

SocietyMembers

Mrs.R.C.Evans,Mr.J.R.Beaumont,Mr.H.Bowring, Miss.Brown, Mr.J.Case,
Dr.G.B.Clinton-Jones, Mrs. R. Collinson, Mr.P.T.C.Crocker, Emsworth
Residents Assoc, Miss V.Gwynn, Ms.J.Lewis, Dr.J.McLuskie, Mr.R.Markes,
NewMilton Sand & Ballast, Mrs.E.Peters, Portchester Society, Mr.D.Priest, Mr.A.Russett,
Mr. P. Sanderson, Col.T.Singer OBE, Mr.N.Stewart, Mr.O.Swarbrick, Mr.E.Vogelzang,
The Rt.Hon.Lord Wakeham DL

The President welcomed members to the meeting and asked them to ensure that they sign the Attendance Book if they have not already done so.

- 1.MINUTES Having advised that seconds to proposals were not required, Mr. Nicholson proposed the adoption of the Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on Monday 3rd December 2007 at the Royal Southampton Yacht Club which, by a show of hands in favour, and with no abstentions, was approved nem con.
- 2.STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES The Hon. Treasurer, in presenting the Statement of Financial Activities, stated that the figures were in fact now almost six months old and whereas total funds were shown as £120,000 they had now reduced to between £105,000/£110,000 as a result of the turmoil in the financial markets. Donations made by the Society, as it is required to do, were just under £8,000. There had been a few exceptional items but most of the expenses were similar to the previous year.
- Mr. Michael Derrick queried the figure of just over £8000 for the Public Relations Consultant. In response the Hon. Treasurer advised that Mrs. Susan Preston-Davis was the Society's Public Relations Consultant who does a tremendous amount of work not only with PR but also in terms of organisation and maintains contacts with numerous people as well as with the press. The charges include not only fees, but her expenses and Vat.
- There being no further questions from the floor, Mr. Nicholson congratulated Mr. Brown on his excellent handling of the Society's financial affairs and proposed the adoption of the accounts which by a show of hands in favour, and with no abstentions was approved and carried nem con.
- 3.ELECTION OF PRESIDENT The President having temporarily stepped down, Mr. Clark s thanked Mr. Nicholson for the substantial input he had made to the work of the Society during the year and proposed his re-election which was seconded by Mr. Brown and by a show of hands in favour, and with no abstentions, was approved and carried nem con. In response Mr. Nicholson said he would do his best and was pleased to continue as President.
- 4.ELECTION OF VICE-PRESIDENTS The President proposed the re-election of Lord Montagu of Beaulieu, Mr. Christopher Bland, Mr. Maldwin Drummond and Mr. Nicholas de Rothschild. as Vice-Presidents which, by a show of hands in favour and with no abstentions, was approved and carried nem con.
- 5.ELECTION OF COUNCIL MEMBERS The President advised that since the AGM papers went out, a properly proposed and seconded nomination of Mr. Peter Hebard to be elected to Council had been made and he called on Mr. Clifford Jakes to say a few words.
- In response Mr. Jakes said this was a unique opportunity as this was the first time, certainly in the experience of the Secretary, that anyone had been put forward under Clause 6a of the Society's constitution. Mr. Jakes lives on the east bank of the Lymington River and it was obvious to him the amount of erosion which is occurring. Mr. Jakes has worked with Mr. Hebard over the past two years on the Lymington Forum. An engineer by profession he has extensive experience in the marine, offshore and defence industries and sedimentary dynamics and has served on a number of steering committees.

Peter has done sterling work on saltmarshes and has led the Forum's response to SEEDAs Solent Waterfront Strategy working with the Solent Forum and Marine South East to ensure that the interests of Solent users, the environment and its leisure marine industry are at the forefront of emerging policy. Peter is extremely hardworking, enthusiastic and a believer in using good science to resolve issues. Mr. Geoff Holmes endorsed what Mr. Jakes had said adding that Peter was interested in wide range of topics and he felt sure he would be an excellent member of the Society's Council.

Mr. Nicholson said that Mr. Hebard had been properly nominated and that there are vacancies on the Council and he therefore proposed that he be elected and called for any comments from the floor. Mr. Hobson said that it would be useful if Mr. Hebard could express to the meeting what his ambitions were for the Society as a whole. In particular what were his views and ambitions on items that would be on the Agenda in future such as the Lymington Breakwater and Port Pennington. In response the Chairman said that this was a good point but he did not think there was time today to go into such detail but suggested that Mr. Hebard be asked to say a few words under Agenda Item 9 Any Other Business. All present having agreed to this suggestion, Mr. Nicholson proposed that Mr. Peter Hebard be elected to Council which, by a show of hands in favour and with only five against, was approved and carried nem con.

