Estuary for the SES. This had been funded by the World Wildlife Fund. He commented that this had been enlightening experience and he had had the opportunity to meet many local interest groups.

- **Coastguard**

There was concern about the future of local coastguard services under the current review. Swansea was likely to be one of the stations scheduled for closure.

- **Chepstow**

Henry Hodges reported that the former Fairford Mabey shipyard land was likely to be sold for housing. Not only might this mean the loss of industrial activity including the sand berth, but there might be an increase in recreational activity and perhaps pressure to build proper access to the river.

- **Beachley**

Alan Stanley reported that the new SARA station at Beachley had now been officially opened and was in action. Mike Johnson commented that problems were encountered from time to time in launching GHT's boat there and SARA should bear in mind that GHT also had an operational need to use the slipway.

- **Weather Station/Tide Gauge**

Mike Johnson reported that a tide gauge and weather station was now up and running at Sharpness and real-time data could be accessed through GHT's website.

5 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Tuesday 15 November 2011 at 7 pm at Navigation House, Sharpness

* Marine Conservation Society, Unit 3, Wolf Business Park, Alton Road, Ross-on-Wye HR9 5NB

Meeting commenced: 19.00
Meeting concluded: 21.15

ADVISORY BODY MEETING – 12 July 2011

Present

Gordon Craig	Thornbury Sailing Club
Jean Hanks	Gloucestershire Association of Parish & Town Councils (East Side)
Nic Price	Maritime Volunteer Service
Graham Turner	Minsterworth Waterski Club
Don Sutherland	RYA (South West) / BCYA
Colin Crick	Newport Harbour Commissioners
Henry Hodges	Chepstow Town Council
Alan Stanley	SARA
Stephen Phillips	British Canoe Union

GHT

Edmund Dorman	Chairman
Mike Johnson	Marine Officer
Rosemary Elsey	Clerk to the Advisory Body

Apologies

John Christie	Lydney Yacht Club
Martin Quaille	Forest of Dean District Council
Fred Larkham	Larkham Ships

Copies for Information

Matthew Riddle	South Gloucestershire Council
Colin Evers	Gloucestershire Association of Parish & Town Councils (West Side)
Robert Williams	Tintern Community Council
Keith Hadley	Severn Estuary Fishermen's Association
Bill Payne	Gloucester Pilots Partnership
Hartley Everett	Severn Estuary Fishermen's Association
Andrew Blake	Wye Valley AONB
Sue Howard	Countryside Council for Wales
Charlotte Pagendam	Natural England
Stuart Ballard	Severn Surfer
Paul Hooper	Inland Waterways Association (Glos/Hereford Branch)
Bob Breen	Severn Sands Ltd
Paul Senior	Environment Agency
Dane Broomfield	Environment Agency (Wales)
Jon Phillips	Government Representative
Jim Clune	Severn River Crossing plc
Capt Jerry Stanford	Bristol Port Co
Steve Grist	D & B Shipping