Minutes of MSBA AGM held on Tuesday, 25 November 2025 at Medway Yacht Club.

In Attendance:

Peter Norris	MSBA Chair
Sue Long	Cruising Association
David Long	Cruising Association
Royce Watchorn	Strood Yacht Club
Matt Small	Chatham Marine Watersports
Bruce Robinson	REYC, Brompton Boat Club
Richard Grad	Peel Ports
Bill Shepherd	RYE LSE
Tony Lavelle	MRUA
Fiona Craven	Border Force
Kirsty Drake	SB Marine Engineering
Chris Aldous	Gillingham Marina and Red2Red
Derek Chalk	HNYC
Martin Kuhn	Segas Sailing Club
Mike Riches	Hollowshore CC
John Jameson	MCC
Bob Oakley	Medway Watersports Centre
Christine Godber	Wilsonian Sailing Club
Phil Cope	Wilsonian Sailing Club
Derek Zobel	WSC, SYC, MNT
Jeremy Wantling	SPCC
Kacper Guina	WSC/MYC
Jason Ramsden	Wilsonian Sailing Club
Lawrence McVeigh	RNSA
Liz McVeigh	Medway Towns Rowing Club
Bob Woolford	Segas Sailing Club
Esmond White	HHSC
Matt Wordley	HHSS/MUS
Quentin Strauss	Medway Yacht Club, MSBA Committee
Philip Clarabut	MYC and MSBA Committee
Charles Hessey	MSBA Treasurer, RCC HNYC, RYA
Diane Jury	MSBA Secretary
Kelly Tolhurst	MSBA Patron

Apologies:

David Metcalfe	LHYC/MSBA
Graham Leighton	LHYC
Phillipa Dickerson	Faversham Creek Trust
Antony Moss	Victory Moorings
Martin Male	Upnor Sailing Club
Jane Male	Upnor Sailing Club
David Wraight	Kent Scouts
Cate Parrin	MRUA Secretary

The meeting was opened at 19:05 by Peter Norris.

Peter opened by thanking our hosts, Medway Yacht Club, and thanked all for attending.

The apologies were read out by Diane Jury.

The minutes of the last AGM held 25 November 2024 were taken as read. The minutes were proposed by Tony Lavelle and seconded by Christine Godber. All in favour. Motion carried.

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The minutes of the Business meeting held at Medway Cruising Club on 30 September 2025 were considered. They were proposed to be accepted. Proposed by Derek Chalk and seconded by Martin Kuhn. All in favour. Motion carried.

Matters arising - all covered by the agenda.

Chairmans Report

Ladies and Gentlemen, Members of the MSBA, as we gather here today, it's time to reflect on the year that has been. 2025 has certainly presented its challenges—for our committee and for the wider river community. We've experienced the loss of key members, and their absence is deeply felt. Yet, despite these setbacks, the dedication, passion, and resilience of those who remain have ensured that the MSBA continues to thrive.

I am very pleased to report that the current committee has agreed to serve another term, though with one change. Our colleague Philip Clarabut has stepped down to devote more time to his other yachting pursuits as Commodore of the Medway Yacht Club. Philip, on behalf of all of us, I extend my heartfelt thanks for your service, your support, and the countless contributions you've made over the years. Thank you.

At the same time, I am delighted to welcome Quentin Strauss, who has generously agreed to join the committee. We are also actively seeking further members to help share the workload of both ongoing projects and those we have planned for the future. Your involvement makes a real difference.

One of our major focuses this year has been the Medway River Strategy. I am pleased to announce that, after final sign-offs from the Council, the strategy will be presented to the final committee on 10th February 2026. To ensure full transparency and discussion, we have arranged an Extraordinary MSBA Business Meeting on 17th February at the Medway Yacht Club, where Council representatives will present the strategy, answer your questions, and outline how it will be implemented.

Kingsferry Bridge – I am pleased to report that, this year, there have been no major issues at the Kingsferry Bridge. Despite the roadworks in the area, we've heard of no delays to river traffic—an encouraging sign of smooth operations.

Peel Ports and Environmental Initiatives - Our work with Peel Ports—especially Lisa Riley and Paul Cozens—has continued this year with a strong focus on environmental responsibility. While some incidents were caused by algae blooms rather than discharges, the message is clear: we need to encourage responsible behaviour. Discharges from holding tanks must be avoided, no matter the vessel type. We are also pursuing funding opportunities with Southern Water, working towards establishing a pump-out facility at Chatham Marina. And in partnership with Peel Ports, we continue to promote lifejacket use at all times and encourage skippers to monitor Channel 74, keeping all river users aware of movements. Our collaboration remains strong, and I'm pleased to say that the next Peel Ports River Users' Forum will take place during our March 2026 business meeting.

