

Future of Yacht Recycling points to solutions for dealing with End-of-Life Boats!

The first ever international Yacht Recycling Conference to be held alongside the METSTRADE show in Amsterdam last week revealed a number of positive initiatives from within the yachting industry.

The organisers of the ***Future of Yacht Recycling*** Conference, held at the RAI in Amsterdam on 16th November, have decided to put the outcomes from the forum right up front in their review of the proceedings.

And one important outcome is that a date is already agreed with METSTRADE for a second international Yachting Sustainability Conference at the RAI on Monday 14th November 2016!

Peter Franklin speaking for YachtMedia who staged the event in cooperation with Quaynote Communications said, “we majored on some fairly negative messages about the affect of abandoned End-of-Life Boats in our pre conference publicity, quite simply because the boating industry was due for a wake up call on this issue. This is because it has been largely overlooked for far too many years, and we really wanted to get attention to it!”

“However” Franklin continued, “after a very informative day with a packed hall of delegates involved, and a very high level of practical engagement from the floor, I think its fair to say that everyone left with a feeling that the boating industry can find ways to address these problems going forward, providing it can pool resources, and work together across all sectors.”

So, after 20 speakers, expert panelists and moderators took to the stage during the day, the main conclusions, which stood out clearly were as follows:

Thousands of boats are already being responsibly disposed of.

Entrepreneurs are getting involved, businesses are being started, a number of national schemes are in place and being further developed.

For instance a network of 52 disposal points is operating around the coasts of France in the first fully regulated recycling network in Europe. It was started back in 2009 under the umbrella of the French Nautical Industries Association, and has handled around 4000 boats so far.

Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Spain and Japan have schemes for recycling, and in the Netherlands there are several independent companies offering a

yacht disposal service, with one of them dismantling a boat every day on average.

The actual costs of disposal are reasonable and fairly uniform across the world.

This conclusion was based on information presented from countries where dismantling/recycling schemes are already in place. Costing comparisons from Japan, France, Sweden, Norway, Spain and the Netherlands showed that disposal prices range from something like 300 euros for a small dinghy, to 2200 euros for a 16 metre GRP yacht, with a typical 10 metre cabin cruiser costing around 1500 euros to get rid of.

Recycling of GRP (fiberglass composite) is no longer 'mission impossible.'

Although there is long way to go before it becomes a readily available process in every country, there are several schemes in operation, and more being investigated, refined and developed in Europe and the USA.

The main focus appears to be on reducing the composite material to shredded particles, and then combining it with other materials or resins, in order to 'up cycle' into a new composite which can be used for manufacturing other usable products.

Legislation will come in the not too distant future!

Environmental legislation experts at the conference all agreed that the present legally enforceable guidelines pertaining to scraping of commercial ships and yachts over 25 metres, will be mirrored for leisure yachts, and probably by 2018.

It was also generally agreed that the leisure boating industry should be proactive in developing its own guidelines, and influencing legislators in order to ensure that the outcomes do not negatively impact upon future development with unnecessary financial instruments or other prohibitive regulations.

Creative funding initiatives are required to 'kick start' more yacht recycling schemes.

It was pointed out several times by recycling operators that getting the last owner of a boat to pay for its disposal is very difficult. Only about 10% of quotes for scrapping End-of Life Boats are taken up, even though the disposal costs are not really that high when compared to the annual cost of keeping and maintaining the yacht.

One very relevant comment was that the last owner of a boat is usually the least wealthy, and there was a consensus, that even with enforced registration schemes, there will always be a resistance to paying up when no more pleasure can be derived from the vessel.

In the worst case scenario the cost falls upon the taxpayer if an abandoned boat has to be disposed of by local authorities, which is hardly a fair arrangement. Therefore it's maybe a reasonable argument that the yachting

industry itself, which profits from the use of the boat over its lifetime, should find ways to provide funding for its eventual disposal.

Expansion of present disposal facilities is a practical possibility.

One thing that is clear after this conference, is that if the funding can be provided, then the availability of disposal points along with the manpower and expertise to operate them will grow quite quickly, and costs may even start to come down as volumes increase.

It was also revealed that around 30% of the cost of disposal is the logistics of getting the boat to the disposal yard; this would obviously reduce when operators become more geographically widespread.

The boating industry can start working together immediately!

At the end of day in his summing up, the conference chairman Udo Kleinitz from ICOMIA echoed the words of keynote speaker Carla Demaria of UCINA and Monte Carlo Yachts. In her presentation Carla had mentioned that the yachting industry was very late in getting to grips with End-of-Life boats. She said, “the linear take, make, and dispose model is over, we need to move to a circular economy. And we need to join forces across our industry in order make this happen!”

Udo went on to announce to the delegates that ICOMIA would be forming a steering group from amongst its members to generate proposals and represent the yachting industry in the run up to possible future legislation. He also promised that the group would reach out to a wide base of industry players in order to involve all parties and utilise all of the available expertise.

A follow up conference at METSTRADE 2016.

Speaking of plans for next year’s event, which will again run on the day before the METSTRADE show kicks off, Peter Franklin said, “our thinking is to expand the theme slightly, and to include more information on how the yachting industry is adapting to the concept of sustainability with its future products and service concepts.”

“Of course we want to follow up on developments in yacht recycling which will be an important part of the program, but I’m sure that there will also be plenty of interest in how the yachts of the future and their onboard systems will be designed and constructed, with due consideration for the environment and conservation of our oceans and waterways. “

Details of all future conferences at: www.quaynote.com

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