

**MINUTES OF A COUNCIL MEETING of the NATIONAL
ASSOCIATION of BOAT OWNERS, held at The Waggon &
Horses, Oldbury, on SATURDAY 11th MARCH 2006**

Present: Stuart Sampson, chairman, in the chair (SS)
 Aileen Butler (AB) Stephen Peters (SP)
 Tony Haynes (TH) Simon Robbins (SR)
 Andy Colyer (AC) Merleen Watson (MW)
 Peter Foster (PF) Carole Sampson (CS)

Apologies for Absence: Gordon Reece (on holiday) & Geoffrey Rogerson (family business).

A Council member expressed concern about Councillors missing meetings, and wished it minuted that the Constitution will be applied as necessary.

1. MINUTES

a) With all who had been present in agreement, the minutes of the 28/01/06 meeting were approved as a true record. The chairman signed the minutes.

b) Action reports.

SS Berrington Print has prepared and delivered the envelopes.

CS 1) Questionnaire in NN re boaters being 'delighted'. Not done as the fee survey is currently active. CS feels that there are only two questions to be asked, and wondered if these could be added to MW's costs survey. Wording to be sent to MW. CS

2) Done, but no account has been received from Zurich - CS to follow up. CS

3) She has written to Bill O'Brien - see later agenda.

AB 1) Crick rally has been booked
2) Her lap-top has been passed on to SR.

GR 1) Mooring site durations on the SU - not known, not present.

TH 1) IW Safety Executive. This has been done, but TH feels that the matter has been overtaken in priority by the fees and expenses survey.

2) Done: RCR are happy to continue.

3) Incident Report Forms ordered to be sent to Ruth Field.

SR Done, with no satisfactory solution. One laptop is now working. SR will contact GR for the Windows discs. SR

MW Boating expenses questionnaire - ongoing.

SP Response to NERC Bill done.

2. BW MATTERS

a) Meeting between SS, GRo, TH and Simon Salem.

TH reported that it had been a useful, informal meeting, very open and honest. BW is feeling the pressure being applied: Simon is looking for a way forward. BW has agreed to consult earlier, and is very concerned about the Cabinet Office Guidelines complaint. SS said that everything that had needed to be said had been said. TH added that the meeting had covered a wide range of subjects.

b) Cabinet Office Guidelines complaint.

CS had received a response from Simon Salem, but was not happy with the lack of a conciliatory tone. Council agreed with this. CS to write a response, the main thrust being on moving forward. (Discussion overlapped with 2d) plus a clarification as to the status of the licence consultation. CS

MW felt the response should be conciliatory, bridge-building.

c) Daily Telegraph article.

SS had been taken to task by Simon Salem, who wanted to know if the views expressed were those of NABO. He had responded by saying that Simon Robbins had always made it clear when views were his own, and also that Del Brennan has no connection with NABO. SS has written a letter to the Daily Telegraph to clarify matters, but to date, this has not been published. BW's attempt at a response had been distributed at the recent PWG meeting, thus ensuring that everybody now knows about the article!

d) Boating Issues meeting

Due to a cancelled train, SS had arrived late and had missed the item about the licence consultation. At lunchtime, he had been told that BW feels the Ombudsman ruling had been most unsatisfactory. Therefore, it intends to revert to the status quo which had existed before that ruling. It is hoped/expected that the original complainant will complain again, so that the matter can be considered by the new Ombudsman where hopefully, a clearer ruling will emerge.

SR feels that this is an abuse of the complaints process. Why should a person be forced through the procedure just because BW can't make a decision. This is a mess of BW's making.

SS reported upon the meeting, where BW announced early consultation on a wide range of issues, such as: Boating facilities gap analysis, Dredging, Standards, Congestion, Safety, and Boating Etiquette.

CS felt that it is now BW's intention to overload user groups with extra 'early consultation' meetings.

A copy of AINA's signage document has been received: CS to obtain more copies for Council members. CS

Marina Prospectus Guide - PF and SP requested copies. SS

SR thinks that BW is feeling even more under pressure as the Mayor's London Commission is scrutinising London's waterways.

