



Coastal Rowing Project: 1 June 2016-31 May 2017

1. The Project and Targets

In May 2016 the Club was awarded a £10,000 grant from Sport England towards the purchase of a Harker's Yard Gig as part of a Coastal Rowing Project to "*expand participation through supporting formal, organised "Club" coastal rowing to provide low cost, open access opportunities for people of all ages and abilities to get involved in rowing and keep rowing*". The Rose Family also donated additional funding to the Club for the rowing project in memory of Bill Rose for whom the Gig is named.

The Coastal Rowing Project funded by Sport England ran for a year from the **1st June 2016 to the 31st May 2017**. The project plan for Sport England was based on getting the Gig in June 2016 and having the summer season to kick start club rowing.

In the event, the Club did not get the Gig until October 2016 as we had to hold an EGM to agree to amend the constitution before receiving the grant. In addition, during the period between lift out at the beginning of November and the April lift in, the Gig could not be launched at Manningtree as there was no access to the East Hard.

These limitations made implementation more challenging but did not change the requirement to meet and report back to Sport England on the targets for whole period from 1 June 2016 to 31 May 2017.

The Coastal Rowing Project targets were:

- To organise regular Club Rowing Sessions throughout the year
- To get 50 people having a go at rowing between 1 June 2016 and 31 May 2017
- To field women's, men's and mixed teams to compete in the Harker's Yard Winter Race Series between October 2016 and February 2017.

2. Achievement Against Sport England Targets

Target 1:

- Organise Regular Club Rowing Sessions

Achievement: **Target Met**

- Two Club Rowing sessions were held each week (one weekday and one weekend) week during the year when tide, light and weather conditions allowed
- 59 organised Club Rowing Sessions were held during the year (**not** including races or the five sessions during the year that had to be cancelled due to bad weather). Some of these included more than one boat or crew.
- 355 individual club 'rows' (**not** including races)

Evidence

- Rowing Log of all Club Row Sessions and participation by individuals

Target 2:

- Get 50 people having a go at rowing during the year

*Achievement (1 June 2016 to 31 May 2017): **Target Met***

- 55 different individuals have rowed at least once during the period (**not** including the Push the Boat Out event which was before the formal start of the project, and in which 19 people participated)
 - 40% of rowers during the year were women

Evidence

- Rowing Log of all Club Row Sessions and participation by individuals

Target 3:

- Field women's, men's and mixed teams to compete in the 2016-17 Harker's Yard Winter Series (27 races over 9 events).

*Achievement: **Target Met***

- Men's, Women's and Mixed Crews were fielded in every single race over the nine events in the series
- 19 people rowed for the Club over the winter series (8 women and 11 men)

Evidence

- Race and League placing and race reports

3. Key Elements of the Project

Club Rowing Sessions

Formal Club Rowing Sessions were organised from the start of the Sport England project in June 2016. The aim through the year was to organise two formal sessions a week when tide and light allowed (one during the week and one at weekends). A total of **fifty-nine** Club Rowing sessions were held between 1 June 2016 and 31 May 2017.

Club rowing began using the Claydon skiffs Lt. Washington and Witchoar which were made available by their owners at no cost to the Club. With the arrival of the Gig in October club rowing sessions took place in the Gig, and switched back to Witchoar when the November lift out blocked access via the west compound and hard. After lift in we had a month before the end of the formal Sport England Project.

Dates for the Club Rows are in the club calendar on the website and any member can sign up and come along.

Non-members are also welcome to sign up to come along for a go at no charge and are asked to consider joining the club if they wish to carry on after three free rows in the Club Gig.

Information and Publicity

A new Coastal Rowing Section is on the club website and the Club facebook page and website are regularly updated with information about Club Rows and races.

Articles have also been written and placed in the local press and 'In Touch' magazine which have raised the profile of the Sailing Club and all of the activities that we offer (including rowing).

This low key publicity and the visibility of rowing 'on the water' have resulted in a steady trickle of enquiries via the website and the 'rowing' e-mail address from both members and non (or not yet) members.

Independent Use of the Gig

A comprehensive Gig handbook has been developed and is on the Club Website, together with a process for becoming an approved user and booking the Gig outside of the organised club rowing and racing sessions.

The Gig was taken out independently twice during October 2016 and was available on non-race days during the lift out period to approved users wishing to trailer and launch the Gig safely elsewhere.

Club Racing

The start of the Sport England project was followed four days later by the 2016 Manningtree Rowing Festival. This primarily racing event was once again a great success with many visiting clubs and boats (it even made a surplus for the club without taking into account bar takings).

