

EPOS and Membership System Frequently Asked Questions – No. 2

Introduction

Over the last 18 months, a small working party of Club members has looked at the benefit brought from updating the Club's membership system and adding an EPOS (Electronic Point of Sale) System on behalf of the membership. An initial FAQ document answered some of the early questions from members. It also requested further comment or questions. This document (FAQ2) is the second in the series. Again, there remain opportunities to raise questions and comments, and these will be added to the next FAQ document.

All of the FAQ and any other documents relating to the new membership and EPOS system are located on the website, the Club notice board and multiple copies placed in a folder in the Oak Room.

Current Position

All the purchased software is loaded and tested. The till, with the drinks, wine and food lists is ready to begin use as a standalone till updating the accounts system when drinks, etc are purchased. The test membership database is loaded and training starts in the use of the system next week. We expect to progress speedily through this over the next couple of weeks and be ready to start using the membership system live on March 9th. Membership cards and details of usage are expected to be mailed to you by March 16th if things progress according to plan.

In any event, keep watching this space and if you have any queries or comments, then email me at web@royalcornwallyachtclub.org or complete the box at the end of this document, leaving it in a pigeonhole marked for my attention.

I hope all this makes sense!
Phil Sissons

Frequently Asked Questions – part Two

- ❖ **Will the new EPOS card fulfil the role of a Club membership card?**
 - This is one of the key roles of the card itself. In design now, it will show a sailing image as the background with the Club name and burgee printed onto the card along with the members' name. We are looking at potentially adding an image of the member or their boat to further aid identification.
 - The agreed design is included as a separate image file attached.
 - We believe that this will be adequate to show at reciprocating Clubs to demonstrate that the carrier is a member of the RCYC.
- ❖ **Can the club membership fees be reduced if we do not go ahead?**
 - The Flag Officers and House Committee members have all agreed that the benefits that the systems will bring to the Club and its members will offset the costs in three years. Using the systems, we expect that the members will see several benefits and a number of costs reduced

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within the Club. Without the system, these savings and benefits will not be achieved. Consequently, the implementation of the systems is more likely to allow the Club to hold down membership subscription increases in the future.

❖ **Is the launch engine no longer an issue?**

- The launch engine was replaced in the winter of 2007/2008 and has run well and reliably since. (This query is not related to the EPOS and membership systems specifically but more as a query on the competing use of funds.)

❖ **What security is there against theft or abuse of the monies or personal details from the system or the cards?**

- The cards themselves will have the Club name and the members name printed on them with a barcode and a RFID (Radio Frequency ID tag, a bit like the chip in your debit or credit card). The card holds no personal data or monetary data, other than your name printed on the front.
- Both the personal data and the money associated with a card are held on the Club Server in a secure electronic environment. A limited number of people have update access to the members' information (Judith Sowell, Robert Hamer and Phil Sissons) and the environment. All access to the personal data is through the TSG system that has a number of security barriers to illegal access (passwords to access the server, different passwords to access the database, for example).
- The money that is associated with a members' card is recorded within the TSG EPOS system and can only be linked to the card via the till terminals in the bar. Top-ups and spending of the funds will use the till or the secure back office systems (which are again protected by two levels of password and accessible by the administration secretary, Robert Hamer and Phil Sissons).
- If a member loses their card, the personal data and any monies associated with the card remain recorded on the server. The card is of no use in any other till than the one at the Club, and no data is stored on it other than the membership number.
- My role (Phil Sissons) is purely as the Club administrator of the server itself.

❖ **Is there a 'payback' or 'discounted cash flow' to show how this investment will be recouped?**

- Yes there is. In summary, we expect to make a number of savings at different levels over a three-year period. If you want the detail, please email me (web@royalcornwallyachtclub.org) and I will forward it to you.

❖ **Are you intending having a marketing push and selling the club branded goods and memberships over the internet and through the Gul shop, or other such ideas to bring us in line with Manchester United shirts et al?**

- Maybe, partially! Longer term (mid 2009), we have the capability (if we wish to use it) to provide access to event bookings, regalia purchase, etc via a web portal for members.
- As the use of the Club emblem etc is limited to use by the Club members, there is no possibility (unless Club rules are changed) for members of the public to use the emblem or Club name. The market place is limited then to club members only and companies like Gull are

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unlikely to want to carry regalia and products for the Club. This is why we sell the regalia and clothing from the Club itself.