PF feels that BW is neglecting its responsibilities: the closure of facilities at boatyards means there is a lack of convenient places for the repair of maintenance craft.

NABO needs to formulate a policy re the provision of facilities: PF to word this. PF

Volunteers are required for the Boating Facilities Gap Analysis group, which is to be made up of numerous BW personnel, two representatives from APCO, and two from other boating user groups. This was thought to be unbalanced, as hirers are less likely to need

toilet emptying facilities. SS to challenge.

SS

3. Default item: LICENSING, MOORINGS, CONDITIONS and CHARGING

The EA has been told by DEFRA that boaters have to bear more financial responsibility for the upkeep of the waterways. SS had received a copy of a ten-year-old study which concluded that boaters would not leave the waterways if licence fees increased by 10%: EA boaters are facing a double-figure % increase in the next three years. EA believes that its customers can afford the increase and will be prepared to pay.

- TH has been asked to join the Thames User Group navigation forum. He reported that the EA is consulting at an early stage, and has been told that users will not pay more than a 6.9% increase, to which EA has said that a 25% increase over the next three years will still not be enough money to fund the waterway. It seems that the plan is to screw as much money as possible out of boaters and blames DEFRA. He recommends that all user groups must have a united voice and complain directly to shipping ministers: it is damage limitation.
- SR pointed out that it is the ODPM running the residential issues consultation as opposed to DEFRA.
- SS said that the treasury believes that people who own boats are rich. We need to produce facts and figures to dispute this.
- CS wondered if a survey is needed, to gain the evidence.
- TH pointed out that the government is short of funds at present: two war fronts and the Olympic games to prepare for, and feels that grant aid will be dramatically reduced. NABO should encourage EA to create more moorings which will attract boats away from BW and increase its income. The present policy will drive boats away.
- PF wondered if anglers should pay more.
- TH asked how we could create a united voice?
- CS felt that we need all boating organisations, including APCO, to attend a meeting to discuss increases in licence fees rather than the differences between licence rates. APCO, IWA, RYA, RBOA, NABO, TBA, AWCC, CBOA. It was thought we should involve IWAAC: SS to talk to the chairman. SS

The old EA survey could be useful to MW. SS to send. SS

4. EVENTS

AB has booked Crick and the National this year. Although we have already decided not to attend Saul this year, she wondered if anyone would be attending any other rally by boat.

TH will be attending Saul by campervan

AB will be at the London Cavalcade

SR will be attending an event in London in September.

5. NABO POLICY / ADVICE TO POTENTIAL LIVE-ABOARDS

TH had received enquiries from people who see living aboard as a cheap option. Should NABO have a policy on this.

- CS felt that the waterways should not be considered as an overflow housing estate.
- SR felt that there were several problems here, some genuine, some leading to continuous moorers, and felt that we need to squash rosy ideas.

After discussion, it was decided that it would be helpful to have a document to hand out

whenever necessary, including at rallies.

- MW mentioned that RBOA has a leaflet, but that it isn't very helpful.
 - AB thought that the document should come from a 'Things to Consider' angle
- EVERYONE IS ASKED TO CONTRIBUTE TO THIS: TH will formulate it. TH ALL

6. PRESIDENT / VICE-PRESIDENTS

CS reported that Bill O'Brien has decided to stand down as NABO's president, mainly due to ill health. She has already written to accept this and thank him. This means that we can start today's discussion with a clean sheet.

SS asked why we should want a president -

credibility / prestige

contacts / influence

and would vice-presidents fulfill the role?

Viscountess Sheelin Knollys was suggested, especially as she is about to retire as chairman of IWAAC.

TH thought that David Suchet is too busy, but perhaps Prunella Scales would be worth approaching.

Proposed PF, seconded SP and with all in favour, SS to approach Sheelin Knollys. SS

Proposed TH, seconded AC and with all in favour, Prunella Scales to be approached. ?

