**DRAYCOTE WATER SAILING CLUB**

## Minutes of the 52nd Annual General Meeting (hybrid meeting held both online and at the Clubhouse) On Wednesday 3rd November 2021 at 7.30pm

**PRESENT**

Jeremy Atkins (Chair), William Whittaker, Rodger Webb, Chris Silver, Norman Byrd (online) and David Rowe.

Together with 38 other members online, and 27 in person at the clubhouse.

## 1. APOLOGIES

Richard & Inge Pye, Kathy Boulton, Mick Clay, Caroline Noel, Pat & Jane Collison.

Jeremy Atkins read the notice convening the fifty-second Annual General Meeting of The Draycote Water Sailing Club Limited.

Jeremy began by explaining to attendees how they could communicate during the AGM with use of the Q&A function, and how a poll would be used should someone be against a proposal.

## 2. MINUTES OF THE 51st AGM

The minutes of the fifty-first Annual General Meeting held on 4th November 2020 were put to the meeting. The minutes were proposed by Richard Botting, seconded by Tim Case and accepted by the meeting with no one voting against.

## 3. REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE

A PowerPoint presentation was given by the Committee to the members attending. The key elements of the reports of the Committee are as follows:

**Jeremy Atkins, Commodore**:

Jeremy gave an overview of the state of the club through the 2010’s to give context to the Club’s current position. He highlighted the changes in management, drastic drop in income, poor site maintenance, and accounts in a poor state. Phil Hunt and Rodger Webb brought the Club back from the brink by making tough decisions despite objections from other Committee members at the time. The renewed investment extended the losses but ultimately worked to recover the Club.

Now we are building on that foundation for future progression, with Committee-based decision making, a living development plan to guide and steer the club, a commercial offer for Draycote View, improved the Club governance with Articles and Regulation changes, a fantastic paid staff team, and a renewed lease extension until 2040.

Membership income peaked in 2010 but has come significantly down. Commercial income which as growing but collapsed when Adam Pretty was made redundant and has since built up under Dave’s management and is now higher than membership income. Commercial income doesn’t all turn into profit but investment back into the Club.

However, we started this year quite fearful with the Covid-19 pandemic. We are a big Club with lots of overheads, commercial income collapsed and the site was closed to members. Support was there, firstly from our members who renewed despite not being able to go sailing, and secondly fantastic government support, plus a rent refund from Severn Trent.

Costs were cut drastically, and once able, the staff were generating commercial income again via open meetings, room hire and training courses. This resulted in us making a reasonable surplus and giving members two months free membership to make up for not being able to use the Club for some of the year.

**Norman Byrd, Rear Commodore Sail:**

We were able to return to the water and activities in a very safe way and very quickly, in comparison to other clubs who were slow and less organised to get going again. This is testament to all the planning that went into it.

Through the year we have had a range of fantastic racing results from our members in a variety of events.

We have become part of the Northamptonshire Youth Series which has enabled a lot of our junior members to join in with ‘away’ events for the first time and get used to travelling for events. Many thanks to Dave who has been transporting boats for sailors to these events.

There was a big turnout at the NSSA regatta event in Plymouth with the Northamptonshire team placing third, the highest result for a long time, and also exposed some sailors to sea sailing for the first time.

We returned to club sailing with the automated start sequence which makes race duty very straight forward and easier to run club racing.

The Draycote Double format has been tried twice now. The first one was a way to reopen the club with a big bang and following the great successes, we’ll be using the format again.

There’s now a class start for the Aeros, but Solos don’t anymore as they couldn’t maintain numbers. We have a great turn out of Aeros, and also Lasers, especially for Wednesday night racing.

OD duties were a little haphazard this year. We had some weeks with no race officers as people didn’t turn up. Andy Whitehead has worked hard to clean up the roster which should now prevent this from happening again. The Y&J fleet are taking on two duties this year, they ran the last Wednesday evening of this year really well. We have removed under 18’s from the roster.

