

**MINUTES OF A COUNCIL MEETING of the NATIONAL
ASSOCIATION of BOAT OWNERS, held at The Waggon &
Horses, Oldbury, on SATURDAY 4th JUNE 2005**

Present: Stuart Sampson, chairman, in the chair (SS)
 Celia Kennedy (CK) Gordon Reece (GR)
 Stephen Peters (SP) Aileen Butler (AB)
 Tony Haynes (TH) Carole Sampson (CS)

Apologies for Absence: Geoffrey Rogerson and Peter Foster.

1. MINUTES

a) With all who had been present in agreement, the minutes of the 23/04/05 meeting were approved as a true record. The chairman signed the minutes.

b) Actions from the previous minutes.

PF Stickers not received to date.

TH i) Tony had contacted Trevor Rogers, only to find that he has been invited onto the BSS Technical Committee, although a misunderstanding had meant that he hadn't been told and thus had missed a meeting. He will attend the next one. Trevor will be writing a report for the next Council meeting.

 ii) Nothing has been heard about the forthcoming Stoppage Meeting.

CS i) - iii) elsewhere on the agenda, iv) will be dealt with for the AGM.

SS i) - vi) all done

 vii) Not successful (in finding out what other organisations pay in travelling expenses - difficult to broach the subject)

 viii) an e-mail has been sent to the Basingstoke Canal Authority, but no reply has been received.

 ix) Done.

GR i) Not done

 ii) As with TH ii)

 iii) Elsewhere on the agenda

 iv) Not done

c) Matters arising from the minutes.

i) Pens.

CS had obtained five sample pens. She explained her criteria of wanting something of reasonable quality rather than cheap and naff, and thought one could be given to all members upon renewal. After discussion, it was decided to leave the matter in abeyance due to the high cost of purchasing them in quantity.

ii) Proposals.

CS had prepared two proposals regarding the change in car travelling expenses from fuel only to a fixed rate per mile. After discussion and slight modification, the proposal was:

"that travelling expenses can be claimed by those whose journey is made on NABO business, for the standard class of public transport or a car mileage allowance of 50% of that set by the Inland Revenue, subject to annual review immediately after the AGM. This with effect from 4th June 2005."

Proposed GR, seconded TH, all were in favour. Proposal passed.

CS: this means that the current rate = 50% of 40p, i.e. 20p per mile.

SP: the expense claim form will need to be changed

CS

GR: in the meantime, it is acceptable to write the number of miles in the description column

CS: members will need to be informed of the change at the AGM

CS

iii) RCR Offer

CS explained that she had sent a letter as actioned at the last meeting, and has received no reply whatsoever. She is concerned that we have not agreed a modus operandi for giving new RCR members free NABO associate membership for one year.

AB said she had joined RCR at the Crick Show and been given the discount.

TH said that new RCR members need to be given a letter and application form.

SP felt that a Standing Order form + an application form + a Why Nabo leaflet should be stapled together by Melanie D.

SS asked for a volunteer to write appropriate blurb: CS offered.

CS

TH thought it worth a press release. All agreed.

TH

iv) Ombudsman Committee

SS explained that election statements and a ballot paper had been issued to those attending the first meeting of BWAFF - the British Waterways Advisory Forum. He had voted for ONE candidate only, in order to make his vote count more. Two APCO representatives (one hadn't even written an election statement) and a legal person from RYA had been elected. SS felt uneasy about this, as the Ombudsman Committee has no boater representative on it, when the vast majority of cases to be considered come from boaters, who make up the majority of BW's paying customers. He has sent an e-mail to Prof. J. Jowell (chair of O.C.): no reply to date, copied to Robin Evans. He read out this and RE's reply. SS feels that use of the BWAFF constituencies would have been fair, so that one representative each from boating/trade/others would have been elected.

SS has prepared a press release which he read out.

CS felt that we need to be careful not to sound like sour grapes.

SP to provide TH with statistics as to the type of case considered by the Ombudsman last year.

