

**MINUTES OF THE 16th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING of the NATIONAL
ASSOCIATION of BOAT OWNERS, held on 17th NOVEMBER 2007 at
SHIPTON-upon-CHERWELL VILLAGE HALL**

Present: Stuart Sampson, chairman, in the chair, Carole Sampson, general secretary, Stephen Peters, treasurer, four other Council members and 26 members.

Apologies for absence: received from Erica Martin, Sadie Dean, Ellen Dexter, Richard Carpenter, Mr & Mrs M Clarke, Brian Holt and Peter Foster.

Minutes. The minutes of the 15th AGM held in 2006 were distributed. Proposed by Howard Anguish, seconded by Joan Jamieson, and with all that were present in favour, they were accepted as a true record. The chairman signed the minutes.

Chairman's Report.

Ever since becoming NABO's chairman, Stuart has pursued constructive consultation. Getting that right, he believes, would enable everything else to follow much more easily. The Broads Authority seems to be getting it right: proper consultation involves listening to and taking notice of what people are saying, then explaining fully, to our satisfaction, if those views are not accepted.

There have been many ups and downs this year, starting with the battle with DEFRA and the Save Our Waterways campaign, followed by the Select Committee taking evidence and issuing a report, a new Waterways Minister has been instated, together with a new Civil Service team. Stuart feels that the door we have been kicking is now open, but there isn't much to look forward to in the room beyond.

BW seems intent upon squeezing every last penny out of boat owners, even after everything we did to support them. Consultation has had its ups and downs too, with the Moorings Tenders Trials and the size of licence increases *not for discussion*. BW's new External Relations Manager appears to have things on a more professional footing. Council has to comment upon BW's Customer Service Standards. (Copies were handed out at this point.)

Our chairman stood for the post of chairman of BWAFF - British Waterways Advisory Forum, if only to make sure that no sign of apathy could be interpreted by BW. The election was contested, and he lost.

Stuart informed attendees that he would not be standing for chairman after the coming year. He is planning to cruise abroad, so a new chairman will need to be found.

Finally, Stuart thanked everyone: those who had come today, Council and other committed volunteers for supporting him and guiding him, and everyone who sent kind comments when his motivation was at a low ebb.

Financial statement.

The accounts had been distributed to the members present. Stephen Peters, treasurer, explained them. Members were then invited to ask questions.

Q: What are the not inconsiderable funds for?

A: Reserves are kept to enable Council to take legal advice whenever necessary. This can cost a few thousand pounds, more if a judicial review is deemed necessary.

Q: Could we spend more on rallies and marketing?

A: The problem is finding people to organise the events we attend, and then finding folk to man the stand.

Q: How is Melanie Darlington paid - flat rate or hourly?

A: She is paid £9 per hour, which is the rounded-up amount from the national minimum wage. When Council originally set up this system, a total annual amount was set at £4,000 per year. As members can see from the accounts, this has never been reached let alone exceeded.

Stephen explained that some of Melanie's time is spent sorting out members individual banks, which have paid more than required. e.g. every month rather than yearly. This is very time consuming, and is the banks fault, not NABO's.

Proposed Chris Boxall, seconded Ian Fletcher, and with all present in favour, the accounts were accepted. The chairman signed the accounts.

Annual subscription fees.

In line with tradition, the treasurer stated that he would resign if the membership fees were to change. He therefore proposed no change, especially as we have a healthy balance of funds, with the life membership fee continuing at ten times the annual rate.

Appointment of the auditor.

Stephen Peters explained that the present auditor, is prepared to continue in 2007-2008. He proposed that Alan Davis be NABO's auditor, all were in favour.

Q: How is the auditor paid?

A: Carole explained that payment is liquid, in the form of a case of wine, delivered before Christmas. She felt that this is most economical when one thinks about how much auditors usually charge.

Election of Council Members.

Seven people are standing for Council, namely, Howard Anguish, Andy Colyer, Stephen Peters, Simon Robbins, Geoffrey Rogerson, Carole Sampson, and Stuart Sampson.