- As far as memberships are concerned, we would not 'sell' these but if a prospective member looks on the website the process of becoming a member is shown along with the various application forms. Although some contact does come via this route, most members join the Club because of contacts with existing members.
- ❖ **Why don't you hand out free boat stickers to all members with the club ID and contact details so that anyone seeing it can respond? I have no club ID on my boat at all and feel that such a sticker would look good on my transom.**
 - In many ways, the burgee and defaced ensign provide this identification, but I will pass the suggestion onward to the House Committee for comment
- ❖ **Will TSG have rights over the software and therefore the content of our system?**
 - TSG have developed their software in the same way that Microsoft has developed the Windows software. TSG have the ownership to the system software but the ownership of the data (and the responsibility for maintaining it and protecting it) lies with the Club
 - TSG are not allowed to use our data (members' details etc) in any way without our permission in writing and the data being anonymised.
- ❖ **Do you also own your website software?**
 - The website management software is purchased from Adobe (standard software) under a normal product agreement.
 - The content of the website (text etc) remains the copyright of the Club irrespective of who writes or edits it.
 - The images on the website gallery remain in the ownership of the photographer, and are used with their permission.
- ❖ **What happens to the cost and future uses if these people either withdraw their goodwill, sell to someone unfriendly or go bust? Will the club have to start again and pay out from the beginning? Will it be able to transport the code to another supplier, who could make something of it?**
 - Two areas here to consider. The first is under the maintenance contract. In this contract, TSG commit to maintain the EPOS and membership software to meet their clients' requirements now and in the future. This means that our specific future requirements will be added to those of other users/clubs and via a user group, the TSG development road map will reflect the majority requirement. As there are many other Clubs (both golf and Yacht) in the user community, then our requirements are mostly going to be consistent with the other Clubs. This is a standard IT industry approach and works well. The fact of the maintenance contract and that we pay for this maintenance as part of our support agreement is that TSG cannot 'withdraw their goodwill' without breaking the legal agreement.
 - The second area is related to TSG ceasing to trade (through either bankruptcy or takeover). With a takeover, the new owner will usually have bought the company to get the clients and the products, so will be positive about keeping the existing clients. In the case of bankruptcy,

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then the IT standard practice s for TSG to place the source code for their products into escrow and store the software with an escrow agent (usually but not solely the National Computing Centre). If they go bankrupt and no other company come sin to buy them, then we as a client can go toe the escrow agent and get the original source code for the software. We can then decide to contract with someone of our choosing to maintain the software. Clearly, this is not ideal, but it does mean that the Club is protected legally from these sorts of issue.

- In both cases above, the original investment is not lost, and the change to the new circumstances is protected by entering a new area of negotiation with the new supplier (in the second case above).
- ❖ **Is the support component close enough to be useful? The clubs you mention are closer to the company, also much bigger, and more moneyed.**
 - I cannot comment on the monetary state of other Clubs. However although TSG offices are in Southampton, they are physically under 4 hours away from us. More significantly, I have agreed a secure method of their support and product specialists accessing our system from their desktops in Southampton. Normally securely closed, if there is a problem that needs TSG staff to look at our installation, I can 'open' a 'corridor' from our server to their network and a specific desktop and user, allowing them access to our server to identify and resolve any issues. This is the same arrangement that we have with NCI Technologies for hardware and network support.
- ❖ **Is there an implied annual fee for updating things like VAT and subscriptions that may cost an arm and a leg?**
 - There is an annual fee for the support and maintenance of the system software as is the industry standard. For things that are 'data driven' like VAT rates and subscription rates, the system allows the local Club administrator to make these changes locally. Given that a Club member handles the support for this internally, the cost is nothing.
- ❖ **Have you had an independent expert consider the issue to give you his opinion - I can provide contact details for a local company?**
 - Not as such, however each of the contracts has been reviewed by a number of people in the Club who are current or ex-businessmen.
 - I have provided input on the software and support/maintenance side. Here I used my experience working at the Department of Health, purchasing systems from both very large and very small suppliers to meet the demands of the hospital and GP sectors of the English NHS. I was also the CEO of some software companies with turnovers in the region of £150m. While a member of the Club, I think that the Flags and House Committee have viewed me as an independent advisor so believe that this is sufficient.
- ❖ **What incentive is there for a member to pre-load a card when other methods of payment are still to be accepted? If we can pay by credit card we keep the money in our bank account until we receive our credit card statement, and we might get points, air miles, cash back etc. If we pre-load our card, we are paying in advance with no benefits.**