The President advised that during the year Mr. Philip Couchman and Mr. Antony Matusch had been co-opted to Council, and he called on Mr. Clark to say a few words.

Mr. Clark said that Philip Couchman lives near Chichester and helps to keep Council informed on matters in the eastern end of the Solent area. Philip recently retired as Manager of the AONB, the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty of Chichester Harbour. He holds a Masters degree in environmental change and in 2006 was awarded an MBE for services to conservation. He regretted that Philip was not here today as he is in France.

Mr. Clark went on to say that Antony Matusch lives at the other end of the Solent in Yarmouth on the Isle of Wight. He has proved invaluable in the last year in helping Council to be aware of the concerns and feelings of Islanders concerning the ferries. Antony is an experienced yachtsman and is Chairman of a Commission of the International Sailing Federation. He was described informally to me as the man who made the 2001 Americas Cup Regatta at Cowes happen.

Mr. Clark proposed the election of both Mr. Couchman and Mr. Matusch to the Council which, by a show of hands in favour and with no abstentions, was approved and carried nem con.

Under the 2005 Rules of the Society one third of the members of the Council shall retire in order of date of election but such members shall be eligible for re-election. The 7 members due for re-election are:

Mr. John Bradshaw, Mr. Terry Gerald, Mr. John Madin, Mrs. Sara Scobie, Professor Gerald Smart, Mr. Tom Young and Dr. Chris Willard.

With the exception of Dr. Willard and all having indicated their willingness to stand Mr. Nicholson proposed their re-election en bloc which, by a show of hands in favour and with no abstentions, was approved.

Mr. Nicholson advised that there were still four vacancies on Council. In particular more support was required in the Portsmouth area and he asked all present that if they knew of anyone who might be interested in helping to let the Secretary or other member of Council know. It was important that the Society looked after the wider Solent area.

The President asked Mr. Clark to speak to the resignations of Dr. Willard and Dr. Langford.

who said that this AGM sees the resignation of Dr. Willard not only as a Council member, but also as one of our Vice-Chairmen. Chris Willard has been a member of Council for five years and has ably represented the opinions and concerns of members in the Keyhaven area. But he has also had a much wider remit in that he has been the lead speaker for the Society to other organisations. He had made a considerable number of presentations and Council was extremely grateful that he has offered to continue to represent the Society in this way. He would be missed and despite attempts to dissuade him it was recognised that he felt the time had come for a change.

Dr. Terry Langford had only been on Council for a short period of 18 months but had then found that his retirement was busier than planned and he was not able to attend a sufficient number of meetings. He was also a fresh water scientist who had said that he found less opportunity to put his expertise at the Council's disposal than he expected. He remains a member of the Society and will be glad to help if needed in his own area of science.

Dr. Willard said he had enjoyed his time on Council and will miss the camaraderie.

6.ELECTION OF
HON.
TREASURER

The President thanked Mr. Brown again for his work on behalf of the Society and proposed his re-election which, by a show of hands in favour and with no abstentions, was approved and carried nem con.

7.ELECTION OF
AUDITORS

The President in thanking Messrs. Hope Jones for their work as auditors for the Society, proposed their re-election which by a show of hands in favour, with no abstentions, was approved and carried nem con.

8.REPORTS

The President advised that he was not going to report on the activities of the Society as Jeremy Clark, the Council Chairman would do that in a moment.

He said he would very much like to take the opportunity of thanking all Council members who really do work very hard on behalf of members. The Council meets monthly and the meetings are very well attended. In particular he wished to thank Sheelagh Evans who took over as Council Chairman about a year ago when the previous Chairman, Professor Malcolm Forster, had to resign at short notice for professional reasons. Sheelagh has worked very hard during the year and her knowledge as a former senior Civil Servant in the Department of Transport has been very useful in guiding us through the maze of regulations surrounding the introduction of the new ferries on the Lymington to Yarmouth route.

She and Alan Inder also did a great deal of work on the Society's successful Saltmarsh Conference. Sheelagh herself unfortunately has had to retire because of the illness of her husband and Mr. Nicholson called for all to join him in wishing her husband a speedy recovery.

Jeremy Clark the new Council Chairman also agreed to take on the job at very short notice and has already put in a tremendous amount of work. To date since taking over in October he has received more than 600 e-mails. Jeremy lives in Bursledon, has a great deal of relevant experience and will continue to work very hard on behalf of the Society.

