

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF BOAT OWNERS

Minutes of a meeting of the Council held on 26th March 1994 at the Port 86, Hockley Port Birmingham commencing at 10.00am.

Present: Penny Barber, Phil Bland, Chris Barnacle, Jon Darlington, Melanie Darlington, Roger Hancock, Neil Hutchinson, Peter Lea, Stephen Peters, Christine Potter & Pete Sterry

1. Apologies: Nikki Timbrell, Harry Winter & Collin Paillin
2. The minutes of the meeting of 26th February were agreed an accurate record after amending the action on River Wey meeting (7) to Roy de la Haye and referring to the Ash Tree Boat Club in item 12 (iv)
3. Matters arising.
 - a) 4. It was agreed that an order of priority was needed and items 2 General Powers Bill and item 9 with particular reference to end of garden moorings should be discussed at the next meeting. JD & PL
 - b) 5. Past Minutes for policy statements. Not yet available JD to chase PennyB JD
 - c) 6. Chris Barnacle said it was news he was to produce the booklet but he would be happy to do so once he knew what was required. It was agreed that an A4 format with ring binders would be best for the Council booklet
 - d) 7. Nothing had been heard from Roy de la Haye following the meeting
 - e) 8. Pete Sterry reported he had not yet arranged the lunch but the advert had been sent
 - f) 11. BW had at last responded and sent JD a blank set of waterways standards documents. They continued to state that they wanted to consult with us but do not want to call a national meeting. The standards were still not available to general users and it was agreed that pressure to do so should be maintained. There was an implication that BW were to redraft the standards before September and pressure was to be maintained to make them more widely available and for consultation to take place. JD
It was noted that BW seemed to have different standards for different areas but it was accepted that there was a need to reflect the requirements of a particular waterway and that at a local level it was possible for information to be commercially sensitive.
4. BWs Consultation proposals Doc no 94/23. This emanated from Watford and should be compared with NABO's draft paper 94/22. Some of our propositions appeared in the BW paper in a much watered down version.
It appeared that BW's idea of consultation was exclusively verbal with as little detailed warning of the items to be discussed as possible. This allowed reaction only and discouraged counter proposals. There ought to be provision for written submissions after sufficient time to think things through.
It was agreed that JD should reply to BW indicating that the proposals were inadequate and asking for written submissions to be included. At the same time he was to contact IWA & NBOC with a view to presenting a common approach and stressing that BW's JD
paper was in reaction to our original one. Copies of NABO proposals to be sent to them
It was agreed that a press release should be drafted reporting on the release of the Waterway standards and the consultation paper. JD & PL
5. Job descriptions. There were 3 outstanding The Boater Editor NT
Engineering Officer HW
and General PennyB
These were to be sent to RH as soon as possible and circulated when complete by him RH
6. Monopolies & Mergers Commission Report into BW. Peter Lea was congratulated on his very clear paper. He stressed that the report was more interested in whether BW was functioning in a cost efficient manner rather than the services provided for boaters. Its interest was therefore somewhat marginal to NABO. It appeared that the Chief Executive was still not a member of the Board. The main point of interest was the comment on the level of licence and mooring fees

- 6a. IWAAC It appeared that the new Chairman Audrey Lees was acting in a dictatorial fashion and had, possibly unilaterally, decided to close the Birmingham office making the staff redundant. There was talk of resignation by a number of members at the next meeting which would not be in NABO's interests as those concerned had boating interests.
Despite the problems with IWAAC it was the only statutory body with important obligations under the BW Bill and the Houseboat moratorium. It was however appointed to act as a body under the Transport Act 1968 and this point was to be stressed to the members considering resignation. JD was to write a diplomatic personal letter to each. Peter Lea was to raise the matter at the next Parliamentary Waterways Group meeting after writing to the DOE setting out the facts and asking if the Department was happy about the Chairman acting in this way bearing in mind the terms of the Transport Act. He would then follow it up with a supplementary question at the meeting which would allow other parties to intervene as well.
JD was also to write to Brian Dyce who was responsible for the staff enquiring generally what was going on.
It was agreed that there was a need to look at what IWAAC had achieved (if anything) over the last 20 years. JD PL
- 7.. Harborough District Council's request for publicity for their rally was to be met with an agreement to include an A5 flyer in the Boater in return for our leaflets being included in their boaters pack. JD
- 8.. IWA links. JD reported on a meeting held with IWA on 12th March. It was agreed that we did not want to have a representative on each others' Council and that liaison should be kept on an informal basis. There was merit in discussing items of mutual interest but the long and slow chain of command within IWA should be remembered.. It was necessary to influence those who ran the organisation and the next meeting was noted as on 16th July.
9. Canalcraft's offer of discount brokerage fees to members was discussed and after a vote it was agreed not to proceed in order to maintain complete impartiality. JD to reply accordingly. JD
10. Council Member's reports
a) Treasurer. Penny Barber's report is annexed. She indicated that for the second meeting expenditure exceeded income and agreed to provide a comparative figure for this time last year. It was agreed we needed to look at membership generally as recruitment was low, possibly because of the winter season.
An expense claim form is annexed . Penny would prefer claims made little & often. ALL
b) The Boater/newsletter. No report
c) Publicity & Public Relations. Pete Sterry confirmed arrangements were in hand for Nottingham Boat Show. He would be there all the time but needed help on the Saturday. Christine P indicated she would be there but that 2 people were needed all the time. A rota would be sorted out at the next meeting. Pete would arrange the new members packs (including stickers) with Christine. JD would produce the letter to new members and a general handout on NABO and its activities. PS JD
d) Regional representatives.
i) South East. Peter Lea reported he had met Peter Coyne the SE regional manager and understood the use of the phrase "arrears of maintenance" would no longer be used as it was impossible to catch up. Also the Tube extension at Hackney would not stop the canal. New moorings had been provided on the Grand Union South with an escalating charge after 48 hours. The lack of 14 day moorings was being pursued. PL
The local manager was seeking to charge 50% of London Class 1 moorings (equivalent to normal class 3) on the Grand Union for farmers' field moorings. This was being taken up as unacceptable. PL
There was a clash of dates and it was agreed that Dave Whetton should be asked if he would attend the Kennet & Avon user group meeting. Both Peter at Grand Union South and Dave Whetton would ask for the planned stoppage details. PL & DW