Rowers from the Club also took part in other races over the summer in Lt. Washington including the Round Canvey Island Race and the Great River Race (22 miles on the Thames through London).

One of the Club's targets for Sport England Funding was to field men's, women's and mixed crews in the Gig to compete in the Harker's Yard Winter Series.

The Harker's Yard Series comprised nine races between the middle of October 2016 and the end of February 2017. Each event had a three races, for men's, women's and mixed crews meaning that at least four women, four men and a Cox were needed to compete and six men and six women are needed to make up three teams with each person racing only once. Nine Sundays over the winter months is a big commitment, and a pool of at least twenty or more rowers is ideally needed to field teams to complete the series.

The Club only obtained the Gig a week before the first race in the series. None the less the Club competed in all twenty seven races over the nine dates in the winter series.

If we had had the Gig over the summer there would have been more time to build up a larger pool of new rowers with the confidence to race. However, five new rowers who only joined the Club after the beginning of June 2016 formed a big part of the Club race crews over the winter, along with some of the more longstanding rowers.

We rarely had the same crews for two races in a row, and had rowers racing who have never rowed a Gig before but were willing to have a go. We borrowed an occasional rower from other Clubs when needed to ensure that we had had full crews for all of the races, and lent rowers to other clubs when we had spare rowers.

Nineteen different people raced for the Club in William Rose over the nine events in the series. All of those who expressed a wish to participate were able to do so.

The objectives going in to the series were to have fun, and to try not to come last. The Club Rowers met and exceeded those objectives finishing with a stunning overall third place in the last event of the season and placing ninth overall in the league out of fourteen Gigs.

4. Conclusion

A huge amount of work has gone into making the Coastal Rowing Project a success. The Project met all of the Sport England participation targets for the year despite the significant challenges of not having the Gig over the summer months, and being unable to launch at Manningtree during the lift out period.

This success will stand the Club in good stead for any future applications for funding from Sport England (through the small grants fund we can apply for £10k each and every year providing that we can show that the funding has enabled the Club to grow participation). Other Sport England funding streams are also available.

More importantly there has been an increase the amount of activity on the water. Rowing activity at the Club has increased significantly as has the number of people rowing. There have been Club rowers out on the water at Manningtree almost every week during the year, including over the winter months when virtually no one else is on the water. A number of new members have joined the Club either in whole or in part to row, and a number of existing members who have not previously engaged in Club activities have become active rowers.

The Coastal Rowing Project has shown what we always knew, that we should not categorise Club Members as 'just' as interested in sailing or canoeing or fishing or rowing. Those who have taken part cross over the categories, and people who simply enjoy being on the water will be interested in the range of activities that the Club has to offer.

There is continuing contact from individuals (both members and not yet members) who would like to 'have a go' at rowing. We are currently building capacity in particular by giving more 'rowers' Coxing experience so that they have the confidence to take crews out on club rows, and also to run additional sessions.

Some of the more long-standing rowers have also expressed an interest in completing coaching qualifications which are run by British Rowing. A number of rowers have taken personal membership of British Rowing. Three rowers have completed the British Rowing 'Man Overboard and Recovery' practical course, and we can now run this course locally as needed using the British Rowing materials and format. A rower has also recently completed the British Rowing Safeguarding Course. Both of these courses are pre-requisites for the British Rowing Coaching Qualification for Coastal Rowing. A number of rowers also have the RYA Power Boat 2 qualification and others are interested in gaining experience to take the qualification.

In summary, the Coastal Rowing Project has been a great success. In total we ran 59 Club Rowing Sessions over twelve months as well as organising the June 2016 Rowing Festival. In addition we took part in 13 days of racing away from the Club. In total there were 73 days during the year when at least one rowing boat and crew was out on the water locally, at other rowing and sailing clubs around the county, or on the Thames.

The 'Coastal Rowing Log' which accompanies this paper includes details and pictures from each club rowing session and race during the year long project. Many of these pictures and stories were shared on the Club facebook page and website during the year.

Rowing is a great team sport which has a range of benefits to individuals in addition to simply the physical activity. Our rowers during the year have ranged from those keen to compete, through social rowers to others who are happy to just come out as passengers and enjoy being on the water.

This level of sustained activity has only been possible due to the commitment of a small group of individuals (including some new Club members) who have turned out all year round come rain, come shine. The Club is extremely grateful for their commitment and support to the Stour Sailing Club and to Club Rowing.