

WHAM Secretary's Report 2019

I hope you have all had the opportunity or rather taken the opportunity to use and assess the new web site. Such feedback as we have had ---not a lot---is very positive and we have expressed our thanks to Crown Estate Scotland for their support and funding of this work. There has been a steady flow of information to put on it and later in this article you may well see some items from the web site appearing here too. In that sense it seems to have filled the gap mentioned last year.

Marine licence applications were down again a bit this year. There have been about 65 to date and there really was nothing exceptional to note. What is striking is the size of some of the circular tanks being installed by fish farm operators. In one instance, in L Skipport, the secretary really did not grasp the size of the new tanks and let an application pass which should perhaps have been objected to simply because it compromises an existing anchorage by its spread. The lesson has been learned!

Mention was made of our concern about the position of a seaweed farm last year. A very constructive discussion was held with New Wave Foods in the early winter and an excellent understanding reached about future intentions. So much better than objecting!

While the Crown Estate Bill is now well past members will be interested to know that the surplus from the CE revenues has been distributed to Local Authorities for use 'in coastal communities'. I do not have all the figures but A&BC got £1.2m, Highland about £1.3 and Western Isles £1.5m. Distribution was on the basis of coastline length. Even Clackmannan got a wee bit. If you have projects which might qualify/would benefit from a boost better get in the queue.

The Crown Estate Business plan is out for consultation though there is not much on marine matters. The plan can be accessed at www.crownestatesscotland.com/maps-and-publications/download/260 and consultation closes on 25 November.

Several individuals and at least 1 MA expressed concern about the appearance of new moorings in Acarsaidh Mhor, Rona. The moorings are sited in shallow water close to the eastern shore and would not be preventing most boats from anchoring because of the depth. Nonetheless we have said enough is enough and CE has assured us that no more leases (hence no marine application) will be granted for this popular anchorage. News has just been received that Scottish Sea Farms do not intend to replace the perch on the mid-point of the reef in L Spelve entrance which fell off last winter. NLB felt it was not on their list of concerns. A Bradfield (Antares) chart or a plotter makes its avoidance relatively straightforward but it was a great comfort! Our thanks to L Moidart MA for their sterling work in identifying and removing an obstruction in South Moidart. With their help we were able to effect an astonishingly quick response to a member of the public's use of our reporting form. Very good publicity indeed. We have also managed to get the anchorage between Gighay and Hellisay cleared of old fish farm pontoons

The Crown has been lifting derelict moorings in Holy Loch as mentioned last year. They intend to continue this work in other areas where this problem exists. Activity is expected in at least one area on Mull.

At the AGM there will be an update on progress in the formation of the Trust Port for Oban Bay. The new buoyage for small craft appears to be working well. The same cannot be said for the Ch 16 announcements about the ferry movements. Some (not all) of the deck officers making them need lessons in elementary elocution and slower speech. What a visitor makes of some of them would be interesting to know! We have brought this to CALMAC Ferries attention. Meantime a lot of hard work is going on behind the scenes to bring the Trust Port about.

PLEASE tell me when your secretary changes!