

Future options/considerations for fleet vessels

1. Purpose of the report

This report is intended to provide an update on the current status of the Authority's main vessels

The report will update members on the progress towards establishing a shared use arrangement between D&S IFCA and the Environment Agency relating to the Agency's 6.8m RIB *Endeavour*.

2. Background

In March 2019, the Authority commissioned a new 7.8 metre RIB FPV *David Rowe*. The Authority's older 6.4metre RIB FPV *Enforcer* was kept in service in order to determine whether the benefits of keeping the vessel outweighed the cost to maintain and store her.

In recognition of the limited survey work planned for 2019/20 a decision was made by the Authority to store the research vessel *Blackjack* on land until she was required for surveys.

Officers have been making preliminary enquires with the Environment Agency into the possibility of sharing the use of the Agency's vessel *Endeavour*.

3. Developments

FPV David Rowe

The RIB has been used to carry out most of the Authority's at sea enforcement. The FLIR camera had been sent away for servicing due to water ingress in the cabling but is now fitted back on board and operational.

FPV Enforcer

The RIB has been used whilst FPV *David Rowe* was out of service and demonstrated the need to have cover during planned servicing and other down time of the main patrol vessel.

There are benefits for keeping FPV *Enforcer* in service, but two main challenges need to be addressed if that is to be a realistic option. The vessel has been stored at the Brixham offices, but changes in needs of other tenants meant that the Authority was put on notice that only one of the RIBs or a road trailer could be permanently stored at the site. Officers may have resolved this matter as the Salcombe Harbour Master agreed to having the RIB stored in a secure compound in Salcombe. The Harbour Master was keen to assist the Authority in its enforcement of illegal netting operations. Officers will seek to find other possible storage facilities by speaking to other Harbour Masters on the south coast of the District.

The more significant challenge and cost relates to the requirement to refit FPV *Enforcer*. The wiring on the vessel needs replacing and whilst undertaking the work it would be advantageous to move the battery bank from the transom to the forward consol. This will reduce the weight across the transom, providing slightly more free board and will mean that the battery bank remain is better protected from moisture.

Officers have obtained a quote from a local marine electrical company and the estimate for this wiring work is £6,700 (excl. VAT).

The electronics on the vessel are old and it would make sense to replace the navigation and lighting on the vessel so that all the equipment and cabling is new. The electronic package has been costed at £11,000 (excl. VAT)

The MCA inspection for the vessel is due in September this year.

RV Black Jack

The Authority's planned seagrass surveys in Torbay were cancelled and the vessel remains in dry storage at Galmpton. In preparation for the surveys, local contractors had undertaken the necessary work to prepare the vessel for sea.

With short notice, officers learnt that the sea grass surveys were to be undertaken by the Environment Agency as part of their on-going Water Framework Good Ecological Status monitoring.

There are no further surveys planned by the Authority this year that involve RV *BlackJack* so she will remain in storage

The MCA inspection for the vessel is due in September this year.

Endeavour

The Environment Agency operate a 6.4 metre RIB *Endeavour* from their Alverdiscott site in North Devon. The vessel is used by the Agency to mainly undertake water sampling programmes in the Taw Torridge Estuary but can be transported by road and undertake other activities around Devon and Cornwall, if required.

Officers have made enquires with the Agency to explore whether there were opportunities to share the use of the vessel. Logistically, having a RIB available in North Devon would have considerable benefits to the Authority. The time to travel to North Devon without towing a RIB is less and is less mentally challenging for the driver. Having a RIB available in North Devon means reactive work is more realistic and identifying and paying for suitable storage of the Authority's RIBs is also removed. It is a possibility that the Authority could take on the water sampling responsibilities for the EA and use the time on the water to patrol the estuaries in the future

The Authority has been informed that sharing the vessel is agreeable in principle. The cost to the Authority for using the vessel for 50% of the time would be in the region of £6,000 per year. In addition to this cost the Authority would be responsible for fuel usage and for any damage to the vessel during patrols.

The Enforcement team have identified a need to be undertaking patrols in the north of the District but given enforcement priorities elsewhere the envisaged use of the RIB in North Devon is much lower, may be 10-15 patrols given current understanding of the fishing activity in the area. On occasions patrols will be undertaken back to back to provide better coverage and reduce officers' time travelling to and from North Devon.

3. Recommendations

FPV Enforcer

The total work package has been estimated to cost £17,700 excl. VAT. If the Authority agreed to the work being carried out, further quotes for the work would be sought and this may reduce the cost. The RIB has two relatively new outboard engines and the hull is known to be sound. The estimated costs of the refit would likely extend the life of the RIB for another five years. If the vessel needed to be sold the refit work would make the vessel more attractive to potential buyers.

The vessel is required to have an MCA survey undertaken in September to maintain its work boat coding. If the vessel passes that survey or is subject to work being undertaken that relates to the electrical works identified, then it is recommended that the electrical works are carried out on FPV *Enforcer*

RV BlackJack

The lack of survey work this year is disappointing and it does mean that the Authority needs to understand in more detail the work plans for the Environment Agency's research vessels.

It is difficult at this stage to determine what future survey work the Authority will need to undertake. More detailed habitat mapping of some of the Tranche 3 MCZs has been identified to inform the Authority's approach to management. Government has announced that it is considering introducing Highly Protected Marine Areas within or across existing MCZ sites.

The cost of maintaining and storing RV Blackjack will rise slowly above the current estimated cost of £6,000. However compared to the cost of hiring a vessel to undertake the Authority's work, the annual maintenance and storing cost would equate to one week's surveying.

The vessel is required to have an MCA survey undertaken in September to maintain its work boat coding. If the vessel passes the survey, then it is recommended that the vessel remains in dry storage until the Authority gains a clearer picture in what the future demand for the vessel will be.

Endeavour

The potential to share the vessel has been confirmed.

It is recommended that officers seek to identify a daily hire cost for the vessel rather than an annual charge.