There being no need for an election, Stuart asked the meeting if it wished to elect them en bloc or individually. All were in favour of election en bloc, so, proposed Tony Haynes, and seconded by Clive Taylor, the seven were elected to Council for the year 2007-2008.

Volunteer help

a) Rallies

- Louis Jankel will ask if his partner can help with PR.
- John Keyes offered to help.
- Clive & Jacquie Taylor will help at rallies.

- Ken & Iris Bennell are prepared to attend the National and man the stand.
- City Link will transport items to and from any event. Having an account with them gains reduced rates.

b) User Group Meetings

Carole S spoke about what is entailed in attending meetings. Stuart S explained that generally, we need eyes and ears to keep watch on what is happening, as it is not uncommon for BW to introduce something contentious 'through the back door'.

- Tony Haynes is prepared to continue to represent NABO with the EA, and also to deal with safety matters.
- David Fletcher will attend south-east area meetings
- David Bezzant can attend those for the Gloucester & Sharpness canal

One regional secretary informed attendees that he needed support as he could not always attend the meetings. Carole answered that it had been decided at the last Council meeting that the appropriate part of the membership list which pertains to each area will be distributed to regional secretaries, so that they can phone members directly to ask for help when needed.

c) Membership

One member reported that there are thousands of boaters using the system who do not belong to any organisation. They need to be targeted. The IWA has the same problem in finding new members. People are leaving NABO for genuine reasons, but BW licence figures show that there are new people taking up boating.

- It was suggested that there should be some stickers to encourage others to talk to members about our organisation.

Q - Could a list of rallies at which help is needed be publicised in NABO News?

A - It was explained that an offer had been made to pay for a member to attend any size of boat gathering in return for a banner on the boats' roof (supplied) etc., but no-one has taken up the offer. We do ask for help at specific events, but not enough is forthcoming.

At this point, Stephen Peters gave a short membership report.

There are 1501 members, compared to 1678 last year. The reasons for this are genuine: age, discontinuation of boating, some of the RCR members who enjoyed one years' free membership have not joined. The following comments came from the floor:

- that the membership numbers are inflated due to SIBUG members.
- Some are giving up due to future costs
- People join organisations due to personal need
- NABO should shout its achievements
- NABO is perceived as a narrowboat organisation
- NABO has made huge strides made over the last five years, and it should be known for its good work. Council should consider advertising.
- every member should have a membership application form to give out. One should be included with every NABO News. Council will look into this. Also, a version should be on our website. Consider on-line joining via paypal.
- perhaps members could 'adopt a boatyard', where a boat builder gives our membership details.

d) Red diesel

Stephen Peters informed members of the response which had been sent regarding the removal of the derogation of duty due in November 2008. Points made were:

- impossible to remove the red dye from tanks
- regarding the increase in duty, we oppose being charged the same rate as per road diesel - why should boaters pay the portion for road maintenance? There should be a reduced rate to allow for the fuel used for heating and charging, and this should be at the point of sale rather than a re-claim system, which would be more costly to organise. For this, we thought a 25% reduction would be appropriate.

Comments from the floor were:

- a good, appropriate response
- if the suggestions are followed, it would do away with the need to have two tanks
- 25% is thought to be very low

Q: Has the UK given up the fight with Brussels?

A: yes, all the countries concerned have lost the case.

e) BW customer standards draft

Stuart S had handed out copies of this. He commented that he feels we should campaign that if BW is to increase licence fees, it shouldn't get 'owt for nowt'. Comments were:

• Who will monitor standards? Unless this is done externally, they aren't worth the paper they are written on. At present, BW can divide and conquer: the time has come for a unified voice. Stuart thought the re-establishment of NINF should be considered.

• Perhaps user group meetings should be taken over and run by users. Carole S mentioned WWUF, where this already happens in Worcestershire. Stuart S spoke about the way BWAFF is organised, and it had been suggested that the national Boating Issues Meeting be similarly organised.

