



## COMET CLASS ASSOCIATION

### ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

held at Ogston Sailing Club

Sunday 27 August 2023

The meeting was attended by 26 members and the Builder.

#### 1. Apologies:

Apologies were received from: Keith Lamdin, Liz Hossell, Nick Baber, Helen Leivers, Rhian Bevan, Steve Gregory, Paul Hinde, Guy Benson, Steve Boud, David Waymont

#### 2. The minutes of the AGM held on 28<sup>th</sup> August 2022:

These have been circulated prior to the meeting via the website. The minutes were approved. Proposed by Sarah-Jane Critchley and seconded by Nigel Fern.

#### 3. Matters arising from the minutes.

**Message from Nick Baber** - A big thank you to all at the Comet Association and Comet Dinghies for making "Whip Out the Walnut" happen and get displayed at the RYA Dinghy Show. The reaction from the public and the sailing press has helped raised the awareness and encouraged men to go, or their partners to insist they go for a PSA test.

#### 4. Reports.

**Chairman – Peter Mountford reported:**

Holding the Committee meetings on a weekday evening on-line via Zoom seems to have become the accepted practice. The Committee has met on three such occasions since the 2022 AGM, but both of the last two meetings had to be spread over two evenings – the first because of insufficient time to address the longer agenda of the first meeting of the year, and the second because the Chairman's internet hub developed a fault.

Our stand at the RYA Dinghy and Watersports Show held at the end of February at its new venue in Farnborough was judged to be a success, and my thanks go to Chris Robinson for organising our stand and to those members who helped to support it over the two days of the show. Andy Simmons lent us Nick Baber's brand-new boat, and in a "first" for the Association and with the agreement of the RYA, the sail displayed the Prostate Cancer UK logo which provided a talking point for visitors to the stand and attracted the attention of the Yachts and Yachting.com website developer who included a picture in his on-line photographic report of the Show.

The events programme has again been maintained at around its usual level. Open Meetings have been held for the first time at Eyott Sailing Club and Shustoke Sailing Club, and Bowmoor Sailing Club is also included in the programme for the first time as the host of our Association Championships. Although the Open Meetings at Nottingham, Redditch and Mundeford Sailing Clubs were cancelled due to adverse conditions, the Nottingham and Redditch events were rearranged for later in the season.

At the start of the season, the RYA published a different PY number for the Xtra rig on their limited data sheet, despite Andy Simmons having designed the Xtra rig to have the same overall average performance as the Standard sail. This matter has exercised the Committee's attention in light of the fact that more than one sailing club has sought the Association's advice, and Eddie Pope has been

in correspondence with the RYA on behalf of the Committee. In a discussion item to be held towards the end of this AGM, the Committee would like to learn the views of the membership on this matter.

At the end of last season, Steve Bellamy kindly agreed to take on the role of trophy buyer, and we were pleased to welcome Helen Leivers and Andy Dale as new members of the Committee. Nigel Fern has decided to retire from the Committee after 9 years membership and to relinquish his current role as the News Editor at the end of the season. I should like to thank him not only for making so many effective contributions to the business of the Committee, but also for carrying out the duties of the News Editor so effectively and for the significant developments he has achieved during his period of office: - converting Perihelion to an on-line publication, developing the monthly Newsletter, and together with Paul Hinde, designing and building the Association's new website.

The Committee has recognised that the scope of the News Editor role has grown considerably in the last few years, and that the roles of Perihelion Editor, managing the website and producing the Newsletter could be divided between more than one person. The Committee also recognises the vital importance of maintaining communication with the membership and keeping members informed of developments, and in another discussion item to be held towards the end of this AGM, it would like to hear the views of the membership on the current publications and methods of communication.

This is my last Chairman's report to the Association's AGM as my 3-year term of office expires at this meeting. I would like to thank all the members of the Committee not only for their hard work over the past year which is vital to maintaining the Association's various activities and to supporting Comet sailing in general, but also, I would like to thank each of them for the strong support they have given me over the last 3 years. I simply could not have done the Chairman's job without that support and advice.

