

Minutes of Council Meeting held at Northfield, Birmingham on Saturday 13th March 1999

1. Apologies for absence

Jim Hutchinson and Peter Foster.

2 Accuracy of the minutes of the 16th Jan. meeting

The minutes were agreed to be accurate.

3 Matters arising from the minutes

It is hoped that Simon Greer will be our N.W. rep.

X The temporary mooring charges on the Gloucester and Sharpness canal are to be considered at the next X
G & S meeting. *defer to next meeting*

It has been shown that the BSS examiners were consulted over the increased charges so the complaint has been dropped.

At our request, some 6 day moorings have been put in place at Stourport on an experimental basis. This will enable boaters to leave their boats there while weekendng.

A leaflet showing "safe" moorings on the BCN has been received from Ron Cousens. A list of seven mooring places is to be put in the newsletter.

Action Wendy

John Stephens is to bring up temporary moorings on the Ashby at the next user group meeting.

Action John

4 Major national issues

a) Future of British Waterways: Documents on the future of BW were circulated. It was noted that the extra £8 million was for three years only. No commitment has been made for after this.

BW have been told to be generally more transparent and to consult all its users more. They were also told to talk to and co-operate with the EA.

It has been noted that DTR projections show that wages increase by £8 million in the next 4 years. The cost of materials is going down, so are contracts increasing?

NABO are now awaiting the White Paper from the DETR.

It was agreed that the chairman should have a subscription to Canal Boat magazine.

Action Peter

b) Draft amendments to the Recreational Craft Directive: the proposed noise and exhaust emission standards would affect all boats built after 1950 and many built earlier. In time they could do away with traditional diesel engines. The DTI is organising the opposition to the proposals and have set up a meeting on 15th March which Nigel will attend.

Action Nigel

There is a need to protest now as this affects all boats.

Nigel to do an article for NABO News.

Action Nigel

Responsibility for navigation on Anglian waterways is to stay as it is, but BW is to help EA with tourism & leisure development. EA and BW came out with press releases stating that they were very happy with the outcome.

5. National meetings

a) Wide waterways: John Stephens passed round a summary and reported on the meeting that he attended. It was very positive and many interesting proposals were put forward. BW were being asked to contribute towards the cost of raising the low bridge in Newbury. BW mentioned widening the Trent & Mersey to provide a cross country link. Watford and Foxton locks also could be widened. There is potential for wide boats on a commercial basis. BW are looking at eliminating pinch points for them.

John and Philip to get in touch with BW if nothing further develops in the next four months. Is this just a wish list, or will anything really happen?

Action John & Philip

b) BSS Advisory Group: The Broads are to go into the Boat Safety Scheme in 2005.

c) Environment Agency:- Subjects for the EA meeting in April were suggested, including coarse fishing, Bow locks, joint licensing, and flood avoidance and warning. **Peter and Stephen to attend.**

d) AINA are having a seminar on 13th April to present their joint strategy. Stoppage warnings are to be brought up. **Action Peter**

e) Parliamentary Waterways Group: The February meeting included a presentation by David Blagrove on freight carrying on the canals. It was noted that a lot of M.Ps turned up and asked pertinent questions. Freight on the waterways is high on Prescott's agenda.

6. Update on other National issues.

London Region dredging policy: Mark Bensted is hurt that he was thought to be against national policy on dredging to original profile. He says he was always a supporter of it. He now plans to spot dredge 1.5 miles of the Slough Arm, as spot dredging need not be done to original profile, and he plans to leave reed beds on the towpath side. How long is a spot?

National Houseboat Agreement: Geoff established that the RBOA is happy with this, so we are too.

Cycling: Geoff has been working hard on this and presented the following points: Cyclists should dismount at bridge holes, therefore rails are not required. Cyclists no longer require insurance, as local councils will pay for it. (Will the Councils confirm this?) The code of conduct is sufficient to regulate cyclists (but how will they all get a copy?) There appears to be no practical difference between the rules concerning cycling on a cycleway and on a non-cycleway designated towpath. BW's Gloucester office believes that Sustrans' proposals are subject to conservation area requirements; other BW offices aren't aware of this and so Sustrans are going ahead without this approval in other parts of the country. It was noted that a number of our concerns were not answered by BW and Geoff will write to Paul Wagstaffe again. Cycling needs to be on next national user group meeting agenda. **Action Geoff**

Ombudsman complaints: Peter gave a report on the reasons for the failure of Denis's complaint to the Ombudsman. It was noted that BW has a duty to provide documents to anyone who asks. Peter to write article for NABO News. **Action Peter**

The Ombudsman said that BW had to provide information on the moorings matrix, the scoring of a site, and any changes to the score to any moorer who asked for it. This was very helpful to all moorers. His decisions on actual physical facilities were less understandable: he scored a hedge as equal to a security fence. He commented that users could complain if Waterway managers charged what they liked for moorings, without justifying the scoring of the location factor. He also would be interested if BW increased a location factor as in normal circumstances this should not change. We should all keep these points in mind as it might be possible to take up a complaint on another site on the strength of them.

Action All

RBOA have won their complaint to the Ombudsman, as BW failed to respond to a letter on continuous cruising. They are now proceeding with a complaint on the Gas Street Junk citing lack of consultation and misleading information to the council planning dept.

Following their joint representations to the DTI, NABO and IWA are to be statutory consultees on orders under the Transport & Works Act affecting canals and boaters.

