

SUSSEX YACHT CLUB
MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE MAIN COMMITTEE
Held on Monday 20th October 2025

Meeting begun at 19:00

Item	Actioned By	When to do

	Title	Name and Initials
Present	Flag Officers	Robin Stevenson (RS) – Commodore, Sue Large (SLa) – Vice Commodore, Aidan Tuckett (AT) Treasurer, Neville Blake (NB) – Rear Commodore, Chris Hawkes (CH) – Rear Commodore
	Directors	Martin O'Sullivan (MO), Terry Kinch (TK), Dave Lee (DL), Yvonne Campbell (YC), Des Silverson (DS), Kevin Knight (KK), Anne Gisby (AG), Kevin Headon (KH), Erika Peck (EP), Gemma Hawkes (GH), Jon Ellman-Brown (JEB)
	Ex-officio	Ruby Alabone (RA) – Minute Secretary, Paul Fisher (PF) – General Manager, Ian O'Dell (IO) - Ex officio
Apologies	Directors	Giles Weston (GW),
Absent	Directors	

EP, JEB to attend virtually via teams

Apologies and Absences

Apologies were received from Giles Weston.

1. Declarations of Interest

No specific declarations of interest were raised during this section of the meeting. The Commodore reminded members of their ongoing responsibility to declare any potential conflicts that might arise during discussions.

2. Last meeting – Adoption of the minutes

Proposal: Adoption of September Board Minutes

Proposed: Commodore; In favour All; Against: None; Abstained DS ;

3. Matters Arising and Actions from Previous Meeting

Covered in the agenda items.

4. Dinghy Report – Verbal

IO reported that all dinghies have been active in on-water training and that plans are underway to conduct match racing using the Club's Laser boats during the winter period.

5. Keelboat Section Report – Verbal

CH reported that the final autumn races will conclude this weekend. The Christmas Cracker Series will then be introduced to revive the festive spirit, encouraging Christmas-themed dressing up and boat decorating.

The KBS Committee is focusing on planning for 2026, with a vision of continued evolution. A recent survey conducted by the section indicated overall satisfaction with the current pace of progress. The committee continues to review the handicap system and assess the data to ensure it remains fair and effective. The next sailing season is scheduled to begin in March.

The SB20 fleet is coordinating joint races with Sussex University in November and February, weather permitting. CH noted a very positive level of engagement from university students, although it is recognised that student participation will be limited in December and January.

The main proposal for the summer series focuses on improving participation, as some vessels have struggled to complete the full series due to other seasonal commitments. The committee is exploring the introduction of three regatta-style weekends, with careful scheduling to avoid clashes with external sailing events. While overall crew numbers have declined slightly, these regatta-style events show promise as they allow flexibility for crews unable to attend every weekend.

RS commented on the challenges faced during the summer, noting that younger sailors may continue to participate through the winter via these regatta-style events. Feedback from the recent questionnaire supported this trial approach.

YC added that shorter series and opportunities to achieve wins on a smaller scale are likely to sustain enthusiasm among competitors. SLa emphasised the importance of continually revamping the sailing programme to maintain momentum.

CH confirmed that the updated programme will primarily apply to Sunday racing, while Saturday racing will continue as normal.

CH highlighted the upcoming Annual Prize Giving, celebrating the achievements of the past sailing year. GH, as Trophy Secretary, reported that out of 57 scheduled races, 54 were completed. A total of 43 separate trophies and 105 retention prizes will be awarded, representing 24 different boats. A full prize list will be published to encourage attendance at the event.

Communication for nominations has been managed through WhatsApp groups, and a new SYC trophy, the *Poppy Trophy* (donated by Terry Kinch), will be presented to a vessel that has best represented SYC at an external sailing event.

CH also mentioned the upcoming “Broach the Subject” series, hosted by Richard Cooper, running from December 2025 to May 2026. The series has been well attended in the past, and CH encouraged suggestions for future speakers to maintain engagement and attract diverse audiences. Opportunities for speakers from other clubs or sections to participate will also be explored.

DL suggested inviting Ray from the Diving Club, and NB will contact Sussex University and Sussex Underwater regarding participation.

6. Events -Verbal

NB quiz nights well attended, 85 NYE tickets sold so far, Members Christmas Party has gone live. August bank holiday booked by Shoreham sailing club for 2026. The new chef is making a real difference, working well and good standard of food offered which is helping to rebuild the reputation of the restaurant.

7. Update on Flood Defence Wall

RS reported that the General Meeting was held on Saturday, 18 October, and included a productive Q&A session. The motion presented received a unanimous vote in favour. RS has since written to ADC, who have acknowledged receipt and responded with thanks. No further requirements have yet been communicated, and the Board will await additional details. RS expressed appreciation to the Board for their support and cooperation.

8. Report from the Treasurer

AT presented several graphs illustrating SYC’s income and expenditure, providing the Board with an overview of how the Club earns and allocates its funds.

YC raised the need to continue to encourage more shoreside members by holding a programme of enjoyable events.

RS proposed holding a workshop to identify opportunities for improving Club promotion, particularly during the flood wall construction period, when public visibility will be high. YC suggested that this could coincide with a broader relaunch initiative, and AT proposed linking the event to the new hoist installation and flood wall completion as a major promotional opportunity.

AT also highlighted rising clubhouse utility expenses and provided financial details, including proposed expenditure of £340,000 hoist project (50% of which is grant funded), and an estimated £100,000 allocation for Southwick, with plans to invest further in the listed building at SYC. AT noted that additional funding will be required for pontoon maintenance and yard improvements.

