ADUR CANOE CLUB

7th March 2016

Application Reference: AWDM 0261/15

In my capacity as Chair of Adur Canoe Club (ACC) I want to set out our position on the proposed new slipway for Shoreham so that that this can be included in future considerations on the topic. I should point out that ACC only became aware of the proposal in late 2015.

If I start with some background:

- ACC is a community based paddlesport club dedicated to providing access to 'any and all' who wish to try, develop, or continue a range of paddlesports e.g. kayaking, canoeing, stand-up paddle boarding etc. The club is affiliated to British Canoeing the lead body for canoeing and kayaking in the UK. We have approximately 100 members predominantly from the Sussex coastal strip ranging in age from teens to eighties and with a good gender balance.

- From our previous base at Adur Outdoor Activity Centre, and from our current temporary location at the 3rd Shoreham Sea Scout HQ we have offered 'taster' sessions, coaching, qualifications, recreational paddling and trips away. We provide all of the kit new paddlers need so that this isn't an access barrier. On summer 'Taster sessions' we can have up to thirty new paddlers out on the water with us. We use the 'nursery area' between the Scout HQ and the rail bridge for coaching novices until they have sufficient boat control to progress beyond the bridge and to the 'Lagoon' that forms by the Western bank.

- We are a 'year round' club and paddle on the Adur River every Sunday. So far in 2016 we have had 20+ paddlers for each of our Sunday sessions. From May - October we use the river twice weekly with additional sessions on Tuesday evenings. I believe I am correct in saying that we put more people, more regularly, out on to the Adur River than any other local organisation.

- Whatever the outcome of the AOAC situation we are determined to be sited as close to our current location as possible as it offers us excellent 'safe, enjoyable learning' that allows us to progress people from novice to competent paddlers on moving water.

Moving on to the slipway proposal

- As a key user of the river we were very surprised at ACC not being consulted about the proposed slipway; and even more surprised at seeing our apparent support for the project included in the CHM2hill report. At no stage have we been consulted on this proposal and if we had been we would have made our significant reservations clear.

- Having reviewed the Preferred Option A i.e. a new slipway between the Scout HQ and the viaduct we have come to a number of conclusions:

    - For experienced paddlers the new slipway would itself be an additional hazard and make paddling upstream more difficult under certain tides. The presence of motorboats would be a considerable additional hazard and would require ensuring only competent paddlers were on the water at the same time as the motorboats. Additional risk assessment and safety procedures would be required to cover this but we are, as yet, unsure of how we could fully manage the risk of, for example, incompetent or reckless motorboat users.

ADUR CANOE CLUB

- For novice paddlers - with limited or no boat control - the risks from sharing the water with closely manoeuvring boats in potentially strong tidal flows would be very high and the impacts could be catastrophic and even fatal. At this point in time I can see no way that we could let Novice paddlers on to the water at the same time as the slipway is being used. As previously stated our novice and learner paddlers have always been coached in the area where the slipway and motorboat users will be.

- Much as we are committed to getting people on the water - it is, after all why the club exists if I imagine a scenario where a paddler has a serious or fatal accident as a result of a collision with a motorboat by the slipway, then I can only foresee our Insurers and/or, a Coroner, deeming us to have been negligent in letting the two types of water users mix. This is obviously not a situation we could entertain.

- In the absence of being able to mitigate the risks faced by novice paddlers - and I don't think we could mitigate them sufficiently and still run effective coaching sessions - I think ACC would have no choice but to discontinue introductory sessions on the Adur. The implications of this for the club as a whole would be very significant as we would no longer have learners coming in to the club to keep it active and vibrant. Incidentally we have two members of the club who joined as Juniors and are now part of the GB Slalom squad and in contention for the 2020 Olympics. This opportunity will no longer be available to local young people via ACC if the proposed slipway goes ahead.

We are all in favour of a new slipway for Shoreham but difficulties in building it in the 'right' location are not a valid reason for building it in the wrong location.

I would be very happy to elaborate on this or discuss it further if required.

Yours sincerely

[redacted]

Nick Dowling
Club Chair
For and on behalf of Adur Canoe Club