

Chairs Report 2017

This time last year I was reading someone else's report at the AGM. Our Chairman Rod O'Connor passed away shortly before the AGM. The board of trustees met and resolved to carry on his good work and to ensure the continued success of this remarkable charity: That was, perhaps, the best tribute we could pay to a longstanding and loyal supporter of Horizons.

Over the months that followed the staff, joined by 3 trustees, formed the Horizons Management Team (HMT). The Board of Trustees focused on managing the change from Rod as Chair. Whilst I am very proud to act as the Chair I give special thanks to Andrew Eccleston for the work he has done to keep our finances running and keep them safe. Let me assure you, it was not plain sailing. Not only did Andrew manage the change but he has also improved our financial systems so we are better equipped to make our money work as hard as possible for us. Thank you.

I must also say thank you to Jon Worster. Jon retired at the end of the last sailing season. Whilst we were able to show our gratitude for his outstanding service during our 25th Anniversary celebrations (more of that later) and at his retirement 'do', it is only right and proper to give Jon thanks at this AGM. Thank you for your dedication over many years and for playing such a key role in making Horizons what it is today.

And thank you to Jon for giving notice of retirement months in advance. This enabled the trustees to plan for the future. And here we have the future:

Simon Mace has moved from Chief Instructor to become our new Operations Manager, Lois Noyce is now the Chief Instructor, congratulations to you both on your appointments. Annette Molloy continues as our Business Manager using her experience to 'steady the ship' and to raise the £100,000+ needed every year to keep Horizons running.

On top of all these changes, we still managed to get some sailing done! The club was as busy as ever and the schools programme ran again with 10 schools taking part. Summer sailing courses were run with cadets gaining certificates ranging from Level 1 to Level 4 – well done to all of you.

The volunteer training programme continues to be developed – the most recent addition being Defibrillator training. Thanks to the commitment of volunteers and to Simon's input we now have volunteers who hold a range of skills and certificates. The coming year will see opportunities to refresh those qualifications and to maintain sailing skills through the Wednesday evening sessions. Simon recently held a meeting with a group of volunteers to discuss a Keelboat Instructors Course. This level of training clearly demonstrates the wealth of experience we have in our volunteers. We are keen to continue working on the training programme in order for us to "give something back" to our volunteers – please know your commitment week in, week out, is much appreciated. Thank you.

Simon handed over the running of the cadet winter training programme to Lois with attendance around 14 cadets per session. Next year Lois intends for the programme to be based around the local maritime industry – sounds interesting!

The maintenance programme saw a new engine purchased for the big rib and the welcome replacement of three different outboard engines on the Hawks with one design – much easier.

All of these activities need funding. Annette does a very good job of securing grant funding throughout the year and this meets the majority of our £100,000+ running costs. The rest of our funding comes from individual funders and organisations. Thank you for your kindness and generosity – we could not do what we do without you – your contributions are truly appreciated.

Communication is important in every organisation. This year the Volunteer briefing pack has gone paperless – please read it. Your signature is your pledge you have read and understood the pack's contents. If you are unable to access it online or there is anything that is not clear, please speak to one of us. Other changes include a "Trustees Section" in the E-news and thanks to Rory Anderson for bringing our Facebook page back to life. If you haven't already done so, please visit our FB page.

This year also saw Horizons 25th anniversary – an outstanding achievement. Thank you to all those who gave raffle prizes and pledges – your donations really made the evening a great success. This was also an opportunity to recognise the contributions from previous volunteers and staff – thank you. The strength of Horizon's current position is not only testament to a lot of hard work and volunteer commitment, it also gives every sign for continued success.

Joe Mann has decided to step down as a trustee and concentrate his time on the water and as a volunteer representative on the HMT. Thank you for your contribution as a trustee. Whilst you will be missed from the board it is good to know you will continue your involvement with Horizons.

Much work has been done during the winter months to review our policies and systems. One of the pieces of work to be done this year is a "skills audit" for the board of trustees. Whilst we can continue with 5 trustees, we will be undertaking an audit to help us target individuals who can make a real contribution to the board and to the future of Horizons. We will post the outcome on e-news and the website in due course.

It has been a privilege to have been involved in Horizons during the last year and I look forward to working with you all during the next 12 months.

On behalf of the trustees, please accept our thanks and best wishes for 2017/18.

Rob Cooper

Chair of Trustees.