RS thanked AT for the detailed financial analysis and reiterated the importance of holding a workshop to explore strategic improvements for SYC's future. AT will present to the Board on a quarterly basis comparing forecasted and actual financial performance.

RS acknowledged the time and cost involved in cutting up derelict vessels in the Yard, noting that Club policies have since been improved to prevent similar situations from recurring.

KH inquired about bad debts, to which AT reported a current total of £8,000 have been written off which in the main are around unpaid lay up fees of derelict boats.

KH also raised the need for a consistent policy on long-term projects, particularly those exceeding two years. PF noted that some legacy projects have caused financial strain and confirmed that vessels no longer meeting payment obligations have been asked to leave. KH recommended the adoption of one unified policy for all projects, which RS and PF confirmed is already being implemented.

KH added that with these measures, the Club should be in a stronger financial position within five years, and AT agreed, noting that improvements are already evident.

9. Update on New Hoist and Fisheries Grant

PF updated the Board on progress with the travel hoist project. A grant of £137,000 has been awarded, subject to the condition that the Italian supplier delivers the hoist to SYC by 31 March 2026. The Fisheries Authority requested formal documentation confirming this arrangement.

A £75,000 deposit was paid to the supplier 10 days ago, and PF explained that at this stage the Italians are confident that the project will meet the 31 March 2026 deadline.

10. Update on Stirlands Negotiation

RS provided an update on the ongoing negotiations, noting that he held a 30-minute phone discussion with Derek Copeman to review progress with all involved parties. He reported that the situation remains complex, with significant investments already made to position SYC favourably for a potential out-of-court resolution.

TK asked whether there was any risk of incurring professional fees exceeding the Club's profit levels. RS confirmed that professional fees are being closely monitored. YC enquired about the expected timescale. RS advised that, while there are pressures, a resolution is anticipated within four to six months, cautioning that any longer delay could risk reversing progress.

11. Nominations For Directors

PF reminded the Board that four Directors are due to rotate this term and noted the deadline of 31 October for related actions.

SLa reported on the introduction of a new trophy, titled the Secretary's Log, created by TL to recognise individuals who provide significant voluntary contributions to the Club but may otherwise be overlooked. The decision on the recipient will rest with the Commodore or Club Secretary, and nominations should be submitted to the Office.

12. ASR Injunction and Directors responsibilities

PF provided an update on the ASR matter, reporting that he and Ben Coe attended a three-hour court session regarding Stuart Fairbairn (SF). The court awarded £7,000 in costs to SYC, to be reimbursed by SF. SF must obtain permission from SYC before accessing the site to remove his belongings and/or the ASR, with a deadline of 6 November.

PF noted that the proceedings were not straightforward, with references made to a number of directors who had advised SF over the years. Directors were advised to exercise care in their communications following this issue being brought to PF's attention.

PF expressed optimism that significant progress in the ASR matter is expected after 6 November at which point Mr Fairbairn either has to remove the vessel or we shall break the vessel up.

SLa reinforced the need for vigilance and reminded directors to review the Directors' Code of Conduct.

YC inquired about the estimated cost to remove the ASR. RS stated that costs depend on whether the work is completed internally or externally and once access to the site can be gained on November 7th a better assessment of what is required can be made. YC also asked about the duration of lost income from the ASR, which RS confirmed to be 2.5 years.

13. Any Other Business

SLa reported that it has been a year since the last website review meeting and proposed that another review now be held to assess progress and identify areas for improvement. SLa suggested creating a crib sheet outlining what has worked well and what has not, to guide the discussion. SLa and RA will prepare the crib sheet, with support from AG, who will assist using her IT background. The findings and recommendations will then be returned to the Board in a structured report.

YC raised the importance of ensuring an effective marketing strategy accompanies the website review. DL added that the website should form part of the club's wider marketing function and must be maintained consistently.

PF clarified that the club's website is one component of the overall marketing strategy, but not the strategy in its entirety. KH noted the importance of understanding the club's broader marketing needs and commended the encouraging progress made in marketing training and related initiatives. KH also recommended that directors provide photographs for inclusion on the website and proposed creating a dedicated page to promote the Board members.

KH then raised the matter of safety procedures, noting that since the previous discussion earlier in the season, progress has been made but further work is needed to ensure that, in the event of an accident or injury, appropriate support mechanisms are in place for the club. KH emphasised the urgency of addressing this matter. RS confirmed that a health and safety policy is under review and acknowledged that while there are some gaps, the club is not unsafe—there is room for improvement.

DL brought forward the topic of business continuity, highlighting the need for system backups and raising a GDPR-related query. DL asked if a risk review could be placed on the agenda moving forward.

CH reported that the sailing diary remains in a provisional state, with final publication to occur after the prizegiving event. C.H. also noted uncertainty regarding actions on the safety documentation, with KK agreeing that this requires follow-up.

PF informed the Board that Daria, who has been attending recent MCM, LFC, and SYCOPS meetings, will be departing from SYC. Recruitment is currently underway to fill her position.

JEB. confirmed that safety documentation, including Risk Assessment and Method Statements (RAMS) for the outriggers entire club, is available and can be provided when required.

EP endorsed KH's comments and recommended that each section of the club develop its own RAMS and health and safety documentation, to be reviewed and endorsed collectively. RS agreed with this approach, adding that all such documents should be stored in a single, centralised location rather than managed separately by each section. Pf agreed to take this forward with the clubs Health and Safety Advisor.

Meeting closed at 21:00 pm

Date of Following Meetings –

Monday 17th November 1900h

Monday 15th December 1900h for Commodore's party.

Approved by: RS, Commodore

Signed: _____