

ESSAC Chairperson Report – AGM 2009

Introduction

This report is based on the report provided by me to the SSCC, in February 2008, as part our (ESSAC) application for funding for the year 2009. The results of this funding request will be addressed in the Treasurer's report.

Regular Club Activities

ESSAC provides swimming pool time for its members. Every Saturday for the whole of 2008 the Club has offered 90 minutes of pool time in the 'De Sterrenbad' in Wassenaar. During the winter period (November – March) half these times slot is allocated for dive training and snorkelling. The other 45 minutes is allocated exclusively for 'free' swimming. Outside of the winter period, diver training, in the main, takes place in the local lakes, near Amsterdam & Rotterdam, or in Zeeland. As a result therefore the pool slot assigned to the divers is made available to our swimming members. The 'De Sterrenbad' pool is often crowded, and so is the coffee table afterwards where members socialise.

As in previous years, for the winter months, the club proposed to augment the available Wassenaar pool space by renting the 'De Schelft' in Noordwijkerhout. The standard agreement we had being that De Schelft would be available for our exclusive use on Sunday afternoons, for 1 hour. This pool is ideal for members with young families. Unfortunately the committee had to terminate the use of this pool, effective end of 2008, due to the fact that the pool management company (Optisport BV) are imposing new contractual requirements on us. The key issue being that they insisted that we, as a club, take over full responsibility for pool supervision, including the liability if any accidents were to occur. As neither the SSCC nor the ESSAC are Dutch registered clubs the entering into such an agreement would leave individually members of the club personally liable. With the loss of this pool we know that we will lose several families, who for one reason or another do not use the Wassenaar pool. ***As a direct consequence of the loss of this pool, combined with the general long term trend, we therefore expect our membership to fall quite substantially (~8 – 12 persons) over the next 6 – 12 months.***

We have with the support of the SSCC Chairman raised this issue with ESTEC management as we expect to encounter a similar problem with the new Wassenaar pool, once it is transferred (in November 2009) to the new private management committee. *(I understand that ESA's lawyers are now investigating this issue and we await keenly their report. I should however point out that we (the committee) have identified one possible 'solution' to this issue. But any solution we as a club could implement will have a (membership) cost issue. Something we are keen to avoid.)*

All diving-related activities are carried out fully in line with the rules of our 'parent' diving organisation, the 'British Sub-Aqua Club' (BSAC). All instruction is performed and all Club diving activities are lead by the Club's own instructors on a voluntary basis. An extensive inventory of available equipment has been produced by the Equipment Officer.

Organised Events

In addition to the 'regular' events described above, the Club has also organised a number of additional events with strong social components.

In addition to the normal weekly diving, which takes place from April – October, the club organised two diving related expeditions. The first of these was a two week trip, in November, was a one week trip to Cozumel, Mexico. *(Interesting article is in the latest Newsletter)* The second trip, which took place in March was to Micronesia (Palau & Jap). Both trips proved popular & a similar combination of trips is planned for 2009. *(See the Expeditions Officer's report for details.)*

ESSAC

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Throughout the year the club organises various non-diving social events. These covered quite a range of topics, including a Wine Tasting & Walking weekend in the tennis Hut to the Moselle, Quiz night in ESCAPE, a Cookery evening in the Hague, BBQs & Discos in the Tennis Hut and of course the Clubs' annual Christmas Dinner/Party. The Christmas party being once again held at the restaurant 'de Sniek', Zoetermeer, as it offers a great venue & excellent food.

Club Resources

The most important 'piece of equipment' that ESSAC can offer its members is pool time, which - in contrast to the situation for many other ESTEC clubs - is rented externally at free market rates. The reason why we have to do this is that there are no suitable facility available onsite at ESTEC. The fact that we need to pay commercial rates for our core facilities means that the clubs running costs increase yearly (*See Treasurer's report.*) at rates well in excess of the local inflation rate.

The next main club resource is its' boat. This boat, a RIB with a powerful outboard engine, is heavily used in the summer months, mostly in support of diving related activities. It is however available for use by all club members in possession of the appropriate skills & legal qualifications. There is obviously a yearly cost (see Treasurer's report) in maintaining this RIB to the appropriate Dutch legal standard, and we thank the SSCC for their continuing support in this area.

A critical issue for us with respect to the boat is the fact that we are still unable to locate an on site storage location. The club is still paying to store the boat in a shed in Noordwijkerhout which means that we are forced to pay market rates. In order to keep the storage cost down we share this storage space with another local diving club. That club has however indicated that they may move their boat next year and if that is the case we will have problem funding the storage space by ourselves.

The ESSAC also has diving equipment used almost exclusively for diver training. The club does have a policy of equipment maintenance, & replacement where necessary, but major upgrading of equipment (although infrequent) often requires funding from the SSCC. Without this support dive training within the club would have been seriously hampered.

An often neglected club resource is our diving instructors. Over the years, in line with the falling membership we have seen a steady decline in the number of available qualified instructors. (*Usually no more than 3*) The situation has been compounded by the fact that the cost of instructor training, which the club cannot do itself, have risen sharply. We have however now established a small group (3 – 4) of young divers willing to become instructors. It our hope therefore that over the next two years we will be able to report an increase in this area. The loss of an instructor hits us badly. Not only do we lose a club member but more critically the loss of ONE instructor increase the strain on those remaining instructors and hence automatically means that we have to reduce the number of new would be diving members we can accept per year, by TWO. ***As we will lose one instructor this summer, this is a serious issue as the lack of qualified instructors is now limiting the number of new students we can take in & hence restricting the number of new ESSAC members we can accept.***

In conclusion therefore we expect that this next year (2009-2010) will a critical one for the club.

Best Wishes

John Nolan
Noordwijk, 08 May 2009