**The Secretary - Liz Hossell** - No report but sends her apologies.

**Membership Secretary – Steve Gregory sent his report:**

This year we have 89 full members ahead of the Nationals and this compares well with 95 by the end of 2022. We have lost a few members so far but have gained 10 new members - and very welcome they are too! There are 5 Honorary Life Members included in the above. Our membership is spread across 38 clubs. The largest being Winsford (10), Severn (6), Chipstead/Nottingham/Redesmere/Staunton Harold all (5)

It would be great if the members at our larger clubs encouraged their fellow Comet sailors to support the Association by joining too! There are 20 clubs with just one Comet member including my very own Frensham Pond! (Which just goes to prove that Comet sailors value a quality boat and don't succumb to local fads like those strange Laser surf-board thingies)

**Events Co-ordinator – Eddie Pope:**

There is a series of 21 opens and 2 championships in 2023. Longstanding club venues of Attenborough SC and Littleton SC were not prepared to host events in 2023, but they have been replaced by the excellent new venues of Bowmoor SC, Eyott SC and Shustoke SC. There is a possibility that Littleton SC will resume, subject to developments at the club.

There have been weather issues affecting 3 open meetings. A swollen River Trent with strong current and limited wind caused the cancellation of the Nottingham SC open, which has been rearranged for September. Gales caused the cancellation of both Redditch and Mundeford opens. Redditch was rearranged for August, but it has not been possible to rearrange the Mundeford open due to a clash of dates.

Merthyr Tydfil SC has agreed to host the 2024 National Championship over the August Bank Holiday (24-26 August), and Silver Wing SC has agreed to host the 2024 Association Championship on 11-12 May. I would be grateful to receive suggestions for Championship venues from 2025 onwards - Gunfleet SC has already been put forward.

Ben Palmer can advise on the number of entrants to date in 2023, but my experience is that attendance at most events is holding up very well. A slight drop in the number of travellers has been offset by home club helms, and Comet fleets at some clubs seem to be thriving.

## **Results Co-ordinator – Ben Palmer**

The 2023 Orbital looks down with a total of 64 event entries so far this year. Last year we had 129 by the end of the season. The total has been slightly down over the last two years.

12 open events have been held with 8 more to go.

The average turnout at an open so far is 12.3 that is up on 9.3 entries per event last year.

The number of Orbital qualifiers last year was 11 which is an increase on last year of 7. So far 5 have already qualified.

The Northern Area saw a stabilisation from previous years with 6 qualifiers last year, there are 11 possible so far. So far there are 15 competitors across 2 events. So far the average turnout is 7.5 down from last year's average turnout of 10.3.

The Eastern Area saw a stabilisation of 5 qualifiers last year, there are 8 possible qualifiers so far. The average turn out is 10.75 so far this is down on last year of 14.5 across the series.

The Southern area had 6 qualifiers last year, a slight decrease. There are 21 possible qualifiers so far this year. There have been 29 competitors so far in 4 events. The average turnout so far is 7.25 down on last year's 12.3 but an increase on the year before at 5.8.

The Western Area had a further decrease to 4 qualifiers last year and currently has 5 possible qualifiers, but I only have results from one event so far.

The largest open so far is Chipstead with 23 entries.

## **Newsletter and Website Co-ordinator – Nigel Fern**

I feel that the Association is at a turning point with regard to Communication. We have successfully developed the website and a method of virtually immediate communication between the Committee and Membership using the MailChimp email software. The wider Comet family is kept abreast of things via our Facebook page. The printed page in general is slowly fading away and I wonder if we should follow that lead with Perihelion. It has been suggested that rather than having 4/5 copies throughout the year we only have one - a sort of round up of the year! What do you get in Perihelion that you do not get via the website and the email updates – in the main only the officer's and Andy's reports plus the odd article, all of which could be included within an email update. I am sure if you were to ask our past Chairmen, Secretaries and Editors that they would agree that finding words to fill out a report can be daunting.

Getting reports on Opens is becoming more difficult, once upon a time a report would be with me on the Monday morning following a Saturday event including images. Now it is about a week later if at all. Who should write the Open report – the OOD/Organiser, the competitors or both? My feeling is both, by having an overview from the OOD/Organiser and comments from Competitors makes for an interesting read.

How many of you have considered noting or actually have made comments on this championship? If not, why not? Aren't your comments worthwhile? You will never find out if you do not submit them!