We will need members to do three duties over two years. The roster has been split up randomly and each member assigned either one or two duties in the first year, and the other duties in the second year.

There was a request at the fleet captains meeting for race officer training which we will put on for those who need it, although the duty has become much simpler and all members are capable.

**Christine Silver, Rear Commodore House:**

Thanks to Dave Rowe for his continued support, it makes the role much easier.

* Marquee for the patio proved to be a great asset while the clubhouse was closed and continues to be very useful
* The women’s changing room refurbishment has been completed with the space divided into two rooms which can be used flexibly. The total cost was c. £50k, of which we received a £20k grant from Sport England. Thanks to Dave, Matt and Mark who completed a portion of the work enabling us to keep costs down.
* The eastern pontoon has been renovated.

**Dave Rowe, Club Manager:**

**Draycote Academy**

We started this nearly two years ago with some Topper race training, and we’re so lucky to have one of the best coaches in the country, Steve Irish, living so locally and willing to come and train the juniors.

The Academy training is fleet specific (Toppers, 420s, Optimists and Lasers) where they book 5 weekends over the winter and work on a training programme. Covid meant we had to move dates and it was tricky but we did deliver the full programme. This year was the first real opportunity to deliver the programme as planned and the 56 places sold out within three days before we even had chance to advertise it, plus there is a reserve witing list.

The benefit of the Academy is that it drives membership as everyone involved has to be a member. We have members from around the country now which at first may not seem useful to the club, but some of these are coming outside of the Academy training to other aspects of the Club such as Sunday racing and pursuit races.

**New Staff**

We recruited Georgia just before the summer who has been a fantastic instructor over the summer holidays and so far. We also recruited a new gardener, Rob, who works 10 hours a week maintaining the boat park and general site appearance.

**Catering**

A big challenge coming out of the lockdown, finding hospitality staff has been very difficult. We’ve taken on some of the older Y&J children, around 15 years old, to help out in the wetbar (Beth, Emily & Jake). Started with a menu of prepacked items and we’re building them up to cook simple hot food. A new cook, Alex, will be joining us next week and we should be back up to a full hot menu once more.

**William Whittaker, Vice Commodore:**

**Governance Issues**

At the beginning of last year when Covid hit, Jeremy, Will and Dave were meeting almost daily online to discuss the best way for the Club. Producing roadmaps and risk-assessments to help guide the Club’s future. There was little support from RYA who were quite slow with guidance, and at points we were advising them. Yet we were one of the first clubs to reopen.

Training was delayed because of Covid but we now have a cycle of training plans for directors and staff to complete to ensure they are robustly trained.

We have also updated and implemented policies and procedures to assist in the Club’s management, and they will be reviewed on an annual basis

We are in regular contact with the ‘great lakes’ clubs (Rutland & Grafham), meeting annually to share best practice of running clubs. We have an agreement not to discuss commercial activity as ultimately we are competitors, but we do discuss general club matters such as volunteers. This year we were approached by Carsington SC who are in now in the position we were 10 years ago and looking to really develop their offering.

**New Developments**

The Junior Commodore & Committee initiative has started.

General Committee meetings will now be hybrid with those living further away being able to still join online if they wish, but with a quarterly face-to-face meeting for all.

We have dropped the subs for sailing groups such as Women on Water and Youth and Juniors to reflect our stronger financial position.

**Future Developments**

We continue to invest in assets for the Club on a rotation basis, rather than letting them lose their value and be faced with a sudden outspending of new equipment.

The tractor will be reinvested and a new replacement with us shortly. The Committee boat, ‘Jam Sandwich’, has been here for nearly 40 years will go and a replacement is being sourced that is similar to the existing OD boats so they can be used in tandem. We need them to have the same cabs so that equipment can be interchangeable between the two boats.

