



Outline Business Plan

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Summary

Introduction

This business plan documents the history of the Swanage Sea Rowing Club, its aspirations and how it is intending to reach them.

The Club's current situation is explained and the various development areas are discussed in some detail.

Objectives

This Business Plan shall be used to document the Club's plans. It may also be used to support any activities designed to help achieve the Club's objectives, for example supporting funding applications.

Conclusions

Swanage Sea Rowing Club has seen rapid growth since its launch and has ambitious plans for development in a number of areas. However, it remains based in a temporary structure situated on land targeted for redevelopment and has no security of tenure. Therefore, the Club cannot expect to maintain its current capabilities until it has established a suitable, permanent base. Indeed, the Club can reasonably expect to see a decline in its capabilities unless suitable alternative arrangements are made.

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1 Background

1.1 Club history

Swanage Sea Rowing Club was formed in November 2001. Its aim is to encourage people to get out on the sea and enjoy all forms of rowing. In particular, the Club aims to participate in the growing sport of Cornish Pilot Gig racing.

The Club primarily promotes healthy recreation by providing facilities for sea rowing in Swanage. It also offers opportunities for members to compete in regattas and Club races.

SSRC is now one of the biggest sea rowing clubs in the country. Membership has grown rapidly after its formation and has stabilised at around 100. Membership is open to men, women and children of all races and abilities.

In January 2003, the Club members voted unanimously that the Club should apply for charitable status. The Club adopted the model constitution suggested by the Charity Commission, and charitable status was granted on 20th March 2003.

2003 was also the Club's first full season and during the year squads of men, ladies and juniors competed at 6 regattas around the Southwest including the Pilot Gig World Championships in the Scillies. On average over 30 members attend each regatta with the result that Swanage has already established an enviable reputation in both competitive and social terms.

The Club currently owns two gigs and a Celtic Longboat. The first gig, "Old Harry", was bought with funds raised entirely by Club members within a six-month period of its founding. The Valentine Charitable Trust generously financed the second, "Peveril". For some time the Club also had the use of a third gig, "Pinnacle", owned by Brenscombe Outdoor Centre, which has since been sold to a Cornwall based rowing club. The Celtic Longboat, "Tilly Whim" was purchased from Club reserves in 2006 and being smaller than a gig permits a different yet still traditional rowing experience.

Early in 2005 the Club took delivery of a traditional sailing rig to be used on "Old Harry". This opens up further possibilities for the Club and its members and it is hoped will attract an even wider membership than we currently enjoy.

1.2 Strategic Context

1.2.1 The Dorset Coast Strategy.

The Dorset Coast Forum was established in 1995 to develop an holistic view of the policies and regulation that covered the uses of the Dorset coast – both land and sea. The Dorset Coast Strategy was published in 1999 as part of an EU funded programme looking at integrated coastal zone management. Recognised by the EU as an example of best practice, it contains a range of policies and actions covering all relevant sectors.

- **Policy 7.2: 'Raising awareness about the coast'**

Suggests a series of actions including 7.2f:

'... the Dorset Coast forum will encourage the revival of competitive marine activities, such as trawler and gig racing between Dorset's coastal communities and those elsewhere along the coast'

■ **Policy 6.4: 'Realising and promoting new water recreation opportunities'**

Also contains a series of actions including 6.4a:

'The Forum will seek to build support for a programme of water recreation development... This could include the need to: support bids to the Sports Lottery Fund to support water recreation development.'

1.2.2 **The Dorset and East Devon World Heritage Site Management Plan.**

The Dorset and East Devon Coast were declared England's first natural World Heritage Site in December 2001. The nomination was awarded for the coast's outstanding geological exposures of rocks that represent near-continuous deposition over a period of 185 million years. The sequence of lower cretaceous rocks in the Swanage area are particularly important for their fossil remains and here the nature of the exposures is such that the cliffs drop vertically into the sea making a close inspection possible. The site's management plan, approved by UNESCO and HM Government, contains a series of recommendations including:

■ **Objective 3: 'to welcome local people and visitors to the site at levels which it can sustain'**

Contains a series of actions including Objective 3f, which encourages the site managers to:

'...promote viewing of the site by boat.'

