

MINUTES OF A COUNCIL MEETING of the NATIONAL ASSOCIATION of BOAT OWNERS, held at The Waggon & Horses, Oldbury, on SATURDAY 26th NOVEMBER 2005

Present:

Stuart Sampson, chairman, in the chair (SS)	
Aileen Butler (AB)	Gordon Reece (GR)
Stephen Peters (SP)	Geoff Rogerson (GRo)
Tony Haynes (TH)	Simon Robbins (SR)
Andy Colyer (AC)	Carole Sampson (CS)

Apologies for Absence: Peter Foster and Merlene Watson.

1. MINUTES

- a) With all who had been present in agreement, the minutes of the 17/09/05 and the 19/11/05 meetings were approved as a true record. The chairman signed the minutes.
- b) Actions from the 17/09/05 minutes.
 - SS i) Has amended the membership application form, but it will need to be done again to include the life membership options. SS
 - ii) - iv) Done
 - AB/CS Ken Bennell has not claimed any travelling expenses.
 - CS i) Liquid remuneration for Ken Bennell was discussed. CS proposed that he receive an honorarium of £100 and/or a case of wine. GR felt that he would not be happy to accept the former, but that wine would be appropriate. All agreed. A budget of £100 maximum was set, the same amount for the auditor. CS
 - ii) Done. She explained the absence of our president from the AGM. SS asked everyone to think of suitable personae for our new president. ALL
 - iii) The national rally entry had been completed: it was awaiting a payment cheque.
 - SP i) Done
 - ii) Bill O'Brien didn't attend the AGM.
- c) Matters arising from the AGM on 19th November 2005
 - i) The red diesel issue. SS had contacted Howard Pridding (BMF) to find out the state of the campaign, and to ascertain where NABO could help. There is to be a statement in Parliament on 5/12/05. John Healy, the treasury official dealing with the matter, has been inundated with letters, to the point where any more could be counter-productive. SS told him of NABO's offer to RYA to join and contribute financially to the campaign: he hadn't heard of this before! It seems there has been little expenditure to date. A leaflet has been produced "Seeing Red", which states the arguments in favour of the retention of current duty levels: this will be resurrected after 05/12 if necessary, and NABO should hold fire until after then.
 - CS informed Council that ALL the slogans about retaining red diesel duty levels had been taken at the AGM, and, as a member had asked for a letter which he could copy, she felt that a bullet-pointed list of the arguments should appear in the next NABO News as well as asking members to hold on in the short term.
 - SP felt that we should wait until after 05/12 so that a meaningful article could

appear in NN. This was agreed, especially as the despatch-to-printer date was after the Commons statement. TH agreed to send information which had been given out at Stokie's Sharpness rally, and SS was awaiting a copy of "Seeing Red" from Howard Pridding. **SS**

- ii) It was noted that a member had been recording the AGM. He had asked permission of Robin Evans for the afternoon session, but had not asked for the morning session. The member had stated that he was allowed to record in a public place. Council was not happy with this, as the morning was a private meeting.
- iii) The resolution pertaining to the claiming of expenses had been amended by SS, in consultation with SP who had proposed it, to reflect what had been meant. Left as it was, it would mean that claimants could only claim during the month of April for the preceeding financial year.
- iv) For the AGM, the buffet had cost £120, £76 donations had been received, making the cost of the AGM just £44.
- v) The matter of a credit or debit card was discussed under FINANCE.

2. AREAS OF RESPONSIBILITY

Chairman	SS - elected at the AGM
Vice chairman	TH - " "
General Secretary	CS - " "
Treasurer	SP - " "
Northwest secretary	GR
Northeast secretary	CS
East Midlands secretary	Joan Jamieson
Midlands secretary	Chris Boxall
Anglian secretary	Mike Smith
London Secretary	Adrian Stott
South Secretary	AC

There followed a discussion about Andy needing to make a declaration of interest, as per the Constitution. His election statement had stated that he continues to represent a local user group. SS stated that representatives can express personal viewpoints as long as they make it clear that it is a personal viewpoint. CS said it is hoped to issue Council Handbooks at the next meeting, so that we can all be aware of the views we are representing.

