



DUCHY of CORNWALL

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*Harbour Master: Dale Clark*

**ST. MARY'S HARBOUR USERS GROUP**

**11<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2013**

**18:30 SLIP INN**

Invitees	Attended
Jeremy Phillips (JP) – Pilots / SMBA	N
Steve Hicks (SH) – Pilots / SMBA	Y
Robert Francis (RF)– ISFA	N
Richard Hand (RH)– Hauliers	N
Mike Knapman (MK)– Hauliers	N
Keith Buchanon (KB) – Tennant / sailing	Y
Bryher Boats (JS)	Y
St. Agnes Boating (JP)	Y
St. Martins Boating (TP)	N
Pete Hicks – ISSCo / RNLI (PH)	Y
Mervyn Bird – ISSCo (MB)	Y
Eldred Banfield – ISSCo (EB)	Y
Tim Fortey – Independent Boating (TF)	Y
Clive Sibley – Tennant / Fuel (CS)	Y
Richard Mills – Sailing Centre (RM)	Y
Tresco Estate (DW)	N

**APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from Robert Francis, Terry Perkins, Jeremy Phillips and Dean Whillis.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM LAST MEETING**

The minutes from the meeting held on the 27<sup>th</sup> September 2012 were approved. Proposed by JP, seconded by PH.

**MATTERS ARISING**

DC informed all that the Hulman navigational mark was still to be painted and will be done when tides and weather allow. DC also mentioned that he was awaiting new rings from Pernic Forge to be fitted on St. Agnes quay. DC asked PH if a request for a 3<sup>rd</sup> crew member had been done. PH said he had not asked and would continue to run with 2 crew on the Lyonesse Lady and continue to monitor the off island freight handlers.

## **INCIDENT REPORTS**

DC informed all that there had been 7 reported incidents since the last meeting. He briefly described some including Paul Lewis' yacht breaking free, Balbridie on the rocks under the lifeboat slip, the Gry Maritha running aground in the harbour during berthing and the fall of a container which was double stacked on the quay. DC reminded everyone that they should report any incidents to the harbour office no matter how small. He explained that the harbour office keep a record and this assists them in identifying problem areas if certain types of incidents continue to happen.

## **DISABLED ACCESS**

DC informed the meeting that disabled access to the harbour office and on the quay will be greatly improved when the harbourside building refurbishment is completed. He mentioned the Scillonian III has had a major refit in which she has installed a lift and greater disabled access to areas on-board. DC advised members to consider what improvements they could make on board their vessels. DC also mentioned that he would like to see a pontoon installed that would allow wheelchair users to gain easier access to boats. This pontoon would also allow the 12 boats to use it and reduce congestion for steps during low tides.

TF mentioned that in the past disabled access was not really considered due to the off islands quays not having facilities to accommodate wheel chair users. DC agreed and did say that access improvements on the off islands cannot be ruled out. JP also reminded all that any new vessel being built must be DDA compliant.

## **QUAY EXTENSION**

DC reminded all of the improvements being sought through Duchy, convergence and DfT funding – a 23m extension, widening of the access to the working area, a new freight shed and freezer/chilled storage on the quay. DC explained that a draft submission of the business plan had been drawn up by Cornwall County Council and that further additions were required before submission to DfT which will probably take place in April. DC also explained that convergence funding required the DfT funding to be in place before they would grant the money. In terms of deadlines, DC explained that June was the latest that we could apply for convergence funding. DC informed all that even if the funding was refused, there would be alterations to the harbourside building that would take place outside of the tourist season – possibly next winter.

## **CRUISE SHIP CALLS 2013**

DC informed all that there was currently 35 cruise ships scheduled to visit the islands this year. He mentioned that he will be holding a meeting with the agent David Badcock to clarify numbers this week. DC reminded everyone that last season just under 8,000 passengers visited St Mary's (a small section also visited St. Agnes, Bryher and St. Martins). He explained that these visitors represent real potential as holiday makers here in the Islands and that their 6 hour visit on a cruise ship should be made as enjoyable as possible. DC encouraged everyone to pull together and ensure that we all communicate and work towards providing a pleasurable and enjoyable experience for all visitors on the quay. He mentioned that it was inevitable that there will be days where the steps are congested and that things may not go according to plan but in what could prove to be a difficult year financially for many (tourists) this was when we should all pull together. JP mentioned (and agreed) that TP was very happy with the way the cruise tenders were organised last season and he hoped the same would continue this year. PH suggested that perhaps a walkway at the top of the steps when cruise passengers land could be set up to assist in the quicker movement rather than gathering at the top of the steps. DC explained that last season the TIC did have on occasions a desk out on the quay which handed out maps and information. This worked very well in attracting the visitors as soon as they got

