

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF BOATOWNERS

Minutes of the Council Meeting held at Hockley Port on 22nd February 1997

1. Apologies

P. Barber Christine Denton.

The Chairman informed the meeting that Michael Handford would not now be addressing Council at this time. A future date would be announced.

2. Accuracy of minutes of Council Meeting 18th January

2. add - D Smith is also a member of the M & R sub-committee.

5. for Handforth read Handford.

8. add - Connections with CAMRA to be referred back to Council for approval

9. add after complaints - Council to agree draft letter.

12(a) add - P Foster also raised problems experienced with anglers on river navigations.

Subject to the above, the minutes were agreed a true record and signed accordingly.

3. Matters arising

a) EA and BW reciprocal licensing arrangements for Hire Craft

No further information had come to light. River Users rep to follow up.

b) Licence and Mooring conditions

Chairman reported that BW had been informed of our complaint. Council re-affirmed the matter would be taken to the Ombudsman if necessary.

c) Customer Charter

It was agreed that the Consumers Association (action John Griffiths) would be approached as to whether some clauses in the new conditions could be challenged. It was also agreed that informal enquiries with the Office of Fair Trading on the same subject be made (action S. Peters)

d) NABO on the Internet.

D Smith reported that an interesting letter from an American subject regarding canals was on the Net.

4. Boat Safety Scheme Update

The Vice-chairman reported on a recent meeting of the Technical Committee. The following were some of the points raised.

a) The Technical Manual is to be re-written by 16.6.98.

b) Fuel hose 7840 standard: Malaysian import must have independent tests.

c) Gas fridges in petrol driven boats. At present, Boat Safety Scheme does not adequately cover problems associated with these installations. A report regarding a serious incident in Motor Boat & Yachting was incorrect in that a pilot light on a gas refrigerator was not a primary cause; carelessness was the major factor. General discussion followed with various solutions, including the complete banning of gas fridges in petrol driven boats, considered. It was generally agreed that safety modifications would be the best way forward. It was noted that this problem would not apply to diesel powered craft.

d) Fire Extinguishers: problems with UK standards vis a vis European standards remain to be settled.

e) It had been reported that the YDSA were advising members that gas appliances were not allowed in diesel engine spaces. The BSS did however permit this.

f) BSS battery venting was wrong. Sealed battery boxes were allowed if checked by British Waterways.

g) Petrol containers would have to have stickers - NO FILLING ON BOARD BOAT - supplied by BW gratis.

h) Solid wiring - the Ombudsman had agreed for compensation to be paid to a boater disadvantaged by the rules regarding electrical installation in his particular circumstances. Council agreed that this was an important point and details should be included in the next Newsletter. Next meeting of the Technical meeting will be in June.

Other BSS points made by Council members included:-

Now 258 examiners (73 surveyors, 185 others) (S Peters)

Ventilation qualified as fixed open if a tool was required to close it. (D Smith)

Broads Authority were introducing BSS Scheme which was possibly more relaxed than BW Standards. (S Peters)

R Davis reported on problems a member was having obtaining a response from BW on a BSS matter; no reply received after 3 months. Vice-chairman agreed to bring up this matter at the next Technical Meeting.

5) Report on London Meetings 12th February.

The chairman amplified his written report on meetings with the DOE and the vice chairman of the Parliamentary Waterways Group. It was noted that the present vice chairman PWG, Bill O'Brien was likely to be the next Chairman. A possible meeting with Glenda Jackson who could be responsible for Waterways may be possible. Council agreed that these meetings were part of a strategy to make influential parties aware of the problems that exist between users and British Waterways.

6 Discussion with IWAAC

A draft letter to IWAAC was discussed. It was agreed that this body was concerned with forward Waterways strategy only and was not a watchdog. However, consultations procedure in the future could form part of its remit. Should BW be changing their consultation procedures as was NABO's complaint, then it deserved IWAAC's attention. P Bland drew attention to the fact that fifty pence per year per taxpayer was all that was required to achieve better funding for the Waterways. Everyone in the UK could be affected in the future with the possible need to move fresh water from one place to another.

7. Correspondence with BW. Goals of meeting on 6th March.

The Chairman's position paper was discussed. The solutions posed in the paper were agreed as targets in an attempt to achieve better response from BW. These are as follows:-

a) Licence fees increases

BW should revise and reduce the proposed 1998 & 99 licence fee increases.

b) Boat Safety Scheme

BW should thoroughly review the BSS documentation. Simplify it, reduce it, clarify it and eliminate anomalies in it. Quality checks on examiners to be speeded up and an appeals procedure published.

c) Consultation

Discuss and agree all documents before they are issued.

d) Openness

BW should openly discuss plans and choices for the future with users. It should provide users with sufficient information to enable them to understand the reasons for them.

e) Licence and Mooring conditions

BW should accept consultation with users representatives. Certain clauses should be revised: in other cases it may be more appropriate to issue guidance notes, available to all in which the clauses would be applied.

f) Standardisation of Policies

BW should standardise their policies and publish them so that we all know what they are and can query cases when they do not appear to be being followed.

g) Standards for Operational Matters

BW should develop measurable, absolute standards which are acceptable to users: set targets for achieving the standards and measure progress and compliance.

