

# MINUTES OF A COUNCIL MEETING of the NATIONAL ASSOCIATION of BOAT OWNERS, held at The Waggon & Horses, Oldbury, on SATURDAY 22nd APRIL 2006

**Present:** Stuart Sampson, chairman, in the chair (SS)  
Aileen Butler (AB) Stephen Peters (SP)  
Tony Haynes (TH) Simon Robbins (SR)  
Andy Colyer (AC) Geoffrey Rogerson (GRo)  
Carole Sampson (CS)

**Apologies for Absence:** Gordon Reece (not well), Peter Foster (overdone it) & Merleen Watson (no available public transport).

## 1. MINUTES

- a) With all who had been present in agreement, the minutes of the 11/03/06 meeting were approved as a true record. The chairman signed the minutes.
- b) Action reports.
  - CS All done.
  - SR Not done: he thought the Windows discs would not be forthcoming.
  - SS
    - a) Ecotec is being employed to conduct a survey regarding BW's provision of facilities. Sally Ash will be holding a meeting about this. SS will be attending on behalf of NABO: IWA and RBOA will also be involved. He asked Councillors for criteria to be considered. Suggestions included the gap between facilities, boatyard services, winding holes, + toilet and rubbish facilities for anglers.
    - b) Done - marina prospecti received yesterday.
    - c) Done, but no interest shown. Other organisations seem to want to go their own way.
    - d) Done, but nothing further heard from MW to date.
    - e) Done, but Sheelin Knollys declined. (See later agenda item.)
  - TH
    - a) Done
    - b) See later item.
- c) Matters arising from the minutes.
  - i) AC thanked Council for enabling his electronic capability and e-mail whilst afloat. He informed Council of a system operated by Orange whereby he can use the internet for £1 per day, payable only when it is actually used. He agreed to circulate details. **AC**
  - ii) Presidents / Vice-Presidents.

SR suggested Karen Buck MP, who has been helpful in the London region. SS and CS were concerned at the thought of another MP - they come and they go, and can then be difficult to get rid of.

TH informed Council that Bob Potter could be Vice-President, but there is no-one for him to be Vice-President to.

SS thought it would be better to wait for the right person to come along rather than make a hasty choice.
  - iii) Inland Waterways Safety Executive.

TH's approaches to other organisations were not fruitful. He expressed his concern over safety requirements being issued to commercial boats by the MCA.

CS felt that this could be further discussed under item 7 on the agenda.

iv) Basingstoke Canal

TH had attended a meeting with Surrey and Hampshire Councils. Surrey has done a u-turn regarding the shortfall in funding this year, but next year's funding will be subject to independent funding being found. Hampshire has guaranteed its funding for the next two years. The District Councils are being pressurised to pay their dues. The canal is now open, water levels are up, so it should stay open until June, subject to any ruling otherwise following a recent tragedy.

v) Cut Crime

TH has attended a meeting with Peter Wade and Mike Barrett at Watford on 21/04/06. It seems that AINA is getting involved and will be taking over the initiative, and producing its own forms.

SS asked TH to produce something for NABO News about reporting instances of antisocial behaviour. **TH**

SP drew Council's attention to the National Crime Survey, which aims to discover people's perception of crime.

TH talked about personal accidents being caused after boaters have been drinking. BW is to issue advice on the subject.

SP reminded Council that it is now an offence for a skipper to be drunk in charge of a vessel: the police have the power to breathalyse skippers, and members should be encouraged to call them.

GRo thought it would be interesting to know the proportion of accidents pertaining to private and hire boats.

vi) Marine & Coastguard Agency.

TH is concerned at incoming legislation, whereby Boatmaster licences will be required by old working boats, although Grandfather rights will apply. Following an accident in Bath, heel testing is being looked into (how much a boat leans over). A figure of 7° was mentioned. Narrowboats are considered the same as seagoing vessels, and those that operate as trip boats would not pass the test, which means that, as the average weight of a person has increased by 12%+, the capacity might be reduced. BMF is being asked for evidence that narrowboats are capable of heeling more than 7°: TH feels that whilst greater than this would be uncomfortable, eventually, people on the roof, say, would fall off and the boat right itself. He wonders whether the MCA will start thinking about hire boats, and then private boats.

## 2. Default item: LICENSING, MOORINGS, CONDITIONS and CHARGING

### a) EA licence costs + NABO response

SS explained that the Environment Agency believes that the licence represents a small percentage of boating costs. Wide-beam boats will be hit the hardest by the increases as they pay length x breadth.

TH added that the EA had wanted a 25% increase, but had reduced it to 14.1% for the next three years, but want the same increase for the next nine years. DEFRA and the government is to blame for reducing grant-aid. He has heard a rumour that grant-aid will disappear in 3-4 years time.

SS reminded everyone that the Anglian region will also be affected.

TH explained the options as he sees them:

#### i) BW takes over navigational responsibility

ii) EA should be allowed to operate mooring facilities

• CS doesn't trust BW to look after the Thames, feeling that the lock houses will be sold off as with the Trent.

• SS has heard that there may be some restructuring of the EA - AB had also heard this said on a radio programme.

• CS thought that DEFRA had promised greater funding for EA navigations after the last review. No-one could confirm this.

• SS wondered if the time is right for a human interest / hardship story to appear in the national press - the PR route.

• TH feels that Thames mooring fees might double in 2007 for those who moor on EA waters.

• CS commented on the disproportionate cost of short-term visitor licences compared to the annual licence.

• SR felt that NABO needs hard evidence to convince EA that boaters cannot all afford such huge increases.