Staged dinghy park improvement – starting with the Laser area, we are trialling a new gravel and hardcore base to reduce maintenance costs. The rigging area next to the patio is also being improved as it’s an eyesore, is what visitors see first when they arrive and we’re looking to improve the overall standard of the club.

**Questions/Comments to the Committee**

Chris Dickinson – Regarding duties, we’ve had issues with people not turning up to do their duties or not updating DutyMan, what is the solution to this problem?

JA – There was a problem when the club reopened with some members rushing to use the water and race that they were added to the Duty list yet didn’t race again. The list hadn’t been updated over lockdown so past members were still on there, and the various lockdowns and disruptions meant some racing/duties didn’t happen. Also, for a while staff were running the racing which people got used to. We urge everyone to confirm their duties promptly, and the new updated list is in place with current membership information.

John Tippett – What is the situation with the two-year cycle of duties, and how has that been split?

JA – This is due to the number of duties not being equal to the number of members who race. We have randomly split the members into two groups, with one doing one duty in the first year and the other doing two duties, and then swapping in the second year.

## 4. PROGRESS OF THE CLUB’S DEVELOPMENT PLAN

**Jeremy Atkins:**

An annual update on our ‘living’ development plan, which is doing so well that we’ve had to revise the targets and aims.

**Increasing Income from:**

* Membership in 2020 was our highest for 10 years.
* Our commercial income target was hit 3 years ahead of plan and was going strong,

Both of these were impacted by the pandemic.

**Enhancing Club management:**

* Committee members – we’ve met our target of 8-10 Committee members.
* Staff team – the team do a great job and this is ongoing.
* Trading company – already set up.
* Financial reporting – budgeting has been difficult with the changing pandemic situation. Paul Huett, who is an accountant, has joined the Committee and we’re hoping he will be able to help us in this area.
* Updating the articles – updated previously.

**Addressing lease & site issues:**

* Securing lease extension – this has been done, with an ongoing site development plan now in place.
* Boat replacement scheme – ongoing with plan in place.

We’ve removed from the plan the targets that have been done and set new ones. Specific income targets for both membership and commercial income have been set to be achieved by 2022 and 2027. They are ambitious but fundamental to the Club’s progression.

**Membership Target**

This summer saw our busiest year of training courses with very little marketing needed. This step is crucial as the start of the membership pathway. We need to maximise the conversion of these people into members and we have plans to achieve this. We don’t know if the 2022 courses will sell as quickly or whether 2021 was busy due to people not holidaying. There is a marketing plan in place for 2022, especially if the training uptake isn’t as high as this year’s.

This year we have upped our coverage in local newspapers. We have struggled previously with getting featured but have found more success by focusing on the hometown location of a sailor who has done well or won an event.

We plan to re-introduce Draycote Unshackled twice a year as it is important to vary the methods with which we communicate to the members. Our email newsletter does have a high open rate of 60-70% but that still leaves a proportion who aren’t being communicated with regularly. Keeping informed with Club news is key to having engaged members who renew each year and to keep retention levels high.

Instead of an Open Day for public, we are changing the format for 2022 to a ‘Discover Sailing’ day. Rather than have members of the public turn up for a free day out, we will be inviting members to bring along friends and family. Also specifically inviting people who have previously shown interest, such as taster sessions or courses. We know these people have an intention to be active, are happy to be on the water and are more likely to then sign up for a course. The focus being on quality visitors rather than quantity. The new branding ties in with that of the RYA’s annual campaign. There will be a specific day for the juniors tied in with the Youth & Junior club activities, and another day for all other visitors. It will be a pre-ticketed day to enable us to schedule taster sessions through the day and offer a better experience.

## 5. PRESENTATION OF ACCOUNTS

**Rodger Webb, Treasurer**,

It’s been an interesting year for being a Club Treasurer! We were suddenly faced at doing budgets nearly every day at the start of this financial year as the pandemic situation changed so often.