• Concern was expressed that there is no mention of the word 'draft' on the document or the website.

• Paragraphs 18 and 23 should be removed - these items should be standard procedure regardless of the licence increase.

• Performance standards should be linked to job bonuses

• there has been no consultation of the 'Annual Review and Consultation' document

• re item 27: West Midlands has committed substantial funds to the placing of three bollards on every lock (all narrow) + providing lock ladders. Does this mean that safety is to come before all else? Enquiries will be made.

• not all boats are full length. Cruisers have a need for a centre bollard.

• the itemised customer standards are just minutiae. We should press for an external auditing system to check upon performance. Maybe users could report back?

• we need to define what won't get done in spite of the standard

• maybe the Waterway Reports Forum could help.

f) Licence fee increases

3% of users are paying 11-12% of the cost of operating the waterways. Restricting the increases to private boaters means that we will be subsidising hirers. It was thought that boaters are easy targets, giving quicker access to money. DEFRA doesn't care. One member had heard that DEFRA thinks the increases are not enough. It was suggested that local authorities should contribute for the waterway as it is a local amenity.

g) European Boating Organisation

A member proposed a European boating organisation in order to directly press the interests of UK boaters in Brussels. In response, it was pointed out that such an organisation already exists, that the RYA represents the UK, and that we should make representations to that body regarding greater input by the inland waterways organisations.

There followed a buffet lunch.

Presentation of NABO officers for 2007-2008

Chairman:	Stuart Sampson
Vice chairman:	Howard Anguish
General Secretary:	Carole Sampson
Treasurer:	Stephen Peters

OPEN MEETING.

The meeting was joined by John Edmonds, chairman of the Inland Waterways Advisory Council.

After being introduced by the chairman, Mr Edmonds addressed the meeting.

IWAC used to be IWAAC, now it is IWAC without the amenities! Its purpose is to advise DEFRA on all matters concerning the waterways. It has two members of staff, compared to DEFRA's three. Much of what it does is governed by the 'Waterways for Tomorrow' document, which was published in 2000. Now it is out-of-date, and needs to be regenerated, and brought up to standard. It is no use telling DEFRA that it needs to give more money to the waterways - we need to be much cleverer than that.

Waterways can help with many current problems, such as climate change, public health, and water management.

Government has been the source of funding. No increase in the level of funding is realistic. Campaigning makes DEFRA realise that boats are important and that no further cuts should take place. The interdepartmental committee, if it is ever set up, will provide no quick fix, as other departments see the issue as DEFRA's alone.

We should ask: Where does all the money go that is generated? And maybe local authorities should bear responsibility for waterways in their areas.

IWAC is trying to open up these arguments, and also trying to put finance under a firmer footing for all navigation authorities, including the smaller ones.

There followed questions from the floor.

Q: Could not rateable income resulting from regeneration be given for waterways maintenance?

Q: To gain extra income:

- i) users should pay. Anglers and cyclists could pay, say, £5 each.
- ii) local authorities could take on the repairs to towpaths + dealing with fly tipping. The money saved could amount to £5 million. Local authorities should pay as their residents would benefit directly, and a better environment would be grounds for increases in Council tax. The money could be used to pay a lengthsman who would check on things, collect angling and cycling fees, check boat licences, and look at overstaying problems etc.

A: That is the easy part, and no-one would disagree with the arguments. The hard part is **how** do you get them to pay, when they don't pay at the moment, how can things be changed.

Q: Currently, anglers pay the EA for their rod licences. This amounts to approximately £20 million per year, theoretically used to restock the fish. Nothing goes to BW.

A: The same answer - **how**? If the EA gives money to BW, then it will be in greater strife. It would just be shifting the problem around.

Q: Shouldn't there be some sort of traceability of funds once a property etc. has been sold off? There is no transparency with BW.

A: If one seriously suspects that BW directors are behaving dishonestly, then the best way to deal with it is to approach friendly MP's and get them to ask questions. But first, users need to be much clearer what they want to get out of it.

