



**Minutes of a MEETING of the COUNCIL
on SATURDAY 12th MARCH 2022
by Teleconference 10.00am to 1.00pm**

PRESENT: Anne Husar (Vice Chair), Peter Braybrook (minutes), Phil Goulding (part time), David Fletcher (Part time), Peter Fellows, Ken Hylins, Peter Braley, , C J Green (part time)

- 1. Apologies** were received from Mike Rodd John Devonald (Gen Sec), and Helen Hutt
- 2. Minutes of the last meeting held on 15th January 2021** were accepted as a true record.
- 3. Matters arising from the Minutes.**
 - i) London Situation: Most have responded to the current consultation. There was a feeling CRT will keep consulting until they get the answer they want. We do not have enough local knowledge but keep an eye on Facebook page for London Boaters. We do have a London Representative. Agreed to contact those we know in the area.
 - ii) Heritage Proposed auctions have been cancelled but we do not know why. We still have no contact with the Canal Heritage Advisory Group. ** No information on the website of any meetings. David will follow up the rejected FOI and will ask for more information or a internal review. BCN heritage has come up. It was suggested there are only two CRT properties on the BCN and they have been values for future sale. Anne has asked Brenda Ward of the BCN Society to submit a heritage article for NABO News.
 - iii) GDPR Response: The information commissioner have refused to deal with the matter as it is too old. It was suggested that we talk to Matthew Symonds with our concerns before resubmitting them by letter. David will inform Anne and Mike.
 - iv) EA Situation: Mike Rodd's email of 7 March was considered and was accepted as very informative. It is evident that EA and CRT are being aligned, possibly in anticipation of transfer of EA waters to CRT. We anticipate more discussion at the next meeting.
- 4. Policy discussions: matters requiring agreement and action from this meeting**
 - i) **Petitioning MP's on funding of CRT and EA.** Mike Rodd email 07Mar 2022. "Final negotiations are being undertaken in April and a decision is expected in the summer. Clearly this will also be when EA's future funding is considered. Despite our reservations about the performance of both organisations there is no "Plan B" and the only ways ahead will be that they either continue as there are (as separate bodies) or CRT takes over the EA's navigational responsibilities. (I personally feel that any funding of CRT will be dependent on them taking over the EA's responsibilities – this was always the long term government aim.) In either circumstances, there is no ways the organisations can survive without receiving at least the same level of government support as they do at present. However, given the Defra strategic policy aims (see above) both organisations are going to have great difficulty in persuading government to provide a suitable level of funding – recall that at original idea of CRT being created was that it could solicit local and charitable funds to replace its government

funding. We all know this lofty ideal has not been achieved – and never will, especially for regular maintenance support.

It then seems to me essential that we put much effort in supporting both EA and CRT's appeal for funding. This can be done via all our social platforms and of course in NABO News. But it seems essential that we appeal directly to all relevant MPs, and also ask our members to do the same. It is just a question of timing and what to say?"

A template letter to MPs was suggested and agreed to be publicised in the newsletter, NABO News and linked to the website. It was agreed that any means available should be used. It was noted that action is needed this month to be effective. It was suggested that a letter be sent to the contact that Mike Rodd met.

- ii) London Congestion: no further discussion
- iii) Heritage: no further discussion
- iv) EA situation re proposed new structures: no further discussion

5. Reports

i) **CRT Council:** Anne reported on a discussion on pollution in Yorkshire. The conclusion is that there will need to be dredging. It was noted that the angling community are using any method they can to stop the barges. The root cause is effluent from Yorkshire Water and CRT will need to put pressure on them to clean up their outfall.

On the subject of Facilities Matthew Symonds indicated that no more were planned apart from some in London. CRT are looking at IWA proposals that facilities be at regular intervals of 5 hour cruising. Mike Rodd reports: "On Monday 7th of February Mike Rodd and Anne Husar had their regular meeting with CRT's Matthew Symonds and Rachel Howard, and on this occasion, Sean McGinley who covered the situation regarding the Ferrybridge fish deaths and suspension of freight movement. Others items discussed included NABO's concerns about facility closures, the London situation and "no moorings" on the Lee, reports from Ken Hylins about local overstaying issues he has been dealing with, progress on EA's review of CRT, and seeking help to promote new Aire & Calder Guide. There was a discussion about the lack of understanding by CRT of different "classes" of boater. CRT do not appear to appreciate the differing needs. Matthew also noted the the annual boater survey is coming up in March and that CRT is having conversations on better understanding the needs etc. of liveaboard boaters. It was suggested that Ken Hylins could help put the survey together. Anne would put his name forward.

ii) **Regional Representatives:** Peter Braybrook (West Midlands) has not had a response from Adnan Saif to meet about Commonwealth Games. There is a boaters meeting later this month which he and Anne will attend.