Colin Brown, the Treasurer, works extremely efficiently for the Society and there are a number of other Council members who do a great deal more than just turn up for monthly meetings. This year the Chairman wished to particularly mention Terry Gerald and the small working party which the Council appointed to handle the ferries issue and to advise Council. There will be those present from Lymington who believe that the Society has not done enough to support their fight

against the introduction of the larger ferries, and others from the Isle of Wight who believe that the Society has neglected their interests which are, of course, almost diametrically opposed to those of Lymington (at this point there were interruptions indicating that this was not so). The President assured everyone that Terry and his colleagues have put in an enormous amount of time and effort to try and ensure that the right solution is reached in this very tricky matter. More about this very shortly.

Finally the President said he would like to thank Judy Davies, the Society's long-serving and very hard-working Secretary, who has continued to work for the Society although she now lives in distant Gloucestershire and has to drive to Southampton every month for Council meetings.

The President concluded his report and called on the Chairman, Jeremy Clark, to report on the activities of the Society.

Mr. Clark advised that during the last year the subject which had taken up the most time, both at Council meetings and outside, had been the issue of the new ferries and these were the subject of the Society's first major meeting of the year when, in April, a meeting was organised at Elmers Court in Lymington to which many interested parties were invited. The intention was not to seek solutions but to give all who attended a chance to hear the full range of views and details of the regulatory process. This meeting was a considerable success due to the hard work of Terry Gerald and other Lymington members of Council. Thank you Terry.

The other major meeting was in fact a conference which was organised to discuss the future of the Solent Saltmarshes. This was held at Beaulieu by kind permission of the Beaulieu Estate with financial assistance from BP towards the cost of the proceedings. A first class panel of speakers and over 100 delegates attended. These included professionals in the field, students, members of the public and members of the Society with an interest in the subject. The idea came from Sheelagh Evans, the former Chairman, but the sheer hard work came from another Council Member, Alan Inder, who attracted speakers, made arrangements and was responsible for its considerable success. Thank you Alan.

The west Solent has continued to be a subject of more study for the Society. The Marine Bill continues to wend its way through the legislative process. The Council is aware of the potential under the eventual Act for a scheme of management to be imposed upon the whole Solent with particular implications for the western Solent. Certain Council members led by Professor Gerald Smart have sought to raise public awareness by producing a paper on the western Solent, suggesting a form of management which is democratically accountable and does not impose undue restrictions or burdens on users. We are very grateful to him for his continuing work.

Looking through the Minutes of the last year, Mr. Clark had found more than 40 subjects that the Council had considered or upon which Council members have reported including Air Pollution, Wind Turbines, Planning Issues, National Consultations, Fawley, Dredging, Trees to name but a few. He wished to commend to those present the tremendous amount of voluntary work done by Council and to thank Sheelagh Evans who led the Council so ably for the first 9 months of the year.

On the question of the new ferries, the Council had done, and continues to do, a vast amount of work with a small group bearing the brunt of the work. Mr. Clark said he regretted that Council had failed the members in the early part of the year by not keeping them sufficiently informed of what was being done. Council had undertaken to make regular reports on its website but had been slow in starting. He apologised but said that to some extent there were reasons. The Society was fortunate in having on the Council members with a detailed knowledge of the regulatory process and who have excellent contacts with the various bodies concerned. Many of the conversations that took place were of a confidential nature that could not be made public but these contacts did enable Council to reach a very good understanding of the complexities of the process. External advice has not yet been sought. This will come up later when the resolution from Mr. Paton is considered. This was not because Council is disinclined to do so but because it is so well served by a Council whose members followed careers that dealt with the regulatory process either in the commercial field or as civil servants. The Council is committed to ensuring that it is fully appraised of the current position by whatever means is necessary.

The Chairman then addressed the question of the CALF funds. CALF was the Campaign Against Larger Ferries in the early 1990s. When it was wound up a sum of £3200 was handed to the Solent Protection Society. There are members who have asked that we should hand this money back to others who they feel are in greater need of the money. The Council discussed this early in the year. The SPS is a registered charity and as such its conduct is bound by legislation and the views of the Charity Commission. The Society cannot and indeed is not permitted to just hand this money over to a third party but we can of course spend it. £1500 was spent on the Elmers Court meeting and it was agreed that the Society was under a duty to take necessary advice irrespective of the sums involved, to enable it to fulfil its mission statement. The position therefore is that the Society does not seek to retain this money, merely that there has not yet been the necessity to spend it. There almost certainly will be and it hopes to share any such advice it receives with others. The only stipulation is that any expenditure must be on the advice that the SPS requires and that the expenditure must be commissioned by the Society.