1.2.3 **Other Relevant Plans**

■ **'Keeping Purbeck Special' – a Strategy for the Purbeck Heritage Area.**

The Purbeck Heritage Committee published the management strategy in 1995 in order to reverse the process of gradual decline and deterioration in Purbeck. Proposals to help regenerate the environment and economy of Swanage include TOU4 (i):

'(The Purbeck Heritage Committee) will seek the improvement of facilities for marine recreation in Swanage.'

■ **The Draft Management Plan for the Dorset Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.**

The plan recognises that

'recreation is a recognised component of health and well-being'.

Its policy objectives 5.9.15 include:

- **AR5** – support and promote links between access and recreation in the AONB and good physical health,
- and
- **AR9** – develop and enhance the variety of recreational opportunities in the AONB.

■ **NHS National Service Framework (1998-2003) – Healthy Exercise Prescription programmes**

- 'Saving Lives, Our Healthier Nation' (July 1999) – Government action plan to tackle health

1.3 Sporting Context

1.3.1 The Cornish Pilot Gig Association

The Cornish Pilot Gig Association (CPGA), is the parent organisation for pilot gig clubs in the UK and beyond. It administers the sport, organises inter-club racing and supervises the building of new boats to ensure that they meet exact design and construction requirements. The CPGA have been experiencing growing pains over recent years due to the explosion of new clubs, particularly outside of Devon and Cornwall. The 2005 AGM produced a new Chairman and committee members determined to see the CPGA mature into a respected governing body. Working with the ARA (see below), the sport now appears to be in safe hands.

Swanage Sea Rowing Club was accepted as an associate member of the CPGA in January 2002.

- **National.**

SSRC enters a series of CPGA regattas for example those held at Weymouth, Mevagissey, Rock, Plymouth and Clovelly. SSRC has also entered the World Championships in the Scillies every year since 2003.

- **County of Dorset.**

SSRC is currently the most easterly pilot gig club in the UK. Weymouth Rowing Club held this position until SSRC was formed in November 2001. In the true spirit of gig clubs, Weymouth was of considerable help when SSRC was being formed. Weymouth allowed SSRC the use of their boats until "Old Harry" was built, offered coaching to club members and proposed SSRC for associate membership of the CPGA.

SSRC are actively seeking to promote sea rowing elsewhere in Dorset. For example, SSRC are in contact with the organisers of prospective gig clubs at Sidmouth (East Devon) and Lyme Regis (West Dorset) and we will be active supporters of such initiatives.

1.3.2 The Amateur Rowing Association (ARA)

The ARA is Sport England's designated body for the governance of rowing. Until last year, the ARA were strongly focussed on 'fine' rowing (sliding seats) and paid little attention to fixed seat rowing. After considerable pressure from the CPGA in 2004, the ARA have now taken the CPGA on board as their champion for fixed seat rowing and the needs of the sport are now encompassed in the ARA's SW Region Development Strategy.

This significant move means that Sport Lottery money is now available through a CPGA/ARA channel although it must be said that the precise position of Dorset remains unclear as it comes within the ARA's Dorset and Hants Region rather than the SW. The CPGA have given SSRC an assurance that their needs will nevertheless be taken into account.

As the influence of the ARA grows, so clubs affiliated to the CPGA will need to adopt a number of new codes of conduct and rules designed to standardise things like health and safety, child protection etc. SSRC already leads the way in the adoption of such policies and therefore the implications are not expected to be too onerous.

1.3.3 Neighbouring Club

The closest Club to Swanage that rows Pilot Gigs is situated in Weymouth in West Dorset. It has a similar history to Swanage Sea Rowing Club, as stated by the Club's President, Mr Andrew Goss:

"Weymouth Rowing Club was formed in December 2000. It launched its first gig in June 2001 and the second in February 2002. The storage of the gigs presented huge problems since clearly they need to be kept in a secure place as close to the water as possible. Initially we were obliged to keep them in a temporary wire cage on the public slipway in Weymouth. The Borough Council was then good enough to provide us with a site for a boat shed on Nothe Parade next to the Harbour. Here we were able to build a boat shed in the winter of 2002/2003. Not only has this provided a vital place to store the boats, but it has been just as important for the development of the club, to have a focal point for club members where they can meet and be kept informed about what is going on. The notice board inside the shed has made a huge difference to our communications."

1.4 Local Context

The Club offers a unique facility in Swanage. Membership is unrestricted, both sexes and all ages are encouraged and the Club currently has active rowing members from 10 to 65 years old. Female rowers outnumber their male counterparts. A high proportion of members have not been actively involved in sporting activity before and many had not taken regular exercise for years. The Club has offered these people an opportunity to get fit and maintain that fitness. In addition, it has also provided a social outlet for many.