Wonderfully, we ended the year in a reasonably good position, primarily as the membership income continued, and thanks go to our members for that continued support. The number of new members has reduced though compared to last year, which has resulted in a drop in membership income. Affiliate membership income was also down.

Commercial income collapsed as we ran much fewer courses, yet a busy summer of mainly junior courses enabled us to still take £97k income.

**Income/Expenditure**

Drastically cutting expenditure through the pandemic was a great achievement to minimise our outgoings. We went through all of our expenses and immediately stopped or cut back on as much as possible. We had to maintain a level of spending on staff costs and Club infrastructure.

We received £80k in support from the government and a rent rebate from STW. Without this we would have made an £18k loss. With this support we were able to give 2 free months membership in thanks to our loyal members, and still had a respectable surplus of £33k.

## Overall Financial Performance

From 2018 we have seen a year-on-year increase in the end of year surplus, with 2021 following the same trend.

Acceptance of the accounts was proposed by Ray Flanagan, seconded by Pete Blakey and accepted by the meeting with no one voting against.

## Where are we after the first 6 months?

We’re in a good cash position with membership recovering and growing; it’s the best it’s been for this time of year for some time. Commercial income has largely recovered resulting in it being the strongest start we’ve ever had, but we’re yet to see if that was an alternative for staycations and for people with cash to spend after lockdowns. Room hire is slightly down but not by a concerning amount.

We’re still being cautious about expenditure despite being in a good cash position thanks to the various help we’ve had. There is, however, a need to spend on the Club’s infrastructure. As mentioned earlier, the boat park work will start in the Laser area and move along, plus the slipways need doing which will be substantial amount of work and money.

**Questions/Comments to the Committee**

John Tippett – What makes up the commercial income?

RW – Everything that isn’t membership – open meetings, bar and catering, room hire, training courses. Training income is the biggest chunk of this by a large margin.

## 6. REPORT OF THE JUNIOR COMMITTEE

**Millie Irish, Junior Commodore**

This is the first year we have had a Youth & Junior Committee. The Y&J Committee is also made of Jess Powell, Sam Byrd and Clemmie Middle.

One of the initiatives we have recently started to coincide with the end of Saturday club is a Buddy Scheme to help new sailors who want to continue sailing through the winter, or keep up to date with social events and what’s going on. A few sailors – Ethan Cheshire, Imogen Green and Felicity Angel – have volunteered to help run this alongside the Junior Committee themselves, which means that most of the junior fleets are covered should a new sailor want to try a particular boat or want specific information for example. The scheme has been a great success already with lots of participation both on the water and on the messaging group. There is a range of abilities which has built community spirit in the junior sector as each sailor encourages others and all are welcomed.

Going forwards, we have ideas of hosting a second-hand junior kit sail, aimed at helping those new to the sport get kitted out especially to keep sailing over winter as the club’s summer kit gets packed away for winter. A social event alongside the Club’s Christmas party to continue building the social aspect. And we had suggestions from the parents too, such as videos on how to rig boats so that they can help out and the children can also become independent.

## 7. PRESENTATION OF THE COMMODORE’S CUP

The aim of the Commodore’s Cup is to recognise voluntary contribution to the Club that is above and beyond the call of duty. The recipient this year is a keen Junior racer but chose to forego the Friday night Y&J race training, which all his friends were doing, to run the Friday night Fun Club as a volunteer. Often after a hard week instructing on courses, and he only missed one Friday night in the whole season. So, in gratitude to his enormous contribution, and also as a demonstration of the amazing contribution of our younger members, I am very proud to present the cup to Ethan Cheshire.

A round of applause and many comments of congratulations were sent in.