Peter Braley (*East Midlands*): has been invited to attend a meeting of a canal partnership. Good news is that there is dredging taking place on the Trent in the Torksey area. Peter had reaffirmed his interest in Boating Buddies. He has been contacted by some marina customers about license and safety issues since it was taken over by Aquavista. He is assisting the with contact.

Mike Rodd (West of England and Wales) reported by email: To note that I have continued to have a good relationship with local CRT management on the *Mon & Brec* and some winter works by contractors which left the canal and especially the towpath in a total mess was rapidly sorted out when I complained! They also have moved fast to lift a sinking and deserted wrecked boat off the waterway. On the *K&A* though, some very large and urgent work at the eastern end (which completely closed the canal) required CRT to shift resources there for about 6 weeks. This resulted in some planned work not being undertaken. However, overall the level of maintenance of whole canal is poor and the "repair only when it completely fails" policy clearly continues! It is clear though that some serious effort is being made to remove "problem" non-moving boats!

iii) **Welfare officer:** Ken Hylins reported that he has had contact with Richard Parry and Matthew Symonds about safeguarding boaters. He is challenging CRT about a lack of compassion toward people with no licenses. He has applied for reasonable adjustments for a 81year old boater but CRT have crossed lines of communication. There was also concern about CRT 's responsibility toward boats without a license. Local people have not been told about the reasonable adjustment agreed resulting in harassment. Ken will continue to contact national officers where local representatives of CRT are causing a problem and not following reasonable adjustments.

iv) **Winter stoppages group:** There was a catch up meeting on 25th Feb. Many stoppages are extended and some arranged for the summer. The Wyrley and Essington to BCN Main line are threatened and the Caldon canal is particularly affected. Phil has been making comment about the serious difficulties and diversions that arise. CRT blame covid, storms, staff shortages and materials shortages, particularly oak for gates and beams. Many defects have not been listed because of material shortage: the lock beams on the Worcester and Birmingham were cited. He shared the frustration of CRT's engineering staff. (Phil Goulding left the meeting)

v) **Media & Publicity:** Facebook: there are many joining in on Facebook but they are not joining NABO. Anne reported that the pictures etc ensure that it is not all doom and gloom.

The Twitter following is growing. It was commented that *wordle* performance is not really NABO business. There was also concern about advertising on the facebook page. It was suggested that information should be provided rather than just advertising. Anne will moderate this.

Peter Braybrook asked for feedback on the monthly Towpath Talk column. He will circulate what he writes. Current topic is do the canals need to be navigable. He agreed to circulate the copy.

vi) **NNUF and TNUF (MR email)** Mike Rodd attended a meeting on the 16th of February of EA NNUF(National Navigation Users Forum) “Stakeholder engagement review” held to review EA’s proposed changes to the whole way the EA interacts with its’ users. He left the meeting feeling that this meeting had been a total and utter waste of time as the EA were simply not there to discuss their internally-produced proposals and this “review” was just going through a necessary stage – they can now say they have spoken to (ie “consulted”?) their NNUF members. The proposals claim to be similar to those adopted by CRT but seems to be a jumble of new committees and groups, all led by EA persons. The structure proposed is simply nonsense and an example of planning by someone with no experience of how a large organisation can interact with their users. And take no notice of present structures, which generally worked well in the past, at least until the present management was appointed!

It is also not clear which organisations will be represented in the proposed new structure as the concept of the present “navigation users” representations has been abandoned and all possible users of the EA’s waterways will be represented in future. The committees also have been structured so as to support Defra’s strategic objectives, which include:

- **Protection and long-term resilience, and transition to net zero carbon usage** – to deliver, maintain and improve historic waterways infrastructure, heritage assets and open access systems, as well as to ensure navigation, accessibility and public safety;
- **Natural Capital** – to contribute to, and support, the protection and enhancement of the natural capital and historic environment found in and around the CRT’s waterways network;
- **Access to the Outdoors** – to contribute to the nation’s prosperity and resilience, cultural capital and the visitor economy;

- **Levelling up** – to contribute to national economic resilience and growth, particularly in areas experiencing economic deprivation and health and wellbeing inequalities.

The above objectives of course apply to CRT!

vii) **NINF** (MR email) On Saturday 26th February Mike Rodd attended the AGM of NINF. Michael Stimpson was reappointed as the Secretary General of this valuable forum which brings together representatives of most inland waterways user organisations. At this meeting special attention was paid to the Defra review of CRT and EA's proposed changes in their waterways management (see above). Other issues included CRT's maintenance backlog and the London proposals, Red diesel & HVO, fish kill issues, proposed fee increases on some waterways when moorings change hands, and the need for member organisations to petition MP's over the future funding of EA and CRT. Agreed to continue discussion next meeting.

