

Rear Commodore's Report – AGM November 2025

Firstly to follow on from John Elmes has been both a challenge and a privilege and I've enjoyed my year as Rear.

A challenge because he achieved so much in his tenure and a privilege because of the level of detail he handed over and the amazing indexed set of club keys.

John continued to offer advice and support and was always at the end of a WhatsApp chat and I dare say he sometimes felt he hadn't handed the role over when the calls came in about the broken lift – always when I was away on holiday.

I started with the major challenge of a concerning structural report that raised issues over the building's concrete stability and sub-standard balustrade. In the autumn of 2024, we went to tender for the concrete repairs and engaged with a specialist in early 2025. Thankfully the concrete repairs were just "bread & butter" to the contractor and they were delivered in a short timescale and under budget. We could have gone for further concrete preventative treatment, but the cost/benefit ratio didn't make sense.

Following on from the concrete repairs I moved onto the balustrade issue. Early indicative estimates suggested that "beefing up" the existing balustrade to meet current standards was almost as expensive as a new aesthetically more pleasing installation.

We consulted with structural engineers regarding the exact specification of the balustrade because our situation didn't neatly fit the regulatory guidance. Once concluded we took this specification to three local suppliers. After site surveys, sample railings and discussions we selected a supplier in July this year. August holidays and railing manufacturer lead times have delayed the start, but we are hoping to get works moving before you hear this report at the AGM!.

A club like ours has two dangers that require quiet background work to manage and limit; Fire & Legionella. This year I have worked on fire policies and a list of high priority issues raised by the 2022 Fire Risk Assessment. One of these issues required some extensive discussions and even a petrol vapour explosion risk calculation performed by

members with Chemistry, Physics and Engineering degrees. A refreshed Fire Risk Assessment this year has continued to raise some important issues, but they are on the whole more procedural and organisational. I should mention here the extensive work performed on the duties book refresh by Mark Dinwoodie. My fire and Legionella updates fed into his book refresh. Do watch out – we need to do more building evacuation tests!.

A Legionella assessment report raised a number of physical and procedural issues and requirements. I have addressed the key physical risks by removing “dead ends” in water supply pipework other water supply items. The shower heads are removed and cleaned on a monthly rotational basis and the Duties book requests Saturday OOD teams to flush taps around the building. We are not yet as compliant as we should be, but certainly better than a year ago.

On the subject of H&S; The roller garage doors were replaced in the winter with new electric versions. We removed the risk of injury from the old doors but the new ones initially proved challenging for some to operate and have on occasion failed to shut correctly but on the whole are an improvement.

Last year John Elmes raised concerns about the routine adjustment of the pontoon heights for rising and falling water levels. I’ve been lucky and grateful to have setup the “Chew Pontoons” WhatsApp group. This group have turned up and adjusted the pontoons though the year. We have only incurred minor damage apart from when one of the north pontoon chains wore through on the rocks. Like all aspects of running the club volunteers are always welcome on tasks like these.

WiFi; John Elmes has delivered a hugely improved WiFi service that can even cope with over 100 students at the club. Josh Preater has upgraded the CCTV system that enables remote monitoring of the club and even allows me to check lake and pontoon levels from the comfort of my home.

Bring on the Chew Choppers! Again, a bunch of volunteers bribed by coffee and biscuits has wielded trimmers, loppers, mowers and sweat and blood to address the brambles and overgrown areas of the grounds. I hope you will agree with me that the club environs are looking much tidier. These works continue so if you like coffee and biscuits and a bit of outdoor exercise come and join us.

Following on from getting the grounds in order we have taken on the challenge of dealing with abandoned boats, trailers, masts and anything left lying about. It's slow work but Dave Pryce and Austen Milner have worked tirelessly – my thanks to them.

As the water levels dropped in June & July I have to admit I was one of a few people wanting no rain and drought conditions. Why, well, have you seen the slipway improvements and repairs? It was simple, I just rang up a builder and asked them to pour some concrete; perhaps not, we had to get Natural England approval for both the ILCA slipway works and the unexpected northern slipway repairs. New barriers also went in alongside the RIB launching slip to manage a known H&S risk.

If you cast your mind back to last winter and the endless rain and miserable weather you may remember the club was looking rather green around the edges. I found a building cleaner and had the exterior spruced up a bit. It still looks good now, partly thanks to a rather dry summer.

As always in a role like this the success and progress depends on fellow members helping, advising and getting involved. I'd also like to thank the General Committee for their support even when progress was slow and projects turned out to be expensive.

I'm glad that I've managed to move projects forward this last year but regretfully this is my first report as Rear Commodore and my last report as Rear Commodore. I'm in the process of moving to Cumbria. My timescale is somewhat undefined but a new Rear Commodore is urgently needed to carry on delivering management of the club infrastructure – you also get the amazing set of indexed keys.

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