

DRAYCOTE WATER SAILING CLUB

**Minutes of the 54th Annual General Meeting
held at the Clubhouse
On Wednesday 8th November 2023 at 7.30pm**

PRESENT

William Whittaker (Chair), Richard Botting, Paul Huett, Jeremy Atkins, Simon Odling and David Rowe.

Together with 30 other members.

1. APOLOGIES

Jonathon Baker, Rodger Webb, Sandra Young, Simon Thompson, Sue McCrea, Sergio Pagliarini, Peter Wood, Norman Byrd, Kathy Boulton, John Rohde, Chris Silver, Sian Clark & Bryan Underdown.

William Whittaker read the notice convening the fifty-fourth Annual General Meeting of The Draycote Water Sailing Club Limited.

2. MINUTES OF THE 53rd AGM

The minutes of the fifty-third Annual General Meeting held on 2nd November 2022 were put to the meeting.

The minutes were proposed by Chris Dickinson, seconded by Jon Hughes 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:

William Whittaker, Commodore:

A quick overview of the last year which we will go in to more details through the evening:

- Enhanced Club Reputation - We host several large open meetings - National Topper's, ILCA Inlands and the upcoming Optimist winter Champs - which have boosted the Club's reputation across the sailing circuit. The Club's facilities, professional staff and efficient event organisation make us a club of choice and we have to turn away events rather than reaching out for more.
- Membership Income Increased - There has been a slight increase but it is limited.
- Changing Membership Profile - We have seen a move towards less sailing families and more children-only sailing. These Young Person memberships don't bring in the higher income of a family membership.
- Fourfold Increase in Utility Costs - There has been a massive increase across our utility costs, especially in electricity which saw a jump of thousands of pounds.
- Double Digit Increase in Costs Across the Board – Insurance and wages have also increased, plus potential purchases such as boats and RIBs.
- Continued Investment – The Clubhouse, site and equipment still need to be kept up to date and we continue to look at the best options for the Club.

- Small Committee Continues to Shrink – This is an ongoing issue of concern as we are now only just filling the flag officer positions. Many of the existing committee worked hard throughout Covid which was tiresome. We need new committee members to come onboard, learn the ropes and create succession for the future.
- Development Plan – We continue to use this framework for the Club’s continued growth.
- DWSC Members’ Sailing Achievements – There have been significant achievements from our members at both National and International events which is a big boost to the Club.
- Jon Hughes’ Awarded – Our Youth & Junior leader has been awarded both the Lifetime Achievement award and the RYA Volunteer Award this year which are testament to his many years of hard work in helping our young sailors progress and flourish in the sport. It is extremely well deserved.
A round of applause for Jon.

A Challenging Year

As predicted last year, it has been a tough 12 months. There have been significant increases in costs such as insurance which itself saw a 15% increase – an issue for clubs across the country, not just us - and soaring electricity costs. We calculated that the bar chiller alone in the cellar was costing £50-60 per day to run which we have cut down on, plus reduced other usage around the Club. The solar panels have been a quick fix in bringing costs down but we also need to look ahead for other cost and energy saving solutions.

Our plant room uses oil to run the boilers and will need replacing at some point so we should look into alternatives such as gas for the wetbar. We could maybe collect greywater from the roof to be used in toilets. For this, we need more committee members to help with the research and planning.

Wages have increased inline with market rate and it is essential that we pay our staff well and fairly to ensure we retain good staff, who do the bulk of day-to-day Club running. We have taken on Andy Felthouse as our second bosun and this is the first time in four years that we have a full team of paid staff. This has enabled Dave & Matt to return to their normal working hours as they were having to cover the role which meant unsustainable long hours for them.

The flat tenant has left which has dented income slightly but the property was getting into a bad state of repair requiring quite some investment and couldn’t be rented anymore. It is currently sitting empty while we decide the best usage for it such as renting out for open meeting accommodation or converting into meeting rooms. Again, committee members are needed for these kinds of projects.

The site continues to have a reduced capacity while the Severn Trent dam works progress.