CS wondered if it is worth TH sounding out Bob Potter. TH

7 FINANCE

SP reported that he had consulted with Jon Darlington. Life membership fees will be kept separately in the account and added to funds pro rata over several years. He also reminded Councillors that the end of this month is the end of the financial year.

Outstanding claims should be submitted and a check of any stock held which has worth.

Current bank balances are:

Alliance & Leicester	£ 4,000
Barclays current account	£ 4,000
Barclays deposit account	£33,000

All funds seem to be increasing.

SS asked, following an enquiry from Melanie D., whether Ruth Field, who puts NABO News into envelopes, should have a payrise, as she is paid below the minimum wage. This was thought not to be acceptable, especially as it is not known if she had ever had a pay rise. It was agreed to increase her hourly rate to £6.

This led to a discussion about the late arrival of the last issue of the magazine.

SP felt that there is a lack of communication between Council and Ruth, Council at fault.

CS explained that as Ruth is paid by Darlington Travis, it was thought that the best method of communication was through Melanie, especially as they are sisters. It seems that this is a poor route, and SP stressed that there should be a contact on Council who will tell Ruth exactly what is required of her and when.

AB suggested a pro-forma with all the information on it.

There being a lack of volunteers, CS offered.

Proposed TH, seconded SP, the general secretary to take this on. CS

8. BASINGSTOKE CANAL

TH reported that the Basingstoke Canal is in critical crisis financially. It is owned by Surrey and Hampshire County Councils plus six riparian councils, four of which are not paying their dues. Surrey C.C. had threatened to substantially reduce its contribution over the next two years, due to its budget being cut. It has backed down for this year, but more money needs to be raised next year.

There is a backlog of work. Deepcut Locks were built in sand. An Act of Parliament is needed to close the canal, but the lack of funds leaves an inevitability. Moves are afoot to change the Basingstoke Canal Authority into a Trust, previously resisted, which would enable private money to be accepted.

TH is himself working on an idea for marinas: the army to be asked for Mytchett Lake, at the Lakeside complex in Frimley Green, and a disused gravel pit near Woking.

Previous problems with vandalism and anti-social behaviour are improving. There will be a raft race over Easter which is hoped to interest trouble-makers and show them what the waterway has to offer. TH then asked if NABO would be prepared to sponsor this.

Proposed SS, seconded AC that NABO sponsor this event for £200.

All were agreed.

CS asked about back-pumping to ensure water supply.

TH responded by saying this had been done in some places, but that EA's permission had to be sought.

9. A. O. B.

a) PF reported that on the River Trent, some moorings have been curtailed in favour of anglers. He is concerned that this become the practice elsewhere.

b) PF reported that there has been an outcry in his local newspaper due to life safety equipment being moved further away from potential places of need.

c) SS asked if NABO should support the Towpath Tidy campaign between 3/4 and 10/4. It was felt that those that use the towpath should be responsible for clearing it up: the campaign was noted.

d) CS is investigating Saga in the hope that she can arrange a deal for cheaper insurance for members. Concern was expressed about its policy being not applicable to those living on boats, and also the age restriction which would prohibit some members, but generally, she was given the authority to proceed.

e) SR reported that BW is looking at other ways of renting out moorings, as it thinks it unfair when a boat is sold with a mooring and BW gets no cut. A working party is to be established. Long term leases would make a mockery of waiting lists. SR would like to attend on behalf of NABO: all were agreed.

f) AC asked for an i.t. update. SR explained that Council members have many different modus operandi. The best advice he could offer is to get what suits the individual best and watch the market for developments and price. The best deals would cost between £15-£20 per month.

This led to a discussion that AC is still not on-line. As it is his intention to purchase an Apple Mac computer for himself in a few months time,

proposed CS, seconded SR that AC be granted an interest-free loan for the purchase of an Apple Mac laptop, to be repaid by 1st November 2006, with a

budget limit of £1500.
CS to draft a document for him to sign.

All were agreed.

CS

The meeting closed at 3.20p.m.

Date of next meeting: Saturday 22nd April, 10.30a.m.

Signed:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Simon', written above a horizontal line.

Date:

22/4/06