

The Marlens CIO (Charitable Incorporated Organisation) is a community organisation which runs Clevedon Marine Lake for the benefit of the community. Marlens has a 50 year lease on the lake from North Somerset Council.

The major refurbishment in summer 2015 restored the lake to "as new" condition, and triggered an explosion in use by a wide range of people. This report covers the year November 2016 to October 2017, with a look ahead to 2018.

## Objectives

Marlens main objective is still "To bring life to Clevedon Marine Lake" but now we are a registered charity this has to be expressed more formally as:

The Objects of the CIO are:

1. *To provide or assist in the provision of facilities in the interests of social welfare for recreation or other leisure time occupation of individuals who have need of such facilities by reason of their youth, age, infirmity or disability, financial hardship or social circumstances or the public at large with the object of improving their conditions of life.*
2. *To advance in life and help young people through:*
  - (a) *The provision of recreational and leisure time activities provided in the interest of social welfare, designed to improve their conditions of life;*
  - (b) *Providing support and activities which develop their skills, capacities and capabilities to enable them to participate in society as mature and responsible individuals.*
3. *To secure, preserve, protect, develop and improve the features of historic or public interest in relation to Clevedon Marine Lake and its surrounding area.*

Key elements are Recreation, Young People and Heritage.

What have we done to meet these objectives?

The most obvious achievement is the renovation of the lake, which has dealt with the leaks, improved the drainage, re-instated an island for swimmers, improved wheelchair and disability access and created a new splash pool area for young children and families.

The renovation has not changed the basic "look and feel" of the lake and we now have interpretation boards to explain the lake history. We also have a Discovery Trail leaflet leading from the pier to the lake which highlights heritage features such as the ring bolt which used to secure changing cubicles on the lakeside and the "core seat" taken from the hole drilled through the outer wall to put in the new sluice.

Young people have been quick to use the lake for recreation when the sun shines and we have also run some training for them on water safety and rescue. Building on this foundation we would like to establish a lifeguard club for the older ones, which can lead on to paid employment.

We have not ignored the older generation, installing concrete seats around the lake where they can rest while watching the activity.

## Lake Users

Throughout the summer of 2017 we had regular use of the lake by Clevedon Canoe Club, Clevedon Sailing Club cadets, open water swimmers and some schools, and we will be trying to increase this “traditional” use. In addition we had a triathlon run by an external company, a swim-run series of events run by Gavin Price and his team on behalf of Marlens, and water safety training courses for young people run by Singe Green. Clevedon's traditional Long Swim from Lady Bay to the pier was re-instated by a team led by Gavin Price with support from Marlens, Clevedon Sailing Club and Clevedon Canoe Club.

Young people are really important to Marlens. The annual Schools Day at the Marlens Festival is being expanded into a schools week during the summer term, when young people will be able to try several water activities instead of just one. We also have use by scouts, guides, schools and the Princes Trust. A great platform on which to build. We also want to engage the young people who just want to hang out, relax and meet their friends round the lake – get them valuing and protecting the lake, and using it to grow their own capabilities.

Finally there was heavy use by the general public: individuals using the lake for crabbing, swimming, boating, having picnics or just going for a stroll to enjoy the view. The island was very popular with swimmers, especially young people, and throughout the summer there was rarely a daylight hour when the lake didn't have somebody swimming and somebody paddling in the splash pools.

## Managing the Use

We see three main kinds of use:

- Individuals using the lake. This is free of charge but we need to make it easy for those who enjoy the lake to contribute to its upkeep.
- Clubs, groups or companies hiring the lake for their own activities and events.
- Individual instructors taking classes.
- Paid services provided by Marlens such as boat hire, training courses, parties, events.

In most cases these activities can share the lake at the same time, but there are some safety issues as the lake becomes busier.

Jo McCready-Fallon is the trustee who has taken on the responsibility of coordinating the different activities and maintaining the lake calendar which you can see on the Marlens web site.

## Funding

We need to build a reliable income. The lake will cost money to run properly (repairs, equipment, improvements, training, ...) these activities need coordination and we also need to market the lake and lake activities.

Principal funding sources for Marlens in the past year, have been:

- Marlens Lottery which is slowly growing. People can also join Marlens directly without joining the lottery, as “Friends of Clevedon Marine Lake”. These lottery and other paying members have a say in formal decisions such as the election of trustees, and in return... well we don't yet have much to offer in return apart from our thanks, an exclusive swim hat or

tote bag, and the satisfaction of helping Marlens to succeed, though we plan to have social events as a thank you to volunteers and members and there will be discounts for members at training courses and other events.

