

Commodore's Report – 2021

A very good evening to you all and here is my Commodore's report for 2020/21.

I'd like to cover three specific periods of time in this year's report. These being the last 12 months, the remainder of 2021 and 2022 and beyond.

Let's start with the last 12 months.

So, it's been an interesting year. I took over from Chris Barr as Commodore on Saturday March 21st, 2020. We held an extraordinary Executive Meeting on the following Monday, which was the first ever Executive meeting held on Zoom. We then closed the club completely on the Tuesday. In another twist I also bought a Solo dinghy on the same weekend, which I've only sailed three times since purchase.

Although there were comments from some members at the time that we had over reacted, as other clubs stayed partially open, the Executive felt comfortable with our approach. This set the tone for all our decisions thereafter, taking a cautious approach and prioritising the health and safety of members and employees. We also started twice weekly communications with members to ensure we remained connected and they were kept up to date.

The next stage was to protect the club finances and we immediately set about hibernating the club. In doing this we reduced the monthly running costs from £16,500 per month to £5,500 per month and have maintained a tight control during this whole period.

Several small teams were set up within the Executive, which allowed us to review guidelines quickly and effectively as and when released. We were then able to create the necessary processes within the club and communicate that to members.

The Executive continued to meet weekly and we were probably one of the first clubs to launch a range of online activities including virtual regatta. The emphasis then switched from protecting the club, to helping the community.

The amazing efforts driven by Gareth, Griffiths, Karl Thorne, Sarah Richards, George Richards and Heather Chipperfield, delivered PPC's and scrubs for our local nurses. This was achieved by working with the team at Sanders Sails and our phenomenal sewing team. During what was a difficult time, I think all members can be proud of how the club looked outwards, stepped up and supported the community.

We then managed to deliver sailing and some small events during summer, but at all times the Executive remained cautious, balancing the desire to provide some activities whilst maintaining the safety of all.

Whilst we did get some sailing in, there were two major casualties in our member groups. The first being our cruising section with Meanderers, Wanderers and most planned cruises coming to a halt. In our Cruising section, we now have the challenge of pulling together a programme that will help to retain existing members and attract new ones, and this will be one of our key priorities during the coming year.

Similarly, our junior sailing programme, which has been highly successful during the last five years, ended abruptly, and we had very few sessions during summer. Our Saturday morning children's

sailing at Salterns sailing club was also halted and I, together with Keyhaven and the Royal, are currently in discussion to ensure we retain access to this important resource.

However, we did manage to secure the Sea Baths for a few weekends in autumn, so we did hopefully create some 2020 memories for our younger sailors.

On the administration side, our new honorary treasurer took the opportunity to completely overhaul our financial management systems. This included a move away from paper-based systems and migrating all our financial management to a cloud-based application. We now have a more efficient operations, real time reporting, daily reconciliation with all bank accounts and complete visibility for directors. The move, together with other changes has resulted in a decrease of approximately £3k per annum on our accounting and financial management costs.

In terms of the financial performance, I can confirm that the club delivered a surplus for the year end 31st August 2020. We remain in a very positive cash position and, whilst the club did benefit from government grants and support, we have avoided the need to take any government loans. Our outlook for the coming year remains uncertain, but the Executive will do all in our power to deliver a positive performance. Amazingly, we also managed to maintain the membership numbers and continue to attract new members.

Another vital area of the club which continued during lockdown, when guidelines allowed, was our amazing volunteer groups. For those who may not know, we have a group called the Monday Club, who effectively undertake the majority of work and maintenance required at the club. Similarly, our Bosun team manage all RIB maintenance together with other club requirements. Together these two groups ensure the club operates efficiently and also save the club many thousands of pounds. As well as the Monday and the Bosun teams, there are several other smaller groups and individuals who regularly volunteer to ensure events and activities can run smoothly. A very big thankyou to you all.

One final memory of 2020 will be our Christmas lights. I'm thinking we definitely won the award for best sailing club Christmas lights in the local area. Again this only happened because of a member providing the lights at cost, and a highly organised team, lead by Mark Armstrong and Jonathan King, who planned the rigging of the lights with meticulous precision. The result was spectacular, and we have now set the bar pretty high for next year.

So, onto the rest of 2021.

Our focus is definitely on getting members as much time on the water as possible. To deliver this we will be creating more opportunities for greater participation across all sections of the membership, and also facilitating more training and coaching activities.

We also have serious plans for the galley, with the intention of completely transforming the food offer, the service, and the financial performance. I hope to release more details on these plans very soon.

We will also continue with our move to improve the efficiency of our office and administration functions, which will include a drive to eventually deliver a paperless operation.

Whilst our member communication has been frequent during this period, it is time for a complete review of newsletters, web content and other methods of communicating with members. We want

to understand more about what each member wants from the club and be able to match those needs with activities and individuals who can help.

And now for 2022 onwards

I'd like to leave you with some thoughts for 2022. Executive members and Commodores are not here for very long, with an active participation on average being approximately three years to four years. I think that short term duration of service for the club, naturally drives a culture of short-term decision making. Whilst this good for near term interests it does not address longer term plans and strategy. That is not a criticism btw, and it is what happens in most other sailing clubs in the country.

So I'd like to ensure we carefully steer short term plans and make the right decisions for the club, but also consider longer term projects. With that in mind I would like to plant a seed regarding two major projects.

The first of those is to do with the heating and energy system. At the club we have what is probably the most inefficient system you can imagine. It's old, it's creaking, it warms some parts of the club and not others. And we have the situation where the team in the office, each run an electric heater under their desk next to stay warm. The result being that we pay over £13,000 a year in energy bills. The first seed I'd like to plant with you, is that we consider using some of our reserves to plan and install the most efficient energy system practical, using renewable where possible. It will significantly reduce our bills, make our club more comfortable for members and improve our office environment for the team.

The second project I'd like to give you the heads up on relates to our balcony windows and doors. To put it bluntly that are crumbling and rotting, and if it were not for the amazing work of the Monday Club, they may well have crumbled already in places. We can go on fixing and patching but next year could well be the time for a complete replacement, with sliding doors giving a fully open aspect in the summer and a very protective shield in the winter. And in all seasons, framing what is the best view in Lymington.

Both projects are significant and will be costly but will have a life of 15 years plus. We will give you more details as these plans progress and will arrange Extraordinary General Meetings if or when necessary.

In closing I need to thank the executive and all the sub committees, who have supported and steered this club admirably during the last year of turmoil. The Executive have held 18 meetings this year plus many more smaller group meetings to cover specific topics. I should also highlight those who have done their shift and are stepping down. Those being Len Tuffill, Jenny Bennett, Tim Bigg, Rob Martin and Malcolm Buchannan. I thank them and the rest of the Executive, and all representatives on the sub committees for their amazing support.

My final thankyou goes to the members who have continued their membership and supported the club during the last year. Many of whom have not been able to get to the club or be involved in activities. A very large thankyou to you all.

Here endeth my report for 2021.