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- You can still use your credit card to pre-load your club card. This will be seen by your bank as a normal purchase, not a cash advance, and you will therefore still benefit from air miles etc, and of course the delay in settlement
- I agree that there needs to be an incentive and the current HC suggestion is of the order of a 10% discount on drink purchased at the bar using the EPOS card. You have identified a key element of the card and Richard Holt is currently working on the bar price structure with some innovative ideas for member benefit.
- Currently there has been no conclusion about discounting anything else, although the system will allow this if HC wishes to do it. Again, Richard is in discussion with the caterers as differential pricing could enable the option of non-member catering to be explored if the club were to achieve some financial reward out of the differential. Clearly, this can all be managed through the system and the EPOS till. These debates are in the fledgling stage but I hope indicates the proactive thought that is been directed at the development of the system.
- ❖ **How do you think that the system will generate more throughputs?**
 - I think this will come through focusing the existing payments through the EPOS card for all the various things that a member pays for already. The expectation is that because it is easier to pay for drinks, food etc (irrespective of the discount), there will be a steady increase in the purchases within the Club.
 - By also providing an event card or corporate card (if HC wish to go that way), then again there will be more payments going across the bar. Proof of this will only come when we implement it, but we will be able to measure a before and after position.
 - Examination of similar systems in other clubs indicated an increase of gross profits in the order of 6%, from increased throughput and increased charges to non-members.
- ❖ **Currently the use of direct debits generates a lot of work and that members rarely inform the club when they change banks or accounts. Does the extra work involved nullify some of the other proposed admin savings?**
 - Much of the hassle that Judith suffers currently is because of the way in which the Club has to handle the direct debits. It is almost a manual system for each DD. The new system will allow the electronic generation of the DD requests and the electronic receipt of the payments collected and those not collected. Standard reports will indicate which is which.
 - Currently all of this matching and cross matching is essentially done by hand, hence the workload. In a later phase where there is web access for the members to their own details and its maintenance, then members can be reminded of impending DD and make the bank account changes in a secure way if they wish. This should make it easier for members although not all will remember.
- ❖ **The controlled access to doors is a big plus for both security and limiting non-member access. Is the cost of controlled access included in the price?**

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- You are correct and controlled access of many areas including the car park is all within the scope of the system. The club is involved with a considerable number of changes in this implementation and it was considered that access control should be in the third phase. So all of the software for the control system is in the package but not the hardware and wiring for any door control, which will of course be on a case-by-case basis.
- ❖ **The use of membership cards on the launch re-opens an assortment of problems. These include activity at busy times, handling non-member crew numbers.**
 - I accept that there will be difficulties with the launch due to the loading etc; however, the card will be either swiped or held close to the reader and will show the name of the member and allow a number of crew/passengers with that member to be entered. The first stage is to monitor better who is actually using the launch and this monitoring can be done easier with the card. Once this has been analysed then the next stage of charging or not remains a decision for HC.
- ❖ **What about the legislation if the launch is a charged for service? Has this been considered or is it the first stage of phasing the launch out?**
 - The issue for charging on the launch and the legislative position (as in insurance, MCA approval etc) is all part of the HC decision-making process. I think this is identified, and some views formed based on experiences of Club members who are involved with MCA certification or who have had their yachts certified. No action has yet started.
 - I do not believe there is a conscious plan to phase out the launch.
- ❖ **Is the reader on the launch included in the price?**
 - Yes
- ❖ **I would hate to see the end of the membership handbook. I know numerous members who use it as their telephone directory.**
 - I am one of them. However, I would still value an electronic version of name/phone numbers to load into my phone.
 - There is a cost to producing the handbook in its current form. It may be that providing the same information (or more, for example including email address and MMSI numbers) in an electronic form on a CD or to be loaded into a mobile phone or computer system may be seen as a better choice.
 - There is a small issue of the timing of the handbook as in how up to date it is. There are always a number of changes and we could issue these changes easier electronically and more frequently.
 - Again, this is a decision for House Committee with input from members, but the system provides us with a wider choice of options. We are trying to ensure that the system is future proof and no decision has been made to end the handbook at this stage.
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If you have any new or followon questions or comments please feel free to either email me at web@royalcornwallyachtclub.org, or use the box below to write them down. Put the written questions into the pigeonholes in the Club

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hall under 'S' marked for my attention (Phil Sissons). I will add new and additional comments to the next set of updates and FAQs.

