

Commodore's Address to the AGM of the Civil Service Sailing Association – 9th May 2026

Introduction

This is a routine AGM offering members the opportunity to comment on the current position and the future and to adopt the report and accounts to 31st December 2025. We have had no Motions proposed. We have had no nominations to the Committee from anyone other than the outgoing Committee.

A more important meeting is a Special General Meeting to discuss the continued existence of an association of sailing clubs within the Council (CSSC). We are unable to have that meeting today because we are still awaiting information from the Council that will influence our decisions. More of that later.

We'll come onto the Annual Report and Accounts to the end of December 2025 in a few minutes when I think you'll agree that the Association (the CSSA) General Committee has kept Civil Service sailing in a good place. I'll concentrate on developments since January 2026 and what we know of the Council's future direction. As you know, the Council is on a cost cutting mission. We have not been made aware of any cost-cutting measures outside of sport so the Council's long-term future must remain in doubt.

The Good News

Sailing, other than National Regattas, has been little affected to date by changed Council policy. Clubs now receiving grants direct from the Council have seen an increased return on their members' Council subscriptions. Large discounts remain available for clubs leasing Council property. Membership remains steady at 2,583 on 30 April 2026 – up slightly since December.

The Challenges

The Association no longer receives any funding from the Council. We have switched to electronic communication through the website, emails and social media. We need current email addresses for this to work effectively.

The Council's 2025 invitation to bid for direct grants was not clearly communicated by the Council and equality of Council funding of sailing clubs for 2026 is unclear.

The Council has made sailing a Tier 2 sport – not a priority sport and no longer eligible for Council support for national events – though the Council is supporting a National Yacht Regatta in 2026. Council funding of taster sails is much reduced.

Changes in the Association during 2025

The Association constitution was updated consistent with the Council's direction of travel pending a thorough review once the Council's intentions are known.

The Council advocates Companies Limited by Guarantee (CLGs) to reduce risk to its volunteers and protect the Council and Association from liabilities. Six of our ten affiliated clubs have become CLGs and now corporately own assets or hold leases.

The Association is no longer party to National Dinghy or Yacht Regattas.

Council priorities

The Council wants to focus on its leisure discounting business but remains committed to delivering sport. The Council believes sport to be of interest to only a small proportion of the Council membership. The Council's figures for sport sit uncomfortably with our knowledge of sailing.

The Council wants to fund sports activities supported by many Council members. As a consequence, many sports have lost unsustainable benefits; some are benefits

that sailing never had. The Sports Transformation Programme offers the prospect of equal and sustainable sports funding – BUT for fewer sports and only for events that can be delivered within the finite capacity of Head Office. If Head Office is overstretched, it will reduce its sports offering.

The Council wants to disband its Sports and Recreational Bodies (SRBs). Sailing is a large and relatively complex SRB and the Council's timescales for change are longer for sailing than headlined for other SRBs. The Council proposes to –

- fund each sailing club directly;
- remove any need for sailing clubs to affiliate to the Association (CSSA);
- remodel the Association as the Council's advisory body for all Council sailing – dinghies, keelboats and yachts;
- renew funding for a remodelled association.

Your Association General Committee has considered the outline options put forward by the Council and agreed that –

- Direct communication between Clubs and the Council has advantages;
- Direct funding of the Clubs by the Council has attractions;
- The Association need not be affiliated to the Council to fulfil the roles that some of its Clubs find helpful;
- Pooled reserves used for interest-free loans may need to be returned to the former Divisions of the Association.

Yacht owner/operator clubs and some other affiliates find the sailing association useful and want it to continue in some form to –

- minimise duplication of effort;

find practical solutions to shared problems;
help deliver good practice across yacht owning clubs;
pool cash reserves to support yacht, etc. replacements.

Sailing clubs' reasons for sustaining an association are different to those of the Council. Your General Committee is awaiting publication of the Council's terms and conditions for the various options.

The Council proposes a halt to sailing that is not under the auspices of an internal national sailing body. Your General Committee has suggested RYA affiliation of clubs is a better route to assuring the Council and its sailing members of good practices in sailing.

The Association shares its Sports Transformation correspondence with Council sailing clubs that are not affiliated to the Association.

The current position

So far, Head Office is involved only in delivery of national sports events. Events are now routed, controlled, funded and booked through Council Head Office with the assistance of Council appointed Sports Champions – volunteers from the sport.

Funding of clubs is now through the Council's new Local Sports Sections. Grants are proportional to Council membership of a club. Clubs must target 100% Council (CSSC) membership.

Club events are delivered without Council Head Office involvement – a great relief to many. But Local Sports Sections seek a close relationship with the clubs they fund. Dinghy clubs fit well with a local model but national and international yacht cruising fits less well. The future is unclear.

General Committee recommendations for the future fulfilment of roles formerly performed by the Association will be made once the Council has set out how sailing fits into its future plans. So far, SRBs have either dissolved; become Sports Champions; or become a hybrid of Sports Champion and an SRB disaffiliated from the Council. The Council's original proposals for changes to be implemented during 2025 have become protracted.

We had wanted to hold a Special General Meeting (SGM) today with the AGM, to discuss the future. When we have the awaited information from the Council we will call an SGM through the website, email and social media.

Sailing is what we're here for...

Notable achievements in 2025 included – Civil Service Offshore Racing Club Limited returning to being a yacht owner/operator after many years of charter; East Coast Yacht Club Limited sailing Freyja to the Mediterranean and Africa – a first for an Association yacht; Portsmouth Offshore Group Limited making major improvements to its yacht facilities.

I'll close with a Thank you to Association volunteers

Huge thanks are due to all volunteers on the Association General Committee and in all Clubs affiliated to the Association and beyond who have provided sailing opportunities for Association members. Thank you. Thank yous are also due to contributors to CS Sailing who have kept members informed of sailing opportunities and the fun that has been had on many events and, in particular, to Nick Bowles for web maintenance and to Eileen Kitts for the magazine.

Please hold on to any questions you might have until after the close of the AGM.

Happy Sailing

Paul Brereton

May 2026