

Chair's Report for AGM 2019

Following some big changes in recent years, 2018 was almost 'business as usual' for Horizons Plymouth – but also with the beginning of new plans for the future.

Business as usual for Horizons is working with young people who will benefit from the work of our Staff and Volunteers by getting out on the water to enjoy our wonderful marine environment. In 2018 we gave 1,272 different children and vulnerable adults the opportunity to join in our activities.

This statistic demonstrates the scale on which we operate, but it's also important that we deliver great quality too. This means that we have to keep everyone safe – both on land and out on the water – and also in the experience we deliver. This can be measured by the feedback we get from the teachers in the schools we work with, the parents and carers of the young people and of course the children themselves.

Here are some examples:

School Teacher: "Children wouldn't have these opportunities otherwise, due to social and economic deprivation. Also helps to build resilience for mental health and teamwork."

Parent: "... the staff are absolutely brilliant. What they do for the children is amazing."

Young Person: "... if you don't have many friends, or you get bullied, maybe it calms you down, you just think of when you're out in the open. Even though it's like really fun, you learn a lot as well."

None of this would be possible without our excellent core Staff; Annette, Lois and Simon. Even though we only sail in the sunnier months, they work the whole year round to organise all the activities, raise funds and maintain the fleet.

An equally vital ingredient is our army of Volunteers. We could not operate on this scale without the help of all those people who give up their time to support Horizons. We had 75 Volunteers registered with us in 2018 and Annette is regularly recruiting to keep the numbers up. We invest in our Volunteers with special training sessions and helping them gain RYA qualifications.

We also rely on Volunteers to act as Trustees for our charity. This is another very important role and carries with it a lot of responsibility and a requirement to keep Horizons operating in compliance with all the current legislation. This year we have recruited some new Trustees with a range of experience and skills, particularly in areas of fundraising, business and safeguarding.

One of the things that didn't go too well in 2018 was a deficit in our finances after two years of enjoying a surplus. This was mainly due to the very competitive environment for raising funds to cover the core costs of running an organisation like ours. It often seems that it's easier to get money to buy new boats than to operate and maintain them.

So what's new for 2019? We have two new boats that will create fresh opportunities on the water; an RS Aero with foils and an RS Cat 16. We have also raised enough funds to replace our old minibus and will probably launch a new website later in the year.

Another new idea we are working on for 2019 is the 'Horizons Sea School'. With our experienced staff and extensive fleet of boats we already provide great opportunities for our cadets and Volunteers to build on their skills and qualifications, but we could also offer RYA training courses to people outside the Horizons community. This will be another way of raising income to fund our core costs.

As a new sailing season approaches, we can look forward with confidence to the future. Horizons is a great adventure, made possible by everyone working together – our Staff, our Volunteers, our Trustees and of course all the deserving young people who come sailing with us!

Andrew Eccleston
Chair of Trustees