Kent Police & UK Border Force. Our partnership with the Kent Police Marine Unit and UK Border Force continues to be productive. Together with Sittingbourne and Swale Borough Council, we have addressed unacceptable behaviour by a small number of personal watercraft users. We are also seeking discussions with the local Magistrates' Board to better understand the evidence required for successful prosecutions against misconduct on the river. We continue to work closely with UK Border Force to ensure we keep you informed of any illegal activities and the sorts of information they require to help keep us all safe and protected from an ever-increasing fraud market in the sale of some vessels.

Conservancy Fee. We are awaiting potential updates on pricing for 2026, expected from 1st April. Any news will be shared as soon as it is confirmed.

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Medway Council: Our collaboration with Medway Council has been ongoing and productive, helping maintain and improve access to the river. This includes facilities, storage, and support for vessels requiring shore-based maintenance or wintering. Adam Taylor from Medway Council will provide an update on achievements this past year and plans for 2026.

Acknowledgements. Finally, I want to offer my deepest thanks to the committee and our patron for their unwavering support over the past year. It is a privilege to serve our members and support the vibrant community that makes the River Medway so special. Thank you all for being here today, and I look forward to another year of working together to make our river community even stronger.

Treasurer's Report:

		Debit	Credit	Balance
Opening Balance 1st November 2024				£13,414.39
Income	Sponsorship		£400.00	
	Membership		£656.50	
Expenditure	Administration Exp	£937.50		
	AGM	£150.00		
	Website hosting and software	£253.38		
	MSBA Grants	£1,166.00		
	MSBA Racing marks	£1,200.00		
	Debtor *	£1,428.00		
	Totals	£5,134.88	£1,056.50	£9,336.01
Report closing balance 31st October 2025				£9,336.01

* Debtor due in 12 months

It was asked if we should be concerned about the running costs, Charles confirmed that we were living within our means and that we have supported more requests for sponsorship this year.

There are some buoys available which are too small for seaside use.

Webmaster Report.

The website has been strengthened. There is now a link that enables website information including notices to Mariners etc to be posted to Facebook. It was asked that if any clubs have events taking place in 2026, details of these events are sent to either Dave, the webmaster or Peter, Chairman so that the website and Facebook pages can be updated.

A couple of boats have gone astray in the past few days. Information relating to these vessels has been passed over to Paul Couzens at Peel Ports to investigate.

Elections.

Peter Norris – Chairman, Charles Hessey – Treasurer, David Metcalfe – Webmaster. Diane Jury and Quentin Strauss Committee members, Kelly Tolhurst MP Patron. Are happy to continue in post. Everyone from the floor agreed. Motion carried.

Peel Ports

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This has been another busy year on the river. Commercial traffic is down but this is the case across the whole of the UK. We are hoping that this picks up in 2026.

Peel Ports continues to work closely with a number of different agencies, including the MSBA, Police, Fire and Rescue on both the use of Personal Water Craft, Environmental and other initiatives. A more in depth briefing on these activities will be provided at the March Rivers Users Form as part of the MSBA Business Meeting.

A new safety code will be launched in 2026 and will be known as the Port and Marina Safety Code – this includes slipways, marinas, etc. While it is not a statutory code, a lot of it is backed up by legislation, i.e. the Health and Safety at Work Act, for example. The significant change is that the new code includes facilities as well as water-based activities. Safety is a combined responsibility of the provider and the Port Authority, requiring both parties to work together to provide a safer environment.

It is proportionate; some of the aspects will not apply to all clubs. We all need to know what we are responsible for, and we will be keep communication lines open to encourage open dialoge. We will be reaching out to you all. If you don't hear from us early next year, then please reach out. There will be a template rolled out to aid all parties submit its risk assessments etc in a standard format. You will need a person responsible for the completion of these assessments and a person to conduct the required audits. Interclub collaboration for the audit side is very much encouraged.

Each club will need to send a letter to the MCA, and you can say partially compliant. If you can demonstrate you are on the way to compliance they will be happy with that.

We will reach out to reference the bridging document, and we will send out links to go into the minutes. There are specific documents for leisure users.

The MCA will not be rolling out any training, there is nothing planned as far as Peel Ports are aware. The RYA are looking at training options. The British Port Association have done some work, large ports vs small ports, given as much support as possible. We are looking at assisting and will pass on any information we get, we may not know the answer as it will be different for the clubs.

Conservancy disks – not sure on the increase as yet. Looking at changes to the way it is done from 2027, any ideas please let us know.

Medway Council

Rochester Pier – remains closed owing to structural concerns to key piles. Survey work completed, comprehensive report expected early February. The report will identify repairs and estimated costs. This will enable decisions to be made on future of pier.

Sun Pier – pontoons dry docking completed. Repainted, new fendering and anodes installed. Tenders for repainting of the balustrades of pier and installation of safety barriers and gates are due to go live in January. A new gate on the brow to restrict unauthorised access to be installed as part of improvement works.

