



CHICHESTER CRUISER RACING CLUB

CCRC Futures – 2021 AGM Discussion

The following is intended to brief members on the current state of CCRC and its future as seen by the Club Committee. We hope you will read through this so as to be able to comment on it at the AGM and support the committee in any actions agreed upon.

Background

In the meeting immediately following the 2019 AGM there was some discussion about the decline in membership as the number of boats had declined to 27 from a peak of 40 in 2011. With some members planning to “swallow the anchor” it was feared numbers would decline further.

Various options were discussed including (a) more promotion/recruitment, (b) working more with other harbour clubs for events or becoming part of the Federation again, or (c) merging with another club.

In 2021 and 2020 the number of registered boats has actually increased very slightly: now 28 but note that because membership fees were rolled over there were no leavers at the start of the season. However, participation in races has declined and some boats have not raced at all. In actual numbers, 12 boats have not raced at all (out of 28 boats) and the average number of boats in an Alpha fleet race is 5 and for the Beta fleet less than 1!

Of course those not racing we are sure have very good reasons but it is a problem as it makes it less enjoyable for those participating and raises a query as to whether we need as many events.

The Committee Discussion

In considering this issue the committee firstly recognised that 2020 and 2021 have not been “normal” years. The pandemic has meant that fewer events were organised (particularly in 2020), there have been few if any socials as part of weekend events, members will have been reluctant to have crews because of social distancing, and booking marinas and venues for social events has been made much more difficult. There is no doubt that these issues have driven down the numbers racing. Many sailing clubs have indicated the same during this period.

Nevertheless, the issue discussed in 2019 remains, as boat numbers have not really increased. Over the last few years members have “retired” or moved on, and new members have joined although often for only a year or two and many do not take part in many (if any) events.

Hopefully the pandemic will, in 2022, be under control (in the UK) and we will be able to return to a normal CCRC programme with social events on race weekends, larger crews, etc. so more members will participate again. However, this might only take us back to the situation we had concerns over in 2019.

In Autumn 2021 the Club Committee considered a wide range of potential scenarios for the club future. These included: continue as now with minor changes; merger with another physical or “virtual” club; become a more “mutual” club; “fold back” into the Federation; co-ordinate more with other clubs on events; change the overall club remit; and even (heaven forbid) close the club down.

We should bear in mind that other clubs in Chichester Harbour have faced similar issues with the popularity of cruiser races and rallies over the years. Some have severely curtailed the number of such events or stopped them entirely and some run them with other clubs. So we are not unique, indeed we have fared better than many.

The conclusions of the committee were that closing the club down or merging with other clubs (which would probably mean the end of CCRC) were not necessary and not attractive. That “folding back” into the Federation is not an option as that is not what the Federation is for. Instead a combination of actions as well as the end of the pandemic restrictions and concerns should provide a further opportunity to grow the club.

Recommendations:

1. That we should continue to work with the other harbour clubs and encourage them to get their members into CCRC race events, and CCRC members into their race events.
This might mean we need to look again at how we provide entry into our events. Currently if they are not CCRC members then they can enter as guest boats but cannot win trophies etc. We may need to focus on certain “open events” with free or charged entry. Similarly we need to discuss with the other clubs how we may enter their events. Integrating other clubs into our programme can allow reduced CCRC events but maintain the opportunities to race over the sailing season.

2. We should discuss with the other clubs that organise rallies (ie non-race events) over weekends to see if we could share a destination and so have a larger social there and more interaction – and maybe exchange – between members. CCRC members and guests can race, others can cruise to the destination by providing the opportunity for both.
3. We should try to get the Federation to provide some additional focus on cruising and cruiser racing and maybe facilitate the discussions needed for point 1 above.
4. We should maintain our flexibility as developed in 2020 and 2021 for rolling starts and other actions to reduce the reluctance some members may have of being Race Officer for a fixed line.
5. We need to take more actions to promote the club. In materials for members to use to potential members as well as other promotions from the Club.

Without a Commodore

While the formal duties of a Commodore are not great they are important and wide ranging; they have tended to vary during the years of the club often according to the particular Commodore. Most important though is the overall coordination between the Officers, the committee and members.

Without a Commodore to drive these initiatives they may not happen. It is possible that the committee plus co-opted additional members could drive these forward but probably not as effectively.

With the resignation of the Commodore we need to consider options for moving forward. These are seen as:

- Elect a new Commodore.
Historically this has been simplified by having a Vice Commodore with other committee experience, but not this time.
It is possible that another experienced member would be willing to take this on supported by the Committee and ex-Commodore.
It is possible that a past Commodore might be willing to come back for a limited period.
- Elect a Vice Commodore
It might be that a member might be willing to take on the Vice Commodore role as a step towards being Commodore; or just as an interim position.
- Committee Run Club
It is possible that the club could be run just by the committee without a leader and no one “chairing” but this would put a greater load on the individuals. Plus the Commodore’s roles would need delegating.

Bear in mind that the outgoing Commodore remains on the committee for one year to support the transition, and the current Commodore remains as manager of the Club web site.