

Lowry Bay Yacht Club Commodore's Report 2021/22 Season

The last year has been a challenging period for the Club with the ongoing repercussions of Covid 19. It has reduced the level of social interaction and had an impact on our finances. Where we have been able, a full sailing programme has continued, and we have held several cruising events. The relationship with the Marina has been good, and we have had useful discussions about the future of our clubrooms.

The membership provided the Executive with a clear direction for the future in the form of a Strategic Plan that was approved at the last AGM. The focus for the first couple of years is to manage the business sustainably. This outcome was broken down into shorter goals:

- Manage risk, and financial sustainability
- Work with members and SML to agree the future of our clubrooms
- Develop on and off water activities in line with member feedback
- Enhance communications

We have made some good progress on these goals, but we are by no means finished. I will deal with each area separately.

Manage Risk and Financial Sustainability

We saw this goal as being quite broad. We felt that there was a need to look at our IT systems, financial system, and club policies. Everything needed to be in one place so that we were not continually reinventing the wheel.

We have now put all our IT needs into the cloud with all the relevant club positions working from a Google email platform. We are also using Google docs to keep all our documents in a shared space, which provides easy access to anyone who needs it. It also means that job descriptions for each of the executive positions are in one place and accessible, and we are able to share and comment on documents easily. Our policy documents are also stored here, and we can keep these up to date as we make policy decisions. One of the big advantages of moving to the cloud is that we are able to work from home and we can reduce our reliance on old technology using unsupported software.

Our finance system has been moved to Xero and is integrated with our invoicing so that members and club hirers will find it easier to pay their accounts. The new system also provides ready access to real-time financial reports and each part of the Club can see how they are performing against budget.

Another change was the establishment of a Risk and Finance Committee. This has allowed us to focus on risk without micromanaging at executive meetings. A major initiative by the Committee has been the establishment of a Club Manual. The idea is that this is a living document which sets out the processes and procedures that are essential to the smooth running of the Club. This approach to risk meant that when we lost key people at the club due to Covid we had contingency plans in place which allowed the club to keep operating. It took some additional effort from particular individuals, but the Club was able to keep operating.

We have invested in the Club rooms for the benefit of members. The carpet has been replaced, the lino has been replaced and we have installed a new dishwasher in the kitchen. All this work has been funded by grants from trust funds with contributions from Club funds. The Executive has looked at potential further capital investment opportunities for the Club and set out a capital plan. This plan means that we have a strategy for requesting funding assistance that will be targeted to where the Executive feels it will benefit members the most.

Financially, the Club is doing well. We lost revenue during the Covid restrictions, but our regular hirers came back over time, and we are covering our costs. The bar makes a small contribution but is not our biggest earner. The biggest cost we face is the insurance on the Clubrooms. This cost is increasing substantially each year and with the increase in building costs, is not likely to reduce.

Future of the Clubrooms

We have a good relationship with the Marina management (SML). Our discussions with the Marina indicate that a move of the building (or a move to another building) is not likely in the short term. The Marina has indicated that it is focussing on rationalising its facilities, services, and processes. The location of the Clubrooms is not a priority and so we are not expecting any action in this space in the short term. The issue has not gone away, but it is not currently a pressing issue.

On and Off Water Activities

The Club lost access to its start box on the jetty. The Sailing Committee has done a great job of organising on-water starts. We have received a lot of positive feedback about these starts, although it can be uncomfortable at times for race officials in the sometimes-challenging conditions that plague our races.

The volunteers who generously provide their boats for these starts need to be compensated. They are, in effect, subsidising our racing activities. The Executive has agreed that it is appropriate to recompense these members, and this will start from the beginning of the 2022/23 season. Paying compensation is necessary, but it will mean that there is an increase in racing costs. The Sailing committee is considering the appropriate level of race fees per boat to ensure that racing activities are sustainable.

Cruising activities have been a mix of technical evenings, education (Yacht Master Courses) and on water activities, including live life jacket testing. We have seen interest in these activities from members of other clubs and it has been great to see additional people coming to the club to enjoy these events. There are plans for extending the cruising (or non-racing) activities to a wider range of events.

The social programme, particularly during winter has been a challenge. But this has been kept going through a variety of planned events and entertainment at the Club on Friday evenings. Attendance has been variable, mainly due to the impact of Covid and possibly the older profile of our membership. The challenges caused by Covid meant that our prizegiving couldn't go ahead as planned last year. But some innovative thinking by our comms team saw an abridged prizegiving merged with our Christmas function and we had a great evening in the Club.

Communications

We have not done much to change the way the Club communicates with members. The 'What's On' email has been well managed and appreciated. It has been a reliable source of information about what is happening, along with posts on Facebook. The Cutlass has been a great source of information and interesting stories of various adventures by our members. The text messages sent out to advise the postponement of races has also been consistent and useful.

In short, there is nothing really broken so we haven't tried to fix it.

General

Our membership appears to be constant, around 220 members, and it has been nice to see a constant flow of new member applications coming through. In some cases, the new members have added new boats to the register.

On the other side of the membership is the sad passing of some of our members this year. We have farewelled Julie Adams, Ralph McCorkindale, Helen Rushton and Sue Rowell. All these people have been long term members of the Club and they will be missed. Our thoughts go out to their families, and we will always remember their contribution over many years.

Conclusion

This has been a successful year for the Club; we survived additional restrictions brought about by Covid, the Club has remained sustainable, we have plans in place to continue to improve the Club and its operations, and our membership is constant. Our volunteers continue to do an amazing job supporting our activities and they are much appreciated.

On behalf of all Club Members, I want to thank in particular our Executive Team for the work they have done on behalf of the Club: Jamie Reid, Guenter Wabnitz, Lynn Porter, Philip Orchard, Ingrid Harder, Tony Lucie-Smith and Barbie Mavor.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'G. Thorn', followed by two short horizontal dashes.

Geoff Thorn
Commodore

August 2022