

**Draft Minutes of the Cowes Harbour Advisory Committee Meeting
held at UKSA, Cowes on Wednesday 15 April 2026 at 1000**

Present: Mark Southwell (MS) – Chair (RNLI)
John Corby (JC) – Waterside Property Owners and West Cowes Boatyards
Ross Edmunds (RE) – Isle of Wight Council
Chris Frisby (CF) – UKSA
Bob Holt (BH) – Cowes Water Taxis and Commercial Fishermen
Lee Rayment (LR) – Solent and Wight Line Cruises
Mark Scholes (MS) – Cowes High Street Businesses
Rob Stewart (RS) – AMC (East Cowes Boatyards)
Cllr. Tracey Reardon (TR) – East Cowes Town Council
Guy Shelbourne (GS) – East Cowes Sailing Clubs /Medina Clubs
Gary Hall (GH) – Chief Executive, Cowes Harbour Commission
Capt. Jon Kidd (JK) – Harbour Master, Cowes Harbour Commission
Sue Matthews (SM) – Minute-taker

1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Lou Newlands (resigned), Neil Chapman (Red Funnel), Paul Fuller, Miles Hamer, Dan Jehan, Simon Davies, Karl Love, Bob Milner, Bob Trimble, Annie Adams, Dave Priddle, David Walters, Mike Townsend, Julian Shawyer and Jess Olden.

2. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the meeting held on 14 January 2026, having been previously circulated, were approved.

3. CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT

a. **Marina Update** – GH updated the group on the following:

- i. **MMO Licence and Planning Applications** - The MMO Licence has been submitted, as has the planning application which is out for consultation. Feedback is being received from official consultees, and CHC is addressing any questions that are raised and responding with the rationale or any changes. The EA have commented that there is salmon in the River Medina and that there should be no piling between May and March. CHC have responded saying they do not agree there is salmon in the river and asking why they believe this to be the case, and that the EA's dates relating to piling are incorrect and should be between March and May. GH awaits their response.
- ii. GH shared that before the application went in, CHC consulted extensively with various Council Departments, met with East Cowes Town Council and also met with other consultees. It was on the basis of that consultation that CHC were asked to provide more information ahead of the planning application going in, which was provided. CHC hope to receive the planning permission and MMO by the end of June and will be working towards opening the new marina in early 2027. The waiting lists for berths is already open and oversubscribed.
- iii. **The Guard House and Parking** – GH referred to and addressed some of the recent social media posts particularly those relating to the Guardhouse and parking. He reported that CHC did consult on these and had constructive conversations. The proposal was submitted following these conversations and Island Roads asked for further information which CHC will be providing. Discussions took place with planners about the toilet and shower facilities and GH explained that if the extension does not take place, then it will not meet the requirements for the number of showers and toilets that are needed for a marina of this size. UKSA are taking over the Barracks building so CHC must erect a fence for safeguarding purposes GH gave assurance and explained that the fence will be in keeping with the railings already there. Also,

that the vista of the barracks building from the road must be kept, so it can only extend the building on the East elevation. In doing that and creating the fence on the footprint UKSA has allocated, CHC has no option but to put the bins at the rear of the building on the South side. CHC had therefore discussed with planners about the possibility of taking down a small section of the railings on the West side of the building, which again will be in keeping with the existing boundary fence. GH also reported that a gate of the same design has previously been installed and used to access the Barracks building.

- iv. **The marina access walkway** - The walkway ramp has also come up on social media. GH confirmed that after consultation a further proposal had already been submitted to planning that was smaller in footprint but remains accessible to all users and must include steps, as well as a ramp.
- v. GH reminded the group that positive comments and letters can also be submitted in response to the application.
- vi. BH raised concerns about pollution in the river from boats using the marina. GH confirmed that two pump-out stations will be installed in the new marina. JK also reminded the group that anyone found polluting the river can be prosecuted by CHC.
- vii. It was also suggested approaching Waitrose to see if they would be interested in allowing third party parking. Although GH thought that this would be unlikely, he will consider discussing with them.
- viii. TR asked if anyone has looked at the slipway to the right, which is not used. CF responded that it is not a slipway and UKSA had looked at reinstating it as a slipway, but it would be at considerable cost, and there were concerns about the vista from the new amphitheatre.
- ix. TR also asked if there was an alternative for the extension to the Guard House, that blends in better. GH said CHC can only be guided by planning, who wanted a flat roof. CF also confirmed that from UKSA's perspective, the lease they have with the IOW Council includes the Guard House which they have no use for, so it is good that CHC are planning to put the building to good use.
- x. JC asked if the new marina berths waiting lists have been filled yet. GH confirmed that the waiting list is already oversubscribed. JC reiterated that there is a shortage of berths in Cowes.
- b. **Dredging** – GH confirmed that this is 50 per cent complete, but there have been some weather and equipment delays. CHC's website shows the survey of where the dredging is taking place, and their newsletter also has further information.
- c. **Water taxi service** - GH reported that he, BH and Dave Foyle have had conversations about the future of the water taxi service, but they could not reach agreement. CHC would therefore continue to provide a water taxi service during the summer in preparation for launching a service from the new marina once it is open.
- d. **Commissioner vacancy** – CHC have appointed a new commissioner to replace Clive Blount from 1 May 2026, initially for a three-year term. There had been a strong response and several applications. The successful candidate will be announced in due course.
- e. **Trinity Landing** – GH reported that power cleaning has just taken place and CHC continues to invest quite heavily in Trinity Landing. New decking will be laid next winter.

