

ROYAL ENGINEER YACHT CLUB – A NEW RACING YACHT

INTRODUCTION

1. The 2014 AGM noted the current state of the Offshore Fleet and directed Maj Rob Duke to investigate and report to the 2015 AGM with proposals for the purchase of a new racing yacht. Offers of assistance from Col (Retd) James Anderson and Lt Col (Retd) Andrew Douglas were accepted. The Meeting noted that Ragna (Elan 31) would be put up for sale in 2015, with her name retained by the REYC for the Townsend Trust.

ISSUE

2. To approve the purchase of a second-hand J109 in 2015/16 to replace Ilex III (X332) as the REYC's Racing Yacht, at a Not to Exceed (NTE) Cost of £130k.

RECOMMENDATIONS

3. The Main Committee unanimously supports Maj Duke's proposals and recommends that:

a. The REYC should purchase a second-hand J109 in 2015/16. This yacht would become the Club's racing yacht in 2016 and be equipped and worked up in time for successful participation in the 2017 Fastnet Race.

b. The NTE Cost of the purchase should be set at £130k. This could be found from the Hulls Fund plus a Nuffield Grant and cash from the sale of Ragna. A contribution from the Townsend Trust (who “own” 46% of Ragna and 15% of Ilex) would be sought. The budget would include: work and equipment to fit the yacht for class racing, participation in the Fastnet and MCA Coding; and the cost of detuning Ilex. Running costs are expected to be similar to Ilex.

c. After the 2015 Season, Ilex should be de-tuned to become the Club's Adventurous Training/Cruising Yacht. Right Royal (RR) (Dheler 32) should be retained for the moment, and the recently gifted Hebe (Norfolk Smuggler) is taken into the Fleet. The fleet mix will be further reviewed at the end of the 2015 Season.

BACKGROUND

4. Two recent analyses^{i,ii}, accepted by the Main Committee, concluded that REYC should maintain 3 Offshore Yachts, a Fastnet-capable racer/cruiser (currently Ilex), a sturdy cruiser suitable for Adventurous Training and Coastal Cruising (currently RR) and an easily handled starter yacht (formerly Ragna). Although still in sound racing condition, Ilex has become increasingly hard to sail to her handicap and to maintain in racing trim; few X332s now race on the RORC circuit and in the Fastnet. Right Royal (RR) has proved to be popular and easily handled. However she is not as robust as hoped, and is not fully up to the demands of Adventurous Training. The lightweight Ragna is already up for sale.

5. By the end of 2015 Ilex III will have entered 8 Fastnets (four fewer, but over more years than the first Ilex) and after 15 years service will have been our main racing yacht for longer than any other in our history. Although Ilex has been sailed hard and has had various repairs (including two new masts), she was very strongly built and has been well looked after. She is fast as well as seaworthy, however she is difficult to sail competitively to her handicap. Originally racing in IRC

Div 2, X332s now race in Div 4; at their peak there were six X332 Fastnet entries; in 2013 there were two. Ilex's best Fastnet place has been 29th in her IRC class of 60 to 70 yachts.

6. As well as anecdotal recommendations from across and outside the REYC, Maj Duke's Working Group (WG) carried out a paper and internet analysis of possible replacements, and narrowed the field to a choice of 6 yachts. Thereafter they visited the Southampton and London Boat Shows, consulted other Service Clubs (including RNSA and RAFSA), took a test-sail (in very cold and windy conditions), reviewed entries and results in the Fastnet, various regattas and other races (including Cowes Week and Round the Island Race), and consulted the Class Association to confirm their recommended choice of yacht.

7. The Short-List included the Arcona 340, the GT330SJ, the Dufour 36 Performance, the J109, the Archambault A35, and the X34/Xc35/Xp33. The X yacht range were all unsuitable for our purpose, the Dufour was of doubtful build-quality and no GT330SJs have yet been ordered or built. Of the others, Archambault A35, J109 and JPK1010, all have sizeable Fastnet entries. Whilst the JPK1010 has excelled in the Fastnet and elsewhere, she is an expensively tuned, out-and-out racer requiring a dedicated crew; the Archambault has a more modest record but is similarly tweaky. Unlike the other two, the J109 is a strict one-design, normally raced in-class. She has had by far the biggest Fastnet entry and is sturdier and simpler to equip and handle than the other two yachts. Consultations at the Boat Show also made it obvious that buying a new yacht of any of these types was neither affordable nor good value for money. The WG unanimously agreed that a second-hand J109 was the best and most affordable choice for our purposes.

8. There are about 80 J109s in UK out of a total production (now nearing its close) of over 400 yachts. About 40 yachts are registered with the UK J109 Association and are eligible to race in-class. Of these, a few also race to IRC rules, making them more costly to run. As well as their own start at Cowes Week (since 2002), the Fleet have their own class in the Spring Series, the Spring Championships, the Vice Admirals Cup, the J Cup, the Dartmouth Regatta and the Scottish Series (but to IRC rules). The fleet normally turns out 20+ yachts, including entries from the RNSA, RACYC and RAFSA.

9. There are currently no new J109s on order in UK; the J111 is being strongly pushed as its successor but thus far has not generated the same enthusiasm. The second-hand J109 market is brisk. Last year seven were sold, and two are presently up for sale; these are not expected to hang around for long.

10. The major expense for detuning Ilex will be fitting a roller-fuller to the fore-stay and re-cutting her foresails as required; these costs are estimated at about £2k. No other major modifications are proposed. Other running-cost savings will accrue by, when due, reducing the size of her wardrobe and replacing with Dacron rather than laminate sails, and replacing rod-rigging with wire.

11. Funding for the new yacht will come from: Hulls Fund £101k; Nuffield Grant £10k; and Sale of Ragna c£19k. A bridging loan may be needed if a suitable J109 is found before the sale of Ragna; previously Corps Funds have helped. The Townsend Trust may also contribute towards the new hull once their proportion of the sale of Ragna has been realised.

12. The recent generous gift to the Club of Hebe, a Norfolk Smuggler (a sturdy 25' gaff-rigged cruiser with a lifting keel) and a down-turn in usage of Ragna have complicated this analysis. Since she is a gift (although unencumbered), we must accept Hebe into service for at least a year. It is not yet known where she will fit into the Offshore fleet. She will either generate her own new market, or she may prove suitable to take over Right Royal's new role as a starter cruiser. With Ragna

out of commission pending sale and the new yacht not available, the Club's requirements for the third hull will be re-evaluated during 2015.

Rob Duke
Captain of Boats

James Anderson
Hon RC

Andrew Douglas
Membership Secretary

- i REYC Yacht Policy on Replacement dated Jul 11
- ii Annex A to REYC Future Hulls Plan dated 26 Oct 14