

MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL MEETING HELD AT NORTHFIELD BIRMINGHAM on
SATURDAY 4TH SEPTEMBER 1999

Members present, Sue Burchett, Roger Davis, Sadie Dean, Peter Lea, Phillip Ogden, Stephen Peters, Geoffrey Rogerson and Trevor Rogers. Andrew Sherry arrived later.

Trevor Rogers was welcomed and introduced.

Peter Lea proposed that Trevor be co-opted to represent the Southern Region. This was seconded by Stephen and unanimously agreed.

1 Apologies for absence received from, Christine and John Denton, Peter Foster, Jim Hutchinson, John Stephen and Wendy Hook.

2 Minutes of the previous meeting were agreed as being accurate as sent out.

3 Matters arising.

BW/EA joint licensing. We are concerned over; the excessive charges levied by BW on large craft; how the 1st January introduction will be implemented; the issue of refunds; concessions – those given to Historic Craft at present could be extended to other categories; how Continuous Cruisers will be dealt with. NABO want more universal standards.

New Waterway Standards. Geoffrey's examination of these has revealed that the new version has changed succinct clear standards into desirable minimums, and commitments into good intentions. He is to put something about it into NABO News and write to BW with our views. Geoff

4 Regional Reps Reports.

Rivers Stephen has received no concrete reply from the Nottingham Office regarding their survey of the use of the river Severn.

There have been complaints from members about the lack of facilities and the changes to the operation of locks. It seems that semi-automatic operation will create problems, especially for single-handed boaters, as will the lack of landing facilities at the locks.

Peter Lea brought up the problem that can occur when switching off an old engine in a Thames lock because this can take the steerer's time and attention. It has happened that an inexperienced lock keeper commenced working the lock while the steerer is busy and the boat is secured fore and aft. This problem is happening more often with inexperienced and summer relief lock keepers. Peter and Geoff reported that the percentage of narrow boats using the Thames is much increased and John Redmond is telling boat clubs that narrow boats will be the future traffic for the Thames. They appear to be more favoured as they pack into locks more neatly and are more robust than some other boats. There have been some problems recently with narrow boaters disregarding safety rules and the dangers with changing conditions on the Trent.

Stephen will produce a leaflet of safety notes for river users, to contain constructive user friendly information, of a general nature with some specific additions for different rivers. It will also advise on other relevant handouts that are available from river authorities. Stephen

There will be a small charge for our leaflet to cover costs.

All council members to give Stephen information regarding any relevant river experiences. All London

Jim Hutchinson sent a written report which was discussed and various additional points made on - Mooring problems, especially in Little Venice. Points in the discussion included advice that peoples should breast up; if members have trouble finding a space they should contact BW; the trip boat operators give the impression that they have complete control in some areas.

Cycling. Concern was expressed over BW implementing their plans to speak to cyclists during rush hour times.

Thames lock arrangements over Christmas and New Year. The PLA wish to restrict narrowboat movement over this period as lots of movement by large boats is anticipated.

Peter to discuss with Jim

Meeting about ongoing dredging has been deferred until 8th at Mark Bensted's request.

South

Peter has discussed dredging with Matthew Routledge. There are still problems over the areas covered, the depth and the profile.

Areas of the canal that are designated fishing areas are not exclusively for fishing, they will just have signs requesting boaters not to moor there, we are told!

Sue has received conflicting letters from Ian Derby, about nettle control. She will write to the Waterways Manager for clarification and send copies of correspondence to Wendy. Sue

We have news that on the Market Harborough arm and much of the Leicester section 5metres either side of the canal has been designated a conservation area as an 'Ecological Site of County Level Importance'. This needs investigating and contact made as to who the 'formal official legal consulties' are, and why aren't we one of them. We also need to contact local conservation bodies to ascertain their attitudes and any plans they may have.

Midlands

John written report was discussed in full. Members are encouraged to write as often as possible to BW about the problem of high weeds along the towpath edge, emphasising the safety aspect. The reply paid postcards are useful for this. Should we encourage boaters to strim the towpath edges each time they meet the problem when they moor up?

East

We have received correspondence from the Fens Tourist Board to the effect that the requested facilities for boaters are on their agenda but they await finance. They are setting up a 'Steering Group'. We are to apply to members of the group, also apply again to be on the Middle Level advisory group as they are members of AINA. Any refusal to be followed with requests for explanation and for copies of the minutes etc. Sadie

North East

Nothing from Simon. Sadie has been in touch with him and local BW offices regarding towpath edge weed, Huddersfield Narrow and navigation there of, and conflicting winter closure information. No replies yet.

North West

Peter Foster is continuing inquiries over the BSS and gas water heater problems.

More moorings are needed in York.