One item I would like the Committee to consider for future communication is value for money. Whilst we cannot and should not get involved with event pricing, I feel that if we have some communication with event organisers as to how they reach the entry fee it would be useful for potential entrants. A bald £20 entry fee say may seem expensive but if it includes the wages of the specially brought in staff, then it is reasonable. Likewise a £15 entry fee is reasonable but when that includes all food and drink it is dirt cheap!

## **5. Treasurers Report and Adoption of the Accounts.**

**Rhian Bevan** sent her apologies and the following report:

- A small deficit of £18 made in 2022, although we maintain a healthy cash balances.
- The income and expenditure for the association have returned to more 'normal' levels after the pandemic within 2022. Membership income has risen and event costs such as the dinghy show also returning to previous levels as more 'in person' events occurred.
- We are now incurring bank charges, which we previously did not. Having looked around at the options available, other banks have either suspended applications for new community/association accounts or are also charging, we will keep this under review.
- It should be noted that inflation remains high, and therefore costs are likely to continue to rise, we are planning to mitigate this by proposing a small rise to membership fees.

The accounts have been available on the website and a copy is retained with these minutes.

**The accounts were then adopted. Proposed:** Nigel Fern, **Seconded:** Henry Jagers

## 6. Builders Report:

**Andy Simmons reported** on another busy year, six new Comets built since the last AGM, including two for Chipstead, one for a long-term owner at Redesmere. The Dinghy Show Comet went to Nottingham and a dinghy in stock should be sold soon. |Comet fleets continue to grow but sometimes one clubs gain is another club's loss. Bowmoor is now up to fifteen in less than three years but only a few of them race which should change with time.

On the rig side, the White Xtra continues to sell, some are replacement sails for the "early adopters" of the rig. I'm busy with repairs, especially the mast hole problem on some older boats. There is plenty of information on this on the Class website.

Second-hand Comets are rare and generally 25-35 years old or more. Most buyers are from the Comet clubs and end up upgrading the rig. Suppliers' prices all rising, sails and £50 to send a sail! But often they are dropped off on a delivery trip or at an event. We try to offer value for money, even on a new Comet!

## 7. Consideration of Motions

### Six Motions to Change the Constitution

#### 1. Change throughout the constitution:

- "Chairman" with "Chair".
- "He" with "They".
- "him" with "them".
- "Him or them" with "them".
- "He/she" with "they".

*Explanation: The aim of this proposal is to make the constitution gender neutral.*

**Agreed. Proposed: Committee. Seconded: Guy Wilkins**

#### 2. Change rule 5.d.ii by replacing:

**"The Secretary shall also keep the National Association Register and be responsible for communicating the decisions of the Committee or General Meetings to the Members of the National Association."**

with:

"The Secretary shall also be responsible for communicating the decisions of the Committee or General Meetings to the Members of the National Association and shall ensure that the National Association Register is kept up to date."

*Explanation: This allows the task of keeping the National Association Register to be delegated to another committee member. Note that according to rule 3.d.: "The National Association Register" shall mean*

*the register of owners of Comets with their addresses, name and number of boats to be kept hereinafter provided.*

**Agreed. Proposed: Committee. Seconded: Sarah-Jane Critchley**

**3. Change rule 5.b. by replacing:**

**“The Committee shall consist of eight Full Members of the Association elected annually at a General Meeting of members, or by postal vote, as Committee Members.”**

with:

**“The Committee shall consist of at least eight Full Members of the Association elected annually at a General Meeting of members, or by postal vote, as Committee Members.”**

*Explanation: This allows the Committee to have more than eight Full Members.*

**Agreed. Proposed : Committee. Seconded: Guy Wilkins**

**4. Delete in rule 5.b. “The Committee will include representatives from the Mino and Xtra fleets.”**

*Explanation: This rule was introduced when the Mino and Xtra rigs sailed separate races with their own prizes. Now that all the rigs sail in one fleet separate representatives are no longer required.*

**Agreed. Proposed: Committee. Seconded: Sarah-Jane Critchley**

**5. Change rule 5.h by replacing “At least three weeks’ notice of the date, place and agenda for any Committee Meeting must be given in writing by the Secretary to each Committee Member. Any business conducted by correspondence shall always be circulated through the secretary and any committee Member not answering a motion communicated to him in writing within three weeks of the date of sending shall be deemed to have abstained from such a motion.”**

with:

