

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 Thursday 17 May 2012 at Navigation House, Sharpness

John Christie welcomed members to the meeting and introduced Jim Clune who was due to speak later.

1 Minutes of Previous Meeting

The minutes of the Advisory Body meeting held on 15 November 2011 were agreed as a correct record.

2 Election of Vice-Chairman

John Christie reported that Gordon Craig had stood down from the Advisory Body on his recent appointment as a Gloucester Harbour Trustee. This left a vacancy for the position of Vice Chairman and nominations had been invited from AB members.

Don Sutherland was nominated by John Christie, seconded by Jean Hanks, and unanimously elected as Vice-Chairman.

3 Aids to Navigation - Counts Beacon

The Marine Officer reported that the boards for the daymark on the Counts beacon had now been delivered. They would be painted yellow and installed shortly. He hoped that this would help to make the beacon more visible for leisure users.

4 Severn Bore

The Marine Officer described a recent incident when a RIB had driven through a group of surfers on the Bore wave and knocked one flying. This had occurred on a well attended Bore during the Easter weekend and had been recorded on video. Fortunately, there had been no injuries, but this incident had again raised the problem of ensuring that power boat operators behaved responsibly on the Bore and took account of both the International Collision Regulations and GHT's byelaws. Guidance was already available on GHT's website and notices had been erected at a number of slipways to promote responsible behaviour. However, GHT did not have the manpower to control the actions of people on the Bore, but could potentially be criticised if a serious accident occurred.

The Advisory Body discussed this issue at length and recommended that GHT should undertake a formal risk assessment to demonstrate due diligence and reasonable care. Don Sutherland advised that the RYA had a suitable pro forma which might be a helpful starting point; the surfers would also be willing to help. The Marine Officer would also raise the issue at the next MCA District Safety Committee meeting.

5 Obstruction in Eastern Channel

Following concerns expressed at the last meeting about overhanging trees and other vegetation which made navigation in the East Channel very difficult, approaches had been made to a number of relevant organisations. Members now had some useful contact details at Gloucester City Council and the Hereford and Gloucester Canal Trust, who both owned land in this area, and hoped to be able to arrange some clearance work.

There were also safety issues in the area, for instance when SARA was called out to search for missing persons, and the Marine Officer would raise this issue with the MCA District Safety Committee.

Open Forum

- **SARA**

Geoff Dawe reported on recent Digital Selective Calling (DSC) alert to which SARA had been tasked to respond. They had searched the river and local lakes for some hours until the call was traced to a boat at a house in Swindon. The call had been activated by children playing. He recommended that batteries should be removed from these units when ashore to prevent an abortive rescue mission.

Geoff Dawe also advised that he had been asked to organise a beacon on Denny Island to celebrate the Diamond Jubilee on 4 June

- **Debris in Rivers**

Members noted that the recent rainfall and high tides had brought extra debris to the river. Moorings had been washed away at Chepstow and Don Sutherland commented that he would not recommend small boats going out in such conditions at night because of the gas bottles and large trees being brought down the rivers.

- **Disposal of Sewage**

Don Sutherland advised that, although small craft were not covered by the legislation on the disposal of sewage from vessels, there was guidance on best practice in this area. He recommended a fact sheet from The Green Blue entitled 'Sewage and Waste Discharge from Boats' available on:

www.thegreenblue.org.uk/PDF/TGB%20Factsheet%2002%20Sewage.pdf

- **Lydney Yacht Club**

John Christie advised that Lydney Yacht Club had been inaugurated on 22 May 1972 and would be holding a big celebration in July.

- **Barrage Scheme**

Members noted that a new consortium, Corlan Hafren, was promoting a scheme for a barrage in the Severn Estuary which was claimed not to need government funding. The group had been in talks with DECC and the Prime Minister was reported to be taking an interest, but no further information was available.

- **Welsh Government**

Members noted that the Environment Agency Wales (EAW), the Forestry Commission Wales (FCW) and the Countryside Council for Wales (CCW) were due to amalgamate into a single organisation with effect from 1 April 2013.

7 Presentation by Jim Clune

John Christie welcomed Jim Clune, General Manager of Severn River Crossing plc and a former Gloucester Harbour Trustee. Jim explained that his company, a consortium of four major companies (Laing, Vinci, Barclays and Bank of America), was responsible for the operation and maintenance of both the Severn Bridges.