General

The over-riding approach by BW must be one of accepting the existence of commitments to their users and honouring them, and achieving results through discussion and negotiation.

Council members also commented on the need for regular competence checks on examiners. It was also agreed on the necessity for advice to members as to failure certificate procedure to be published in the Newsletter. Advice on BSS matters could be a regular feature. The point was made that the failure certificate's six months runs from licence renewal, not from examination date.

8. Facilities for the disabled

P Bland reported on a survey he had carried out with all Waterway Managers as to facilities for the disabled in their regions. Kennet and Avon contained best response, Oxford & Grand Union worst. Council agreed that information would be made available to members either in the Newsletter or with details held by Council members (rep for disabled, Chairman, Membership secretary, secretary and Newsletter editor.)

Broads Authority and the Environment Agency would also be approached for details. The Secretary to conduct further research into the Disabled Act and a previous Waterways World article.

9 BW Chartermark. NABO response

This item replaced the address by Michael Handford.

The Chairman outlined the procedures governing the issuing of a Charter Mark. Council then addressed the question of whether NABO should request that BW Charter Mark should not be renewed. Various arguments were put forward both for and against NABO taking action. A draft letter to the Charter Mark Office was discussed. Several resolutions regarding NABO action were proposed and withdrawn. Finally it was agreed, as proposed by the Chairman, that a

decision as to whether a request be made for the non renewal of the BW Charter Mark would depend upon the outcome of the meeting on the 6th March. This decision would be made by the Chairman and Vice Chairman. This was agreed by 9 votes for, 3 against and 1 abstention.

10. Marketing and Recruitment.

Christine Denton's letter was discussed and noted. It was agreed that Council members would endeavour to sell as many raffle tickets as possible. The manufacture and supply of mooring stakes would be investigated by the Vice Chairman. It was emphasised that all Council members were obliged to assist at Rallies in order to avoid an unfair burden on individual members. The following mission statement was also agreed.

"NABO is dedicated to promoting the interests and concerns of boaters on Britain's Canals and Rivers. We work to ensure the Boaters' voice is heard when decisions are being made which affect our boating. NABO will always challenge injustice where necessary at the highest level."

11. Press matters

Articles and items in Waterways World and Canal & Riverboat were considered. The Chairman pointed out the wide range of discontent shown by articles in these publications. This may have some effect on BW.

Press Releases.

Three had been published. Council members and the Newsletter were to be provided with copies in the future. Water shortages could perhaps be next topic.

Newsletter

The editor was congratulated on the new look. She reported that a series of articles on the work of Council members was being planned with Stephen Peters' work as River Rep being the first.

12. Membership

The membership secretary reported on serious anomalies which had arisen over time in the membership records. These had now been corrected. He was preparing a geographical analysis of the membership. Standing orders had increased. Council considered an application for membership of Chris Leah under Section 5 of the Constitution. This was agreed nem con. Here it was pointed out that Council members were not in possession of new copies of the Constitution as amended by the 1996 EGM. The Secretary to circulate amended versions to all Council members. Council congratulated Roger Davis on his hard work in putting the NABO membership record to rights.

13. Accounts and Budgets

The Treasurer amplified his written report.

14. Reports on meetings attended and important local issues.

Midlands Rep: D. Smith reported the current situation concerning the possible loss of Stourport 3rd basin. A letter from Wyre Forest Council was read indicating that NABO would be informed of any further developments. A response from the local MP was also noted.

A. Sherry: Reported on a recent Coroners report recommending lockside railings. The Chairman reminded Council of NABO policy on railings.

River Users Rep: Written report amplified.

15. AOB

The Chairman suggested that a list of the main fishing events to be held throughout 1997 could be published in the Newsletter. Also that the NTEA minutes had contained the comment that BW's new mooring charges were not conforming to the matrix. He would investigate.

The Chairman then read a letter of resignation from Pete Sterry and expressed his regrets that pressure of other commitments had prompted his retirement from Council and thanked him for all his good work on behalf of NABO. Council hoped that at some time in the future Pete Sterry would be able to stand for Council again, and wished him well. As the post of NE Rep. was now vacant, this would be filled by Peter Foster. Pete Sterry would provide him with a briefing.

P. Foster reported on the proposal to construct a Marina below Gainsborough on the River Trent. Council re-affirmed their general support for the promotion of facilities for moorers and consequently NABO could be considered as supporting the concept of a Marina between Gainsborough and Trent Falls.

Meeting ended 1627.

Next meeting 12th April at Friends Meeting House, Northfield.

Agreed a True Record.

F. Foster