

Cowes Week Limited's response to your feedback, 2013...

A Week to Remember

Thank you for your feedback on Aberdeen Asset Management Cowes Week 2013. Many of you wrote to tell us that this year was one of the best yet, and we were delighted to receive so many positive responses.

The introduction of a two-race-a-day format for the SB20 and J/70 classes was extremely popular and we hope to see a boost to these fleet numbers in 2014 as a result of this feedback-initiated refinement. We are aware that a few teething problems were experienced as a result of this arrangement which we have an action plan in place to address.

The Aberdeen Under 25 initiative, designed to encourage youth entries into the event, went from strength-to-strength and this year fifteen under 25 year old crews benefitted from free entry, courtesy of our title sponsor. We're delighted that this initiative has been increased to twenty crews for 2014. If you're eligible, don't delay; nine of these places have already been snapped-up.

The new initiatives of live streaming and online photo sharing, introduced this year courtesy of Aberdeen Asset Management, were very well received. The live streaming attracted over 50,000 views and the photo sharing facility resulted in over 1,252 photos being uploaded by 86 different photographers. We're pleased to confirm that both initiatives will be supported again in 2014, enabling fans worldwide to connect with the event.

We were also delighted that the Red Arrows returned to the skies in advance of the Friday fireworks display, thanks to funding support from 'local letterbox' and thanks also to all those that continued to provide support for the fireworks fundraising effort.

To show you the ways in which we intend to make improvements to the 2014 regatta, we've highlighted in the following pages some of the key themes identified in the course text surveys, the post-event online survey, the class wash-up meeting and your individual comments.

Following your review of this feedback response, please do not hesitate to contact our Sailing Director, Stuart Quarrie (stuart.quarrie@aamcowesweek.co.uk) on any sailing matters, or our Sales & Marketing Director, Michelle Warner (michelle.warner@aamcowesweek.co.uk), for anything else.

We look forward to welcoming you to Aberdeen Asset Management Cowes Week 2014.

Best wishes,



Peter Dickson, Chairman

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The Early Bird Catches the Worm (and pays less for their entry and berthing!)

We appreciate that there are many financial considerations associated with taking part in the regatta and we work really hard behind-the-scenes to keep your costs as low as possible.

As a result of these efforts, East Cowes Marina is offering a special "Racer Rate" for all boats taking part in the 2014 regatta. In addition, they are providing a new 3 night pre-bookable package, a small boat rate and a discount on all prices until the end of June. Alternatively, for those not worried about the comfort of a marina berth, Whitegates pontoons has an eight night rate of £22.50 per metre, providing a low cost "no frills" alternative for those looking to berth in Cowes. Conversations are underway with Shepards Wharf Marina and Cowes Yacht Haven who we hope will confirm a commitment to early bird prices, and discussions continue with the accommodation providers and Red Funnel. Full details will be published in the Notice of Regatta at the end of January.

Prize Draw

The early bird discount of 20% off the standard entry fee applies on all entries received and paid-for before midnight on Monday 26 May. However, don't forget that any entries received before the end of 2013 will be entered into our prize draw and could be in with the chance of winning some fantastic prizes including a rebate on entry fee and a free berth courtesy of one of the main mooring providers of East Cowes Marina, Shepards Wharf Marina and Cowes Yacht Haven. The winner and runners up will be announced at the London Boat Show on Saturday 11 January.

Improving Your Racing Experience

We're here to listen and make improvements to the regatta on the basis of your feedback. If you'd

like us to consider a new or different approach, please get in touch and tell us. We're always open to suggestions and ideas and will try and accommodate your wishes, if reflective of the majority of the fleet.

Course-setting in 2013

Many of you gave great feedback on this year's courses and we received some of the best scores ever in the daily text surveys.

We know how crucially important it is that you have good courses to race each day at Cowes Week, so we will continue with our ongoing efforts to further improve the standard of course-setting.

Unfortunately the XOD Class suffered various course setting and committee boat issues which are a key priority area we are addressing for 2014. Separate follow-up is taking place with the XOD Class on the specific measures we're taking to address feedback from the Class.

First-Timers

Aberdeen Asset Management Cowes Week is a complex regatta to manage, particularly given the size of the fleets and the enormous variety of boat sizes and boat speeds.

As a result, the event can be challenging for newcomers, and on the basis of feedback received, we'll be making improvements to the first-timers guide on the website, as well as refining the skippers briefing at the start of the Week. Please share any specific comments on areas for improvement with stuart.quarrie@aamcowesweek.co.uk.

Start Lines

The new position of the Bramble Start Line and its occasional use as a finish line was liked by most of you. The main feedback was that Black Group boats would like to have the opportunity to start on the Royal Yacht Squadron line on some occasions. As a result, we plan to

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sometimes start White Group on the Bramble Line with Black Group starting at the Royal Yacht Squadron on a relatively short line out to Aberdeen Alpha (but not to the west in a westerly wind against an east going tide!). Finishes on the Royal Yacht Squadron line will also be alternated to ensure White Group enjoy more RYS finishes to compensate for any decrease in RYS line starts. This move should prove popular with both competitors and spectators.

Cancellation of racing

It's always a difficult decision to abandon racing and it's never one we take lightly. Some felt that our decision to cancel racing for the boats due to start on the black group committee boat line on the Tuesday (when there was wind in that particular part of the Solent) was the wrong one. However, at the time the decision was made there was not a large enough area with wind to provide a decent course. Nonetheless, we are changing the communications systems between the race officers afloat and those ashore to make sure the system is more robust, partly to ensure that this sort of tough decision is always made in light of all the relevant and available information.

Improving the Shore-side Experience

Turn it Down

A high proportion of you felt that the volume of music during the event immediately after racing interfered with your enjoyment of the après-sail and post-race chat. As a result, a more ambient atmosphere will be the focus next year in the early evening with acoustic bands performing.

Toilets!

Toilet provision at any large-scale event is inevitably an area that will feature in feedback comments. The biggest challenge is around keeping the facilities clean. The feedback provided by our survey has been shared and discussed with the various venues with the biggest problem area identified as Cowes Parade.

We are currently in the process of putting a plan in place to address this perennial problem.

Preventing anti-social behaviour

We work closely with the police, security staff, Council and the local business community to limit the effects of the minority who behave badly during the regatta.

Extra foot and cycle police patrols are deployed in Cowes to provide reassurance and a swift response to any problems reported. Officers can use a range of lawful powers to direct and disperse people to leave Cowes for up to 48 hours if their presence is likely to cause alcohol-related crime and disorder.

While this year's feedback noted a few instances of alcohol-fuelled antisocial behaviour in the evening, tens of thousands of people enjoy the occasion safely and responsibly, and the police continue to work proactively with the community to maintain the regatta's vibrant and friendly festival atmosphere.

Competitor Benefits

We are constantly looking at ways in which we can enhance your experience at the regatta and spend more time with us in Cowes by providing a range of benefits and discounts throughout the town. This is currently under review with the venues and Cowes Business Association for 2014 but if you have any thoughts please drop a line to michelle.warner@aamcowesweek.co.uk.

Aberdeen Asset Management Cowes Week 2014

The regatta dates in 2014 are 2-9 August and the full Notice of Regatta will be available from the end of January. We look forward to welcoming you for a week of close racing, vibrant festival atmosphere and the trusted après-sail. Don't miss out!