The regular presence of the gigs in Swanage Bay has stimulated much local interest, both from tourists and residents alike. Future regattas organised by the Club will provide spectacular entertainment in the Bay.

The Club is aware of this unique position and, along with complementary organisations such as the Sailing Club and the Angling Club, can provide important opportunities for a Community often charged with lacking sufficient facilities. As a member of the Town Partnership initiative (see section 3.7), the Club aims to maintain and build upon its integrated position within the Swanage community.

2 Management

2.1 Guiding Principles

The Club is managed according to a set of principles that were agreed at the Club's first Annual General Meeting. These principles are:

- **DEVELOPMENT WHICH IS SUSTAINABLE**

Development of the Club will be in line with the Club's needs. The Club will not invest in assets that knowingly create an unsustainable financial burden on future club members and their management team.

- **PROVIDING A RESOURCE FOR HEALTHY RECREATION**

The primary aim will be to promote healthy recreation by providing facilities for sea rowing in Swanage. Competing in CPGA regattas will be a secondary aim dependant upon having sufficient resources available to satisfy those only interested in rowing in home waters.

- **PROMOTING SOCIAL INCLUSION**

The Club will be managed in a way that recognises the needs of everyone. The Club will encourage membership from all races, all age groups and all abilities.

- **WORKING TOGETHER**

The Club will be managed in such a way that all members of the Club are as involved as possible with the Club's activities and programmes. Communication with, and between, members will be given a high priority and regular use will be made of meetings, the website, emails, newsletters, notice boards and the media.

- **ENCOURAGING FEEDBACK**

Feedback will be actively sought in relation to decisions made by the management team that affect the members' interests.

- **RAISING STANDARDS**

The management team will manage the Club in such a way that it is considered an asset to the people of Swanage. They will encourage enjoyment of the sport, the highest standards in rowing, the best possible presentation and maintenance of the Club's assets, good integration with other users of the sea, and good behaviour from members when representing the Club in, or away from, Swanage.

2.2 Management Structure

The management structure of Swanage Sea Rowing Club is in accordance with the guidelines of the Charity Commission's model constitution for a charitable unincorporated association.

The officers of the club (Chairman, Treasurer and Secretary) are elected by the members at the Club's AGM and hold the position for the period of one year. The Management Committee consists of the Club's officers and up to 7 (not less than 3) further members. The members of the Committee are also elected at the AGM (held in April/May each year) for a period of one year.

The Management Committee undertakes all aspects of management, although the structure has been extended to include a separate Rowing Committee, chaired by a member of the Management Committee, to allow the Management Committee more time to consider broader aspects of the Club's affairs.

The Management Committee meets formally once a month in order to make the necessary decisions for running the Club and minutes of the meetings are taken. General meetings of the rowing club (no decisions are made at these meetings) are also held monthly when items of interest arising from Committee meetings are discussed with club members. Notes of the general meetings are taken and discussed at the next Committee meeting.

On 21st August 2003 a Boathouse subgroup (Chairman, Treasurer, Communications officer & Bosun) was formed to investigate the viability of a Boathouse project. Notes of this subgroup's meetings were recorded and progress reports are given to both Committee and general meetings. This committee is currently dormant, and its activities have been absorbed by the Management Committee.

2.3 Financial Structure

The Club operates a very simple financial structure, within the guidelines stipulated by the Charity Commission. The Club's accounts are inspected annually and a submission made to the Charity Commission.

Receipts and expenditure accounts are kept for the Club's cash account. The majority of the Club's financial activities are covered in this way. The transactions are categorised for analysis and budgetary purposes, budgets being set for the coming financial year based broadly on these records. The funds held in the cash account are split into restricted and unrestricted amounts, restricted meaning that the money is being held by the Club for a specific purpose, often as a result of a donation being received for that specific purpose.

A separate bank account is used to manage the Club's small lottery initiative (see section 3.6). The details are merged into the Club's accounts annually.

A third account contains funds set aside to cover depreciation of assets, in line with the first management principle of the Club.

3 State of Development

3.1 Membership Profile

The Club was started by a handful of people in late 2001. A public meeting was held in November of that year, and such was the interest that by January 2002 we had 135 members, but no boat! Membership figures climbed slowly but surely, and at the end of 2003 the Club had 186 paid-up members. Of these, 138 were adults, and 48 were junior members, i.e. below the age of 16.