Q: Cycle permits have gone as the system was impossible to police. Can developers be made to pay towards the waterways within urban areas?

A: Yes, the facility to do this already exists.

Q: The electorate using the towpaths has no idea of the underfunding problems, and are horrified. People believe the funding comes from the government.

A: We need to be realistic about getting more money out of DEFRA.

Q: Boaters are unsure as to what they get for their money.

A: Clarity of thought as to what they need should be decided.

Q: Where should boaters / organisations go when they think their suggestions are being ignored?

A: IWAC might be able to help. If we can convince IWAC, they might pursue the matter with government.

Q: Are you saying that there can be direct dialogue between NABO and IWAC?

A: Yes. It's what we're here for.

Q: More money is needed. The solution seems to be to extract it from 1% of users, the private boater. With other increases due, people are questioning their investment in the waterways. What can boaters do?

A: Economists reckon that three increases will be tolerated. More than that, the subsequent decline in boat owning numbers will yield no extra return. EA and BW figures need to be

scrutinised.

Q: Do you have a view on the ethical and moral aspects of the moorings tendering trial?

A: Yes, but I'm not prepared to share it with you. IWAC does not campaign. We are delaying consideration of this issue until after the consultation.

Q: More boats = more wear and tear = greater cost of maintenance. Who on BW's Board represents users?

A: A rhetorical question: I will think about it on the way home.

Q: (i) Are BW's commercial enterprises sustainable? (ii) Is BW fit for purpose?

A: (i) Difficult to conclude on this. (ii) The only solution would be to divide BW into two companies. This would be far from ideal as the government might cream off profits from one and not give it back to the other.

Q: Hasn't BW already done this with a 49% interest in ISIS, for example?

A: If you think something is going on 'against the national interest', then approach MP's.

Q: BW is acting in an arrogant manner towards users. There could come a time when IWAC will have to say to government that BW and its customers are no longer communicating.

A: The EFRA committee's report was not impressed by relationships between BW and users.

Q: Where will the waterways be in twenty years time? There'll be a doubling of boat numbers, a lack of marinas etc.. Does IWAC consider the future?

A: We ask ourselves, what is the potential? How can that be delivered and funded? More waterway regeneration enlarges the system, but overall the asset declines due to insufficient funding for an enlarged network.

Q: Two comments. (i) An MP will only deal with his/her own constituents, (ii) As a local councillor, I know that councils do not have the money to give towards its local canal, but it might if such investment gave a return which furthers its core objectives.

The meeting closed at 3.15pm.

Proposed : Joan Jamieson
Second : Andy Colyer

Signed : 

NABO Audit at 31st March 2007

Auditor's Report to the Members of the National Association of Boat Owners

I have examined the Books and Records of the Association and am satisfied from the information presented to me that the Financial Statements give a true and fair view both of the Association's funds at 31st March 2007 and the surplus for the year ended on that date.

Financial Issues from previous Audits

A number of financial issues arose during the course of the 2005 Audit, all of which now appear to have been addressed with the exception of:

Stock held in Central Store

The stocks held in the Central Store have still not been verified with the accounting records. I recommend the Association ensures a physical stock-take is undertaken next time the store is emptied (e.g. after the next rally). From the information presented to me, the current situation has no material effect on the Association's Financial Statements.

Financial Issues – 2007 Audit

From information given to me and from ensuing discussions with the Accountants, no new financial issues arose during the course of the 2007 Audit.

