

## **Our outgoing Safety Officer**

### ***What have I been doing for the last two years?***

#### **Finding Out!**

I took this role on in October 2016 without a clear idea of what the job entailed, but with a clear idea that I needed to look at what my predecessor, about to become our Principal, had done, and to consolidate and build on it. I also made two things clear to the Management Team. I am not Health and Safety trained nor qualified, so I would use my best endeavours to get it right, and that I would do the job for two years.

I arrived in post broadly as Premier were getting to grips with the Noss Marina site, and I was able to feed off their excellent Health and Safety advice to us. They are continually reviewing their H&S requirements and so are we, and that is how it should be.

I started off by auditing what we needed to do, safety-wise. The list includes:

- \* Certification
- \* Lifejackets
- \* Fire extinguishers
- \* Portable Electrical Appliances
- \* Hoisting operations
- \* Inspection
- \* Buoyancy Aids
- \* Vessel Safety Equipment
- \* Examination
- \* Our processes and procedures (HOPS)
- \* Our vessel registration with the now outgoing CG66 scheme

As you can see there is a lot of paper processing, and not a little getting down onto my hands and knees inspecting equipment. Added to that, Premier runs a safe working environment and accredits contractors who work on site to be allowed to do that work. I had to ensure that all who came on site to perform inspections and servicing of equipment were accredited by Premier. This covers statements of work and insurance policies and everything a quality contractor has in place already.

My predecessor had not lived in this more regulated environment, my successor will and understands it already, and I have had to learn to.

## **Getting down to it**

I got my thoughts marshalled in October and November 2016, absorbed information from all quarters, and set out a plan of action. December saw me in the hut just finding things. I found lifejackets, safety boxes, fire extinguishers, first aid kits, portable appliances, VHF radios, and a load of rubbish,

In January I started properly. I formalised out absolute requirement for professional commercial certification of our lifejackets, engaged a contractor and sent them off. At the same time I called in the fire extinguisher certification body I'd used on my old charter boat, and found out we needed to replace over half our units. They expire! Who knew? And you can't just buy one online and deploy it! Why not? Because we operate an organisation that requires new fire extinguishers to be inspected at commissioning time. Although a charity our operation falls under the loose definition of commerciality for safety equipment.

The safety boxes were in a good state, the more so since there was a complete list of what each should contain. That just required the creation of a shopping list, and it was a large one. You probably have no idea, though, how unexciting it was to print and laminate new paper enclosures!

Buoyancy aids were more interesting. We have a decent number, expanded in 2018 with an additional size range. The only scheme we had was to use the mark one eyeball to see if they looked ok. So, I found a British Canoe Union scheme, and developed a full register with the date they came into use and the results of a physical inspection, adding in a sample test regime to prove that they support a 5kg weight.

Hoisting was more of a challenge. We used to have an engineering hoist as well as two personnel hoists, a Hansa keel hoist and a wheelchair safety line. Our contractor passed all of these in 2016, but in 2017 we were not so lucky. The manual personnel hoist and the Hansa keel hoist were condemned, and the hydraulic hoist was declared to be end of life at the end of the 2017 sailing season.

We chose to sell the engineering hoist, and we now lift the Hansa keels using certified strops on the personnel hoist, and we are replacing the wheelchair safety line with a new line for the 2019 season that has a fail to safety brake as an integral part of it. That's not a requirement, but wheelchair users have asked for it. We're using LOLER compliant mountaineering equipment for the new line.

We have also moved to 6 monthly inspections at almost no extra cost, which means that all of our equipment will be in date for use for the entire year. Since the hoist is on the pontoon and is thus available to any user, not only ourselves, it must be in date.

The safety boxes have moved to the ISO container, primarily because they contain flares which are something requiring storage that has been thought about. A single

set of flares in one place, that is fine, but we have sets in nine boxes. It's less convenient on sailing days, but safety takes priority over convenience.

During the winter of 2018, despite having drilled air holes in the boxes we stored out lifejackets in, I saw that damp was a problem. Mildew is unsightly, of course, but the real problem was the probability that sufficient damp would set off the automatic mechanisms and fire off the jackets. One went off for this reason at the end of the 2017 season. We now have a set of hanging brackets for the lifejackets, and we air the hut, with heating deployed in the middle of winter, too.

Odd things happen to safety boxes. Just before our RYA inspection I discovered that one fire extinguisher had been fired and replaced in the box. I had to order a swift resupply, and it arrived just in time! I don't care that it had been fired off. What I care about is that no-one mentioned it and just put it back quietly. Accidents happen and these are consumables. We budget for things like this. We need to be able to rely on them in case of fire. It's better to be mildly embarrassed than to be charred to a crisp!

## **On the water, too?**

The Safety Officer's primary responsibility is safety, and nowhere more than afloat. Part of that is ensuring that we use the radios correctly, which means sufficient to run a safe session, but not monopolising the air waves and absolutely no chatter. We share the airwaves with all other local users. We need to do ever better at radio brevity.

As well as that, the role includes running an eye over water based operations and making sure that near misses and incidents are logged and learned from. Our HOPs seek to cover every foreseeable eventuality, so it is the accident that we look to prevent. And, should something happen, the correct

care and treatment of the event and any personnel involved.

## **And our hosts?**

Our marina hosts, Premier, are extremely kind to us. Our role in return for that kindness is to be the very best marina users that they have. This means our safety processes must be top notch our neighbourliness must be top notch. We must be pro-active at being the very best we can be.

This means listening when they ask us to refine our safety procedures, and showing that we have done so. I think we're pretty good at it. I also think we must not become complacent, which is precisely why I adopted the post with a two year tenure. It's hard to keep your eye on the Safety ball for a longer period. New eyes are needed

## **For the future**

On 1 October 2018 the mantle passes to David Pendlebury. The email address remains the same.

David and I have performed a full handover already and I will act as consultant to him for his first few months. I'm truly pleased that he is already finding areas where he can build on and improve my work, in the same way that my predecessor was pleased that I was able to build on his.

I have been very aware that fun is important, and that we must manage safety into the fun. David is as aware as I. You'll see his profile replace mine on the web site, and that is the only real change you'll see.

I'd like to end my stint as Safety Officer by thanking you one and all for being willing to be guided as Dart Sailability grows and becomes ever better. I know some of you have teased me for pedantry. That means a lot to me! It's a positive thing. But it also shows times when I didn't quite get it right for you, despite getting it right for us as a whole.

From 1 October you can tease David!