**“At least one week's notice of the date, place and agenda for any Committee Meeting must be given in writing by the Secretary to each Committee Member. Any business conducted by correspondence shall always be circulated through the secretary and any committee Member not answering a motion communicated to them in writing within one week of the date of sending shall be deemed to have abstained from such a motion.”**

*Explanation: This reduces the notice period that needs to be provided for a Committee Meeting from three weeks to one week. Three weeks was originally specified when the agenda had to be posted and Committee meetings were in person. Now that email is used, and Committee Meetings use videoconferencing a shorter notice period is feasible and makes it easier for the Committee to respond to unexpected matters.*

**Agreed. Proposed: Committee. Seconded: John Coppenhall**

**6. Change rule 6.b. By replacing “The making of payments shall be validly evidenced only by the signature of the Treasurer and the Secretary or Chairman.”**

with:

**“The authorised signatories shall be the Treasurer, Secretary or Chair.”**

*Explanation: Makes the rule clearer now payments are made online rather than by cheque. As the number of authorisations required is stipulated by the bank, so it is not explicitly specified.*

**Agreed. Proposed: Committee. Seconded: Rhian Bevan**

**7. There has been no uplift to the membership fees for the Comet Class Association since 2018, however due to rising costs to the Association it is proposed to increase the membership fees by £2**

across the board to the following for 2024. Suggested Full & Associate Membership: £22, Junior: £12, Family: £28, Temporary: £12.

**Agreed. Proposed: Committee**

**Seconded: Rhian Bevan**

## **7 Election of Officers and Committee**

Peter Mountford stood down as Chairman and Nigel Fern stood down from the Committee. The remaining committee members were prepared to be re-elected en bloc. Proposed by Henry Jagers and seconded by Guy Wilkins.

The Committee for 2023/2024 is

Officers :

**Chairman** – Eddie Pope. Proposed by Peter Mountford. Seconded by Henry Jagers

**Secretary** – Liz Hossell,

**Treasurer** – Rhian Bevan

Committee,

**Results** – Ben Palmer

**Trophies** – Steve Bellamy,

**Membership** – Steve Gregory

**Website** - Chris Robinson

Helen Leivers,

Andy Dale,

Peter Mountford.

### **1. Appointment of Auditor/Independent Examiner:**

Mark Govier has kindly agreed to continue as Independent Examiner. Proposed by Rhian Bevan and seconded by Henry Jagers.

### **2. Any Other Business**

- **Comet RYA Portsmouth Yardstick**

Eddie outlined the background, including a summary of the RYA's response to enquiries and information provided to them. There was discussion, with input from AGM attendees representing most active major Comet fleets as well as from Andy Simmons of Comet Dinghies. Andy referred to Measurement Rule 2(f) which covers the 4 rigs and makes no mention of performance differences. All Comet events organised by the Comet Class Association do not use a handicap system. In general handicap racing some clubs are using the RYA's limited data PY figure of 1197 for the "Extra" rig (to be changed to "Xtra" by the RYA) for Xtra and White Xtra rigs, at least one club is only using 1197 for the White Xtra rig, and some clubs make no differentiation between the rigs and are using the Comet's PY of 1210 from the main list. Some clubs also take account of local conditions and use a different handicap altogether. It was agreed that Eddie, in liaison with Andy Simmons, should again approach the RYA. It is hoped to produce an update to members before publication of the 2024 PYs by the RYA.

- **Publications and Communication with the Membership going forward.**

Comments by Nigel Fern in his report had already contributed to the discussion where the meeting recognised that Perihelion is effectively the only record of the activities of the CCA, and for that reason should be continued. As Nigel is standing down as the editor, a new volunteer is needed. The group agreed that the website works well in keeping members updated on activities and that using emails to highlight news items has been successful. Chris Robinson has agreed to take on the website and will send out regular email updates to members.

- **Peter Mountford** announced that the RYA has awarded Lifetime Commitment Awards to Henry and Norah Jagers and Mark Govier.

The meeting closed with a vote of thanks to the committee.

Liz Hossell with thanks to Norah for standing in for Liz at the AGM

Honorary Secretary