

The Minutes of a Focus Group Meeting for RCIYC Building Development held on Monday 30th October 2023 at the RCIYC

The Commodore, Kevin Newman, opened the meeting at 18:35 hrs.

Attendees: Stewart Rowney, Steve Bailey, Dennis Lavin, Dave Hatter, Nick Morel-Orchard, Steven Hunt, Gill Hunt, Mary Winchester, Geoffrey Winchester, Myles Winchester, Stuart Bowen-Davies, Paul James, Ian Macdonald, Jeffrey Speller, Fiona Speller, Jess Winterbourne, Jeremy Swetenham (Vice Commodore), Richard Hunt (Rear Commodore), Gina Seddon (Hon. Treasurer) and Committee Members: Paul Johnson, Paul Dentskevich, Sonia Le Noa, Hilary Ann Ratazzi, Charles Millard-Beer.

Apologies:

Anthony Olsen, Gaye Olsen, Gary Jonathan, Leat Perrée, Ross Allonby, Christian Lee, Keith Bisson, Celia Jeune, John Coates, Bill Dolan, Jonathan White, Mark Buxton, Ian Flambard, Oliver Egerton-Vernon, Robin Bougourd, Stuart Sangan, John Kempson, Trevor Collenette, Mark Inwin, James Mulholland, Nick Marshall, James Baudains, Darren Stubbs, Russell Tomalin, Karen Johnson, Daphne Birt, Myles Flint, Nigel Philpott, Bill Harris, Alex Ohlsson.

1. Introduction - Vice Commodore (JS)

1.1 The challenges the current building presents:

- Scale of growing membership (the survey told us that members would rather grow membership than membership fees). Space is particularly limited for functions
- Condition of the building (water leaks, roof and flat need attention)
- Challenges for the Cadet and adult courses (changing rooms, training room and facilities)
- Toilets require a full upgrade along with the kitchen

1.2 What you told us in the survey

The primary issue raised was space. The favored options were:

- Add more space on the roof terrace.
- Re-build existing extension (Clubroom) with a second floor

The survey canvased the following fundraising options:

- Small donation (sub £100)
- Medium donation (£100-£500)
- Large donation (£500-£5,000)
- Significant donation (£5,000+)
- Legacy
- Interest free loan
- Interest bearing debenture

The most encouraging feedback was the number of people who said they would consider supporting in some way.

1.3 What we've tried so far

10 years ago comprehensive plans were drawn up by Axis Mason which involved quite a lot of change. The cost of these works at the time was over £600k (now over £1M). The process went no further but the challenges remained. More recently, the Club submitted plans to the Planning Department for an extension on the roof terrace, but has encountered repeated rejections and revisions.

2. The anatomy of a successful project – Anthony Gibb (AG) (Building Surveyor, historic building specialist and a Commissioner of the Jersey Architecture Commission)

- The current planning application has hit problems as the original brief was not clear.
- Planning matters – The Club is in the most prominent site in St Aubin's, by the sea, by the fort. The plans need to fit in. If you keep what you have externally, it makes it easier to *fit in*.
- What we can do; define our brief, have architects draw up proposals for the building to be
 - (1) Functional
 - (2) Affordable
 - (3) Able to pass planning

Questions:

(JS) Can you tell us about what is happening in relation to conservation in this area and the impact on the Club.

(AG) Conservation areas are coming in; they are in the current Bridging Island Plan. The law has been changed so the first conservation area is due to start in January 2024, with St Aubin being the first designated area. Whatever happens here in terms of planning applications, as we are such a prominent site, inevitably there will be scrutiny.

(Member) Is the older part of the building listed?

(AG) No, it is not a listed building. If it remains unlisted, the external facade of the building in a conservation area is of more importance than the internal part of the building.

(Member) The application that got refused, what do you think fundamentally would have to change the position, what was the main objection?

(AG) I have had a quick look at the application and there were various issues, windows, railings etc.

(JS) A further revision of the application is currently be considered by Planning. So we could wait for the response on these final changes or apply on a larger scale.

(AG) Usually if the bigger idea is clear, smaller details become less important.

(MW) Myles Winchester. We need a very clear concept from the very beginning, everyone needs to know about it and it needs to be backed up completely with a business plan. The application needs to solve the issues; finance, restaurant, bars, clubroom youth sailing etc. The building needs to be an iconic building and if we can't offer that, we will fall on our feet again. We need absolute vision and clarity for what we want to achieve with a full business plan which in my opinion will be a 3-5 year plan.

3. How getting to base-camp (properly scoped and costed options with which we can fundraise) would be project managed and the costs of doing so with varying degrees of details – Richard Cheal (RC)

- We need a core business plan and budget. What we propose to do is an option/appraisal study. We need to produce costed options that align with the business case to allow the membership to decide on the way forward.
- The memberships' preferred single option would undergo a full feasibility study. We need to consider every possible scenario prior to submitting an application, avoiding pitfalls.
- Once this study has been completed, then we would put the application forward. Community and public feedback need to be included and submitted to planning.
- Shutting the Club or a phased option would need to be considered.

(JS) How much would it cost us to get to pre-feasibility study.