SP

TH to fine tune the press release.

TH

SP would like to see details of the make-up of the Waterways Ombudsman Committee, so that boaters will know who the people are.

v) BWAFF

Again at the inaugural meeting, elections took place for chairman and vice-chairman of BWAFF. The results were: chairman, Howard Pridding, vice-chairman David Fletcher, ex BW Chief Executive, now vice president IWA. The interesting thing was that at the end of the election statements document, it stated that there would be an opportunity for BWAFF members to ask questions of the candidates. No-one chose to do so, but David Fletcher was not there!

SP felt there had been another stitch up.

CK thought NABO should continue with its campaign for an independent Waterways Regulator

SS feels we should watch with interest and find fault whenever appropriate.

SS went on to explain the nature of future meetings. There will be two Agenda Meetings per year, which will be attended by invited (by the chairman) representatives, as appropriate to the agenda items to be discussed. These will alternate with two Plenary Meetings per year, which every recognised organisation will attend.

CS wondered if some organisations could be deliberately left out, and thought NABO should monitor attendees carefully to see if this happens.

SS explained the modus operandi as written into the Constitution, which should prevent this from happening.

SP felt that SS should make sure that the rules are followed.

vi) Shropshire Union Visitors Moorings

Following the discussion about these at the March meeting, CS and SS had cruised that Shropshire Union main line. CS felt uneasy about the fact that only 48-hour moorings are being provided: provided in that the towpath is neatly mowed, there are mooring rings, and the area signed. As some of the stretches are considerably long, this is borderline for compliance with the Statement of Intent issued by BW on 18th June 1993. She further felt that, although complaints have been made at local u/g and national boating issues meetings, if nothing changes, this will allow a precedent to be set for other parts of the system.

Following discussion, a proposal:

"that NABO takes the issue of current policy of only providing 48-hour Visitor Moorings on the Shropshire Union and Ashby Canals through BW's Internal Complaints Procedure."

Proposed CS, seconded CK. All were in favour. CS to do this.

CS

2. REPORTS

a) NNUF. SS's complaints re the ineffectiveness and bad organisation of these meetings seem to have been addressed, and he found the meeting vastly improved. It had been chaired by John Edmonds, a member of the Environment Agency board, who is the Champion of Navigation.

b) EA Harmony Forum. This was supposed to have been about the implementation of the Transport & Works Act/Order, but the latest date for the submission of comments has been extended to July, so little was possible. But, EA is starting to consider the

harmonisation of registration fees between the Anglian and Thames regions, and asked for suggestions as to the preferred criteria for calculation.

- CS felt it should be length only, as NABO policy states that we are seeking for harmonisation between different navigation authorities, and to press for a different system would mean that we would have to press for BW to change. She also felt that the majority of boaters consider that the lack of paying for extra width of vessel on the canal system is made up for by the inability of wide-beam craft to cruise the whole system, and that this is, therefore, fair.
- SS recalled a discussion at a previous Council meeting whereby a case was made for a fixed rate per boat irrespective of length, as with cars on the roads. He further thought, that as it is people who use the facilities, a case could be made for charging relating to the number of berths per vessel. However, the idea of length-only charging has a comfort feel about it.

The EA is also considering the problem of naming of vessels, where more than one craft might have the same name.

c) CRICK SHOW

AB reported on the success of the show. We had a good site, inside a marquee, which had meant that not all the stand had had to be erected. Member Ken Bennell had provided transport and donated two chairs. The information packs had been a good idea and had been picked up.

- Over £200-worth of goods had been sold, 8 windlasses, 2 polo shirts, and 1 pennant
- 4 new members had joined at the time, including one family

AB had ideas for things to sell

- embroidered blazer badges of the NABO logo. She had obtained prices from a stand at the show: 100 = £1.99 + VAT, 10 = £3.50 + VAT

To have a personal name or boat name + NABO logo = £3.50 + VAT

- the badge could be encased to make coasters, ashtrays, etc. It was thought that Wendy Hook might be knowledgeable about this.

