

Harbours Committee - 17 March 2021

Agenda Item 4 - Public Participation

1. Rob Wiscombe, Commodore - Lyme Regis Sailing Club

LRSC has had its launching and storage fees increased by 76% and 84% respectively, as opposed to a general increase to other harbour users of 3%. Lyme Regis Power Boat Club has been charged a 28% increase.

Your December minutes record that *budgets, fees and charges for 2021/22 for Bridport and Lyme Regis Harbours* were recommended for approval to full council. We understand the council intends to standardise discounts to its harbour user groups across the county. We don't understand why. It removes any encouragement or incentives for clubs such as ours which provide outstandingly positive health, environmental and social benefits to our local community.

We appreciate that Dorset Council is under considerable financial pressure and that West Bay/Lyme Regis harbours make a loss, so we question why charges for other harbour users were only increased by a general 3-5%. Dorset Council appears to be failing to support local organisations in favour of visitors.

Mark Roberts stated in his letter that "*LRSC fees have remained reasonably static and comparably low for some time*".

We contest the assertion that our "*fees have remained reasonably static*" as they have increased by more than double the percentage of other harbour users from 2013 to 2020.

We agree our fees are "*comparably low*". The rates originally negotiated with West Dorset District Council in 2009 reflect our special relationship with the Harbour and the benefits from our contribution to youth training, physical and mental fitness. The environmental impact of sailing is minimal and we support the local economy by providing employment.

Lyme Sailing Club has always worked to keep sailing costs affordable to avoid elitism, so increasing our charges makes it difficult for us to remain inclusive. The membership profile of LRSC reflects the demographics of the local area. The main cohorts are young working families with youths in our training schemes and retired members on fixed incomes.

We do of course realise that the Council is under considerable financial pressure, as are many of our members after the double hammer blows of Brexit and Covid, so raising sailing costs will result in some members giving up the sport.

We request that the proposed percentage increase is significantly reduced to be in line with other harbour users and allow the club to continue benefitting the community.

2. Councillor Kate Wheller (Dorset Council - Rodwell and Wyke)

I have read the results of the initial consultations on a new Harbours Strategy for Dorset Council. They do not tell us anything very much new but serve to usefully inform the ongoing process. Could you tell me the schedule for proceeding and is the committee on target to complete the strategy as they hoped?

The next topic I brought forward a number of times in the past but with limited response. No-one suggests that "Sea-bins" and other devices will solve the problem of pollution in our oceans. However, there is evidence that they could help in harbours and marinas. Currently in Weymouth there a few wonderful people who collect litter at low water from around the Stone Pier steps and other locations as far as it is safe to do so. And I know harbour staff also collect litter when time restraints allow. Litter, plastic bottles, food cartons, cigarette ends etc also collect by the Town Bridge and the North Quay bend where it joins with Westway Road. Whilst ultimately it is a matter of education and the reduction in single use plastics a 'sea bin' or similar could help keep these areas and similar areas in Westbay and Lyme cleaner. Could I ask the Harbour Masters and the committee to do some research into these devices and perhaps set aside a budget to provide them in the locations where they would be most use.