Limehouse Landing (LHL) – Successful use by Jetstream tours led to increased visitor numbers arriving in Medway via the river from Queenborough and Southend. Daytrips to Maunsell forts, Montogomery and 1 hour circular river tours have been popular. Significant increase in passenger numbers to and from Rochester as opposed to Jetstream using Sun Pier.

Waverley paddle steamer made 2 well-attended sailings from LHL to London. The first ever sailing from Gravesend to Rochester, complimentary tickets were given to river stakeholders including MSBA, Maritime Volunteer Service, RNLI, Peel Ports, Maritime Heritage Trust, Tiller & Wheel, Intra Maritime Trust, LV21,

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Rochester Bridge Trust, Chatham Dockyard and volunteers from several charities and sailing clubs who have helped to care for and manage river access points within Medway and provided invaluable help and advice to enable construction of LHL.

Waverley will return in September 2026, it is hoped that sailings will increase and LHL will be used as an overnight mooring for Waverley as opposed to Tower Pier, London. A ramp to improve access for people with limited mobility will be installed in January.
The council is actively seeking other suitable ships, with an emphasis on historic vessels to use LHL and we encourage MSBA members to spread the word and offer suitable suggestions.

Gillingham Pier – the long licencing process to enable dredging of the harbour area of Gillingham Pier has begun. This will be a capital dredge and is forecast to be completed late Summer 2026. The dredging will increase the tidal window for berth holders, thereafter the pier will be maintenance dredged annually.
The waiting list for a mooring has been suspended until April 2026 and is being reviewed. The standard mooring agreement will be updated and improved.

Transformation of the Western Arm is being researched, aims include a focus on improved facilities for historic ship restoration, partly inspired by Underfall Yard in Bristol. Potential funders include developer contributions from Chatham Docks, Heritage Lottery Fund and central government regeneration grants. A limited number of appropriate commercial units could be included which would provide additional income streams to improve the pier.

Salt Marsh Restoration – the Corn Exchange, Rochester, will host the UK Salt Marsh Forum in July 2026, this will provide opportunities to secure funding to improve and expand the salt marshes of Medway and by extension augment flood defences and improve habitats for birds and fish.

Darnet Ness – this is up for sale for the first time in 40 years, the starting price is £50k. The council has received several enquiries regarding this. Medway Council is not in a position to make a bid and there are no plans to purchase any additional salt marshes or islands in the Medway estuary.

River strategy meeting on 17 February 2026. We will lay on some food so please let us know if you will be attending. Diane will compile a list, it is open to all not just MSBA representatives. It affects us all so anyone who is a river user is welcome.

Kent Police

Kent Police now have 2 PWC, over the autumn and winter months, the team is being upskilled to use them. The full-time team have now all been trained and will be developing their skills, ready for April to start deployments on Saturdays and other peak times where operational commitments allow. The officers within the Special Constabulary are currently being developed and brought up to the required level for deployments. In Spring, they will be trained to be deployed on PWC to support operational deployments where possible.

The feedback from recent meetings is that PWC issues are down around the Swale area. Gillingham area still seems to be suffering some issues; officers have been deployed into this area on Saturdays where operational commitments allow, but there have been no issues.

There have been engagements with the marinas and yacht clubs around Kent Coastline to help encourage reporting of issues. There have been no other significant updates.

RNLI Sheerness

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Sheerness Lifeboat has had a relatively busy year in 2025. As of 8th December 2025 the Lifeboats have been called out 98 times. This is made up of 63 shouts for the inshore lifeboat and 35 shouts for the Shannon class All Weather lifeboat. The boats and crews are credited with assisting 59 people and confirmed to have saved one life.

Changes to lifeboat cover around the East/South East coast have had an impact on the calls the station has received. In recent times the all-weather lifeboats have been removed from Margate and Walton and Frinton. These were the flank all-weather stations to Sheerness. Whilst the Walton boat has, to an extent, been replaced by a Shannon Class lifeboat at Clacton, this is taking some time to become fully operational, mainly because of crew training and the extra crew needed. Sheerness Lifeboat has attended call outs this summer East of Clacton.

All stations around the coast have suffered in terms of manning levels. We are advised when stations close to us are unable to launch because of this and it seems to happen with a fair frequency, with the stations at Whitstable, Southend, and Burnham on Crouch all suffering. We at Sheerness have had times where we would only be able to launch one of our boats due to the number of crew available.

People's lives have changed, many now work away from the local area or work for companies where it is impossible to leave during work hours. Sheerness Station has also changed in that, for the first time on our history, we no longer have a full time coxswain/mechanic. The only full-time member of staff is our 'Senior Station Technician.' Responsible for the maintenance of the Station's Boats. We have four volunteer coxswains responsible for the boat 24/7 instead of covering for the full timer every other weekend, a massive ask.