## 8. APPOINTMENT OF PRESIDENT AND VICE-PRESIDENT

**Jeremy Atkins**

Many of you will know that Harry Sayers has been the President of our Club for 23 years and he asked earlier this year if he could stand down. It was therefore entirely appropriate that he was then awarded an RYA Lifetime Achievement Award which will be presented in two weeks’ time. That is just a small recognition of what Harry has done for the Club over the years. The President & Vice-President role are Committee appointed and I’m delighted that Harry has decided to continue as Vice-President.

**Harry Sayers**

For a number of reasons, the time is right for me to stand down. I have suggested to the Committee before that it is wrong for a retiring Commodore, with all the experience and Club knowledge they have, to no longer have input when their term of office ends. I’m pleased to say the Committee have taken that on board, and this year have appointed Jeremy as the new President.

The reason I took on the Presidency initially was to provide continuity to an often-changing Committee, however that doesn’t happen now as we have a stable Committee. I feel for the first time at the Club, the Committee is the most professional, committed team we’ve ever had. I feel I can now retire, thanking the Club for allowing me to be President, and feel confident in the future of our Club.

**Jeremy Atkins**

Thanks must also go to Annette Sayers, always cheery and friendly, for supporting Harry and the Club too.

## 9. ELECT OFFICERS

There has only been one nomination received for each office, therefore no election is needed.

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| **OFFICE** | **NOMINEES** | **ELECTED** |
| Commodore | William Whittaker | William Whittaker |
| Vice Commodore | Richard Botting | Richard Botting |
| Rear Commodore Sail | Norman Byrd | Norman Byrd |
| Rear Commodore House | Christine Silver | Christine Silver |
| Treasurer | Rodger Webb | Rodger Webb |

There is no surprise that William was proposed by Harry and I, and we feel he’ll do a very good job. We started as fleet captains together and moved on to the Committee together, William has really been my right-hand man for my term as Commodore. We have essentially shared our roles together as William has offered much support to me, and I to him as Rear Commodore Sail when individual skills are suited. A key example of this is the handling of the lease renewal as William has a dogged determination to see that issue through.

We also welcome back Richard Botting who has been on the Committee in the past. We are aware that it is difficult for someone to join the Committee and immediately take on a flag officer role, especially given the size and complex nature of our Club. However, Richard previously held a flag officer role and we feel confident he will do well.

We owe an enormous debt of gratitude to the other flag officers who continue in their roles. Rodger has now done 10 years as Treasurer.

## 10. ELECTION OF MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE

On the Committee, we have 5 nominations for 7 places so they are all elected. Robin Warren, Simon Ball and Paul Huett are continuing. Pat Collison and Miles Walker are retiring this year and thank you to them for their work. It was good to have Miles on board representing the windsurfers both on the Committee and as the fleet captain, but sadly he has moved away from the area with work. This leaves the windsurfers unrepresented so we urge someone to put themselves forward for this role. The new Committee members are Sian Clark and Caroline Noel which brings our female membership of the Committee up to the highest it’s been for a long time, and we thank both of them for joining the Committee.

## 11. APPOINTMENT OF ACCOUNTANT & AUTHORISE COMMITTEE TO FIX REMUNERATION

Bernard Rogers & Co to be appointed as our accountants and the Committee authorised to fix their remuneration.

Proposed by Ed Tuite-Dalton, seconded by Harry Sayers. Approved by the meeting – passed nem com.

## ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Questions from the members:

Sergio Pagliarini (Submitted prior to the AGM) – Can the Club be more visible on recycling efforts?

WW – the topic was actually discussed by the Committee in 2020 and an Environmental Policy circulated. Pat Collison and Dave Rowe made an assessment of the site to determine what was needed with the intention of a bold policy announcement. Josh Davies had also offered to help. However, our attention was then turned to Covid, but we are now looking to pick this up. Sadly, Pat has left the Committee and Josh is away at university so we are looking for someone new to champion this cause either on or off the Committee.

There are lots of grants for recycling, that we are looking into. As well as ideas such as a ‘seabin’ that sits in the water by the pontoon, pulling in water and in doing so, filtering out rubbish and we’ll be talking to STW about. We can also look in to the way the Club is powered and whether solar panels on the roof is a viable alternative.

