

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF BOAT OWNERS

Minutes of a meeting of the Council held on 20th April 1996 at Northfield, Birmingham commencing at 10.00am.

Present: Jon Darlington, Nigel Parkinson, Peter Lea, Penny Barber, Stephen Peters, Phil Bland, John Griffith, Neil Walker, Denis Smith, Andrew Sherrey (initially only), Neil Hutchinson & Roger Hancock

1. Apologies: Nikki Timbrell, Pete Sterry, John Glock, Phillip Ogden & Chris Boxall (who had resigned).
 2. The minutes of the meeting of 2nd March 1996 were agreed an accurate record after minor amendment. It was noted that Canal & Riverboat would publish an article on NABO's 5th Birthday.
 3. Future of IWAAC
IWAAC needed to look at BW's policy formulation more closely and see if it accorded generally with the general direction approved by them. BW's policies were becoming increasingly diversified eg. over moorings policy. IWAAC should adopt a regulator role and monitor fairness of BW's policies. The lack of independence of IWAAC was worrying.
Agreed the draft response should be amended to give examples of where the role could be expanded and that there should be a preamble stating that IWAAC should look at the formulation and implementation of policy over all nationally owned navigable waterways and should be funded by DOE and be responsible for the Ombudsman. JD
 4. Environment Agency - Future of Navigation
EA's response to SP's letter attached. Agreed by the Forum that no action should be taken until after DOE report published as regarded as an attempt by EA to pre-empt the report.
Agreed necessary to put forward reps for the RFACs and Philip Ogden should be approached to see if he would be willing to be put forward for membership of the REPAC. JD
 5. Update on Boat Standards
Following the meeting after the last Council the press release produced rapid response from BW. The attitudes of RYA & IWA had also changed. David Fletcher had been targeted with solving the problems and had produced a "Boaters guide" this together with the content of a telephone discussion with JD went some way towards dealing with the practical issues, although the guide was itself pretty useless. A meeting had been called for 10/5 to "finalise" issues. Fletcher had said that changes would not be retrospective and that if a boat had a BSS it could expect a renewal if there had been no changes to the boat in the meantime. It was uncertain how this related to C of Cs. Confirmed surveyors would have discretion but examiners would not. This felt likely to kill the examiner scheme and that the surveyors could not cope with the number of boats. Part of the problem was believed to be the Professional Indemnity policy negotiated by BW which forced the lack of discretion on examiners in return for an unrealistically low premium. The only practical solution was the modification of the checklist.
The appeals procedure must be resolved. Fletcher had agreed this must be done.
There must be a practical routine for dealing with rejections of BSS eg 90 day period to deal with failures or conditional certificates.
BW had stated again the start date would not be delayed.
Agreed on 10/5 we must try to convince BW there was so much work to be done to get things right that they delay the implementation dates themselves.
JD to reply to Fletcher saying insufficient movement on key issues. We must continue opposition until the scheme can be made to work fairly. JD
Meeting 10/5 must set timetable for completing work needed and if BW move further our final position may depend on the attitude of other user groups. No decision would be made at the meeting and a **provisional date of Wed 15th May @ 5pm was agreed for an emergency meeting** to be cancelled if not needed.
- Ombudsman correspondence circulated added to by response from Lady P that she had no jurisdiction on interpretation of statute but that she was considering further. JD to respond saying agree that not a question of interpretation but the failure to follow procedures laid down in issue. JD
6. Marketing Strategy
No ideas had been put forward over the 5th birthday and likely that nothing would happen in their absence.

The survey had produced some possible marketing expertise which would be followed up. RH was congratulated on the results and presentation of the response although about only half the responses had yet been analysed.

Rallies. Bookings were as circulated. Many had requested leaflets. Agreed where an organiser asked for a donation for including leaflets in packs £25 should be given subject to there being a charitable purpose and approval by Council on each occasion.