4. HARBOUR MASTER'S REPORT

- a. **Incidents** – JK reported there have been a total of 11 incidents since the last meeting including boats breaking down, one vessel which went aground and a mud rescue in Medina wharf.
- b. **PMSC** – the report has been received and CHC is compliant. There are 19 observations to work through, although 17 relate to word changes within the new Code and the other two related to best practice processes and permits.
- c. **Hazard ID Group** – this group is made up of stakeholders looking at CHC risks assessments. It normally meets at the end of April but is being rearranged for a later date.
- d. **Safety and Regulatory Compliance Group** – the group has been reviewing health and safety policies and reviewed in the last of month the inclusion of the mental health awareness.. It also discusses industry wide incidents to learn lessons. JK is also

undergoing training and looking at systems to meet ISO standards leading to a globally recognised standard of certification for the Harbour..

- e. **Trinity House audit** – this took place in March and looked at safety of navigation and the auditors were very happy.
- f. **Flare disposal** – this is going well, and 300 flares have been delivered to Southampton for disposal. CHC will continue to keep the service operating. There was some discussion about flares that were recently left in Arctic Road and on benches, and JK was asked if there is any agreement with the Coastguard or Police on how to deal with these. It was suggested that flares are being dumped because people are not willing to pay. The flare disposal service is advertised, and the pricing structure just about covers costs. JK confirmed he will look further into the issue.
- g. **Propulsion failure campaign** – this is still the biggest incident for call-outs, usually relating to engine failures, fuel problems and propellers. The Deputy Harbour Master will be undertaking a refresh of the campaign with other ports and harbours, and it will run on social media and the website.
- h. **Cruise ships** – 16 cruise ships are booked for this year, with one cancellation, and it is looking healthy for 2027/28.
- i. **Cowes Week** – GS asked about moorings on Row J. It encroaches on racing for Tuesday and Thursday nights and is right in the middle of the East Cowes Sailing Club loop. GS asked if the additional row outside of J will be removed after Cowes Week or if a Notice to Mariners be issued. JK confirmed that the additional row will only be for Cowes Week. He is looking at installing a row between the old Shrape mud and the beacon so he will make sure it does not impinge on the start line. He confirmed there will be a Notice to Mariners.
- j. **Pilotage** – this is very quiet with just two this month, and is a situation that is unlikely to change.
- k. **Swimming pool** – this has gathered momentum, and JK has met with Cowes Town Council and also had a meeting with the team trying to put in a tidal pool at Yaverland. The plan is to provide a safe swimming area off the parade which is protected from tide and wash from vessels. At this stage, it is a slow-moving project, but JK will be looking at funding options and will keep people updated. It would be a temporary structure and can be used elsewhere if it does not work out. There is a possibility of the pool being in place for the summer, but it depends on funding.
- l. **Trinity landing /Parade electrics** – the re-decking was delayed, but the Council have said the cabinets at the top of the parade will be refurbished before Cowes Week, and wiring has been upgraded. JK said CHC is doing what it can to enhance the supply. He also confirmed that the Trinity House buoy will stay where it is.

5. MARINE INDUSTRY

There were no updates available.

6. COMMERCIAL VESSELS

- a. **Red Funnel** – There was no representative from Red Funnel, but it was thought that the electric boat idea is still going on in the background. MS said he would be requesting Red Funnel to try to ensure a representative attends the CHAC meetings.
- b. **Solent Cruises** - LR reported they have been busy with coaches starting to come into the town. He also confirmed that the chain ferry will be out of service for a refit at the beginning of May for two weeks. He commented that it was good to see the commercial traffic going up the river to Newport and that there might be a possibility of more aggregate coming in.
- c. **AMC** – RS reported things are going well, and that AMC have bought out Wight Shipyard, which had previously owned half of the company.

7. LEISURE ACTIVITY and PUBLIC ACCESS

GS confirmed that East Cowes Sailing Club will be removing shingle on 11 May, and the digger has been booked. He also thanked CHC for supporting the purchase of paddleboards and kayaks, and donations that have been received from East Cowes Town Council and IWC.

8. REVIEW OF CHAC CONSTITUTION

- a. The revised draft constitution had been circulated for adoption at this meeting. MS explained that CHAC has developed a lot in recent years, so there was a need to review the constitution. MS explained that a key change was that Members of the Committee will normally only serve a three-year term, but members may be reappointed for a further three-year term. Continuous service will normally not exceed two terms, except in exceptional circumstances. Members may nominate an agreed substitute to attend meetings, when necessary, subject to approval by the Chair. If a member leaves the Committee, the Chair will arrange to advertise the position to the specific stakeholder group that requires a new representative.
- b. MS shared that he is concerned that the group is not disseminating information to those they represent and therefore requested that representatives either circulate the minutes to others or draw attention to the minutes when published.
- c. MS reported he will need to appoint a vice chair and that he will leave when he has completed his second three-year term.
- d. The CHAC group confirmed the adoption of the new constitution. MS said those due to leave in September may still attend the September meeting.

9. CHAIR'S UPDATES

- b. BH asked if anyone knew of recent water testing that had taken place in the river. It was thought this might be Natural England, but it was not known for sure.
- c. Cowes Week activities – the group agreed that information appeared to be fairly quiet at this stage relating to off the water activities, the Parade and the Green. It was thought that work is going on in the background, and that further information would be available soon.

11. DATE AND LOCATION OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will take place on Wednesday 9 September 2026 and the venue of East Cowes Sailing Club was offered. MS gave thanks to UKSA for hosting this meeting.

There being no more business, the meeting closed at 1110.