PL reported on the meeting of the Parliamentary Waterways Group from which it appeared that the business users were at an advanced stage in negotiation with BW for a business users charter. The River Yare users at that meeting reported increasing difficulty with the Broads Authority who appeared more concerned with the environment than navigation.

It was agreed that Chris Barnacle would act as Area E representative and pursue this as an introduction to the Broads. Because of his particular motoring problems it was agreed that in addition to the refund of petrol he should also be able to claim 2.5p per mile on NABO mileage.

ii) North West. Neil Hutchinson reported he had attended the Pennines & Potteries Group meeting at Stoke and arranged for future representation there by the Commodore of the Stoke Boat Club. There was to be a major stoppage at Barnton Tunnel needing 40 weeks work. BW was considering working from both ends. Unless the Rochdale company opened their canal during winter there would be no through route.

Congleton Borough Council had taken over responsibility for maintenance of towpaths in their area. This was an interesting innovation and they would use their existing powers to prosecute owners of dogs fouling the towpath.

iii) Midland. No report

iv) North East. Pete Sterry reported problems on the Wakefield Arm which was a dead end controlled by 3 lockkeepers. Moorers could not operate the locks themselves and would be deprived of cruising whilst major improvements were to be made (including the alteration of the locks so they could operate them). The area manager would be able to provide details of the work and its timescale and moorers should take up the possibility of licence fee reduction or the provision of alternative moorings.

v) River users co-ordination. Stephen Peters presented his report (attached). He also suggested that the papers on item 4 of last meeting's minutes should be kept as research papers and that JD should prepare a paper for Navigation Authorities on NABO and its structure and membership as he was often asked for one. JD

The use of the Boater to provide this information and also to prospective members was to be revisited and discussed at the next meeting.

vi) Navigation Neil Hutchinson presented a paper on Stoppages (copy annexed) and the standards to be achieved by BW. This was the result of a meeting which established a useful set of criteria and in particular an attempt to keep to more rigid time limits. There would be a longer Christmas window. There was a general feeling that Bw's stoppages took too long and although Barnton Tunnel and Lapworth (North Stratford part) would be closed all winter they would try to keep through routes available.

It was essential that all regional representatives obtained details of the stoppage programme as soon as possible and pass it to Neil. He could then monitor and co-ordinate progress at the next national meeting in July. Regional Reps

There was to be a standard type of stoppage notice to make it easily recognisable and there would be greater communication between regions to ensure adequate warning was given to boaters coming from another area.

NH reported that the Area manager at Stoke stated his dredging policy (apart from planned work) was winding holes, mooring sites and then rally sites. This policy is to be discussed next meeting to consider whether this is the right policy to follow.

vii) Membership Christine Potter reported 1100 - 1200 current members.

13. A.O.B.

a) There were further incidents of boaters being billed by BW for mooring on the towpath. JD to pursue the legality of this. JD

b) There was a possibility of the safety regulations being enforced on all boats over 10hp. This was a European Union regulation. It was anticipated that there would be many objections especially from the Hire industry which could be killed off. The position should be watched carefully.

14. Next meeting. Saturday 7th May. It was agreed that a change of venue was desirable. The venue would be advised later (with map) but was likely to be at Galton Valley or Northfields Birmingham.