

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF BOAT OWNERS

Minutes of the fifth Annual General Meeting of The National Association of Boat Owners held on 25th November 1995 at the Friends Meeting House, Northfield, Birmingham

52 Members attended. Apologies for absence were received from various members

1. **Minutes of the 1994 Annual General Meeting** were agreed an accurate record

2. **Chairman's Report**

Jon Darlington, the Chairman outlined the work of NABO over the past 12 months and challenges for the future.

He reported the successful complaint to the Waterways Ombudsman, one of only two, over the availability of Waterway Standards. He commented that the burden of proof on the complainant was somewhat onerous and possibly favoured BW as did the fact that the Ombudsman was appointed and paid for by BW. These matters would be discussed with the DOE.

One of the major achievements of the year was the setting up of the Inland Navigation Forum, jointly with IWA. All major waterway groups had attended and a greatly improved understanding between organisations had been achieved. Improved links gave BW less opportunity to play one group off against another. Peter Lea had been invited to join IWA NAVTECAM committee as a result.

BW's consultation procedure was another success story. Not without a lot of hard work, but in theory BW have now agreed a reasonably workable consultation process. It was to be hoped that the short notice, often days but down to 2 hours, BW have given to agree important documents are now in the past. Time will tell. The latest effort was to apply inertial so that no reply within 6 days was to be taken as acceptance. A complaint has been lodged.

On the Boat Safety Scheme NABO is ably represented by Nigel Parkinson, who was also on BW's technical committee. It was believed that standards should be applied where there was a significant risk to safety, but that should be demonstrated where it necessitated work to a boat. The dates for implementation had been announced without consultation and without the full documentation being available. A complaint has been lodged rejecting the start dates because of the lack of consultation. More positively, Jon acknowledged the interest shown in canals by the new BW Chairman Bernard Henderson and hoped to be able to work constructively with him.

The next year will bring a lot of work concerning, Boat Standards, new bylaws, new licence terms, end of garden moorings and unreasonable BW mooring charges.

It was essential the NABO increased its membership, as the larger we were the more notice would be taken. He hoped to increase membership in the next year to 2500. All members were needed to support this effort and recruit at least one new member each.

Jon closed his report with thanks to those members of Council who were retiring; Christine Potter who had worked tirelessly at the Membership records; Mij Lambert at marketing; and Melanie Darlington as Treasurer, membership officer, envelope licker and anything else which came along. Their efforts were greatly appreciated and they will all be sorely missed.

3. **Treasurer's Report**

Melanie Darlington spoke to the accounts to 31/3/95. The accounts showed an increase of income but that the expenses were accelerating at a greater rate. This was largely because of the move to professional production of The Newsletter. The audit certificate was explained to members. The accounts were adopted.

4. **Subscriptions.**

The Chairman proposed, that the subscription remain the same as last year. Carried.

5. **Election of Council members**

After a ballot the following were elected: John Glock, Neil Walker, John Griffiths, Denis Smith, Andrew Sherrey, Nikki Timbrell, Pete Sterry, Stephen Peters, Peter Lea, Neil Hutchinson, Jon Darlington, Phil Bland, Penny Barber, Chris Boxall, Nigel Parkinson & Roger Hancock.

6. **Appointment of Auditor**

Ann Tilman of Tilman & Co was re-elected as Auditor.

7. **Any Other Business**

Peter Lea paid tribute to the untiring work of both Jon and Melanie Darlington who did many hours of work in addition to their other duties, filling envelopes, standing in as Treasurer and a hundred other things.

NABO AGM
Matters discussed in open forum.

1. Was Nabo too confrontational towards BW?

Comments included a few who felt this was so but the general feeling of the meeting was that it was necessary and should be continued until BW became more reasonable and followed their consultation procedures.

Direct action was something that could be considered but it was unlikely to have much effect unless it was at a high profile event such as the National.

BW appear to want to take over all Navigations in the country and if nothing was done their autocratic attitude will become worse.

3 main areas for confrontation--

1. Increase in licence fees.
2. BSS.
3. Consultation.

The meeting felt that all these aspects should be pursued. There was a need to represent the needs of boat owners where BW's policies were in conflict.

MPs and parliamentary candidates should be questioned on funding and control of BW.

On BSS it was impossible to comply with some of the standards and BW were ignoring the advice from their own technical committee.

If BW had told everybody why it was necessary to increase the licence fee in a proper and sensible manner then we might have been prepared to go along with it.

The BW Charter states that they consult with their users and this is clearly not happening. It would be detrimental to try and remove the Charter Mark as by having it BW are forced to adopt some quality standards, even if they do not attain them.

Criticism of BW can lead to intimidation and we must be ready to face it.

Water supply will be a critical issue for the future. Drier summers mean less water and BW seem to be operating a policy of creeping closure of canals. This must be an urgent priority.

BSS. BW had not changed their attitude over the last 12 months but were beginning to realise the problems. After a failure certificate had been issued there was now 6 months in which to get the necessary work done. The concept of a dangerous boat had been scrapped as BW had not consulted EA apparently. The main criticism was again the lack of consultation.

The disappearance of BW pages on Ceefax was to be taken up.