BW seem to be closing Cranfleet lock much more frequently and on little excuse.

Why is the Fire Brigade objecting to Goole Marina on safety grounds?

These two need investigating.

Peter

There has been an incident involving a narrowboat and dangerous behaviour at Keadby. As the Association of British Ports is looking for ways to stop pleasure craft using this area, this gives fuel to their argument. (Refer to leaflet mentioned in River's section).

Boaters at Ripon have reported that the bottom gates are out of Linton Lock, so soon after BW have restored it! We ask should BW consult WRG regarding restoration? Roger to contact boaters and write snippet for magazine. Roger

K&A

There has been no improvement in the lock landing stages; this coupled with the perceived difficulty in working some of the heavy gates is causing some boaters to give up attempts at cruising the whole canal. This to be taken up at users forum meeting.

The question of raising money from towpath cycling was discussed, how much does it cost to get ANY money for this?

Trevor was briefed on various aspects of the Southern Region

5 National Meetings

Peter to arrange meetings with Lord Whitty and Brian Glicksman in due course.

On 13th October Peter will have a meeting with Robin Evans and Paul Wagstaffe to discuss possible license concessions for retired boaters with 'long service' records on canals, and to try to find a way to encourage new boat owners. We will suggest a package deal consisting of -

A cheap boat with a CE mark or Safety Certificate,

One year's free third party insurance,

Free one-year licence

Three months free mooring,

Free year's membership to NABO

6 Major Issues

A. Recreational Craft Directive

Peter has sent letters to John Walker of the DTI and three EC civil servants about the problems concerning noise and exhaust emissions from engines.

He has taken up with the Secretary of the Parliamentary Waterways Group the problem of NINF and other waterway organisations not having links or representation with EC committees dealing with Inland Waterway issues.

B. Boat Safety Scheme Changes

There was much discussion over the new gas water heater and other LPG appliance installation regulations.

Concerns include;

The non-existence of room sealed appliances yet

Involvement of Recreational Craft Directive and/or Health and Safety

Action by boat builders

Problems for those fitting out their own boats

The timetable for implementing the new standards

Other problems about ventilation, fuel systems and batteries, plastic and flexible pipes were raised.

Peter has written to David Fletcher concerning the increase in costs for boaters.

C. Deferred

D. BW Membership Scheme

Where is the money coming from to finance the publicity and to set up the scheme?

We need specific comments on exactly what BW are asking, before the end September 99 from

All council members

We need to know how other user groups stand on this AWCC seem to give conflicting views depending on who you ask.

Peter drew our attention to an article by WRG chairman Mike Palmer recommending it as a clear summary and good approach to the issue.

E. Covered earlier – see 5 above.

7&11 Press Matters and AGM

Thanks from council to Wendy for all her lone hard work on last Newsletter.

Nominations for council needed by next meeting so no Newsletter to follow this one but a mailing to members only with AGM details and nomination form.

Copies of last year's minutes and updated constitution needed for the AGM.

Meeting at London Canal Museum, 20th November 10.45.

Tea coffee etc followed by

Apologies, minutes, election of council, then reports from chair, membership and treasurer, then selection of auditors.

A discussion of current issues will follow.

After lunch the new council will meet to elect officers and arrange the programme of meetings.

8 Rallies and Marketing

Sue was given thanks for such a good position for the stall at Worcester and a donation of £100 made to WRG.

We need to make enquiries all round before committing ourselves to a stall at Crick, where the 'Braunston' boat show is to be next year.

9 Membership

18 single, 2 families joined at Worcester.

The list of concessions for receiving the Newsletter was considered and updated.

10 Treasurer's report and Accounts.

Draft copies were circulated and discussed, all is much the same as last year.

The Auditor would like the books earlier.

12 Council members time limit.

There was much discussion and every member gave an opinion, eventually Peter proposed –

'Council declares that its policy shall be that the Chairman of the Council shall not serve as Chairman for more than three years, except in exceptional circumstances. In those circumstances he/she should

only be re-elected to serve for a maximum of two subsequent years, and that these elections be by a secret ballot of the Council.'

This was seconded by Geoff and carried unanimously.

A list of formalities to be carried out before an AGM, at an AGM and at the first Council meeting is to be attached in the front of the Minute Book. Sue

13 AOB

Roger has sent a letter and Newsletter to the new BW chairman, and received a very courteous reply thanking him and saying that NABO News will be considered essential reading!

Peter has replied to Draft EA 'Navigation and Restoration Policy Statement.' And EA's 'Extended Public Consultation on Selected Licence Applications.'

Geoff is to do the talk at Oxford, with the help of some notes from Roger.

The meeting closed at 3.00pm

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Sue', written in a cursive style.