Membership income continues to be static. It is slightly higher than in 2019 but still behind the highs of 2009 and 2010. We’ll continue to use the Development Plan to drive membership but at this rate it is becoming unsustainable to continue as a membership Club.

Jeremy Atkins, Rear Commodore Sail:

We have 3 National Champions this year – Jess Powell as Topper National Champion and then as Female World Champion, Freddie Sunderland as ILCA U17 national Champion, and Harry McVicar as both RS300 National Champion and Inland Champion. They are a shining light for the Club and we pass on our congratulations to them.

This year we had 17 entries to World Championships (down from the 50 last year but that was a boom year of UK based events and post-Covid bounce). There is a growing travelling community representing the Club far

and wide, not just in the UK.

In July we held the NSSA Regatta, a week-long event with nearly 200 sailors, the biggest the Club has ever hosted. It went smoothly which is both down to the staff and organisers but also to the large number of members who volunteered and really supported the Club. Over 30 members helped us, many took the entire week off from their jobs to be here, and we are proud and thankful of them for this.

Y&J have been very good and it is great to have more people joining the sport, but here we see the effect of changing memberships. Many of these children are now from non-sailing families so we see just one boat out on the water instead of maybe three or four from a sailing family. Many of these children also leave the Club at weekends to travel for training and open events. Plus, their parents are not members so currently can't join the committee though we are looking into changing the regulations to address this and include them.

We have put a greater focus on Club racing with our fleets by introducing a Notice of Series (previously only done by the Solos), a fleet's prizegiving at the end of each series and a scoring system which ensures every winner of every series is awarded with a trophy. We have seen increases in fleet participation, especially in the FF15's.

Club racing has seen a slight down turn in numbers despite the increased Y&J input. Summer race 1 has gone down slightly, and race 2 has seen quite a drop. Winter race 1 has seen some uplift but again there is a drop for race 2. Race 2's decline is primarily due to the Lasers and Aero fleets not racing in the afternoon.

Wednesday evening racing has also seen a slight decline but the real issue is Sunday afternoons and how to improve this.

Question from Neil Kelsall (emailed in before the AGM) -

Have back-to-back racing formats been considered as I see the afternoon races have less attendees and it may be due to sailors wanting a faster pace race format, especially going in to winter and colder temperatures, and time pressures? The format seemed to work well after Covid when changing rooms couldn't be used.

J.A. – This is more of a topic for the Fleet Captain's meeting but it's good to reply to all here, and the Menagerie fleet don't have a fleet captain to attend the meetings where this has been discussed. It was decided to keep the format the same for three reasons:

1. It would be impossible to maintain the number of starts and achieve a sufficiently fast turnaround between the two races, and generally most prefer to have separate starts for the fleets. Furthermore, given the difference in speed of boats that we have to incorporate, it would probably still be impossible to have just 1 start and a sufficiently fast turnaround between races unless the laps were very short – which would be unacceptable to many.
2. As we know, our members are on the older side, and some cannot comfortably stay on the water for 2+ hours.
3. While a group of our members favour a 'time efficient' approach, another group enjoy taking a day out of the week which they can spend at the Club sailing and relaxing.

Simon Odling is taking over as RCS and this will be on the agenda for future Fleet Captain's meetings as we agree that something needs to be done.

(As an aside, I am resigning from the committee for the second time in two years. Just to observe on the committee losses; we are losing three members this year with a combined 25 years of experience, and there is no one to replace us, this is frightening. It takes time to learn the ropes of the Club and committee, we need new members now so they are ready to step in when the remaining committee step down.)

William Whittaker:

Site Improvements

- Solar panels were installed in January and we have a programme to monitor their production. They

were installed quickly to both help with the sudden increase in electricity bill costs and also because Christine Silver have sourced a £25k grant fund which had a deadline for installation. This did mean that STW didn't complete their approval beforehand, which is still outstanding but should be amended on the lease at the same time as the changes required for the dam works and site changes.

