

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF BOATOWNERS

Minutes of the Council Meeting held at Northfield on 12th April 1997

1. Apologies

Nikki Timbrell, Nigel Parkinson, Andrew Sherry (attending mid-day only).

2. Accuracy of Minutes of Council Meeting 22nd February agreed a true record and signed accordingly.

3. Matters arising not covered by the Agenda

3a. Reciprocal licensing between EA and BW:

A document has been received on the matter from the EA. River rep. to write an article on the subject for the newsletter.

3c. Customer Charter:

John Griffith reported that the Consumers Association had been contacted. Stephen Peters reported that the OFT had also been contacted.

3d. NABO on the Net:

A separate NABO page has been set up by J Dennison. CAMRA are also interested in a joint project.

5. Bill O'Brien, Vice Chairman PWG had written to BW over lack of consultation over license fee increases.

6. Lady Knowles has acknowledged receipt of the letter. She would be spending a day on the canals with the Chairman

8. Information still remains to be made available by the Rep for the disabled for the Newsletter. He had been indisposed but would forward information as soon as possible.

9. BW Chartermark:

The Chairman opined that at the meeting with BW on 6th March, BW had been responsive. Therefore, as allowed by Council under this minute, he had stopped short from asking for the BW Chartermark not to be renewed. A letter had, however, been sent which raised objections to the content of the new charter. A discussion over the current situation concerning consultation or the lack of it between BW and NABO then followed. It was agreed that NABO had no obligation to inform BW of any action the Association may wish to take at any time. Consideration could be given in some cases to prior consultation but only on a quid pro quo basis.

12. The secretary tabled new copies of the amended Constitution for all present.

15. The Chairman advised that he had confirmed with BW that the moorings matrix was still in force.

4. Meeting with BW 6th March

The Chairman reported on the outcome. It was noted that there was a disparity between the NABO and BW accounts of the meeting. The Action points agreed to be taken up by NABO were then considered.

a) Encouraging people onto the Canals.

It was agreed that Council members would formulate their own ideas or suggestions, with ordinary member's views being sought via the Newsletter. P. Barber listed RBOA's ideas. It was agreed that over-officiousness on the part of some Patrol Officers was detrimental to the overall relaxed ambience of the Canals. Reports on any such incidents would be sought. After further discussion, it was agreed that Council members written ideas should be forwarded to the Secretary by the 12th May for collating and circulating prior to the next Council meeting.

b) License and mooring permit conditions:

The Chairman would draft a response to BW detailing our proposed changes.

c) Water supply:

NABO had been asked for a view, with suggestions for water conservation. Philip Ogden would draft NABO reply for consideration at the next Council meeting. Council members to send any suggestions to him.

d) Dredging and restrictions:

If there were any known stretches of waterway which were giving difficulty, the Chairman would inform BW.

e) Other matters:

It was agreed that NABO could not comment on the distribution of funds for restoration of waterways except in general support of the extension of navigation.

The Chairman commented that the meeting was better in substance than in style. Contact would be kept and undertakings followed up. It was suggested that a detailed comparison between undertakings and actuality be published in the Newsletter after a suitable period of time. This was not agreed, though an article in, say, six month's time covering any results from the meeting would be considered appropriate.

P. Barber then reported on the RBOA's meeting, full details of which were in her Association's magazine.

5. Current status of NABO complaints

a) Council noted with satisfaction that the Ombudsman had found in favour of NABO in our complaint over lack of consultation about increases in license fees.

b) The Ombudsman was now considering our complaint over the introduction of the BSS.

c) Proper answering of letters would be considered by the Ombudsman after (b). It was agreed that should the Ombudsman find in favour of NABO in this matter, no publicity would be made from it.

d) A complaint over failure to consult over mooring conditions was still being formulated.

General discussion then followed on the efficacy of Ombudsman reports. Despite doubts expressed by some Council members as to their actual usefulness, it was agreed that NABO would continue to use what was the only official avenue of complaint open to it.

6. Press releases and Relations with other Organisations

Prior to discussion on this item, the Chairman read from a letter from N. Timbrell giving a Trade view on the ramifications of the NABO press release on water shortages. R. Davis then gave the list of recipients of NABO Press releases. Council then considered the matter as a whole, together with responses from various individuals and organisations. It was agreed that internal procedure would now be put in place to ensure that all Council members were informed prior to any statements to the Press being made. Membership of NINF would be continued with the respective NINF Chairman being included on the Press release list, together with BW and the EA. It was further agreed that despite what was a relatively short disturbed period there had been a substantial publicity gain.

7. Boat Safety Scheme.

Council considered items from the minutes of the Technical Committee. Council re-emphasised they would not support any boycotting of the scheme. The AWCC questionnaire on results of the scheme's application and consequent costs having to be incurred by boatowners was discussed. Council were concerned that overcharging could occur. An investigation would be undertaken to discover the extent of the problem.

S. Peters would draft a display page for the Newsletter, and a questionnaire circulated with membership renewal forms. (R. Davis to facilitate). Vice Chairman to be asked to devise the questions, and check the content of the Newsletter display.

8. General Election - New MPs

It was agreed that canvassing new Members of Parliament immediately after their election, to champion waterway causes would be beneficial. Though a map was probably available which details constituencies through which waterways pass, NABO resources would not permit too much time being given to researching which MPs could be particularly concerned. However, it was agreed that a letter should be sent to selected MPs if it was logistically possible, or all MPs if not, drafted by the Chairman who would organise the printing and posting of the letter.

9. Press matters not already considered

a) A NABO press cuttings book had been started. This would be available for inspection at Council meetings.

b) The delay to the last Newsletter distribution was explained.

10. Membership

The membership secretary presented a report which included inter alia a list of members who had not renewed their subscriptions. Christine Denton agreed to contact some individuals on the list to endeavour to persuade them to renew.

11. Accounts

No report for this meeting.

12. Reports on meetings attended and important local issues.

a) Napton Marina:

Reports of the construction of a 200 boat marina and objections to same reported on. It was noted that there could be a difference between rumoured financial matters and what was actually the case.

b) Wye Order:

The NABO objection to this order continued to be under consideration.

c) Fibreway:

P. Ogden had attended a presentation on this project and would be writing an article for the Newsletter.

~~12~~ AOB

A. Barber drew the attention of Council to :-

a) A statement by BW that living on board boats was not an issue

b) An article in the Guardian newspaper advocating the privatisation of some waterways

P. Foster: reporting on the last NE User Group Meeting at which the proposed conversion of some Trent locks to automatic working was discussed. IWA and NABO were against any change. Also Associated British Ports were not taking account of shoaling at the Trent Humber confluence which could be caused by BW dredging activity.

D. Smith drew attention to the Unfair Contracts Act.

The Council meeting closed at 1400hrs and was followed by a M&R sub-committee meeting.

Next meeting 7th June 1997.