Ken B. will provide transport for the National Rally, but can't do Saul. TH thought he might be able to help, failing that, Alastair Morton, a member who has already offered help, might be able to suggest something.

Help is needed on the stand at the National Rally. SS to ask in NABO News. SS

SS might be able to attend for some of the time - AB to provide bed for him SS A

3. FINANCE & DEBIT CARD

Two new Barclays bank accounts have been opened: a Community Account, into which £12,000 has been paid in, and a Bonus Savings Account, which will pay interest. The account signatories are GR, SP and CS, any two needed to sign cheques. Council authorised GR to use on-line banking for the transfer of funds between accounts.

The Community Account comes with a debit card, which, obviously, can be used by one person only. CS proposed:

"that the debit card/s be used for approved expenditure only"

Seconded by GR. All were in favour.

Proposal agreed.

GR explained that there will be considerable work transferring the standing orders to the new account. After discussion, it was agreed that a S. O. form be included in the next and several following NABO News' to encourage members to change their payment to the new account in advance, the form to be returned FREEPOST, to Melanie D. SS

4. TRANSPORT & WORKS ORDER - MIDDLE LEVELS

SP explained that the Middle Levels Commissioners are attempting to resurrect an idea from 1998 of a draft Transport & Works Order and draft by-laws. These would allow for greater regulation of boats, and include an ability to charge. He has briefly looked through it, and found it to be similar to the EA proposals. Comments are required by 1st July 2005. SS offered to look at it and draft a response which SP will finalise.

SS SP

5. Default item - LICENSING, MOORINGS, CONDITIONS & CHARGING

SS explained that GRo had been verbally told by Eugene Baston at the Crick Show that, as the Ombudsman had ruled that shared ownership boats should not be charged a licence at business rate, BW is looking to recover the lost income by introducing a High Intensity Cruising Licence for continuous cruisers. i.e. those who do not have a home mooring. This could cost up to 100% more than the present cruising licence.

• CS thought that BW is on a very sticky wicket with this, as: boaters already buy a 12-month licence, so why should some be penalised when they actually do so: what happens when a winter mooring is purchased, which effectively negates the continuous cruising: there would likely be a loophole whereby boaters could pay for a few nights mooring per year, and then claim not to be continuously cruising, and so on.

• SS was in some doubt as to the genuineness of the original comments from Eugene.

• SP felt we need more details of the proposals.

6. A. O. B.

a) Ivor Caplan, chairman of RBOA had suggested a joint meeting of both Councils as we share a lot of common ground. This was agreed in principle, although no-one wanted to travel to an extra meeting. CS thought it might be possible for them to join us for lunch and afternoon of our post AGM meeting. SS to find out what they want to discuss and get further details. SS

b) GR had received an e-mail from a new member questioning NABO's membership numbers following derogatory comments made on www.narrowboatworld.com He was given guidance as to what to say in response, TH offered to deal with the offending comments. TH

c) CK needs to take a break from NABO business for personal reasons. CS stated that we would be sorry if she were to leave, and that she shouldn't lose touch. Acton Trussell

and Stourbridge meetings in the autumn need to be covered.

d) SP asked what is happening about Bill O'Brien, our president, now that he is no longer an MP? CS said that she no longer knew how to contact him, but that he had previously agreed to come to our AGM. Penny Barber is our liaison person, so needs to be contacted and her advice sought. CS

e) TH will be attending a CutCrime meeting with Eugene Baston and Peter Wade on 3rd August. He asked if SS would like to go too, and which was the preferred location. Watford won over Hatton.

f) A member had enquired as to what NABO is doing about the red diesel issue. SS explained that we had offered to help the RYA/IWA campaign financially, members had been urged to question the prospective MP's as to their stand on the subject, questions were being asked at PWG meetings, and we expect to be active in the future.

The meeting ended at 3.38pm.

Date of next meeting: 16th July 2005

Signed:  _____

Date: 16 July 2005