- An affiliation contribution from clubs or individuals who make regular use of the lake, some of whom are from outside Clevedon.
- Registration fees from qualified instructors who wish to teach clients at the lake. This also ensures we have a quality check on the instructors.
- Events throughout the year (Winterfest, Lake Day, Balmoral boat trip, Open Water Series Clevedon Long Swim, Last Night of the Proms) which we hope you will support.
- Hire of the lake for external commercial events such as triathlons and filming.
- Being visible (and raising funds) at community events run by other organisations ( Hill Road St Nicholas Fayre...).
- Talks to local groups (WI, Probus, Bridge Business Club...)
- Sales to members of the public who are using the lake, limited this year to hire boats on the lake, run for Marlens by Mat Taylor..
- Grants for specific projects associated with our objectives. In 2016-17 we obtained £5000 towards the changing rooms and toilet in the boat store.
- The Marlens Festival – but this is a lot of work and can lose money as well as make it. In 2017 the festival made a loss, but this was not borne by Marlens.
- Donation buckets and boxes.

As you can see from the accounts, this adds up to a useful sum of money each year.

## **Structure**

We have to make sure that we continue to listen attentively to the views of the whole community, not just those who pay, so we have a working structure with three parts:

- An operations team responsible for day-to-day running of the lake and associated activities, composed largely of lake users and volunteers.
  - Maintenance team led by Mike Mayhew and Alan Wilson
  - Love the Lake cleaning team led by Lorrie Parnell
  - Lake activities led by the users and coordinated by Jo McCready
- A board of unpaid volunteer trustees who carry formal responsibility, set the budget for the operations team and make sure we don't go bankrupt.
- Informal consultation and listening to provide a communication channel with active users, our volunteers, young people and the wider community. This is implemented in various ways:
  - Our online presence (Facebook and Twitter) managed for us by Carol Price.
  - Publicity and Marketing led by Kate Gay.
  - An open “Coffee with Marlens” get-together in the Salthouse bar every second Saturday

of the month – 10am at the community boat store for an hour cleaning up the lake then 11am in the Salthouse for a natter over coffee. Everyone welcome.

- Informal feedback from our volunteers, users and concerned citizens, plus contact with schools. This is led by Linda Knott.

## Volunteers

Volunteers are a key to success – and every organisation in town is looking for them!

Lorrie Parnell has been coordinating the lake cleaning team, who have cleaned the lake every weekend through the summer and after over-topping tides through the winter.

Alan Wilson and Mike Mayhew organise the technical work, again all done by volunteers (except where we employed a contractor for a specific task); see separate technical team report.

In the background we have been thinking about how to make sure that our volunteers are well-trained, kept informed, properly looked after and proud of their role ...and (most important) enjoying being Marlens volunteers.

## Trustees

The people with formal responsibility for the lake are the Marlens Charity Trustees.

The 10 trustees at 31<sup>st</sup> October 2017 were: Chris Blades, Tony Cherry, Kate Gay, Linda Knott, Jo McCready-Fallon, Joe Norman, Steve Price, Bob Slee and Alan Wilson. Councillor Colin Hall had been appointed by Clevedon Town Council, but was unable to participate owing to ill-health. Mat Taylor was a trustee until December 2016.

Marlens is governed by our constitution, which has been agreed with the Charity Commission and was adopted by our members on 12 November 2013. It is a public document and you are welcome to have a copy – just ask. According to our constitution there are three ways you can become a trustee:

- Be appointed by the members (normally at the AGM).
- Be co-opted by the trustees, in which case the members must approve the appointment at the next AGM.
- Be appointed by Clevedon Town Council (1 trustee).

Trustees are appointed for three years and can serve up to 3 terms (which should be enough for anyone!). There is no formal training for trustees, but they are expected to familiarise themselves with the Marlens constitution and Charity Commission guidance.

Kate Gay was co-opted during the year so needs confirmation by a vote of the Members at this AGM. A third of the Trustees must retire by rotation at each AGM as required by the Marlens constitution, so Chris Blades, Linda Knott and Bob Slee are seeking re-election for a further 3 years.

We have a lot of skills and knowledge within the Board, but there are some gaps we would like to fill (for example accountancy, human resources). Vivien French has volunteered as Secretary, which was most welcome. Finally, we would like a more diverse mix of trustees – volunteers please contact the Secretary ([secretary@marlens.org.uk](mailto:secretary@marlens.org.uk)) or any trustee.

## Marketing

The trustees took the decision to separate the marketing of Clevedon Marine Lake (a regional resource) from Marlens (a local community charity) ‘to put Clevedon Marine Lake on the map’, focused on visitor needs, to build footfall and income by making the lake accessible to more people. We have invested in opening a window to the lake with a new website for Clevedon Marine Lake, providing visitors with lots of useful information to help them get the most out of every visit. The new identity will be used consistently in communications to build a recognised brand which not only has a strong sense of place but also opens opportunity for merchandise. The lake website [clevedonmarinelake.co.uk](http://clevedonmarinelake.co.uk) sits alongside the existing website for Marlens [marlens.org.uk](http://marlens.org.uk) which will focus on lake heritage and community activities. Essentially Clevedon Marine Lake is marketing the venue and activities to the region and beyond, while Marlens is of interest to the local community.