- New ovens were installed in the wet bar in July. We had already highlighted the wetbar as being in need of an update and refurbishment as it's looking tired, but the old ovens stopped working and replacements were needed in time for the NSSA event.
- The east side of the boat park and slipway had some updates over the past winter. Many thanks to the staff who were out there working in the freezing cold, it saved us around £25k compared to getting contractors in – and they had to work into the dark one evening as the concrete lorry was late.
- Staff also redid the parking area by the visitor centre.
- The west car park that was laid by Bentleys as part of the dam works has been churned up by heavy 4x4 style vehicles turning. However, the area is a massive improvement especially for our larger events. Its surface is not so popular with windsurfers who would prefer grass to rig up on, but it is good that they are able to get right to the water's edge.
- We have started using eco-packaging in the wetbar to improve our environmental impact and will continue to make changes in this direction.

Dave Rowe, Club Manager:

Commercial & Staff Update

Training Courses

This summer we have seen our RYA course participation return to pre-pandemic levels after two bumper years. While this return to 'normal' levels isn't alarming itself we do realise that costs for the courses have gone up so there is less profit in them. We manage costs by only hiring in instructors as needed. We must also think of how lower course numbers will affect the pathway into membership which is the ultimate goal. This year we have seen a summer of poor weather, it's been very windy which has been off putting to new sailors. The circular route has also reduced the number of site visitors who may have previously seen our activity and booked taster sessions.

Academy

This is the fourth year of running our Draycote Academy and all places sold out within a few weeks of opening and that was with us doubling the number Optimists, ILCAs and Toppers. Many thanks to Steve Irish for heading this up as head coach. The increase in numbers is a strategic decision to bring through more experienced sailors with the aim of developing them as coaches themselves for long-term Club benefit. Steve heads up the coaching with assistant coaches under his experienced eye.

Staff

Matt Rowley has completed his Coach Assessor training and is now fully qualified to teach dinghy instructors. This is a huge asset for our Club as we can now run dinghy instructor courses ourselves at a much lower cost. Matt has worked hard for several years, the process through the RYA is very arduous.

Andy Felthouse has returned from France and taken up the position of second bosun which frees up myself and Matt to focus on our usual roles.

Catering staff in the wetbar is now good although we still struggle for a cook. This is seen in other clubs too. There will still be a limited menu while we don't have a permanent cook there.

Site & Equipment

Matt has installed a new RIB alarm system following the RIB theft last summer. Previously the alarm

cables went through the engines but the thieves cut the engines in half to get round this. The new system means they would need to fully dismantle the engines and is working well so far.

The trailer park has had a big tidy up as it had become very overgrown and many trailers had been abandoned there. We filled a large walk-in skip with rusted scrap trailers and implemented a trailer tag system so we have a record of the owners. This is still ongoing.

A tidy up of the boat park also started in the last month. We have marked unregistered/unpaid boats with red and white tape and sent out formal letters to the owners to either pay or remove the boats within three months, as stated in the Club regulations. This is the first time in several years that a formal notice has been sent out and we hope it will free up valuable spaces for our regular paid-up members. This is a task we are doing in phases over the winter.

We won't be taking on any big projects this winter, but rather focusing on finishing and updating previous jobs. Following a poor summer of training income, we will be doing cheaper jobs in the Clubhouse such as painting and maintenance that we can do ourselves.

William Whittaker:

Severn Trent Site Development

Let's start by saying we are extremely glad we got our lease completed when we did and before all these site works started as we have had 4 issues to deal with recently!

We (myself, Richard Botting and Dave Rowe) met with STW senior management. We're very pleased that site tenant's meetings have resumed after a period of time without them after Tom Crawford (Draycote Head Ranger) left and the new manager, Debbie Dean, started. We are glad to have a good working relationship with STW where we can discuss these issues.

Their managers wanted to discuss the site plans and get a good understanding of how the site actually works following a drop in their visitor numbers which saw a big peak through Covid.

Car Park, Visitor Centre & Fisheries

STW plans to build a larger additional carpark using our trailer park land has been mothballed. They have retarmacked the lower car parks including ours free of charge, but have taken some of our land in that process which needs to be sorted. The new car park surface is very good and includes white lines which is much better for our members, especially during busy events.