The current position of the Society on the Ferries issue is posted on the website and copies of the press release are available at this meeting. It makes clear the Society's understanding of the importance of the ferries to people living on the Isle of Wight. There will be further discussion of the ferries later on. However, the Chairman read one small section of it as follows:

SPS Acknowledges the need for a safe ferry service, carrying passengers and vehicles between the mainland and West Wight recognising the economic and social issues. We are very conscious of the serious concerns of Island residents who rely on regular and frequent service. We hope that decisions by regulators will continue to be made on the basis of a sound evidence based scientific approach without recourse to hypothetical consequences and that the ferry operation, even if it starts before trials are completed, can be satisfactorily managed.

Mr. Clark went on to say that he had been asked by Derf Paton to make clear that it was not, in the constitution of the Lymington River Association, in absolute opposition to the introduction of the new ferries.

In finishing his report, Mr. Clark said that the Society was singularly fortunate in having a President who not only Chairs the AGM but also attends the majority

of Council meetings and whose advice and guidance is greatly valued. He wished to say how very glad he was that Peter and not he was responsible for this AGM and to thank him on behalf of the Council and its members.

9.ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The President advised that a Resolution had been properly put forward by Mr. Derf Paton and seconded by Mr. Michael Derrick which he would now read out and then ask Mr. Paton to speak to it.

That SPS pledges a sum not exceeding £12,000 to pay legal fees required to obtain environmental and risk opinions of new bigger ferries in the Western Solent.

Mr. Paton advised that following the submission of the above Resolution he had spoken to the Chairman and considered there was a solution and that everyone was singing from the same hymn sheet although at this point he was interrupted by a member from the Isle of Wight who denied that they were. The Chairman had proposed an amendment to the Resolution on the grounds that there were concerns over the wording in that up to £12,000 could mean only £100. Furthermore the Council has a right and a duty to spend whatever money it sees fit in order to fulfil the Society's mission statement. In one sense Derf Paton's Resolution is unnecessary but in another it is valuable to Council to hear views expressed by members.

Mr. Clark said he would therefore like to propose an amendment that actually goes wider than the original Resolution which is:

The Solent Protection Society greatly regrets the proposal by Wightlink to introduce the new ferries into service before the Lymington Harbour Commissioners, as regulators, have had the opportunity to receive and consider the full information on the environmental effects of the ferries. The Solent Protection Society will seek such professional, legal and environmental advice as it may require.

Mr. Peter Jennings, Commodore of the Royal Solent Yacht Club asked to speak and stated that there were 140,000 residents on the Island a large percentage of which used the ferries on the Yarmouth to Lymington route. The Island needed the ferries for both social and economic aspects and the consequences of losing the service would be unthinkable. The ambitions of some in Lymington could result in the service being suspended. At the risk of upsetting friends in Lymington he wished to put it to the meeting that the SPS should not co-operate with that. £12,000 represents more than double the Society's surplus and is disproportionate to the overall business of the Society.

Mr. Malanaphy said that he owns a business in Ryde and lives in Lymington and desperately needs a fast effective reliable ferry service. However, he was also convinced that these new ferries were far, far too big. The present ferries were 746 tonnes whereas the new ones were 2546 tonnes. He and the LRA were not against the ferries per se but against their size. The new ferries were not right for the river. He re-stated that the LRA were not against the ferries just against the size of the new ones.

Mr. Matusch who lives on the Island, said that everyone seemed to be agreed on both the Island and the mainland that a ferry service between Yarmouth and Lymington was necessary. What nobody seemed to be doing was presenting a realistic alternative to the WightLink proposals within the current timescale. What is the option? There is no option that can be brought into practice before the

existing ferries are no longer capable of operation. Mr. Matusch said he had taken the ferry service eight times in the last week; it was constantly breaking down, was late and gave a very poor service. Nobody condones the way WightLink has played with everyone but the reality is that the new ferries are the only practical option for the foreseeable future and a way had to be found to work around the problem together so that a reasonable solution could be arrived at which was acceptable to everybody.

Mr. Geof Holmes, Royal Lyminster Yacht Club reminded everyone that their aims were to ensure that there was no increased adverse impact on their activities. That was no more and no less than Wightlink's own stated aim when the Club was introduced to the ferries in January 2007 and to the Society somewhat before that. RLYC wants to make sure that, when the new ferries come into operation, as he has little doubt they will, they are operated safely. Unfortunately there will be an adverse impact on the Club's activities but they will have to live with it and if necessary will look to WightLink to find out what they might do to mitigate the adverse impact. The RLYC was not anti-ferries but simply anti-adverse impact.