viii) **NAG** David Fletcher reported a meeting a couple of weeks previous. This was his last NAG. His work on Nag was appreciated. There was a presentation on water management that was very helpful. CRT have had serious difficulties within the Bradley workshops that Julie Sharman found it necessary to take personal control of them. She is deeply concerned with the operation. Problems need a good shake up. Too much bespoke work is being carried out in the name of heritage preservation. More standardisation could be undertaken on particular canals where lock gates are similar. Problems included a shortage of oak. New materials need to be considered. It appears that the shutting of Bulbourne Workshops has had a knock on effect. The proposal that Phil Goulding replace David has been sat on by CRT without the knowledge of the Chair! It is hoped he will join a Sub group concerning problems with services and rubbish facilities. The IWA recommendation of facilities/water points every 5 cruising hours appears to be misunderstood by CRT as they do not include locks in their calculations. They suggest that there are only gas on the Chesterfield and Ashby canals. Water points still have problems of flow and elsan points often block because of poor engineering. This needs sorting out. There are many problems with rubbish disposal and fly tipping. Cost of a facility is usually £20k pa but Leeds facility cost >£100,00 pa which is unsustainable: closure is the the only viable solution. David will try to get on a facilities subgroup. David recommended that we keep up the pressure to report faults and failings. From the chair, Anne wishes to record NABO's thanks to David for his many years of service on NAG

(CJ Green joined the meeting)

ix) **BSS**: A number of meetings have been attended. New Examination procedures are now rolling out and training is progressing to complete in June. There will be some changes in outcome but that is because the new ECPs bring clarity and uniform interpretation. A major current concern is the sustainability of the Examiner workforce as a businesses. There are about 500 failures a year. Many because of lack of maintenance. There is a move to change examination frequency to catch those boaters who are not maintaining their boats properly. It will double the number of available examinations. There are also suggestions that the Certificates will become non-transferable and no more than two examinations will be allowed by the same examiner. David asks that we have alternative suggestions ready. Annual Record of Marine of accidents was tabled and discussed at BSSAC and this will be forwarded to Peter Fellows to prepare a digest..

(David Fletcher left the meeting)

x) **Web & GDPR**. No further actions to report.

6. Finance : council

i) Balances: The bank balances are as follows:

Barclays current	£2,826.45
Barclays deposit	£4,623.61
PayPal	£89.81

Redwood £15,782.89
 £23,322.76

- ii) Printing of "Skippers Guide to Commercial Waterways" It was agreed to contribute £100 to the print costs. We will get our name on the document. Peter Fellows said we could also include it as a centre "pull out" in the magazine over three issues.
7. **NABO News:** Peter F said that he has little for the next issue. Stoppage problems may be a good article. John Devonald will be approached. Anne will write on Heritage. Peter will contact other members for articles particularly in the technical section.
8. **AOB**

- i) Ken Hylins reported that around Wigan Calor 13 kg bottles are impossible to get.
- ii) Ken Hylins also reported on problems of moving his boat and current increasing costs. Anne asked Ken to put his ideas together to that the Chair and Vice-chair can take it to their CRT contacts. There is expected to be an increase in difficulty for low income boaters. The current world situation and increasing fuel, food and other costs will impact everybody. He told of his situation with staying where he is as he has sufficient solar power. Moving to a town would cause a nuisance with generation. Anne asked Ken to seek a definitive answer to their attitude to situations such as his. Anne asked Ken to put his ideas on paper. Chair and Vice chair can take it to their meetings with CRT. Peter Braley suggested taking the issue to the Boaters Conference next month to bring it into the public arena.

Next meeting will be 23rd April 2022 by WhyPay

Tamworth CC is booked for Council meetings on 18 June and 12 November (inc AGM)

Meeting closed at 1235h

Signed as a true record 23 April 2022

**** email from CHAG received 12/3/2022 just after the meeting at 1256h**

Just received, surprise, surprise and very disappointing. Anne



From: Nigel Barker-Mills <nbarkermills@gmail.com>

Sent: 12 March 2022 12:05

To: anne husar <wanderingsnail@hotmail.co.uk>; Naomi Kempton <Naomi.Kempton@canalrivertrust.org.uk>

Subject: Re: March Meeting

Dear Anne,

Apologies that you had to chase. I held a pre-meeting this week with senior officers of the CRT to discuss both the next CHAG meeting and the objectives of the group for the first year which will in turn inform the agenda of both the Summer and Autumn meetings. At the pre-meeting I raised the possibility of NABO presenting to the CHAG next week.

After discussion and consideration it was felt that would not be the right meeting for two reasons: The first is that the Group has yet to agree its priorities for the year and how it wants to work. The second is that the issue you have raised is an operational one over which the group has no influence at present. It is therefore not clear how assistance can be given.

We concluded that direct contact with the relevant officers of CRT was the way forward for NABO at present and therefore Naomi Kempton National Heritage Policy Advisor with the CRT will be in contact with you to carry your issue regarding disposals forward.

Regards

Nigel Barker-Mills

On Fri, 11 Mar 2022 at 17:01, anne husar <wanderingsnail@hotmail.co.uk> wrote:

Hi Nigel,

I wonder if you could confirm whether or not NABO will be invited to your CHAG meeting which I think is due next week? The days are slipping away.

Best wishes, Anne.