off the quay helping to reduce congestion around the area of the middle steps. DC also informed all that the TIC will be trying to get as much presence on the quay as possible this season to assist/inform passengers. JS asked if the Scillonian III will be moved on low tide days. DC informed JS that the moving of the Scillonian III (or Gry Maritha) will take place as required and he will liaise with the Master of each vessel a few days in advance.

JS asked if there are set times for the cruise ship tenders. DC explained that the agent (David Badcock) arranges tender movements with the ships and that he will discuss this with him during their forthcoming meeting. DC mentioned that the tenders will have to work around the times set aside for local boats but again, communication and working together will help get everyone moved on or off the quay without too much delay. JP mentioned that it can be difficult for off island boats especially when they have passengers waiting to catch flights. DC agreed and suggested greater communication with harbour staff to ensure that no-one misses their flight connection. PH asked if there if the harbour had any control over cruise tenders. DC replied that he did not as they operated outside of the harbour limits. DC mentioned that he has advised Tresco in the past and will do so again of the need to operate with local tenders given the potential dangers of using large ships tenders to both Carn Near and New Grimsby. PH recalled an incident where ships zodiacs got lost in the fog some years ago and was concerned that this could happen again. JP informed all that this topic has come up in meetings with the MCA before and that due to the boats operating out with the harbour limits there was little they could do. DC mentioned that they should potentially have a local license. Many of the attendees asked why Tresco do not insist on using local boats. MS suggested that a the majority of cruise vessels visiting Tresco were the smaller expedition type ships and the added costs of running tenders could potentially put them off. DC once again reiterated that he will advise Tresco again of the dangers and of the need to use local boats.

### **PORTHLOO BOAT PARK**

DC explained that a delay in the funding has meant the work will now take place in winter 2013/14. He expressed disappointment that the work could not go ahead this winter. PS asked why the work could not go ahead in the summer. DC mentioned that the planning restrictions were such that any work to the boat park had to be carried out outside of the tourist season. PS mentioned the uneven ground at the North end of the park where the vessels were placed and DC agreed that this was far from ideal but in order for the improvements to be carried out in sequence – i.e. slipway and trenching works first – the vessels would have to be stored there once again this coming winter.

### **MCA VISIT**

DC mentioned to all that the recent visit by the MCA IN December was a worthwhile event that had allowed all commercial boatmen the opportunity to meet face to face with the MCA and discuss their concerns regarding the securing of passenger vessels. He also mentioned that at the next H.U.G. meeting he would look to invite the MCA to re-cap on what they have discussed with boatmen so far. JP mentioned that the code relating to the securing of passenger vessels does not apply to the 12 boats. DC reminded the boatmen that the MCA and harbour office had offered to assist anyone who was conducting risk assessments in relation to the securing of passenger vessels.

DC also mentioned that the harbour continue to maintain their mooring points on all of the Duchy owned quays on a monthly maintenance programme and that they will be putting new rings on St. Mary's over the coming weeks. He mentioned that St. Agnes will get 2 new stainless steel rings. PS asked about the possibility of using a chain between the rings on the end steps – DC agreed to look into this. DC mentioned that they will also consider the use of a chain beneath the fenders in the middle steps or rings on the edge of the steps on the end steps. DC also informed all that new hardwood fenders would replace the current fenders on the middle and new steps and that new soft wood fenders will replace the current once protecting the ladders in the inner and middle berths.

## **OFF ISLAND QUAYS**

DC reminded the boat men that as they operate on the Duchy and Tresco owned quays, they had the right to ask that the quays were suitable for use. Now that St. Martins Hotel will not be open this year, DC expressed concerns that the boats will continue to run to Lower Town quay and reminded them that they should ensure that the quay is suitable to use or at least ensure the owners are reminded of their responsibility to maintain it whilst boats are using it.