Since then, membership has fallen away, and our current membership of 87 (May 2007) can be broken down as follows:-

Male under 16 (Juniors)	3
Male under 16 not actively rowing	2
Female under 16 (Juniors)	6
Female under 16 not actively rowing	4
Male under 40	5
Male under 40 not actively rowing	5
Female under 40	12
Female under 40 not actively rowing	7
Male over 40 (Vets)	15
Male over 40 not actively rowing	4
Female over 40 (Vets)	15
Female over 40 not actively rowing	4
Pensioners	5

We have held several successful Open Days, where members of the public can come and “have a go”. Great interest is always shown, and a few people have joined there and then.

Gig rowing offers healthy outdoor exercise for people of virtually any age or level of physical fitness, as it can be enjoyed on any level, ranging from a gentle social trip to out-and-out racing. The Club is therefore all embracing, and we already have several members who have some form of physical disability, yet enjoy a row at their own level, and indeed, some who cannot row but are perfectly capable of steering the boat.

3.2 Accommodation

All of the Club’s equipment is kept within a temporary ‘polytunnel’ on a spare piece of land adjacent to the derelict ‘Pier Head’ building. This kind gesture by the owner of the land has arguably been the single most important factor in facilitating the Club’s rapid expansion, in that it has enabled the gigs to be kept securely within easy access of the sea. The site is scheduled for redevelopment in the near future, perhaps as early as the autumn of 2007.

3.3 Training

Since its inception, the Club has had the opportunity to provide a wide range of learning experiences to a broad cross-section of the Community. As well as the need to ensure safe use of the Club's equipment and the safety of its members, the Club by its nature is involved in many marine-related activities for which training should be provided.

- **Beginners**

Currently, all beginners are given verbal instruction and a brief demonstration prior to boarding the boat, particularly with regard to skippers' commands and safety procedures.

- **Juniors**

Junior practice sessions are held on Monday evenings throughout the summer months. The Club places great importance on these as juniors represent the future of the club. The sessions themselves encourage teamwork, confidence and self-esteem. Particularly important, the Club is keen that rowing is another activity available in a town often criticised for its lack of facilities for youngsters. Some of our juniors have also take part in our successful coxswain training.

- **Regatta Squads**

The club sends teams to a number of pilot gig regattas throughout the season including the World Championships every May. Regular men's, women's and veteran's training sessions are held to prepare teams to a sufficiently high standard to represent Swanage.

- **Coxswains**

It Club policy that a suitable person (a 'skipper' approved by the management committee) is in charge of the boat every time it goes to sea.

- **Safety at Sea and General Seamanship**

Above anything else, the Club has a responsibility to ensure the safety of its personnel and equipment at sea. The club has an established and documented safety procedure (see section 3.4), which includes the safety equipment to be carried, use of the VHF radios, an approved skipper on board etc. This policy encourages members to book, and launch boats on an ad-hoc basis, outside of regular organised sessions.

3.4 Safety Policy

Taken from the Club handbook:

SAFETY AT SEA

The primary responsibility for safety at sea lies with the individual member. It is their responsibility to decide whether to row in the light of their competence, the ability of the rest of the crew, and the sea conditions likely to be encountered.

BOAT RULES

At least one person aboard an SSRC Gig shall be certified by the Club Management as being a competent Skipper. Preferably this person will be either the Cox or Stroke.

The Skipper is responsible for the boat and its crew and should only go to sea if he/she is confident of being able to handle the prevailing and expected weather and sea conditions. SSRC Gigs should never go to sea without a Cox.

The following list of safety equipment is provided and will always be carried aboard SSRC Gigs:

- throw line
- bailer
- anchor
- first aid pack
- flares
- VHF radio
- compass
- knife

The Skipper should always ensure that someone ashore knows that the boat is afloat, where it is going and what time it is expected back. HM Coastguard (01305 760439 or VHF Channel 16) should be notified if the Gig is going outside the area bounded by Durlston Head to the south and Old Harry Rocks to the north.

Personal buoyancy is provided by SSRC. Buoyancy should be worn by all non-swimmers and adequate personal buoyancy is compulsory for all juniors. The Skipper may insist on all crew members wearing buoyancy aids if the conditions require it.