Rivers representatives	SP and PF
Regional secretary coordinator	TH The role was discussed
Publications editor	SS
Webmaster	SS:

he asked for help from all Councillors, that they should look at the website and suggest ways it can be improved.

Events & Marketing	AB
Membership and recruitment	It was hoped that MW would be able to contribute with ideas for this.
Residential and mooring issues	SR
PR + safety matters	TH
Legal affairs	GRo

3. CO-OPTIONS

There is one vacant place on Council. No-one springs to mind immediately, but Councillors should be aware that we can co-opt for a specific purpose if necessary.

4. AGM's

i) 2005

This was thought to have been one of the most successful AGM's, in an excellent venue. Members had expressed their enjoyment of the event, and it had been a good idea to have invited Robin Evans.

ii) 2006

CS had contacted the Bonded Warehouse in Stourbridge. The room would cost £75, and she had received details of the buffet which could be provided. She thought it expensive, more so than M & S Foods!

GRo felt that our AGM had moved into a different league and that we now need somewhere more up-market, if only as a PR exercise.

Everyone agreed that Stourbridge is acceptable. CS to enquire about the price of the buffet. CS

Re a speaker, proposed CS, seconded GRo, Hilary Bainbridge. All were in favour. CS to invite her. CS

AB felt that the timing of a 10.30 start should be looked at. Everyone agreed that the start time should be decided according to the agenda once the number of resolutions was known.

5. FINANCE

a) Definition of the audit.

Council defines the work it expects to be carried out by the auditor appointed under paragraph 8.2 of the Constitution to be: "an examination of the books and records of the Association, and verifying that the Association accounts are in accordance with them and the information and explanations provided, and are free of material misstatement."

Proposed CS, seconded SP, all were in favour.

b) CS explained the history of the Boats on Show share. She informed Council that the second installment of the sale of the share - £333 - had been received. Hopefully, the final payment of £334 would be received next year.

c) Payment for secretarial support.

SS had received a request that Melanie's hourly rate be increased from £8 to £8.77. CS proposed that we pay £9 per hour, this seconded by GRo. All were in favour. CS is to write to Melanie informing her of this, and expressing our gratitude and appreciation.

d) Draft budget.

SP presented a draft budget. Individual items were discussed and some amounts were amended accordingly. SS proposed a vote of thanks to SP for doing this, seconded TH, all were agreed.

e) Bank signatories.

SP had ascertained that the approved signatories for the Alliance & Leicester account are: CS, GR, Sue Burchett, and David Harle. Proposed SP, seconded GRo, and with all in favour, these will be changed to CS, GR and SP, with the appropriate change of correspondence address.

The Barclays account signatories are: SP, CS, GR

These will be changed to SP, CS, TH, along with the appropriate change of

correspondence address, this already approved at the 19/11/05 Council meeting. SP would wait for the Barclays change of correspondence address to become operational, then order a second paying-in book and passcodes for on-line banking. SS suggested that the individual balances in the accounts be left to the treasurer. All were agreed.

f) Debit / Credit card.

CS had found out that a credit card is available on the Barclays current account. This matter was discussed, bearing in mind members grave concerns about security at the AGM. It was decided to leave matters as they are for the time being, with as many of the regular expenses as possible being transferred onto Direct Debit payments, and SP paying our meeting venue expenses after each meeting. SS was asked to convey this decision to the members via NABO News, to allay their worries. SS

g) EA Breasting Up leaflet.

Louis Jankel, NABO's representative on the Thames, is eager for NABO to contribute towards the cost of a leaflet to encourage narrowboaters to breast up on moorings on the Thames. Our logo would be on the front. SS suggested £100. Generally, it was thought to represent cheap publicity. Proposed TH, seconded AB, with 8 in favour and 1 abstention, this was agreed.

6. RALLIES

AB explained to new Councillors that NABO tries to attend rallies covering the country, and that in the past, we have attended the National, Crick, and Saul. We had already decided to give Saul a miss this year. SS felt that, although it is nice to meet members and fly the flag, most boaters have already decided which organisations they wish to belong to, so that attending rallies does not lead to massive recruitment. It was agreed to attend the National and Crick + ? TH will attend the IWA Campaign Rally on the Basingstoke Canal in May. CS informed him that a banner is available.

7. INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

SS appreciated the problems Councillors are having with NABO hardware. Two lap-tops are not working, and have never really worked efficiently. These are to be brought to the next Council meeting for SR to look at them. AB GR

After this, decisions will be taken re supplying AC with electronic communication.

TH has found that the cheapest way for him to use electronic communications is to use Outlook Express through a mobile phone: 10p per minute.

8. LICENCE CONSULTATION

SS had received the white paper consultation document on 24th November. He had distributed it, but not all Councillors had had time to absorb its contents. The response deadline is 16th January 2006, i.e. before our next meeting.

- GRo thought the document irrelevant and academic, as there had not been a satisfactory green paper consultation beforehand. This latest document still contained BW's intended change from the terms 'pleasure' and 'business' to 'high band' and 'low band', and there is a move to charge according to usage.
- AC felt that we should oppose the re-classification.
- SS said that the term 'multi-user' appears in the 1995 Act.

- CS summarised, saying that each share owner in a vessel nominates up to three other people who can use the boat. In the case of a twelfth share, this could mean up to 48 groups of people using the boat, which is probably more than a hire boat. So it comes down to useage as the reason for BW charging them at business licence rate. If we let this slip through, it could represent a move to charging by useage other than by length as previously agreed with user groups.
- TH asked how many shared owners are members of NABO?
- SS said theoretically none, although we have allowed a couple to join.

Proposed GRo, seconded GR, that:

"we accept in principle the interim proposals, but reserve our position regarding the change of nomenclature of pleasure and business licences"

SP felt that we should question the terminology of BW's concept of a lawful keeper.

- CS was not happy with the proposal in the light of not everyone having had the time to read the document. She suggested that SS should contact:
 - a) BW to ask for an extension to the response period on the grounds of inadequate level of consultation, and the views of those who had expressed an opinion about the licence charging of shared ownership boats being ignored, and
 - b) other user groups to inform them of this and also our misgivings re the change to charging according to useage that the white paper implies. SS

This issue, and the proposal, to be added to the next meeting agenda. CS

9. NATIONAL MEETING REPORTS

SS had attended an EA meeting. After pressure, the proposed 8.5% increase in licence fees had been reduced to 6.9%. Generally, it was felt that the RFERAC committees are too influential and not representative of users. EA is trying to improve the standing of NNUF, and appears to be taking notice of attendees. He will be attending a Harmony Forum meeting on 12/12/05.

There had been a Parliamentary Waterways group meeting, where grey water issues had been raised. We need to keep an eye on this as it may have issues for inland boaters.

SP had noticed that a new application re the Transport & Works Act/Order was made on 18/10/05.

TH will be attending a Cutcrime meeting in February/March 2006. Currently, the information received is being analysed, and it is hoped that a document giving advice will be issued to boaters. He will also be attending an MCA meeting in December. He is asking what the MCA does about anti-social behaviour.

10. THE WAY AHEAD

CS felt that, especially since the latest licence consultation, BW has little understanding of what boating is about. Maybe NABO should be doing more to educate BW personnel? Possibly an audio/visual presentation. It would be a more proactive move.

- SP wondered about a questionnaire in NABO News, along the lines of what would 'delight' boaters more? Suggest ten things. It could start by quoting BW's own satisfaction percentages.
- SR and GRo feel that BW is not interested in boats, but more in property development.

11. A. O. B.

- 1) Concessionary NABO News. Everyone is asked to look at the list and send in any amendments. L.S.M
- 2) SR asked about NABO's view regarding the spending of £15K for a new lock to increase usage of Prescott Channel. This is possibly tied in with moving construction equipment and goods for the Olympic Games works.
- 3) SR informed Council that there is a move to re-launch the Thames Waterways Stakeholders Forum.
- 4) PF had send in some items, asking that the licensing of unsuitable boats (too large and therefore unmanoeuvrable vessels), and boating etiquette, be raised nationally.
- 5) An update re the 48-hour mooring complaint was requested. CS explained that she is awaiting the draft report from the Ombudsman, whereupon both sides will have an opportunity to comment before she produces her final report. Whilst there can be no guarantees, CS is cautiously optimistic.

The meeting ended at 3.50pm.

Date of next meeting: 28th January 2006

Signed: _____



Date: _____

28/1/06