DC asked that any boats using the off island quay do so with suitable fendering to protect not only their vessel but the quay and steps also. He mentioned damage that had occurred at St. Agnes and also at Higher Town that had not been reported. DC reminded all that they should report any damage as soon as possible to the harbour office.

JP asked if the rocks at Porth Conger could be removed – DC agreed.

DC highlighted concerns over swimmers from the off island quays during the season. All boat men agreed that there was a problem and that information warning people of the dangers should be placed on all off island quays. DC agreed and said he will take steps to have something in place in the coming weeks. KB asked if perhaps school visits could be considered. TF explained that it was not the local children but mainly the tourists. DC said that this year the harbour will be part of the police 999 scheme that they run for the secondary pupils. He mentioned that they will be discussing sea safety and swimming from quays/rocks etc when they meet with the pupils.

## **BOAT OPERATORS TIMES FROM THE QUAY**

DC started this agenda item by reminding all present that there was a real need for everyone to work together this year. He explained that with the loss of the helicopter, more people will be using the quay – either the Tresco visitors or more people using the Scillonian III. He emphasised that the drop in tourist numbers may well continue this year but that every effort should be made by all to make those who do come feel welcome and wanted. He mentioned that this year we hoped to see a similar number of visitors from cruise vessels (just under 8,000) and that they represent a real chance of visiting the islands again. He explained that he believed some people thought that cruise ship passengers got priority and went through the regulations relating to their security system and why the harbour staff operate the security system in the way they do.

DC expressed disbelief at the way some boat operators treated tourists on the quay at times and felt that all skippers needed to up their game in terms of looking after tourists/visitors using the quay. It was discussed by all at the meeting of the service currently (last season) on the quay and felt by many that there could be more done to ensure visitors had a better experience. Confusion over which boat or steps to use was a common theme and it was felt that this could easily be avoided or improved if skippers and crews of boats made themselves available during the loading of tripper boats.

JS asked SH what times they would be looking to operate from the quay this year as he felt Bryher Boats could operate around SMBA times. DC explained that he does not want strict times to be offered to each boating company but that an understanding of the current “normal” timetable should continue and that boats needed to spend less time alongside. DC also reminded boat operators that they should be monitoring VHF Ch 14 and call the harbour if they feel there is a problem with the use of the steps or if they have passengers waiting to depart quickly for flights etc.

DC mentioned that this year each set of steps on the main quay will have a different colour flag to assist visitors I where to go after they have bought their ticket. He asked that when tickets are sold in the kiosk, they should advice the passengers accordingly. DC also asked that SMBA give the “running order” for the day to harbour staff so that they (along with SMBA crew/skippers) can continue to assist in directing passengers to the correct vessel.

## **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

- PH asked if it was possible to have another ladder in the outer berth to allow off island boats to use in the summer – DC agreed to investigate.
- CS mentioned that Sibley's would be monitoring VHF Ch 14 over the season in order to help fuelling operations operate more efficiently. He also mentioned that (pending planning approval) a flag will be hoisted adjacent to the fuel kiosk to allow yachts/boat operators to easily identify when the kiosk is open for business.
- EB mentioned that the Swift Lady will return within one week and take over post boat duties from Bryher Boats.
- DC reminded all that there is no area on the quay for the storage of dangerous goods with the exception of Sibleys fuel and gas compounds.
- DC reminds all that the speed limit is 5mph and given the increase in traffic this year, it is important that all vehicles observe this.
- DC asked SH to mention at the SMBA meeting of the need to queue passengers down onto Old Quay and not let them back up onto the road entrance of the quay.
- DC advised all that the restriction on vehicles using the quay would remain and that it was a "gentlemen's agreement" that had worked well in the past and so should continue to do so.
- DC highlighted to all that the Old Gaffers Association would be conducting a round UK tour and stopping off at St. Mary's in the 2<sup>nd</sup> weekend in May. To date 18 boats are booked to attend.

With no other business the meeting was closed at 20:30.

Next meeting to be held end of June/early July – HM to advise.