

MINUTES OF A COUNCIL MEETING of the NATIONAL ASSOCIATION of BOAT OWNERS, held at The Waggon & Horses, Oldbury, on SATURDAY 3rd FEBRUARY 2007

Present: Stuart Sampson, chairman, in the chair (SS)
Aileen Butler (AB) Stephen Peters (SP)
Tony Haynes (TH) Simon Robbins (SR)
Andy Colyer (AC) Carole Sampson (CS)
Geoffrey Rogerson (GRo)
Howard Anguish (HA) attended the meeting with a view to being co-opted onto Council with special reference to Shared Boat Ownership.

Apologies for Absence: Peter Foster (recent operation).

1. MINUTES

a) With all who had been present in agreement, the minutes of the 25/11/06 meeting were amended slightly, then approved as a true record. The chairman signed the minutes.

b) Action reports.

SS i) regsec@nabo.org.uk set up

ii) & iii) Done

iv) & v) He has not spoken to Richard Carpenter re banners as there might need to be design changes following AC's input regarding NABO image

vi) - viii) Done: articles in NABO News and Buying a Boat leaflet distributed electronically

TH Not done (contacting reg secs prior to the meeting)

GRo Not done (contacting reg secs via e-mail group)

CS All done

SR Done. HA reported that he had seen a small item in the Times which stated that the application has been withdrawn / turned down. CS asked that this be sent to TH for inclusion in NABO News. SR will try to obtain a copy of the report. HA SR TH

c) Matters arising from the minutes.

i) Contact with Regional Secretaries prior to each meeting.

SS thought that they should be advised of any issues which they should raise at local u/g meetings.

TH felt that they could be asked to find out whether problems reported on the Waterway Reports Board have been dealt with.

SS thanked TH for all the work he is doing on that board.

ii) Proposed SS, seconded TH, that Howard Anguish be co-opted onto Council. All were in favour. Howard was welcomed.

iii) 2007 AGM

CS reported that the venue has been booked, namely Shipton On Cherwell village hall. The cost will be £10 per hour: total £60, payable a minimum of one week in advance. CS is in contact with a caterer. John Edmonds has accepted the invitation to come as guest speaker.

iv) A new computer has been bought for TH, under budget.

v) Self-accreditation boat safety scheme.

The issue has died, as BSS has no inclination towards self-accreditation.

2. PRESIDENT & VICE PRESIDENTS

SS has approached David Suchet, although the initial response to Louis Jankel was not optimistic. He has sent a snail mail letter to David S., and is awaiting a response or the return of the undelivered letter.

- HA suggested Paul Wagstaffe.
- GRo suggested Timothy West.
- SR expressed reluctance to invite any ex-manager of BW.
- AC agreed with this statement.

TH had proposed, prior to the meeting,

'that Mike Shefras be invited to be Vice President of NABO'

• CS spoke against the proposal. She felt that the membership would not have heard of him, and that the role of Vice President should not be used merely as a carrot.

SP thought that a President has a position as a figurehead, but would be happy with Mike S, in recognition of the work he has done for boat owners.

• SR asked what we would want a President / Vice President to do? If ever offered such a role, this would be the first thing he would ask. If Council replies "nothing", then we would look very silly.

• SS felt that we should have a President before we appoint any Vice Presidents.

Proposed TH, seconded SP,

'that when NABO has appointed a President, Mike Shefras be invited to be a Vice President'.

The vote: For - 5, Against - 2, Abstentions - 2

It was decided that the Chairman would effect this when appropriate.

S:

3. PROCEDURE FOR MAKING QUICK COUNCIL DECISIONS

TH was concerned about the decision-making process at times when Council meetings are spaced wide apart. e-mails do not often receive replies.

• SR remarked that such decisions / actions are, in other organisations, the Chairman's responsibility.

• AB felt that she would like a text message drawing her attention to an e-mail.

• CS thought that Councillors should contact the Chairman by phone, who should then decide if the matter is urgent. The Chairman should then contact Councillors as necessary, and make a final decision.

• SS wondered if a quorum would be a sufficient number to contact.

• SR commented that non response to an e-mail should not be taken as a yes.

• SS asked how Councillors would prefer to be contacted.

AC & TH by e-mail SP & PF by phone, GRo by phone or text,

HA, SR by e-mail then phone if non response, AB text + e-mail,

CS to be spoken to.

• CS commented that this should never be a substitute for discussion, as someone may

have an argument for / against something, which may sway others initial opinions.