Mr. Nicholson thanked Mr. Holmes and reminded all present that these comments were in connection with the amended resolution that the SPS should be prepared to spend money to take expert legal advice should their discussions with the Lyminster Harbour Commissioners, who have the ultimate responsibility in finding the right solution bearing in mind the needs of the Islanders and the Royal Lyminster Yacht Club and all river users, make this necessary.

The President called for the amended Resolution to be put to the vote and by a show of hands in favour, and with only 5 against, the amended Resolution was carried. He thanked everyone and assured them that Council would be very, very thoughtful about this and would not spend money irresponsibly or aggressively either.

The President then asked if there was other business from the floor. Mr. David Burdett, Vice-Chairman of the Isle of Wight Society had a question concerning maritime archaeology. Within the last 12 months valuable remains had been destroyed off the Fishbourne area by trawlers dredging the sea-bed. He wished to know whether this was within the Society's remit and interest and if so was there any way that they could have an impact on preventing such damage. Mr. Clark said he had heard that there was to be new legislation that would cover marine archaeology. Council would be considering this and commenting to Defra. In the meantime, Mr. Rabbitts said that the matter would be covered in the Marine Bill if the Bill does go ahead. In the meantime the Solent Forum was looking to act as a co-ordinating body in this area and the SPS could work with them. It would be put on the Council Agenda for consideration.

Mrs. Sue Kent raised the question of a proposal to dredge off the Dolphin Bank and the adverse effect this could have on Hurst Spit. The President suggested she should write to Hampshire County Council under the heading of the Hampshire Minerals Plan and the Society would also put the matter on its Agenda.

The President then called on Peter Hebard to say a few words. Mr. Hebard thanked Mr. Jakes and Mr. Holmes for proposing and seconding his nomination. On the Ferries issue he said that as an engineer and with some knowledge of sediment transportation issues he felt there may be a way of finding a pragmatic solution to operating the new ferries without increased detriment to the environment. He was not sure it was possible but certainly it should be investigated. On the Saltmarsh

issue he had been looking independently at the problem and hopes that he may be able to pull in some innovative thinking from around the world particularly from the southern hemisphere where he feels they have better solutions such as using dredgings to solve the Saltmarsh problem.

The President thanked Mr. Hebard and in calling on Mr. Steve Porter of the Isle of Wight Chamber of Commerce was advised that he felt the issues had been well covered already.

In closing the discussion the President said that the Council of the Society does fully understand the concerns of both the Isle of Wight and Lymington over the Ferries issue and has been putting in a tremendous amount of time and thinking into finding the right solution. He thought everyone was agreed that the Lymington Harbour Commissioners have the necessary powers and responsibility to examine all aspects of the introduction of the new ferries and the Council of the SPS believes they will fulfil their obligations but will if necessary put pressure on them to ensure that they do carry out their responsibilities to the letter. Mr. Nicholson then called on Mr. Peter Griffiths Chairman of the LHC to say a few words. Mr. Griffiths said he appreciated the support of the SPS; the LHC were working their way through the due process, it was taking a lot of time but there was nothing that could be done about that. Mr. Nicholson asked whether Mr. Griffiths could give any indication as to what the timing was likely to be to which he responded by saying they hoped to have a draft report in mid-December followed by consultation and then a final report in mid-January 2009. At the same time they would be sending information to Natural England who will give advice on the environmental side.

Mr. Rabbitts said that to some extent the Society had been quiet on several points to do with the Ferries issue but this was mainly because the RLYC and in particular Geof Holmes have done such excellent work that there was no need for the Society to ask questions which had already been answered.

A member from the Island said it was his understanding that the existing ferries could run until the end of March to which Mr. Derrick said that when surveyed in 2005, and if maintained to the same standard as they had been, they could run until 2025.

A founder member of ThWART thanked the Society for the support in their fight to prevent wind turbines being erected at Wellow. The Island Plan whilst encouraging the installation of renewable energy technologies states that “the scale of proposals will be required to reflect the capacity and sensitivity of the Island to ensure that they do not compromise the objectives for the designation of the Isle of Wight AONB and Heritage Coast.

Mr. Malanaphy proposed a vote of thanks to Peter Griffiths for the huge amount of work he and his team had put in which was warmly endorsed by all present.

Finally, the President thanked the Royal Solent Yacht Club for allowing the Society to use its premises today and also thanked the Royal Southampton Yacht Club for the use of their premises for the Society’s monthly meetings. He also thanked Society members for their part in what had been another very important AGM and there being no other business, declared the meeting closed.

N.B. The AGM Minutes will be subject to approval at the 2009 AGM