

**MINUTES OF A COUNCIL MEETING of the NATIONAL
ASSOCIATION of BOAT OWNERS, held at The Waggon &
Horses, Oldbury, on SATURDAY 12th JULY 2008**

Present: Stuart Sampson, chairman, in the chair (SS)
Stephen Peters (SP) Simon Robbins (SR)
Howard Anguish (HA) Richard Carpenter (RC)
Geoffrey Rogerson (GRo) Carole Sampson (CS)
David Fletcher (DF) also attended as an interested member

Apologies for absence: Brian Rowland, Andy Colyer (ill)

1. MINUTES

a) After discussion about a few items, and with all those who had been present in agreement, the minutes of the 7/06/08 meeting were approved. The chairman signed the minutes.

b) Matters arising:

SP asked if David Fletcher wished to be co-opted onto Council, and if so, he would propose him. DF replied that although he hopes to join Council in the future, he is still finding his feet.

c) Actions

- SS
 - i) He had contacted Trevor Rogers who is now in contact with DF.
 - ii) and iii) Done
 - iv) On the agenda
 - v) Done
- CS
 - i) No-one has sent her any information re member queries. Several were immediately forthcoming from SR, SP, and HA.
 - ii) On agenda.
- SR
 - i) Response re overstay charges pending.
 - ii) Done

2. BW CONSULTATION ON CONSULTATION - RESPONSE

SP & HA were both under the impression that a rewritten form of the document was to be produced, but it hasn't been received yet. It is therefore not possible to comment on it. Also, HA felt that as the matter is a consultation between BW Watford and staff, it is difficult for us to get involved.

SS asked who initiates consultation? If NABO does, then it's more of a complaint, if BW does, it's a request for views.

SP thought we must always consider the implication of an issue for boat owners and boating. Other organisations will have different priorities.

SR commented that the BW website appears, to any outsider, to cover consultation issues comprehensively, whereas often that consultation has not been properly conducted.

This led to a discussion about BW accusing user groups of not being representative as they do not consult their members. Council disagreed with this as far as NABO is concerned: we publish what we are doing and the results of our surveys in NABO News. We are accountable to our members, who can, and would, complain if we get something wrong.

Returning to the consultation, DF wondered if we should give some suggestions of issues for future consultations, as an initiative.

GRo thought it would be interesting to see which, if any, suggestions were accepted.

CS feels that this issue should be the key item in discussions with John Bridgeman. She feels that the whole process is being conducted merely to satisfy and answer the criticisms of EFRA/DEFRA.

HA is to pursue the issue of an updated document with BW HA

SR is to draft out some proposed consultation issues SR

3. MOORINGS TENDERS CONSULTATION - RESPONSE

SR had looked at the consultation document in detail, and outlined his arguments:

1) BW believes that the waiting list system is unsuccessful, when a properly run, properly organised trial has never been done. He queried if raising this would achieve anything.

SP observed that a properly operated national system would be fair to everyone.

2) Vacancies are awarded to the highest bidder. This only shows what the most well-off or the most desperate are prepared to pay, which has nothing to do with market rates.

SP commented that such tendering is elitist.

3) The premise of market rate starts from the supply and the demand being equal. In this case, it isn't. Coupled with its stated policy of reducing on-line moorings, BW is manipulating the market and contributing to price fixing. BW therefore is having an indirect influence on private operators.

4) A reluctance by BW to disclose the full costs of introducing the scheme compared to what was expended before on the waiting list scheme.

5) A similar reluctance to disclose how many empty moorings were stock-piled prior to the 'trial', and the loss of associated income from them as a result.

6) We do not have the full results of the 'trial' before we have to comment upon it.

CS commented that we still do not know BW's plans for after the trial: how will moorings fees increases be applied to other moorers at the same site? Will their fees be raised annually so that at the end of the three-year fixed tender contract, their fees will be the same as those tendered, so that the whole process can start again?

SP wondered that when the 'trial' ends at the end of October, what will happen on 1st November?

HA felt that we must respond to the consultation, otherwise NABO will be sidelined.

SR commented that we have tried to be constructive in the past and have still been ignored.

SS proposed a response from two angles:

a) an objective appraisal of the document

b) a devaluing of the trial and consultation process.

CS asked whether BW could refuse to renew a mooring agreement in order to be able to tender the resulting vacancy?

SR replied "yes", as there is no security of mooring beyond the paid-up

year, and, whilst it has been BW's practice to automatically renew a mooring permit, it would be naive to assume that this will continue to be the case.

The document gives five possible future options for the allocation of mooring vacancies. HA asked which of these we should support.

CS proposed a decent trial of a national waiting list system. We could offer suggestions as to how this could be done, especially as SR has knowledge about such things. She felt that boaters had accepted the old mooring matrix system as it was transparent and fair, and that any new system should be similarly so.

SR observed that the new website devoted to moorings tenders is good, and that if a waiting list was substituted in place of the tenders, it could work well. An annual fee to join, to be paid annually with the onus on the boater to rejoin, would eliminate time wasters and show a degree of commitment. RC thought it would be sensible to put the system on-line.

GRo questioned what is being waited for? Are there sufficient moorings for the 1,000 new boats coming on to the system each year?

CS felt that boaters would prefer a waiting list system.

SP asked how such a system would work.