Other National issues: IWA have sent an excellent submission to the Salmon & Freshwater Fisheries Review group, giving good technical argument against the EA's proposals to abolish the Coarse Fishing Close Season. It was noted that IWA have the technical experts to write such a response. The chairman's column to thank IWA. **Action Peter**

X BW permission is required for events to be held on the canal. There are six forms of special conditions including a form to indemnify BW. BW also has to be given credit for permitting the event and to be told the amount of money raised for charity. There are other unacceptable clauses. Peter has complained to Paul Wagstaffe and is awaiting his response. **Action Peter**

Peter has also asked Paul Wagstaffe to see if the Bye Laws, which date from 1965, could now be updated. **Action Peter**

A copy of a letter from BW to Philip on navigable channel pinch points was discussed. Nothing is being done on channel dimensions at present because of other waterway business.

In view of the lack of parliamentary time there is not likely to be a government wildlife bill, and the strengthening of SSSI's is likely to be done piecemeal.

7 Reports on other meetings & local issues

Middle Level bye laws: IWA have given Peter a copy of the Bye laws together with all their comments.

- ✘ These mostly have been accepted by the Middle Level staff. This was passed to Sadie. Middle Level personnel have accepted many of our reservations, but say that they intend to close the navigation during fishing matches "in line with other navigations". Sadie is to take this up with them. **Action Sadie**
Wendy to pass a letter from Paul Wagstaffe to Sadie. **Action Wendy**

- ✘ Kennet & Avon Conservation Plan: There is no reference to safety in it. The conflicting needs of cyclists, walkers and anglers are not addressed, and it indicates that there may have to be boating restrictions. This does not comply with national policy and will be vigorously opposed. It was suggested that there should be a meeting this year so the position can be monitored. **Action Geoff**

The underwater concrete blocks create a danger to boats. This is to be brought up at the next user group meeting. **Action Geoff**

Bow Locks: Peter explained the silting problem and the need for four lock gates to make the Bow Back river navigable at any state of the tide. EA need convincing that the restrictions will not cause a significant reduction in the capacity of the tidal basin. We are helping BW over this issue by supporting their cause; BW is to provide data supporting it.

written report from Philip on the last IWA NTA meeting was handed round.

Jim Hutchinson sent a report that was also passed round. It was noted that he had obtained 13 new members from Northolt Boat Owners following his meeting with them..

Peter Foster is improving and attending local meetings.

John Stephens reported on a BW canal forum in Birmingham. He suggested getting police and BW to give guidance on what boaters should do if threatened. John to look into this at National level, and to contact Paul Wagstaffe in the first instance. **Action John**

NABO also opposes the development of the post office wharf in Birmingham and thinks that it should be retained as a wharf. Plans are being rushed through again. It was suggested that BW do a Heritage site audit as they are in danger of selling the family silver. **Action John**

Stratford pontoons are still a possibility, according to John Lancaster, and an eye needs keeping on this. The Rosie and Jim theme park has run into opposition from trip boat operators.

7a Constitution

Wendy is to amend and send to Nigel to proof-read. It will then be published in a future edition of NABO News. **Action Wendy & Nigel**

8 Press matters

Jendy thought the trouble with the printer was just a blip and that the problem was now solved. The tight press deadlines were discussed. She is to look into the possibility of using a local printer who could do the whole job including the mail-out. This would ease the time pressure. Nigel has agreed to proof-read NABO News before it goes to the printer. **Action Nigel**

Tribune in Canal & Riverboat has quoted the Ombudsman as saying his terms of reference have been changed compared to those of his predecessor, and that there was a category of cases which he could not consider any more. This contradicts the assurances given by David Fletcher at two national user group meetings, and which are in the record of those meetings. Peter has written to C&R to highlight the contradiction and query whether Dr F is telling the truth.

Angling Times said that BW plans to ban cycling and boating during fishing matches, but this is a fabrication, according to Paul Wagstaffe, who has written to all user groups to deny it.

- ✘ John Denton received an irate call about an article in the Guardian relating to people living on boats. He is to see if he can defuse the caller. **Action John Denton**

- ✘ It was felt that the newsletter should identify our reps more closely with the BW regions they cover. John is to give Wendy a map of BW regions. **Action John Denton**

9 Rally and marketing report

We should have a good rally site at Braunston. This is being paid for. The Worcester site is being coordinated by Sue and should be free.

It was agreed to buy 10 of Clegg's cruising maps to sell @ £2.50 each.

The Council's lock day on 26 June is to be advertised in the next NABO News.

"Why NABO" needs updating. A single A4 sheet with bullet points on both sides was suggested.

Christine will draft and then show it to Peter and Nigel.

Action Christine, Nigel & Peter

NABO's web site address should be published in *Waterways World*. Concern was expressed that the web site is boring. Wendy is to discuss improvements with Michael.

Action Wendy

Peter Foster is to be asked to book a venue at Newark for the June Council meeting as some of us will be at the rally there with the stall. When this has been confirmed Melanie is to be asked to cancel Northfield for this date only.

Action Sue

Other rallies were discussed and given the thumbs down.

10 Membership

Roger handed his report around. Four boat clubs have joined which represent 250 members.

Tony Mason has written complaining that we have used the AWCC handbook to target clubs. We have not. Peter is dealing with this.

Action Peter

11 AOB

BW's Commercial Director, Ian Valder, is retiring. Robin Evans has been appointed to replace him. Mr Evans has been involved with prestigious heritage bodies including Royal Palaces, and is an expert in making heritage pay.

Oxford IWA want a speaker in January 2000. A holding letter is to be sent.

Action Roger

It is rumored that after the fatal accident on the L&L helmsman testing for all boats may be called for. This is completely unworkable and will kill the hire business that has already been hard hit by BW price hikes and by more time share boats.