The Severn Bridge (M48) opened in 1966 was made up of four separate structures:

- Aust Viaduct
- Suspension bridge (Grade I listed)
- Beachley Viaduct
- Wye Bridge (Grade 2 listed)

The Second Severn Crossing (M4) was made up of three structures:

- Avon Viaduct
- Main bridge
- Gwent Viaduct

This scheme had been set up in 1992 as a PFI initiative with the cost to be recovered from tolls by the concessionaire over a maximum period of 30 years. It now seemed likely that the concession would end in 2018.

Of particular interest to GHT was the decision to provide the pilot watch system. The original design had called for the installation of ship protection measures which would have been substantial structures, but it had eventually been agreed that the PWR would be an appropriate substitute. This system has worked very well since 1996, but the current equipment was showing signs of its age and a major upgrade was due to take place shortly.

SSC now has 185 employees engaged in maintenance and inspection. Their work is heavily regulated under strict guidelines from the DfT. A 5 km monorail under the crossing with five stations is used to move people and equipment. It hangs below the structure above the river so it is a scary ride and everyone using it must be capable of abseiling. A group of highly skilled abseilers is routinely used for inspecting hard to reach areas.

As is the case with many other suspension bridges, corrosion has been found in the main cables on the SSC. They are now re-inspected every five years and subject to acoustic monitoring, a technique whereby microphones listen for individual wires breaking, which can then be repaired. However, new technology, in which the UK leads the way, using dry air to dehumidify the void round the cable, has proved successful in arresting the corrosion process. Acoustic monitors and dehumidification are now built into new structures as standard and are being retro-fitted on the Severn bridges. Jim confirmed that the integrity of the structure was not compromised by these problems as the cables had been massively over-designed.

Members then had an opportunity to ask Jim questions about the operation of the bridge.

- Only the police or the Highways Agency (HA) could authorise bridge closures
- The new LED signs had proved successful – easier to see and vary when necessary
- HA did not allow contraflow on the bridges during maintenance
- Recent strengthening of M48 bridge would prolong its designed life
- When concession period ends, ‘tolls’ become ‘charges’ - free flow a possibility
- Very occasionally (3 or 4 times in 20 years), toll plaza has been opened to get traffic moving
- Lorry filtering allows bridges to stay open more often in bad weather - success
- Jim to follow up toll free access for SARA vehicle when on an emergency call

John Christie thanked Jim Clune on behalf of AB members for an interesting and illuminating presentation.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

THURSDAY 22 NOVEMBER 2012 at 7 pm at Navigation House, Sharpness

ADVISORY BODY MEETING – 17 MAY 2012

Present

Jonathan Everett	Thornbury Sailing Club
Jean Hanks	Gloucestershire Association of Parish & Town Councils (East Side)
Don Sutherland	RYA (South West) / BCYA
Colin Crick	Newport Harbour Commissioners
John Christie	Lydney Yacht Club
Martin Quaile	Gloucestershire County Council / Forest of Dean District Council
Colin Evers	Gloucestershire Association of Parish & Town Councils (West Side)
Geoff Dawe	SARA / Geoff Dawe Marine Services
Hartley Everett	Severn Estuary Fishermen's Association
Graham Turner	Minsterworth Waterski Club
Steve King	Severn Surfer
Fred Larkham	Larkham Ships
Jim Clune	Severn River Crossing plc
Katherine Clune	Observer

GHT

Mike Johnson	Marine Officer
Rosemary Elsey	Clerk to the Advisory Body

Apologies

Steve Pocock	Tintern Community Council
Alan Stanley	SARA
Keith Hadley	Severn Estuary Fishermen's Association
Nick Worthington	British Waterways
Nic Price	Maritime Volunteer Service

Copies for Information

Matthew Riddle	South Gloucestershire Council
Bill Payne	Gloucester Pilots Partnership
Charlotte Pagendam	Natural England
Bob Breen	Severn Sands Ltd
Paul Senior	Environment Agency
Jon Phillips	Government Representative
Capt Jerry Stanford	Bristol Port Co
Steve Grist	D & B Shipping
Stephen Phillips	British Canoe Union
Lance Allen	Gloucestershire Association of Parish & town Councils (Wye)
Stephen Phillips	British Canoe Union
Geri Rowe	Chepstow Town Council

Meeting commenced:	19.00
Meeting concluded:	20.55