

Commodores Report to the AGM 2025

I can't quite believe that it's already another year since last year's AGM and am pleased, once again, we have this chance to highlight all that we have achieved over 2024/25 and to receive your input on the years ahead.

I want to start by giving a huge thanks all the volunteers that contribute across so many of our club's activities. This includes everyone giving their time and experience via the club's General and sailing committees, and also all those of you involved in organising our huge range of sailing activities, various fun days and open activities, maintaining our house and grounds, and generally keeping the club going. Special thanks are due to Camilla, who stepped in following our appeal at last year's AGM to replace Rosie and is proving to be every bit as fantastic in the role of membership Secretary. Thanks also to Rosie, who thought she was 'off the hook' when Camilla stepped up, but couldn't help and volunteer to take on another role to fulfil our bank payments, taking pressure off the Treasurer and ensuring our suppliers and, more importantly, members are speedily paid.

I am not going to single out any other individuals at this point, we have limited time and I will leave that to our Vice and Rear Commodore's reports, but please be assured all your efforts truly are appreciated and combine to make a huge difference. Our club is completely dependent on this voluntary effort, and your combined contributions, assistance and support help make our club great. Thank you! On this note, you may have read from our duties secretaries report that the number of duty no shows has declined from over 10% last year to now less than 8% - thanks in no small part to Mark's efforts to fill slots. The reduced no shows is great news, but clearly can still be improved, so please do make sure you know when your duties are and take early steps to swap them if you cannot attend.

You will hear this evening from Paul and Chris of the many things that have been achieved over the year. Some of the big things on our agenda have been crossed off – the laser slipway improvements, the installation of greener and more efficient heat pumps in the changing areas, new automated garage doors, structural enhancements to the clubhouse, improved Wifi, steps well underway to remove abandoned dinghies and tidy up our dinghy park, and starting imminently smart, new, glass balustrading to meet building regulation requirements along the front to the clubhouse.

On the sailing front our youth and junior sailing goes from strength to strength, the various social sailing groups continue to be enthusiastically supported, the school and university groups are thriving, while our training teams deliver a wide range of courses and our racing continues to evolve with afternoon sprint racing now well established and laser handicapping ensuring fair competition across the laser fleet. That wide range

of sailing activity is essential to the health of our club, appealing across a wide base and helping ensure we continue to deliver what members want. In this respect I can report that membership levels remain stable, almost identical to last year's total (currently at 493 vs 497) while other clubs are reportedly struggling to maintain membership levels.

Notable this year, we are having to contend with extremely low water levels, and in previous years we have suffered shut-downs due to blue green algae and in the recent past, COVID. We can only react to these issues when they crystalise, but it strikes me that they are becoming more frequent and could potentially impact sailing on the lake and membership in the future.

So, what are the probable key areas we will be focused on over the coming years?

We continue to have a good relationship with our landlord, Bristol Water, and have started discussions with them about the further evolution of sailing on the lake, in particular to potentially allow windsurfing and wing foiling. We consider this is an essential step to continue the development of the club, appealing to a younger base potentially and potentially helping us grow our membership.

Increased recreational use of the water does bring some conflicting stakeholder pressures, with Natural England rightly striving hard to protect the banks and the wonderful environment we enjoy, resulting in the fishing being increasingly 'encouraged' away from the foreshore and further into the water, all alongside dinghies and potentially windsurfers/foilers. The lake is large (normally) and we can all enjoy it together, but continued dialogue with Bristol Water will be needed over coming months if we are to be successful in agreeing an extension to windsurfing/foiling, and beyond that to maintain the good relationship we currently enjoy and to continue our evolution.

The gated entry off Walley Court Road continues to be a niggle, with short chaining not uncommon, occasionally locking either us or fisherman in or out! Bristol Water will be fitting a new lock to the gate identical to the one we recently fitted to our inner gate, which will hopefully prevent such problems in the future. After much work and discussion, the potential for an automated gate has been kicked to touch for now by Bristol Water, due principally to cost.

Another area of focus relates to the clubhouse and the 2024/4 structural survey, which had highlighted several issues in the fabric of the clubhouse. Fortunately, the main concerns relating to our concrete structures and balustrade are almost all now addressed, and financial impacts have been much less than feared. For the medium term we now believe the fabric of the building is sound, although it will require continual attention over the coming years and a fighting fund needs to be maintained to cover this. This year we will have made a dent in our reserves to the extent of around £60k as a result of the structural work, new balustrade and slipway improvements. We still retain

a good level of funds, but need to take care and continue to build on these gradually over coming years.

One thing currently ongoing is the migration of club emails and supported software to the Microsoft 365 suite. Provided the migration goes smoothly this should not have any visible impact at all on members and, when complete, it will remove the huge reliance we currently have on Steve Nash to maintain our club servers and provide technology support to us, as well as ensuring we are always fully up to date with enhanced security, a suite of associated benefits and cloud based systems. Dare I say, we are moving into the 21st century!

Our final, ongoing challenge is one in common with many other clubs and organisations - that of maintaining and growing our membership to help ensure our revenues continue to exceed our expenses, while balancing cost and value. Every member plays a role in this respect – committee volunteers obviously but all of you too by helping create a welcoming, friendly and enthusiastic sailing club that offers a range of water based and shore based social activities; I started by thanking all our volunteers and I will finish stressing therefor, once again, just how important this will continue to be in the future.

Before I finish I want to thank some people that will be standing down from key roles at this AGM. Charles Clapham has kept us on the financial straight and narrow for a couple of years now, Damian Gardner-Thorpe has proven himself a collaborative and focused champion of health and safety over the last 3 years, and Paul Nichols has lead all sailing related discussion, planning and activity, no small task! Also our Rear Commodore, Chris Meredith who will be standing down as he is shortly moving away from the area – over his year in term he has achieved so much, moving forward some important projects while also staying on top of the day to day tasks. On behalf of everyone, thank you all for the time and effort you have contributed, and all that you have done.

Thank you

Andrew Jones

Commodore