STW have plans to implement ANPR sensors on the site as they have issues with visitors not buying parking tickets and we need to discuss with them how that will work with our members.

We are requesting a barrier for our car park area to protect our members' parking area. The cables for this were laid as part of the resurfacing but further discussion is needed to implement it.

The fisheries lodge is going to move but the location is still unknown. Their lease within the Visitor Centre is expiring and STW are keen to take on that space for their own use. Plans had been submitted to build a new lodge in front of the Visitor Centre which we opposed as it encroached on our land, east parking, and access to it was unclear.

Further development of the Visitor Centre or other STW buildings is being planned which we will have input in and respond appropriately.

Dam works

The siphon for the drawdown system is now operational and has been tested in time for the legal deadline. That does mean that the urgency has gone and restoring the land will probably move at a much slower pace now.

STW still need to make plans for a pond either in the farmer's field (discussions have not been successful so far) or build a trough on STW land at an estimated £8m cost. No further work can be done until this is decided and a plan in place.

The building site will be demobilised while the plan is agreed, however, we think they will probably reopen the circular route in the meantime. We are unsure as to whether the builder's cabins will stay on site or be removed while they wait.

We estimate it will be another 12-18 months until we fully regain our land but this will be paid for in the lease we have agreed with them.

Talks will be held as to how the site will be restored. STW are keen to avoid any requirements for planning permission if the site is not restored to the 'green' state it was before. We have highlighted to them that we do not want any designated picnicking area there as we have seen an increase in visitors using that area this summer which has resulted in litter and BBQ fire damage.

Water level

STW have proposed increasing the water level by a maximum of 0.6m due to increased demand from local houses and factories. This may have some impact on our shoreline especially by the FF15 area. However, this increase would be dependent on pumping conditions needing to be right so it will possibly just mean that our summer water level will stay higher. We are being included in the stakeholder talks around this.

Questions

Paul Roe – When there have been high water levels in the past, we have nowhere on the foreshore to put our boats during lunch of Club racing and don't want to re-berth them especially if that's up the hill. How will the increased water level impact this?

R.B. – It will be a case of waiting to see how we are impacted and making a decision from there but we don't anticipate it will cause us too much of an issue. And as part of the boat park tidy up, Dave is looking to move regularly moved boats closer to the water.

Chris Dickinson – Do we have an idea of what we'll be left with after the slow phase of the dam works and site restoration?

R.B. – We know what area we will get back but not how green they will make. STW and Bentleys do not want to move 25 tonnes of stone, and it works for us to keep it, too. We know that further round the corner must be made green again as they don't want to apply for change of use planning permission. The lease states that it must be returned to how it was before but we are open to conversations with STW that will benefit our Club and you as members.

Robin Verso – Windsurfers do not like the current surface for rigging up as it has caused tears to sails. Could the Club look into matting of some sort in the rigging area?

W.W. – Yes, we can look into this and discuss options.

John Tippett – Car parking during large events is an issue both in the lower car park where campervans and motorhomes take up many spaces, and also at the west side which gets taken over by trailers. Can the motorhomes be parked elsewhere? It has been a struggle at recent events and I've ended up going home.

W.W. – Motorhomes have to be in our car park as part of our site agreement and they do bring in a

good income to the Club. STW do not want them in their car park as they take up too many spaces for their paying visitors and may encourage the public to bring motorhomes.

Emails regarding parking have been sent out to members with the fortnightly newsletter, informing you that you can use the STW visitor car park during busy weekends but you must be displaying a DWSC members car sticker.*

In the west car park, we will have considerably more land once the barriers have gone so the reduced parking is only a temporary issue. We do have members and windsurfers areas reserved there for you to use.

*After the AGM, it was made clear that members had been informed to use the STW visitor car parks for the duration of the resurfacing and that it hasn't been communicated since. That communication hadn't said that STW car parks could be used during our busy periods and events. This will all be highlighted and explained again, with site maps, in the next scheduled newsletter.