(RC) we would require the advice of the likes of AG, an Architect, Quantity Surveyor, someone like myself to co-ordinate, circa £10k to get to the end of concept study stage where the Flag Officers can present to the membership “Which option would you like to take forward to a full feasibility study and might we be able to afford it?”

(Member) In terms of the business plan and the cost of the construction, who would prepare the feasibility study?

(RC) The business case would come from the client which is the Committee. They would write the business case for what we are doing.

(JS) Thankfully, we have a really good handle on the Club’s numbers. Our Hon. Treasurer, Gina Seddon provides monthly management accounts including membership income, Club running costs and restaurant and bar profitability. To make business plan assumptions would not be complicated thing to do based on the existing figures that we have and the opportunities a redevelopment would represent.

(SH) Steven Hunt I am conscious about what one can find when renovating such an old building (structure etc.) and therefore, compared with a totally new iconic building, it may well be that the costs just do not justify renovation. Equally, I am conscious about the practical space we need and when I look at the club now it seems to operate on a very small footprint pretty well on the ground floor. I am conscious of the needs of the sailing community and the commercial side to help fund all that and when I look upstairs, I see a tremendous, wasted opportunity. What might be a possibility a retractable roof on the terrace?

(JS) The first application had French windows which was declined by Planning.

(SH) Looking at the plans with the orangery, there is still an open space and echoing Myles’ comments regarding an iconic building, as we are the Royal Channel Islands Yacht Club, we should set the bar up high.

(MW) It is doable but with the space on the terrace, it is so exposed and with anything mechanical, there could be issues.

(JS) The space above offers many opportunities and some challenges. There are different levels between the terrace and the office (potential new bar area). Having the main bar area upstairs with suitable access would offer extra dining/event space on the ground floor. This will be a key consideration as many other locations have added pace on floors above but, without a strong reason to go there, they have been seldom used. We could possibly move the office up into the first floor flat. There are many potential options. Therefore, it is important that we engage members and invite them on the journey, so they are fully informed every step of the way (including fundraising, budgets and the operational plan with regards to where the Club would go when work is being carried out etc.) so that they can make an informed decision.

(Member) Will we have a problem with Heritage

(AG) Heritage is not really a problem - knocking the building down may cost more than renovating what we have now. Old buildings are easier to deal with than you would think as simple structures, wooden floors and wooden roofs. Also, nice features can be kept. The building is relatively small so relatively easy to do up with plenty of scope. As the building is also not listed that immediately makes things easier.

(Member) Is there a way we can get Planning on side?

(AG) It is possible, there is a route to doing it. If you develop your plan for a pre app consultation before you submit your application and then discuss it with them, that enables you to get them on your side, flush out any issues before the plans go in.

Concerns over foundations of the property with years of sea and general erosion over the years and climate change

(RC) Coastal erosion is happening on all of our shores and the Government is going to have to address this so if there was an issue, they would have to do some coastal protection work possibly. The survey team would have to check if the wall has not been undermined and what its integrity is like, if it needs stitching and / or underpinning etc. that is what the design team / structure engineers look at.

(AG) The Island Plan includes flood assessments and anticipated sea level rises, for which St Aubin's is 2nd on the list after Harve des Pas.

(AG) The current planning application can be withdrawn, and a new one can be replaced for up to 6 months free of charge. There are options to add to existing plans if they are accepted.

(Member) An ecology survey could be useful.

(RC) May not be worth doing until full feasibility study complete.

(Member to AG and RC) Do you have a vision for the Club?

(AG) It is for the membership to agree on the vision, drawing on options and advice from designers.

(RC) As a member myself, my vision for the project is to not see money or time wasted.

(Member) During the redevelopment, will the Club need to be shut?

(JS) Subject to the chosen option, its scale and consequent disruption, an operational plan would need to consider whether we:

1. Approach the SHYC to discuss options
2. Find a temporary location.
3. Remain open and work around small-scale works

(Member) How do we avoid the frequent Committee turnover which could jeopardise the project?

(JS) We are proposing to employ a project manager who will be involved from start to finish to deliver consistency and continuity. In addition, we could certainly create a permanent Project Committee that is not impacted by new Committee elections.

(Member) What is the first step? (Actions)

(JS) To circulate the minutes and keep the wider membership informed of today's focus group and first meeting. Then, to get the Project Committee together. Their task will be to communicate with members about potential ideas and the steps we need to go through. We also encourage today's group to talk to members and gain an insight into their views and act as an additional channel for members to know what is going on. A page on the website will also be put aside for this purpose.

Summary and thank you (JS)

The aim of the meeting today was to start at the right place with a structured approach. We wanted to introduce you to two people who we think will introduce experience and knowledge, so that we can go back with confidence to the General Committee and Honorary Treasurer and say "this is what we need financially to get to base camp and to then be able to start fundraising raising." We appreciate everyone's attendance today (especially Antony Gibb and Richard Cheal), for starting the process and for spreading the word. When we get to the point of casting out for a Project Committee, we will include all members and share the minutes of today's meeting.

The meeting lasted 1 hour 15 minutes and was declared closed at 1950