One our biggest own sources of pollution is tape from sailors being discarded on the floor and we need to look at how things like this can be reduced.

**Will Whittaker – DRAYCOTE RESERVOIR DRAWDOWN ENHANCEMENT**

Draycote reservoir falls under Section 10 of the Reservoirs Act 1995, and due to the Whaley Bridge disaster, new guidelines have come in where all reservoirs falling under that act need systems in place to be able to drawdown the water quickly in the event of an emergency.

At the latest inspection, Draycote does not meet the new guidelines and the remedy work is legally required to be completed by October 2023.

Ground investigations started in November on the far dam just past the windsurfing beach, and work is planned to start in early summer 2022 and likely to last over a year.

There is a lot of work to do in that time such as developing solutions for how the water will be dispersed quickly into the surrounding area, including building a pond beyond the dam.

The intention is that the water level will not be reduced by more 3 metres below full – which is what we presently have – and this will be for around 3 months. There is a potential risk that it will go lower if the reduction happens during summer and it happens to be a particularly hot summer. We have had conversation with STW about timings and the possible effects.

They will also need some access to the water using some of our land. We are having conversations with STW to ensure this works for us both operationally and financially. The exact plan of works still hasn’t been finalised and we started monthly meetings with STW. Having Richard Botting back on the Committee now is useful as he has a civil engineering background and will be able to work with us and them to ensure we get the right set up for us.

Questions from the members:

Chris Dickinson: What percentage of water is ‘3m below full’?

WW – That’s around 70%.

John Tippett – During the summer, STW were seen going around the car park measuring up and surveying, the rumour was that they wanted to take some of our car park. Is this true?

WW – STW did approach us with regards to increasing car parking capacity to meet the demand from visitors. STW have a commercial desire and targets to meet regarding the increased number of visitors they have at the site. They did put a proposal to us which involved enhanced parking for our car park including a barrier to keep people out, but it didn’t consider that where they wanted to expand their area was on to our trailer park. Jeremy did remind them that we are under lease until 2040 and we haven’t heard from them since.

We do have a very good working relationship with STW and this proposal came from their visitor side of the business. I have approached their property side of the business, which is who we liaised with regarding the lease extension, and they didn’t know anything about it.

We’re now waiting for them to come back to us with a revised plan, but we have made it very clear that it is our land and any plans to develop it must certainly not reduce our offering to members, but should enhance it, whether that’s financially or otherwise.

John Tippett – Our car park gets very full during open meetings, and a larger car park would be beneficial to members, would there be any room for negotiation to benefit the members?

WW – Absolutely, and we do have rights to a larger amount of land down there. Phil Hunt and Harry Sayers referred to it in my early days on the Committee as a land grab to protect the Club for future developments. We do have the ability to extend into the trailer park if we could pass that with STW but there are access issues because it goes through their car park, plus the cost of turning a field into a car park is excessive. We do have lots of groundworks to do nearer to the Clubhouse and around site to improve the situation.

In the same way that we negotiated the lease, we will not accept anything that would have a negative impact on the Club or the members.

Sergio Pagliarini –

WW – there are lots of ways in which the STW plans could work to our advantage if we negotiate it well. We could have a larger car park, have infrastructure work completed, we have a list of ideas. But whatever happens, it must be in the best interest of the Club.

Harry Sayers:

Following on from earlier, and the mention of the professionalism our Committee have shown over the recent years. That Committee has been ably led by Jeremy and we have been so well blessed that these people are able to bring the skills of their business lives into the running of the Club which I’ve never seen before. I hope that all our members would join me in a large vote of thanks and applause for all the work Jeremy has put in to the Club over the last 6 years.

Several comments of support and thanks were sent in from members.

## This concluded the business of the Annual General Meeting