Chris Dickinson – I would just like to say that the site works are all great news for members and we will have a great facility once it is all completed.

W.W – Absolutely, and these large car parking projects are things we could never have afforded ourselves.

4. PROGRESS OF THE CLUB'S DEVELOPMENT PLAN

William Whittaker

The main objectives of our plan and updates on these are;

1) Increase Income

We have seen an increase in membership income from last year which is a good step on the right direction but more still needs to be done to drive membership if we are to hit our target of £270k by 2027. This will in part be addressed as we look into the changing membership profiles.

Commercial income continues to outstrip targets. This year was £264k compared to our target of £250k by 2027.

2) Enhance Club Management

We lose 3 committee members this year with no replacements. A dwindling committee is a danger to the Club. There are already projects that get delayed or not done completely as we don't have the hours to cover everything, which to the Club's detriment. This will only get worse if more members don't step up to support the current team and encourage future succession.

Club staff continue to work well and Matt's recent qualification is another avenue for the Club.

Thanks to Paul Huett for coming to the committee as Treasurer, taking over from Rodger Webb. He brings his accountancy skills and knowledge which will really help us analyse the figures for greater understanding and planning.

3) Address Lease & Site Issues

Sian Clarke, Caroline Noel and Christine Silver have worked to develop our disability awareness and created a policy to be added to the website.

The car park improvement has been completed and the boat park work is on-going throughout this coming winter.

The implementation of the solar panels has been completed.

5. PRESENTATION OF ACCOUNTS

Paul Huett, Treasurer,

Income/Expenditure

Membership income help well again – thank you to our members – and saw a 5% increase. Overall, this has been quite stagnant for many years.

Commercial income has again increased significantly and is following the same trend of previous years, excluding the Covid year dip. It is at a new record high and again larger than membership income. This also takes into account for reduction in post-Covid grants that we had received the previous year.

Expenditure is also at a record high with those increased utilities, double-digit increases across the board, and the full team of staff now in place. We will be looking at what mitigating action we can take to further reduce costs and be more efficient.

Overall Financial Performance

With the increased costs factored in, we see a small deficit for the Club this year of £14.2k. If we remove the electricity increases from this then the Club would have made a healthy profit.

We have also restructured how long-term costs depreciate which had an effect on the bottom line. Previously we had large projects, such as the changing rooms refurbishment, to depreciate over the term of the lease but this has been shortened to get them paid off.

Questions

Robin Verso (submitted by email before the AGM) -

Please could you elaborate on the increased staff costs and what are the credit card charges?

W.W. – The staff costs have gone up because we have a second bosun now. The credit card charges are transaction fees which are higher now we move to a more cashless operation but has offset cash deposit fees and trips to the bank.

Where are we after the first 6 months?

We are again forecasting a 5% increase in membership. The review of membership profiles may enable us to build a strategy to increase this.

Commercial income continues to increase though we will be mindful of this year's poorer summer potentially having an impact and working to promote courses well in advance.

We have already seen a significant fall in utility costs in part to the solar panels and new electricity contract. We will continue to keep a close eye on these but are forecasting a return to the black at the end of the financial year.

We will also continue to look at potential infrastructure and equipment investments should cash levels allow.

Question

Helen Salisbury – Why is there a downturn in income for commercial activity such as meeting rooms?

W.W. – This has been a lasting effect since Covid. Our main customer was STW who have continued to use remote software for small meetings. They have also refurbished their in-house meeting rooms so have less need for external hiring. We have welcomed some new customers this year and will continue to promote the facilities.

6. SPECIAL RESOLUTION OF THE CLUB MEMBERS – HONORARY MEMBERSHIP ELECTION

William Whittaker

Honorary Membership is rarely awarded and those on the board have all given substantial time, effort and dedication to supporting our Club.

The committee have suggested both Rodger Webb and Malcolm Lewin be awarded with the honour.