Agreed Chairman to write standard letter to organisers thanking for support after each event.

More help needed to staff stand at Chester, Evesham & Stourbridge. May come from volunteers from survey.

World Canals Conference. Agreed to take space although weekday staffing would be difficult. Could be used as opportunity to show opposition to BSS and publicity in handbook.

7. Council Structure

In the absence of any follow up NH proposed a training course(s) should be run for volunteers to ensure we all make the right responses at meetings. It was essential that meetings were - attended; participated in; provided with input from informed reps and that reps understood the concepts involved and that they were aware of NABO's views. Agreed NH to present plan to next meeting. Attendance at meetings needed to be co-ordinated with a complete diary known to all participants. Lack of information on NABO's policies would hamper the course. JD to supply NP with full set of minutes. NP to produce a list for confirmation by Council. Position statements should be reviewed regularly by Council.

Moorings Matrix. Agreed the possible transfer of moorings by BW to private sector should be resisted as this would increase costs for all. Moorings to be discussed at next meeting.

Agreed NABO rep not necessarily a council position and this should be considered when deciding council jobs next year.

8. Secretary.

RH stated that he was unable to deal with the volume of paper now produced for meetings through business commitments. Agreed clerical assistance should be sought from volunteers to deal with these aspects and if necessary payment should be considered. RH agreed to continue to minute meetings for the time being. DS offered clerical assistance temporarily.

9. Canal closures and Water supplies.

After long discussion Agreed:

Any BW proposal to lock key flights of locks outside working hours was to be resisted. NABO views the restriction of navigation as unacceptable except where necessary because of immediate water shortage, or in the interests of public safety such as the closing of locks leading to rivers which are in flood. Where it is necessary to lock-up locks to prevent vandalism, keys should be made available to boaters, as on the Ashton Canal and the Aylesbury Arm of the Grand Union.

This statement to be included in the newsletter.

10. Affiliated Members.

A proposal to inaugurate a class of Affiliated Members was considered. The primary aim was to enhance the "weight" of NABO in discussions with other bodies. It was clear that Council was of many opinions. Agreed Chairman to put all sides of the case to AGM for decision.

11. Postal Voting

NP reported he had passed a proposed Constitutional change and Special General Meeting calling request to the Newsletter editor for the next issue. If 25 members returned it we could proceed to postal voting for council members at the next AGM. Council agreed that this was the right way to effect change clearly requested at the last AGM.

12. River Wye

SP reported NRA (now EA) had applied for a Transport & Works Order, but that this had not appeared in the parliamentary papers we monitored. After discussion with the editor of those papers it seemed that items only appeared if the editor was told about them. SP to write to the Speaker to advise her of this potential problem and to the EA formally objecting to their order as it was likely to severely restrict navigation. IWA were to oppose the order, and had requested donations to an unspecified fighting fund. Council decided that more details would be required before a donation could be considered.

13. Licensing Workshop
The series of workshops arising out of the licensing review seemed likely to reduce to just one, probably because the review had failed to identify acceptable opportunity for radical change. PL to attend on 5/6. BW proposals were expected in May and would be discussed at next Council meeting.
14. Canal Society Umbrella Body.
Staffs & Worcs CS had proposed formation of umbrella body for Canal Societies, aiming to have this body consulted as part of any BW consultation process. PB attending meeting for RBOA. DS to represent NABO.
15. Newsletter Fax.
Agreed NABO to provide newsletter editor with fax/modem to make compilation faster and easier. Cost £250 approx approved by Treasurer.
16. Private Members Bill
A bill, ostensibly about wildlife was in the queue for parliamentary time. Some provisions could affect the operation and designation of SSSIs with potential damaging effects to navigation interests. The queue was such that the bill might go nowhere, but SP undertook to examine the Bill in detail and monitor the position.
17. Next meeting. Saturday 1st June 1996, Friends Meeting House, Northfield, Birmingham

rmh 22/04/96