

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF BOAT OWNERS

Minutes of the sixth Annual General Meeting of The National Association of Boat Owners held on 23rd November 1996 at Hockley Port, Birmingham

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

1. **Minutes of the 1995 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 a relatively quiet year politically until very recently. Efforts had been concentrated on recruitment resulting in a 15% increase in membership. This was thanks to Denis Smith with his tireless efforts over rallies and Christine Denton who managed to recruit more members than anybody else.

NABO had been quoted in Hansard and been instrumental in obtaining an exception from the landfill tax for dredging.

Jon thanked retiring council members Neil Hutchinson, Roger Hancock and John Glock for their contributions during their membership.

NABO's main area of concern was BSS and during the year had campaigned for changes ^{Some} ~~against~~ the general view of other user groups. They eventually saw the merit of our position but by then BW had committed themselves. A formal complaint has been made to the Ombudsman over the lack of consultation. BW tried to change the terms of reference of the Ombudsman but she informed them that she would decide what she could deal with and not BW. BW were now trying to interfere with the appeals procedure by creating a list of precedents and denying appellants a hearing. This is a breach of the Act and NABO will be pursuing this.

A meaningful dialogue with Watford is currently virtually impossible and BW are taking an aggressive line. They have scrapped the consultation procedure completely without any notification and are refusing to reveal the changes to the licence conditions upon which they have not consulted at all.

The savage increase in licence fees will deny access to the waterways to ordinary people as will the huge backlog of maintenance. The new licence fee is 40% higher than a Thames licence and unless we say no now it will continue to rise. NABO was born out of a desire to stand up to BW's bullying over the introduction of the C. of C. and it was again time to stand up to them.

David Daines thanked NABO Council for their work and congratulated Jon on not pulling his punches in his speech which should be given the widest publicity possible. Peter Lea agreed to publish the speech in the Newsletter and to see what could be done to publish it elsewhere.

A statement deploring the cut in government funding for BW was passed unanimously.

3. **Treasurer's Report**

Andrew Sherrey spoke to the accounts to 31/3/96. The surplus was on a par with last year if the building society bonus was discounted. Standing orders for payment of subscriptions helped the administration and more members were encouraged to use them. The budget for the current year should also show a surplus. The accounts were adopted.

4. **Subscriptions.**

The Chairman proposed, that the subscription remain the same as last year. Carried. Agreed that if a fighting fund was needed for a confrontation with BW or others the membership would support an appeal rather than increase the subscription.

5. **Election of Council members**

The following were elected: Neil Walker, John Griffiths, Denis Smith, Andrew Sherrey, Nikki Timbrell, Pete Sterry, Stephen Peters, Peter Lea, Phil Bland, Penny Barber, Nigel Parkinson, Roger Davis & Peter Foster.

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 Jon Darlington who Had been chairman since 1993 and had campaigned tirelessly on a large number of issues. His work on the Act was the primary reason for success in obtaining the changes we did. Penny Barber presented Jon with a windlass and a framed map of the Birmingham Canal Navigations as a token of NABO's appreciation.