• CS proposed that NABO instigates a press campaign, plus a survey of Thames boaters to ascertain exactly what they will do when faced with these increases (move elsewhere - where - , give up boating, etc.), and a letter to Jim Knight, the waterways minister, expressing displeasure, and pointing out the effect there could be on local trade etc.. She felt that we need to say something as silence implies acceptance.

TH to liaise with Louis Jankel and Mike Shefras re PR and survey, SP to write the letter.

TH      SP

b) End of garden moorings

SS reported upon two recent successes. Some members were being charged 50% of the average BW mooring price instead of 50% of the lowest price. The areas concerned had backed down and the charges are being corrected.

• GRo thought this is something good to put into NABO News.

SS

c) Grand Union mooring durations.

It has been reported that BW South is intending to reduce all mooring durations on Grand Union Visitor Moorings to 24 or 48 hours.

CS had mentioned this during a phone conversation with Simon Salem, stating that if this went ahead, there would be another official complaint from NABO.

SS had heard nothing more, and thought that the idea had been dropped.

d) Kennet & Avon moorings.

A similar situation had arisen on the K & A, and also that boaters might be charged for mooring. SS has already made representations that moorings should be free for 48 hours.

CS is concerned. What is the purpose of mooring durations? Is it to move boats on so that others can use the moorings, or is it a backdoor way for BW to make money? Either it is alright to stay on a mooring or it is not. It cannot become acceptable if someone is prepared to pay.

SS is to make more representations, AC will write a letter. SS      AC

### 3. CRICK RALLY

John Russell has offered to man the stand on all three days.

Ken & Iris Bennell will do one day (Monday thought to be the best day for them so that Ken can transport the stand back to Oldbury).

Another member has offered, and SS might be available for the Saturday.

#### 4. FINANCE

SP reminded Council that we are in a new financial year. Expense claims up to March 2006 together with details of NABO stock held should be submitted by the end of this month (April). He will be preparing budget figures in time for the next meeting.

#### 5. NABO DOCUMENT FOR POTENTIAL BOATERS

CS congratulated TH on the document he has produced.

- TH informed Council that MW is very unhappy with it as she feels it to be negative. Louis J. has already written a guide which he will make available to NABO.

- CS said that living on a boat is not always sunshine and roses, and that it is important to be honest to prevent some folk from making what could be the biggest mistake of their lives.

- AC commented that the cost estimates are not accurate. TH asked him for input with this: AC to send to TH. AC

- CS thought the NABO document pertaining to buying a boat should be incorporated, together with BW guidelines about what is expected of a Continuous Cruiser, and that a flow chart at the beginning would be a good idea.

*This led to discussion about the size of the document, and TH not wishing to overlap with information available elsewhere.*

It was agreed that sample copies will be produced for the Crick Show, with a feedback form for people to comment upon how useful they find the document. TH to liaise with SS. TH SS

#### 6 WATERWAY REPORTS

SS asked everyone to look at the site.

There has been discussion with Eugene Baston as to how the facility could be better used and more effective. BW staff will be encouraged to support it more, but it needs pushing and more publicity.

- TH expressed a vote of thanks to SS for all his hard work setting it up. He wondered if it could be tied in with AINA?

SS is producing a new promotional leaflet.

#### 7. SIBUG AND BUSINESS MEMBERS

SS has been approached by the Shared Investment Boat User group, which is due to fold in the near future due to a lack of people to keep it going. He had also been approached by Nick Scott (known to TH) who operates a hotel boat. Nick is dissatisfied with APCO, who charge a lot for membership and do very little for him. Both approaches enquired about joining NABO.

- SP emphatically stated that as these people do own their boats, they are entitled to join NABO.

- CS felt, in the light of the fact that other organisations are not interesting in securing a united voice to deal with the MCA etc., we should follow Adrian S's suggestion that NABO establish itself as the leading organisation. Having shared owners and some

business members would entitle us to say that we represent every type of boat ownership and give us much more authority.

Following further discussion, CS proposed that we welcome the interest in joining, and offer to co-opt representatives onto Council to stand until the AGM in November, when they can be encouraged to stand formally.

This was unanimously agreed.

SS to contact the relevant people, and also to sound out David Lowe.

SS

8. A. O. B.

a) AC - BW is auctioning off its fleet of workboats, eighty craft being advertised on its website. Suddenly, after complaint from HNBOC and others, the heritage boats were removed, and are now being offered for sale to 'approved' people only.

SS said the matter was discussed at the recent Boating Issues Meeting: the boating heritage group is working with BW.

CS felt that this is beyond NABO's remit.

After discussion, it was decided that AC will write a letter enquiring how a 'member' could go about purchasing one of the craft.

AC

b) SP had shown a copy of the Why Nabo leaflet to a fellow moorer who had found it negative. Perhaps a new leaflet is needed.

c) SR - Dennis Docherty (boat impounded and taken away by BW) has got it back, having had to pay £5K for it. Three crew hired to collect it from BW charged £875 for a days work. This will be pursued.

d) CS asked about NABO becoming a company limited by guarantee. She had not understood the issue when it was first raised a few years ago, and asked SP if it is still relevant. He explained that such a move would be against the Constitution. There are benefits, but NABO would have to be disbanded and reformed as a limited company. CS wondered if the idea was therefore a non-starter. SP didn't think it was, but SS to consult with Peter Lea initially.

SS


e) CS asked if there are any more press releases in the pipeline as we haven't done any for a while. TH stated that he had hoped that MW would take these on, but she wasn't there today. CS to think of some ideas and let TH have them.

CS

The meeting closed at 3.10 p.m.

Date of next meeting: Saturday 3rd June, 10.30 a.m.

Signed:



Date 3/6/06