Rodger has worked tirelessly on the committee for 10 years and we owe a huge amount of debt to him for helping shape the Club into what it is today. From a time when the Club was in peril, he has been a driving force to bring it to success.

Malcolm has been an invaluable contributor to our Club's life for many years and provides us with a large number of top-quality photos to use free of charge, and it is great when he is able to be back with us.

Approved by the meeting – passed nem con.

7. PRESENTATION OF THE COMMODORE'S CUP

William Whittaker

There have been a lot of names to consider for this year's Commodore's Cup. There are many members who support the Club in numerous ways, especially this year with those who gave up so much time during the NSSA event.

There was one person who stood out – a new member who has joined in with gusto and helped at many events such as Youth & Juniors, Improvers Group and many open meetings.

The Commodore's Cup this year goes to Sandra Young. She has fully embodied the ethos of our Club with such cheerfulness and enthusiasm. Unfortunately, Sandra can't be with us this evening but I have spoken to her and she was most thankful, and surprised, to be recognised in this way. We will be presenting the Cup to her shortly.

A round of applause for Sandra.

8. APPOINTMENT OF PRESIDENT AND VICE-PRESIDENT

William Whittaker

We are very glad to announce that Jeremy Atkins and Harry Sayers have agreed to continue in their valuable roles of President and Vice-President. We thank them both for their continued support and much needed sound advice to the committee.

9. ELECT OFFICERS

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

OFFICE

Commodore
Vice Commodore
Rear Commodore Sail
Rear Commodore House
Treasurer

NOMINEES

William Whittaker
Richard Botting
Simon Odling
Christine Silver
Paul Huett

ELECTED

William Whittaker
Richard Botting
Simon Odling
Christine Silver
Paul Huett

10. ELECTION OF MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE

On the committee, we have 2 nominations for 7 places so they are both elected: Robin Warren and Sian Clark.

We must note that with such a reduced committee, it will become difficult to meet quorum at our monthly meetings. Many of us work full-time and run businesses so sometimes can't attend which means meetings may not be held and committee work delayed. This will impact the Club.

Question

Robin Verso – Can the regulations be changed to reduce quorum limits?

W.W. – This has already been done previously and realistically can't go any lower. There are already projects and work that we can't cover between the few of us. The only answer is getting more people on the committee, and urgently.

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.

Question –

Robin Verso – Do we consider changing our accountants every 5 years or so for fresh input and perspective?

W.W. – We were with Kenilworth Accountants for a long time and moved to Bernard Rogers around 5 years ago, who were then immediately bought out by Kenilworth Accountants! We are happy with the service they provide and having Paul Huett on the committee now also brings fresh eyes and knowledge to our accounts.

Proposed by Caroline Noel, seconded by Pete Blakey. Approved by the meeting – passed nem com.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

John Tippett – I often use the small lockers for my valuables and have noticed an increasing amount of them taken up with peoples padlocks and permanently reserved. It won't be long before they're all gone. What can be done to resolve this?

W.W. – We'll have a chat with Dave to look into this.

D.R. – We can issue notices for these to be made vacant. They are lockers for all members to use and are not for permanent reservation.

Chris Dickinson – The Open Day format was changed a couple of years ago, have we seen any benefit from the new system?

J.A. – The new format has been a big improvement and allowed for quality visitors rather than quantity. This year the family day was less popular but that was probably due to being the first weekend of the Whitsun half term which we will avoid next year. The Whitsun half term also meant Rebecca was on holiday and so following up with visitors wasn't as ideal. However, we have seen it is a lot less work for staff and volunteers, the pre-booking system is great for knowing numbers and time slots, for the same or higher return.

Derek James – I just want to say a big thank you on behalf of all members for the hard work and dedication that the committee and staff put in. It is much appreciated.

R.B. – Please remember that you can approach us throughout the year with questions and thoughts, you don't need to wait until the AGM.

Simon Odling – I concur with Richard, though I don't know as many people, do say hello or feel free to

chat. One priority for me this year as the new RCS is to get a Menagerie fleet captain sorted so they are involved with fleet discussions.

This concluded the business of the Annual General Meeting