

SLYC ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING: 12th December, 2018: Commodore's Remarks

This has been an extremely busy year for the club, both on the water and off. I will speak briefly about some key areas of activity over the past 12 months, however more information about what has been happening can be found in the Treasurer's and Captains' reports.

Sailing

Club racing this year has continued to operate on Wednesday and Thursday evenings and Saturday afternoons. Tuesday night dinghy sailing has also proved popular, with good turnouts and an increase in numbers and race courses being set. Next season, we will also have dinghy starts on Saturdays.

The weather was generally favourable for us this year and racing was reasonably well attended overall. However, the Committee remains keen to look further at ways of encouraging more participation in racing at the club, especially Saturday racing, and this will continue to be a focus for our attention next year.

We did have a good turnout for Regatta Day in August, and this provided a really enjoyable afternoon on the water, followed by a regatta tea and prizegiving party in the clubhouse.

Importantly for the club, we hosted the SB20 Northern Championship in May and the Flying Fifteen British Isles Championship in June. Both events were very successful. There was positive feedback from our visitors, despite a conspicuous lack of wind for the Flying Fifteen competitors, which was a shame since, as I said before, weather conditions were generally pretty good this year, so that few other races had to be cancelled.

The racing season ended on a high note with the completion of another very enjoyable 6 Saturday afternoons' Frostie Series racing.

Further afield, SLYC members have enjoyed some great racing successes this year. Among these, Peter Kennedy's achievement in winning the All Ireland Sailing Championships at Lough Ree was outstanding while in the Flying Fifteens, Roger Chamberlain and Charlie Horder as well as Andy and Rory Martin qualified for Team Ireland to compete in the 2019 World Championships. Well done to all.

Facilities

At the beginning of the year the entrance hall, landing and function room were given a fresh coat of paint and new curtains. A digital projector and sound system have been welcome additions to the function room and have been well used during the season. Some further upgrading is planned for this Winter, including a much needed facelift for the office.

Also regarding club facilities, as well as the many vital, but more "routine" types of maintenance which are carried out almost daily, some larger projects have been undertaken this year. These include attaching safety strips to our vehicle access gate and also installing a more up to date, and hopefully reliable, club access system.

On a more negative subject, like a number of other clubs on the lough, we have been targeted again this summer by thieves who have stolen dinghies and engines from around the clubhouse, the dinghy pontoon and in the bay. A great deal of Committee time has been spent on the issue of how best to deter thieves and to safeguard members' property. Actions to date include installing improved lighting around the clubhouse, upgrading the existing CCTV system and agreeing plans for an outboard engine store. Club security will continue to be an important item on the Committee's agenda as we move into the new year.

It is likely that the club will have to commit significant funds to other repairs in the next few years. Members will be aware that the jetty has deteriorated significantly over time and that the bottom of slip 2 has also continued to crumble. The cost for repairing slip 2 alone is likely to be in the region of £15-£20K. The Committee decided this year to delay all but the most essential repair work until a wider slipway and jetty feasibility study has been completed. Various options are being considered and costed and we will be seeking members' views as soon as we have established what is possible.

Training

This year has been a very successful year from a training perspective, with a varied programme which provided courses for around 180 people in total.

The club's association with the RYA has been strengthened through collaboration in the planning and delivery of some of our training courses and early in the year we signed up with the RYANI Focus Club scheme, which aims to help clubs' development, to increase membership and to encourage members' participation and volunteering. Courses have included Learn to Sail, Learn to Race, Powerboat Level 2 and First Aid.

Our first big event was a Push The Boat Out day in May. Around 75 people attended for the opportunity to try out sailing and power-boating.

Following on from this day, participants were able to sign up for a range of courses being run over the summer, including two new schemes - Women on Water and a Crew Sailing Programme.

The Women on Water course enabled women to have a taster of sailing and power boating and some excellent feedback was received.

We plan to run these events again next year.

We have been working in partnership with the RYA to host a Dinghy Instructors Course and Powerboat Instructors Course.

We also saw a return of squad training at SLYC in June and hosted a Topper pathway training day which was attended by 26 Topper sailors, including 8 club members.

Finally, our junior sailing programme has continued to flourish through Sunday Sailing. A total of 95 children signed up, however thankfully they did not all come on the same day and fortunately a lot of parents volunteered to help out!

This busy junior sailing season ended on a charitable note, with a fundraising fun day. As a result, over £1050 was raised to help a particularly worthwhile local cause.

Social

On the social front, the club has enjoyed a full and varied social calendar, covering the whole year and not only the sailing season. A series of successful social events was organised and it has been very encouraging to see so many members and their guests coming along to support the club and to enjoy themselves in the clubhouse. In fact in early July some intrepid members undertook a "Cruise to the Quoile", with a number staying until late, or even overnight, to take full advantage of the hospitality laid on for us at Quoile Yacht Club.

A further range of social events is planned for the next year. Members are encouraged to look out for information about these and to come along and join the fun. Volunteers willing to help organise events are always welcome - please just let the office know if you would be interested.

Efforts have been made this year to improve efficiency in after sailing catering arrangements, so that food following Wednesdays' and Thursdays' evening racing has been organised and served by volunteer members. This arrangement appears to have worked well and it is hoped that it can be continued next year.

Thanks to increased custom, for example during sailing events, our bar takings have risen. This is despite a small, and overdue, increase in charges, which was implemented in the New Year to bring our prices more in line with other clubs around the lough.

For the past six months we have had a designated Committee member to organise and oversee the bar. This has been a major boon for the club. Savings have been made in a number of areas, including through the use of volunteers whenever possible, rather than paid staff.

Volunteering

On the subject of volunteering, since becoming Commodore, I have been struck by the amount of effort which goes, sometimes unrecognised, into the day to day running of the club and thanks are due to all of the members who give their time and expertise so generously. In that vein, I would like to encourage as many of the membership as possible to get involved in helping out. We are always grateful for volunteers to join in with a range of activities to contribute to the life of the club and hope that numbers will increase, going forward. It's simply a matter of letting the office or any of the Committee know.

Conclusion

I am pleased to report that increases in membership, social activity, volunteering, training, and events have contributed to an encouraging upturn in the club's financial position.

It isn't possible to thank everyone individually for supporting the club this year - the list would be very long and the thought of my missing anyone out is truly terrifying.

However I would like to acknowledge the tremendous contribution made by our outgoing Committee members, Brian Corry and Julia Bloch and to thank them both very much.

Thanks also to our excellent Club Administrator, Elaine Cushley, who does such a sterling job, to John Hagan at QSS for his efficiency and willingness to go that extra mile and to Chris Boston for continuing to help out in so many ways around the club.

Lastly, I am extremely grateful to everyone who has been a member of the Commodore's Committee in this past year. Their commitment to improvement and their hard work on behalf of the club has been fantastic.

Thank you.