Signed:



16th November 2007

Alan C Davis, FCCA,

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF BOAT OWNERS

INCOME & EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT FOR YEAR ENDED

31 MARCH 2007

		31.03.07	31.03.06
		£	£
INCOME			
Membership Fees	1	17,806	20,072
Donations		959	934
Profit on Merchandise Sales		109	273
Advertising Revenue		0	0
Deposit Interest	2	922	98
Sale of "Boats on Show" Share		334	333
Other Income		706	78
		<u>20,836</u>	<u>21,788</u>
LESS EXPENSES			
Printing & Distribution of Newsletter		6,786	6,941
Rallies & Marketing Expenditure		683	933
Printing, Postage & Stationery		783	1,405
Telephone and Office Expenses		589	886
Travelling & Conference Expenses		2,803	3,332
Room Hire & Meeting Expenses		760	486
Subscriptions & Donations		569	260
Insurance		1,127	1,240
Secretarial & Computer Support		1,846	2,433
Accountancy costs		327	315
Storage Costs		680	490
Legal Costs		0	940
Web Site Costs		234	234
Sundry Expenses		90	352
Depreciation of Fixed Assets		295	447
Write off of Investment		0	0
		<u>17,572</u>	<u>20,694</u>
EXCESS OF INCOME OVER EXPENDITURE		<u>3,264</u>	<u>1,094</u>
Corporation Tax		244	0
		<u><u>3,020</u></u>	<u><u>1,094</u></u>

BALANCE SHEET

31 MARCH 2007

		31.03.07		31.03.06	
	No	£	t	£	£
TANGIBLE FIXED ASSETS	4		703		199
CURRENT ASSETS	5	45,485		43,156	
AMOUNTS DUE WITHIN 1 YEAR	6	(15,286)		(15,473)	
		<u> </u>		<u> </u>	
NET CURRENT ASSETS			30,199		27,683
TOTAL NET ASSETS			<u>30,902</u>		<u>27,882</u>
RESERVES					
Reserves brought forward			27,882		26,788
Excess of Income over Expenditure			3,020		1,094
			<u> </u>		<u> </u>
Reserves carried forward			<u>30,902</u>		<u>27,882</u>

1. MEMBERSHIP FEES

Membership fees are shown net of a reserve for advance subscriptions. At any time the Association has a commitment to each member to provide a service for the length of time up to his or her renewal date. The reserve accounts for this commitment.

2. DEPOSIT INTEREST

Deposit interest is received gross. Provision for Corporation Tax has been made against this at 0% (2005: 0%) and included under current liabilities.

3. BOOKS OF ACCOUNT

All members are welcome to inspect the Association's financial records at any time mutually convenient to the member and the Treasurer. Please contact the Treasurer if you want to exercise this right.

4. TANGIBLE FIXED ASSETS

	TOTAL	Office Equipment	Other Fixtures
	£	£	£
Cost Brought Forward	8,298	7,530	768
Additions	799	799	0
Disposals	0	0	0
Cost Carried Forward	<u>9,097</u>	<u>8,329</u>	<u>768</u>
Depreciation Brought Forward	8,099	7,331	768
Charge for Period	295	295	0
Disposals	0	0	0
Depreciation Carried Forward	<u>8,394</u>	<u>7,626</u>	<u>768</u>
NET BOOK VALUE at end of year	<u>703</u>	<u>703</u>	<u>0</u>
Net Book Value Last Year	<u>199</u>	<u>199</u>	<u>0</u>

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS

31 MARCH 2007

	Notes	31.03.07	31.03.06
		£	£
5. CURRENT ASSETS			
Stock of Merchandise		1,162	738
Stock of Promotional goods & Stationery		489	658
Membership fees owing		795	1,011
Debtors & Prepayments		1,815	1,661
Bank Current Account		5,204	7,490
Bank Deposit Account		36,020	31,598
		<u>45,485</u>	<u>43,156</u>
6. AMOUNTS DUE WITHIN 1 YEAR		£	£
Trade Creditors		122	622
Accruals		1,227	1,216
Advance Subscriptions		9,056	9,435
Members Credit balances		4,041	3,604
Corporation Tax	2	671	427
Capital Gains Tax		169	169
		<u>15,286</u>	<u>15,473</u>

Approved by members at 16th Annual General Meeting on 17/11/07

Proposed: Chris Boxall

Seconded: Ian Fletcher

Signed: Stuart Chairman