In terms of the type of call outs we are experiencing this yea, it is, as ever, a very mixed bag. The inshore lifeboat will be sent to small leisure traffic, missing people and, increasingly nowadays, despondent people, usually adjacent to the river in the Medway towns - Rochester Bridge, Sun Pier, etc. Although Kent Fire and Rescue now keep a small plastic boat afloat at Strood, manned by crews from Larkfield and Whitstable, who will, if a crew is available, attend these calls also. There is/was a plan for them to replace this with a jetski, manned by crews from Strood, after training.

The All Weather Lifeboat will also be tasked for missing person searches, although not usually too far up river. Other taskings are mainly to larger leisure traffic, yachts, etc. in the summer months, from UK and northern Europe, as well as commercial and leisure fishing craft, workboats and injured personnel aboard commercial ships.

This time of year, the leisure traffic has slowed, but still around. More often fishing, angling boats and work boats and further commercial traffic. The crews are hoping for a quiet festive period this year. Both boats were afloat for several hours last Christmas Day searching for an 84-year-old man, confirmed to have entered the water at Sheerness. Sheerness Lifeboat Crew appreciate the support of the MSBA and individual clubs throughout the area and were honoured to be asked to officially

Boarder Force

Thank you for letting me come; my colleagues came in September. I am the local Enforcement Officer for Border Force, I assumed responsibility at the end of June, when my predecessor retired.

Our job is to work closely with Kent Police, RNLI and other authorities to raise awareness of Border Force criminality, looking at executive migrant travel, not at migrants on small boats. In the South West we have criminals using nice yachts to move people around. The things we focus on are guns, drugs and the disruption to the flow of cash.

We have not seen anything migrants here on the Medway as yet, but we need to be vigilant. Covid has changed the way things are done. There was an incident where half a ton of drugs was washed up, a big container ship dropped off some drugs and the people didn't collect in time, which enabled us to trace.

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Working on organised crime groups using larger-engined ribs. If you see anyone standing out or asking questions, e.g., how much boats cost, anything like that we are interested. We offer to come out to any club or organisation and give a 45-minute talk with photos and history. We are trying to get around everyone, we do work evenings and weekends. Share my email please give us a ring. Happy to meet you off the beaten track if required.

If you are sailing and spot something out of place, please don't get involved, call 999 if it happens there and then. If you see floating bales, please report. You could use VHF but they may be listening in so mobile phone is best

Peter added that it has been noticed that some boats are appearing on social media and being bought and sold to launder cash. If you don't know the person buying your boat, please by careful. We have had people caught up in money laundering. Please be careful to do all the necessary controls and checks. Someone who is genuine would be willing to wait while you do this.

RYA

The RYA are pleased to have affiliated clubs.

RYA Connected was well attended, with around 100 people in attendance. The RYA run workshops on how to run a club, etc, and they will be repeating these workshops at a local level. If there is any appetite, they will come and present. A list of the potential courses will be shared.

MRUA

New chair (Matt Holness) and secretary (Cate Parrin).

There were a number of Algal blooms in the summer which have caused issues on the upper River. There are a number of winter lock closures planned this year to enable dredging to take place. Please check the EA website before planning upriver trips.

EA compliance up, now 82% of boats are licensed. Currently, 15 are seized, some now for sale on eBay.

Excellent police cooperation. They ask to join the EA river patrols. Anti-social behaviour along the upper section of the Medway is now down.

Maidstone Festival was successful. New restrictions on the use of powered water pistols and water bombs in raft races were impressed which made the event even more fun.

Cruising Association

We have a meeting here at MYC next week, and there are still places. Roger Best is giving a talk on the life and times of a London Policemen, not just London, very amusing. Please book through MYC, free to attend.

January to March we have our Winter talks all hosted at the Dog and Bear in Lenham. Individual flyers will be sent out by Diane. The next talk in January is from SERV Kent who is the organisation who organise blood transportation in Kent. Volunteers run the blood and other products around the country, our MSBA Chairman Peter is one of those volunteers who comes to the aid of people in their greatest hour of need. Myself and Sue both used to work in pathology so we were the people who called for blood.

Peter reminded people that if you are thinking of departing the UK, there is the CA conference at the end of March 2026 with a dinner on the Saturday night. The CA cover the practical side, including charging batteries, anchors, VAT etc. Accommodation available too, at CA house, Limehouse.

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Dates of Next Meetings

Tuesday 17 February River Strategy – extra Business meeting, please inform Diane of attendance at Medway Yacht Club
Tuesday 24 March (Peel River Users section) at Segas (Gillingham)
Tuesday 23 June Gillingham Marina
Tuesday 29 September Mid Kent College (Gillingham)
Tuesday 24 November AGM Medway Yacht Club

AOB

None

There being no other business Peter closed the meeting at 20:15

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