SR replied that a boater would register, then put his/her name beside any occurring vacancy, then wait his/her turn. The tender 'trial' has establisher where there is high, low, or no demand. There have been major fluctuations. Residential moorings have been underpriced and highly sought after, but the majority of others have sold for around the guide price. This shows that the current set prices are fairly accurate.

SP felt that BW should operate in the same way as private operators do.

CS thought that we should opt for a proper trial of the waiting list system with the price set by BW.

This was agreed.

GRo commented that BW can now set fees as a result of information gained from tendering, so there is no need to continue tendering.

SR is to expand on our proposed system and produce a response. **SR**

CS is to write about NABO's response for NABO News, whilst encouraging individual members to send in their responses. **CS**

4. BRIEF FOR BWAFF LICENSING COMMITTEE MEETING

a) Licence increase for 2009-2010

SR stated that any above-inflation increase has to be justified by an increase in services.

All agreed.

b) Roving mooring permits

SS explained that some boaters need to remain in one area, for reasons of work or schooling for example. These permits would not be available everywhere. He commented that they would conflict with the continuous cruising guidelines.

GRo asked why there is a need for such permits.

SS explained that BW cannot currently enforce the guidelines

SR said that enforcement costs money and brings no financial benefit to BW.

HA said that they would be, in effect, a licence to bridge hop.

CS felt that it would be divisive if not adopted everywhere. Boaters who work or have school-going children have known about the guidelines in advance, so should expect to comply with them.

GRo read out the letter written to BW in August 2003 about the proposed Moorings Code, which he felt is relevant to this proposal.

SR informed Council that it is a charge for exercising what is already a statutory right. Everyone has to move after fourteen days in any case. And this cannot be considered to be a *mooring* permit as a mooring has to have a contract.

CS commented that boaters would be paying for BW to turn a blind eye.

SR stated that what is being proposed is a roving linear mooring, which is against other BW policies. He also feels that giving out full proposals at a meeting and then expect opinions in five minutes is not consultation, it's bullying.

To summarise:

- a charge for what is currently a statutory right
- possibly ultra vires
- in effect a roving linear mooring, which is contrary to the stated policy of reducing linear moorings
- BW should issue firmer thought-out proposals for us to consider

5. NABO NEWS

- HA offered to produce an article + send his spreadsheet re future meeting coverage
- CS will write about tendering
- SR will send something about Thames Lock houses.

6. FINANCE

Current balance:

Alliance & Leicester Current Account:	£ 2,877
Barclays Current A/c	£ 4,254
Barclays Tracker (deposit) A/c	£39,834
TOTAL:	£46,965

SR is very concerned that he has paid no subscription for the last four years, and that therefore someone else's money is being credited against his name. His bank has confirmed that that no money has been taken from his account. SP checked the June statement from Alliance & Leicester on which fees received are itemised with the members name: SR's name does not appear at all.

HA also has concerns re administration.

7. NABO IN THE FUTURE

SR asked the question: "who will be chairman next year?" More bodies are needed.

He has identified vacant Council roles:

- Chairman
- General secretary, or namely, someone to take the minutes
- a web master

SS spoke about continuity and his willingness to ease a new face into the role. Re the website, Brian Rowland has expressed his willingness to look after everything apart from technical matters. SS explained that things such as e-mail forwarding is simple and quick to do. SR asked him for a list of tasks involved. SS

This led to a discussion about the role of membership secretary. RC proposed that he take care of NABO's storage requirements at a location near to him for a fraction of the cost. Furthermore, he has a clerical assistant with some spare time who could work under his supervision if the new Council so wishes.

CS informed council that Melanie is working with a system which was set up many years ago, and that she does not have the computer know-how to get the most out of it

RC is to expand on his ideas for a membership secretary role, and CS is to contact Melanie re his involvement. RC CS

8. THAMES LOCK HOUSES

EA has deferred the sale of these - Louis Jankel and Graham Patterson are not convinced that the issue has gone away: the situation is still very fluid. The EA has admitted inadequate consultation. It was felt that it hasn't thought through an impact assessment nor the level of service to boaters. SP commented about flood situations as in summer 2007.

9. A. O. B.

1) SP asked about the outcome of the latest EFRA report.

SR explained the recommendations:

- BW should have talked to investors prior to pulling out of the Cotswold canal restoration scheme
- it welcomed the establishment of the inter-departmental group to look at funding
- it is pleased that BW and DEFRA are talking to each other
- no solution to the £10,000 budget deficit
- it damned the status review cost of £600,000
- BW should not directly fund restoration work.

2) HA asked about NABO's representation at BSS meetings. He understands that Tony Haynes has represented NABO, but no reports have been received.

SS replied that Trevor Rogers would be looking after everything, and that there have not been any meetings.

SR proposed that HA contact Tony, and that if he can't attend a meeting, he should let us know so that we can arrange a substitute. HA

3) SR has attended a NINF meeting, which was an attempt to resurrect the National Inland Navigation Forum. David Pearce of the AWCC had produced a draft constitution. It was agreed to meet once a year (February) to exchange views and try to find common ground, and be more like a forum.

GRo commented that some years ago, every member of NINF had signed a letter sent to BW. This unanimous approach was very effective.

4) GRo informed Council of a huge hike in diesel prices by the Alvechurch base on the Kennet & Avon at Hilperton - from 92-93p per litre to £1.10 in one increment.