When rowing is finished, the Gig and its equipment should be washed, checked and stowed carefully and correctly. Any damage, however slight, must be reported to a member of the Management Committee.

3.5 Communications

The Club recognises the importance of effective communications both amongst its members and outside the Club into the Community.

Members periodically receive news bulletins, often single sheets, designed to keep everyone in touch with the most up to date news within the Club.

SSRC has established good relationships with the local press and news events are regularly published in the two local papers; the Advertiser and the Gazette. We have also featured in the Southern Evening Echo and the Western Morning Times following competitive events.

The club once produced a handbook which contained the Club’s constitution, safety rules, management structure and other salient information, but this has not been updated nor re-issued for some years.

For effective, fast communication the Club uses its website (www.ssrc.org.uk) and a notice board located at the Pierhead.

3.6 Other Initiatives

As well as staging ad hoc fund raising events for specific needs, the Club is aware that it needs to generate recurring and sustainable income. The Club runs a small lottery scheme, known as the ‘1000 Club’. Members buy numbers in a monthly draw, 50% of the donations being returned in prize money. The Club also sells customised merchandise, which generates no net income but creates a team spirit amongst members.

3.7 Working in Partnership

Swanage Sea Rowing Club from the outset has set out to be embedded in the local community. For example, it has been policy that social events, social meetings and other events where practicable will take place in the many pubs, restaurants and halls available within the town. In this way it is felt that the club will maintain an open and accessible profile whilst benefiting local business.

The Trustees try to attend Town and Community Partnership meetings. This body meets monthly and comprises mutual interest groups including the council, police, churches, voluntary groups, local businesses and educational establishments. This forum provides the Council and members with an overview of community based developments and unique opportunities for groups to discuss areas of mutual interest. For example it is through this forum that we have been able to meet representatives of the Children and Families Forum and Youth Centre with a view to encouraging young people to take part in rowing, a great many, surprisingly, have never been out on the water.

Swanage Sailing Club and SSRC have a good level of cross membership. SSRC has benefited from access to the sailing club slipway and occasional temporary storage of rowing boats when absolutely necessary. SSRC are also able to use the SSC clubhouse for monthly meetings. SSRC value the assistance that the Sailing Club has offered and this has engendered very good mutual relations at all levels.

Swanage Town Council has established a Working Group to liaise with our own Boathouse Subgroup on matters arising from our need for a boathouse. The STC Working Group reports to the Town Council and has no executive powers but is invaluable in providing guidance to the Working Group as to decisions that might be acceptable to the Council with regard to planning and matters under Council control.

SSRC also seek to maintain a good image and high profile by taking part in local events. Each year we have a very successful carnival float crewed by our members and we assist the Town Council with the local 'Victorian Market' which provides further exposure for one of our craft and we hold open days to enable members of the community (and tourists) of all ages to experience a short trip in a pilot gig, these are extremely popular events. We also compete (hilariously) in the annual Swanage Lifeboat raft race.

In 2006, SSRC took up a position on the inaugural Swanage Beach Users Committee, one of the requirements of Swanage's 'Blue Flag' status.

4 Objectives

4.1 Audience development plan

Examining our current adult membership (see Section 3.1), ages are skewed towards the over 40s, particularly among the men. There are a lot of veteran rowers who are keen to row competitively, but we do have problems finding crews for the 'A' and 'B' teams. The range of the women's ages is more evenly spread.

In percentage terms of the *active* rowing membership (78) :-

63% is female	37% is male
33% female over 40	25% male over 40
22% female under 40	6% male under 40
8% female under 16	6% male under 16

App. 30% of our membership is 'non-active'. Whilst this number does include very young and supporting members, there is a group within the Club that may need some encouragement to return to rowing. If this does not happen, it is feasible that we may see a further reduction in membership numbers. We should also work towards increasing the number of 'families' in the Club as this number is dwindling against a dominant 'single' membership.