At this point, the meeting was joined by Will Chapman, member of the Save Our Waterways steering committee, in order to aid discussion about the campaign against the DEFRA cuts to grant-in-aid.

4. BW GRANT CUT CAMPAIGN

Will outlined the campaign to date. The next round of protests are planned for March 3rd/4th, ten so far + five more unofficially. The IWA is encouraging branches and regions to organise something. There were 27 protests last November, 30+ are expected this time. The AWCC co-operated last time, and could double the number this time. There has been good press coverage.

The letter writing campaign has been successful, with 246 MP's supporting the campaign by signing the e.d.m's: mainly labour MP's. Adding those who have not signed, Will estimates the number of MP's in support to be about 400. Events are being planned in areas where the MP is supportive.

For the future, it is proposed that individuals write to their MP's asking if he/she would present a Constituency Petition to parliament. This would lead to each and every MP handing one in would stand and speak on the issue. If 400 are prepared to do this, then it would make quite a statement.

CS explained that NABO, whilst keen to support the campaign, could not organise protests as our membership is spread thinly over the whole country. But we could claim success for distributing publicity about the funding problems. Similarly, we could distribute information about the petitions at the next round of u/g meetings in March. She further explained that NABO is trying to accumulate photographs of waterway maintenance problems, with which to demonstrate that lack of maintenance of A, leads to B, and then to C.

Will informed Council that he has heard that a pot of DEFRA money is available - surplus from last years' funds. The EA can't bid for it as it had reached an arrangement with DEFRA previously, but he believes that BW has bid for some of it.

SR asked what would happen in subsequent years?

Will felt that specialist accountants could take apart BW's figures and, hopefully, come up with something we could use, but this could cost £10-15K.

GRo asked what would be required re accountancy skills?

SR said forensic accountants. He further felt that we need to be sure that maximum gain is coming from BW activities before more money is required from boaters, and thought that the EFRA select committee could involve the audit office.

Actions:

- i) prepare a leaflet to hand out at local u/g meetings, which also requests photographic evidence
- ii) TH, SS, and WC to produce a summary of this discussion for NABO News **TH SS**
- iii) GRo: Will to be put into contact with Peter Lea re the finding of suitable accountants and estimating the cost of looking at BW's accounts **SS**
- iv) e-mail to find out the timetable of the select committee
- v) HA in conjunction with SS to contact Howard Pridding re cooperation between various aspects of the campaign. **HA SS**

The Chairman expressed a vote of thanks to Will Chapman for attending.

5. FINANCE

The treasurer distributed a balance sheet. He commented that NABO is working within the budget. He reminded Council that the end of March marks the end of the financial year, and that expense claims should be submitted by the end of April, as per the Constitution. Any submitted after that time would not be paid.

CS had noticed that postage costs are set to increase by 2p (first class) in April, and asked that she be allowed to buy 200 x 1st and 100 x 2nd before then. This was approved. CS

6. PUBLICATIONS

a) CS had contacted Towpath Talk and had obtained a column for NABO at no expense. She therefore requested a list of topics as we have to submit copy (500 words) every three weeks. Suggestions were:

48-hr moorings complaint	Reports Board
NABO Cruise	Photograph appeal
Red diesel	User groups
Buying a Boat	Boatmanship courses

CS to add this topic to each agenda as a default item. CS

b) NABO News. TH is now the official editor, and communications addressed to editor@nabo.org.uk will go to him. HE NEEDS ARTICLES!

c) Council handbooks. HA, on receiving his first copy recently, thought it very useful. In order to minimise production time and effort, SS and CS proposed A5 ring binders and a replacement sheet option. This was agreed by all present.

d) Buying a Boat document. Updates have been requested and are now needed urgently in order for them to be made in time for Crick. CS proposed that we offer them to the IWA to sell on its bookstall at £2 per copy (totally refundable against a future membership fee): bought from NABO at £1.50 per copy. CS to send a sample copy when ready. It was decided that 100 should be made for NABO, and a further amount for the IWA. CS

e) SS has been in communication with Charles Moore (member), who has offered help with the website and has already come up with some constructive ideas. Now that he has less to do (!), he will contact him again.

SS informed Council that the site provider is limiting the number of addressees per e-mail to 200, in an attempt to reduce spam. Our current list is around 400. SS is splitting the group into five interest areas, and has asked members to resubscribe into the one which most interests them.