## Technology

In addition to the CML website, we invested in an electronic timing system for the open water swimming events. This not only gives more accurate timing, it also improves safety by telling us quickly if there is a swimmer missing. Member clubs interested in hiring this system for their own events should contact the Secretary.

We also set up a camera which shows still pictures of the lake via the CML website. The purpose of LIVE LAKECAM is to enable people – locally, regionally, nationally or internationally – to ‘visit’ the lake remotely, to help plan their trip. The feature streams live footage from the lake to whet people’s appetite if they haven’t been before and to enable regulars to check out conditions, much like the cams you find at popular surf beaches. More visitors means more people engaging with the lake and local businesses in Clevedon.

## Environment

We care for the environment by collecting and binning plastic rubbish from the lake and its surroundings during our frequent clean-ups. We have also recently fitted a water bottle refill tap to the outside of the community boat store, alongside the cold water shower and dog bowl.

The lake develops a rich ecosystem of crabs, worms, fish and birds, so when we clean mud from the lake we try to leave a couple of metres margin round the edge to conserve the crabs, and refill the lake again on the next tide cycle.

## Finance

We are once again presenting provisional accounts at this AGM. They will be presented to an external examiner before they are posted to the Charity Commission, however we are confident that the overall picture shown by these provisional accounts is correct,

Some of the funds in our bank account are earmarked for repair of the lake. Our lease makes Marlens responsible for the first £3000 each year spent on maintenance, so we need to hold at least this sum in reserve. For challenges bigger than £3000 we can look to North Somerset for support, In the current financial climate there is no guarantee that N.Somerset would take action quickly, so it is realistic to have a cushion beyond £3000 if we want to keep the lake in service.

We also need to start saving towards the boat-store rebuild project so that we have resources to back

up grant requests when the time is ripe.

## Looking Forward

- Lake Day - on Saturday 24<sup>th</sup> March, at the start of the school Easter holiday, will kick off the summer season with a community celebration and lots of activity on the lake. We want to engage the community, including town and North Somerset councillors, and publicise the facilities available at the lake. It is planned that this first Saturday in the Easter holiday will be “Lake Day” every year.
- Schools week in June/July - Rather than have one Schools Day for all the schools at the end of the summer we want to give each school an opportunity to bring their children for a half or whole day so that every child can sample a range of activities at the start of summer.
- Boat Trip down the Avon on the Tower Belle, Sunday 24 June.
- Open water swimming events – Throughout the summer there will be events for our open-water swimmers including the annual Clevedon Long Swim which has been running since 1928. (Long Swim is not part of a series, it’s a stand alone event). .
- Triathlons – Portishead and Clevedon Triathlon Club (PAC-TRI) will be using the lake for training sessions, but so far nobody has come forward to run a public Triathlon.
- Last Night of the Proms on Saturday 20 October, at Clevedon Community Centre.
- Mud removal during October, assuming we get the necessary approval from the Marine Management Organisation.
- Light Up the Lake on Saturday 1 December.

### Development Vision:

We don't want to stop at renovating the lake itself. Further changes can enhance the value of the lake to the community.

1. **Lakeside changing room: Done** A pair of small changing rooms with a toilet in the Community Boat Store, able to accommodate a club, school class, scout troop or similar. This won't be open to the general public, unfortunately, but it is a start.
2. **Benches beside the lake: 5 done** The first five concrete benches have been well received so we will look at adding more.
3. **Artwork: Mermaid – in residence.** 3 murals created and waiting to be installed (needs warm dry weather).
4. **Boat Compound:** We need extra space for equipment to increase the range of activities on the lake. We are looking at a number of options to store boats outside the current boat store.
5. **Boathouse expansion:** The current boat store is a great asset but could be so much better. We envisage a total rebuild replacing the existing buildings with a bigger and more convenient building which could also provide toilets, teaching space and other facilities. This would need to be a high-quality building because of its position on the sea front, so would be an expensive project requiring long-term planning and financing.
6. **Public launching ramp:** The lake re-design makes provision for a broad public launching ramp into the sea from the East end of the lake. This would relieve pressure on the existing ramp near the pier and would facilitate the separation of powered craft from sail. It would

also make it easier to integrate basic training on the lake with advanced training on the sea. Launching fees could be a further long-term source of income for Marlens. Challenges include the fact that the sea off Clevedon is highly protected so getting approval could be a lengthy and expensive process. A long-term project so don't hold your breath, but if anyone expert in these matters would like to help us, this could move forward more quickly.

Joe Norman, Chair

on behalf of Marlens Trustees