It is important to grow the membership for a number of reasons;

- Increased subscription income
- Core numbers when arranging events (both rowing and non rowing)
- Continuity of the Club
- Stronger teams
- Beneficial to the community

Future plans to increase a) overall membership b) more male rowers will include the following;

- In recognition of the importance of members' satisfaction, the Recruitment & Members' Officer will actively seek out new memberships and look after members' interests. Critical to this is the continued communication with active members, 'non-active' members and potential members (see section 4.1)
- Offer more people an introduction to the sport of rowing
- Analyse non-renewals

- Creation of SSRC 'business cards' by the PR officer. These cards can be used for distribution by members to friends, colleagues, and people in public places. The card can contain contact details on one side and rowing times on the other. Each member should carry a small supply of these cards to hand out at any time.
- SSRC Handbook to be issued to all new members on joining and any current member currently without a copy. Update sheets for and 'guides for the season' will be sent as appropriate and made available in PDF format for members able to receive it via e-mail.
- Initiate a Celtic longboat racing league in Swanage under the auspices of the Club, building on the idea of local organisations owning or sponsoring a boat and using it for regular racing in the town. This league will be a unique proposition along the South Coast.
- Continue to involve the Club in wider community projects (Carnival, Christmas Market, etc). The raised profile for the Club results in a win-win situation.
- Include 'family days' on the rowing calendar to encourage more families to participate.

4.2 Accommodation Plan

The Club has no security of tenure in its current, temporary, accommodation. Various options exist that will take the Club forward from this position, from simply re-housing the boats at a different location to establishing a permanent base within easy reach of a suitable launching site. A feasibility group has explored all available options open to the Club, and the Development Officer will take responsibility for this.

The Club will continue to enjoy local authority support and will seek the co-operation of senior officials at District and Town level.

The Club recognises that at times it will be necessary to engage outside professional assistance to take this project forward.

4.3 Access & Safety plan

The Club would like to recognise the requirements of all members of the Community. The Club's policy is to provide access to all abilities and ages, but it is currently limited by the temporary nature of its current facilities and the difficulties involved in transporting and launching 10m, 300kg boats.

Through the use of risk analysis and ergonomics, the Club aims to provide a safe working environment for its members to launch and recover its boats. The Club shall also identify any special needs of members or prospective members and make best endeavours to fulfil them.

Hand in hand with the access policy is the Club's safety policy, which the Club recognises is of paramount importance. The policy is regularly reviewed to ensure it keeps up to date with the latest developments within the Club, such as the new Celtic Longboat and use of the sailing rig on "Old Harry".

4.4 Training plan

The Club has the opportunity to provide a wide range of learning experiences to a broad cross-section of the Community. As well as the need to ensure safe use of the Club's equipment and the safety of its members, the Club by its nature is involved in many marine-related activities for which training should be provided.

The club boasts amongst its membership a number of people with significant maritime experience – local fishermen, lifeboat crew, sailors, divers, lifeguards etc – a wealth of knowledge, experience and expertise that the Club will use to the benefit of its members.

■ Beginners

As an inclusive Club and registered charity, the Club will continue to encourage more and more people to participate in the sport of rowing. Regular beginners' training is scheduled once a week during the summer months with the opportunity to discuss matters with more experienced rowers and the facility to look over the boats. Every member will receive some level of introductory training.

■ Juniors

For the Club to continue to offer juniors a serious alternative activity as well as a regular vent for surplus energy, it is vital that junior training sessions continue throughout the year and to ensure this, permanent facilities are a must. The club wants to be able to commit to providing a programme for juniors week in, week out, and our success will be measured on the number of junior sessions we are able to hold.

■ Regatta Squads

To achieve further success, the Club has established a winter training programme to maintain stamina and endurance levels with an increased focus on technique and style. The Club has its own course in Swanage Bay against which times are set and monitored to gauge progress and skill level. There will continue to be the very successful intra-club 'Carpenters Cup' Race Series held on Friday evenings in the summer months. This event is open to all Club members to experience the thrill and frustration of competitive racing.

■ Coxswains

There is now an established syllabus for coxswains' training both on a theoretical and practical level generating a number of Club-certified coxswains for both Gigs and Long Boats. Our racing Coxswains have gained considerable experience handling the vessels in many different sea conditions and racing conditions around the Coast.

■ Safety at Sea and General Seamanship

The Club considers it important to continue to encourage its 'open' policy for groups of members to access boats for rowing purposes. All boats will be led by an approved coxswain and the Club has established rowing limits dependent upon, crew experience, weather conditions and time of day. We have an impeccable safety record, and through our safety at sea policy we intend to maintain a 100% accident-free performance.