7. BOATMANSHIP COURSES

TH explained that courses run by the RYA are not thought to be worth much. The MCA runs Boatmaster courses for commercial operators. He proposed the idea that NABO organise a course with a defined syllabus, which would cover boat handling, safety, and etiquette. He has spoken to Nick Scott, a member who has the Boatmaster qualification, who is a NABO member, and who already runs similar courses, and distributed a sample syllabus. He further spoke to David Dare, a member who runs Oxfordshire Narrowboats, who is equally enthusiastic about the idea.

GRo thought this idea to be beyond NABO's remit, and SR felt that more information is needed. CS to place this item on the agenda for next time. CS

8. NABO IMAGE & LOGOs

AC, who had been asked to look into this matter, felt that the logos could be updated: he distributed his porthole based designs for perusal.

AB commented that she feels a porthole is more relevant to seagoing vessels

CS thought that the rope looks so small it is silly

SP stated that we need to maximise the words Boat Owners and minimise National Association

CS reminded Council that it had already agreed (September 2006) to throw away the old round blue stickers and buy replacement clear-backed ones, so we need to decide on a design.

SS would take note of the views expressed and distribute 'solutions'.

Discussion moved on to the show stand.

AC felt that photographs of boats, of the website, of the Waterways Reports Board, should be displayed as well as information. There should be goods for sale and a free gift (cuddly toy?) for joiners. He would distribute pictures of his own stand. AC

CS expressed thanks to Andy for the work he has done on this project.

9. Default item: LICENSING, MOORINGS, CONDITIONS & CHARGING

GRo asked what had happened to the formulae produced by OXERA?

SS responded that it is being implemented this year, hence the small percentage increase.

Thereafter, he feels we will need to fight to keep that formulae, but any new method of calculating increases will have to be put to users as a proposal.

HA informed Council that three licence applications made by individuals on behalf of shared owners have been returned. He was asked to copy these to SS who will pursue the matter. HA SS

10. EVENTS

CS felt strongly that after last years' debacle, NABO shouldn't attend this years' National Rally unless we can properly man the stand.

SR suggested that the stand shouldn't need to be manned all the time. A display could be put up, a system in operation for visitors to leave messages, + information about when there would be someone there to talk to.

SS thought we should approach other organisations to see if anyone would be interested

in sharing a stand.

CS had a proposal that the current tent/stand be pensioned off, and that NABO have indoor stands in a marquee in future. This will make savings on our insurance and be less goods to transport. All agreed.

AB was asked to check the availability of an inside spot.

AB

It was suggested that all the stand material be brought to a Council meeting for Councillors to sort through to see what is still useful.

11. GLOUCESTER & SHARPNESS CANAL

AC had been contacted by a member complaining about the winter operating hours. i.e. closed for two days per week.

SP explained that he had attended the meeting to discuss the matter, and NABO had agreed on the compromise from what had been originally proposed.

AC wondered if this member should be encouraged to attend WWUF and Gloucester & Sharpness U/g meetings on NABO's behalf.

This was thought to be an excellent idea. AC to encourage him.

AC

12. RED DIESEL

SS informed Council that the government cannot bring in any change to the rate of duty without legislation. He has organised an on-line petition requesting that the government drag its feet on the matter: it has over 1000 signatures already.

13. A. O. B.

i) AC has re-established a link with the Taverners' Boat Club on the Kennet & Avon

ii) SP, as treasurer, has received a cheque for over £600 from SIBUG. He does not know to whom to send an acknowledgement. HA to supply an address.

HA

iii) PF wished to inform Council that he is pursuing the matter of the Newark Dyke flood gate with BW. He sees it as a hazard to navigation as it is unmarked and unlit, and site just above water level. There have been incidents of boats nearly hitting it.

iv) Proposed SS, seconded SR, that SIBUG members transferring to NABO be given a January 2008 renewal date. All agreed.

CS

v) SR expressed his dissatisfaction with BW's attitude within the Moorings Working Party.

vi) SR noted that cyclists on the towpaths in London are causing problems: he feels that priority should be given to boaters. SS had attended a Customer Services Standards Working Group, where NABO's proposal that a Visitor Mooring should have a gap of at least one metre between the edge of the bank and the cycle path was generally accepted.

The meeting ended at 4.10pm.

Date of next meeting: Saturday 10th March 2007, 10.30am, at the Waggon & Horses Oldbury

Signed: _____

Date: _____



10/3/07