■ Future Training

The club is not static, and as new developments and opportunities appear, so we continue to adapt and set policies and develop and provide training. There has been considerable interest within the Club in the concept of long distance rowing challenges such as the Great River race, down the Thames and the Eddystone Challenge rowing to the Eddystone Lighthouse and back. As an alternative to our usual regatta in 2007 the Club will be trialling our own long distance challenge to the Needles Lighthouse and back, a distance of 30 miles

One exciting area that the Club is eager to explore is that of pilot gig sailing. The Club has taken delivery of a sailing rig for "Old Harry", funded by the Valentine Charitable Trust and this will provide a new avenue for the club to explore. Our measure of success will be when we join the small number of gigs who take part in sail racing off the Isles of Scilly each May.

Finally, we intend to build on the gentle exercise and keep fit ('physical, non competitive training') opportunities that the Club provides to the community.

4.5 Communication plan

SSRC seeks to reach further into the community. In this way it will fulfil a salient objective set out in the Club's constitution and work towards achieving its goals set out under 4.1 Audience Development. In this way it is intended that we continue to develop our membership both in terms of 'niche', diversity and competitiveness.

4.5.1 External Communications

The club has achieved a positive image and is well known within the community. It has also achieved a high degree of success on the racing circuit and good press coverage to substantiate it. The community is therefore more aware of how Swanage performs away from home. We can capitalise on this track record by maximising and enhancing relations with the press and other local organisations.

We seek to engender and further develop an environment which will encourage members of the community to try rowing who would normally be reluctant to approach an established club through a sense of gauche or shyness. In this way we hope to deepen our outreach. To achieve this we propose to continue to develop our personal communication policy based around members of all ages and ability and to have in place a system that will ensure that all new members are nurtured through the initial stages.

The website is regularly updated with news and photographs and is deliberately not overloaded with technical jargon to make it attractive and accessible to non members. The Club's branding should in future refer to the URL www.ssrc.org.uk.

Additionally, a simple way to communicate to non members and the Community at large would be to install a notice board in our 'local' pub displaying photos, news articles, news and announcements.

4.5.2 Internal Communications

Timely communications within the Club are essential and whilst embracing electronic communications (ie. website, e-mail and SMS texts) which are easiest, quickest and cheapest we must remember that not all members have access to these means, and we will retain alternative systems to run alongside.

- We will introduce a policy of issuing newsletters and circulars electronically as standard, unless members specify that they would prefer hard copy
- Where members permit, we will share the database of individual e-mail addresses, telephone numbers and mobile numbers amongst the membership to facilitate easier member to member communication.
- We will continue to encourage members' feedback, by whatever means in accordance with one of the Club's guiding principles.

Within the management structure of the Club, it has recently been agreed to hold three joint meetings per year between the Management and Rowing Committees in order to maintain focus and cohesion.

4.6 Financial Plan

The biggest project identified in this document is the construction of a permanent boat house, for which we have set a budget of £100,000. To make this a realistic target, the following provisions have been made;

As well as a treasurer, a new trustee position will be created of Sponsorship & Finance Officer, the role of which will be to identify and target appropriate funding streams.

In addition to this, the Club's Development Officer role will be key, with responsibility towards managing longer term projects such as the boat house and working with the Treasurer and Sponsorship & Finance Officer to ensure that these are delivered within budget.

Many funding streams dictate that recipient clubs must have attained the Clubmark accreditation; certainly this is the case for any Sports Lottery Funding that can only be delivered to rowing clubs via the ARA who stipulate Clubmark as a requirement. One of the first tasks of the Development Officer will be to help the Club reach this accreditation, and we set a target date of April 2008.

Each year the Treasurer will consider annual accounts and likely requirements for future years and will recommend an appropriate level of subscriptions for that period at the next Annual General Meeting.

A Merchandising Officer position amongst the Club trustees has responsibility to develop a range of souvenirs that can be sold to visitors and non members to raise a profit. At the same time, this raises the general profile of the Club and contributes to our Audience Development and Communication Plans. The small lottery initiative will be further promoted to encourage new subscribers.

Key to these initiatives being successful is to maintain feedback on fundraising and other financial details to members on a regular and frequent basis in line with our internal communications plan.

5 Summary and Priority Actions

Whilst the long term aim of the Club must be to develop permanent accommodation for its boats and other assets, there are certain steps that must be taken to facilitate this.

Priority must be to attain the Clubmark status, which is not only an indicator to the public and stakeholders that the club is properly organised and run, but is also a key requirement of most funding streams.

The Club will continue its outreach policy and will engage with the wider community to maintain support, goodwill and a growing membership.

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