



**Minutes of a MEETING of the COUNCIL  
on SATURDAY 23<sup>rd</sup> APRIL 2022  
by Teleconference at 10.00am**

**PRESENT:** Mike Rodd (Chair), Anne Husar (Vice Chair), Helen Hutt (Treasurer), Peter Braybrook (minutes), David Fletcher, Ken Hylins, Peter Braley.

1. **Apologies** were received from Phil Goulding, CJ Green, and Peter Fellows. Helen agreed to take notes on behalf of Peter for “The Fly on the Wall”
2. **Minutes of the last meeting**, held on 12 March 2022 were accepted as a true record.
3. **Matters arising from the Minutes.**

(Anne Husar led a review the minutes point by point. New information is included in the agenda items below as appropriate)

- i) London Situation: Anne reported that the NBTA march had attracted over 300 people but nothing of note has come from it. Boaters continue to moor on areas marked with “no mooring” signage to make a point. CRT do not wish to make any changes and indicate that 90% of London moorings are not chargeable.
- ii) Heritage: see below
- iii) GDPR Response: David followed up his RFI. In absence of response he has asked for an internal review. He will continue to press for a reasonable response.  
  
It was noted that there will be a face to face discussion with Matthew Symonds on May and GDPR would be a subject for that.
- iv) EA Situation: Anne reported that CRT and EA, although they have aligned objectives, have no current intention for combining navigational operations.

**4. Policy discussions: matters requiring agreement and action from this meeting**

- i) **London Problems** CRT say they are “bringing forward proposals.” There has been contact from GLA housing team concerning availability and affordability of moorings. They are in touch with NBTA and CRT. The inference is that they are looking for what the Mayor could do to alleviate the situation. The huge problem is overcrowding and excess of residential boats without residential moorings. She has contacted NBTA and CRT. David said that having London reopened to visitors is essential and if bookable moorings does this he would support it. Security on the towpath is also a serious problem. As far as mooring restrictions are concerned David Fletcher was of the opinion that we have to trust CRT to make appropriate decisions about the placement of signage. It was noted that St Pancras Cruising Club have residential vacancies but they are on the expensive side. Anne agreed to give David the GKLA contact's email address so that he can share his views.
- ii) **Petitioning MP's on funding of CRT and EA.**  
A template letter to MPs has been publicised in the newsletter, NABO News and linked to the website. It was agreed that any means available should be used to raise this issue. It was noted that action is needed this month to be effective. It was

suggested that a letter be sent to the DEFRA contact that Mike Rodd had met. Mike reported favourable responses from Laura Farris, the Newbury MP and his local MP and other contacts. Mike has also taken the template to the K & A Trust. Mike agreed to write to Michael Fabricant, the chair of the All Party Parliamentary Group for Waterways.

- iii) **Heritage:** There has been no invitation to meet the CRT heritage group. There is no sign on the web that they will be meeting in the near future. Whether the sales have slowed was discussed. There were rumours that London properties, withdrawn from auction, have been sold quietly. There was a comment that also in Scotland some sales have been quietly taking place. When Scottish Canals split from BW/CRT in 2012, Parliament never got around to signing the documents that prevented CRT from selling off heritage without it going before DEFRA first. It would seem therefore that CRT have been quietly selling off properties in Scotland without this layer of protection. The Braunston Stop House is rumoured to be passing to the safe hands of the Braunston Marina owners. An article had been published in NABO News from the BCN Society which was much appreciated. Anne will request a follow-up article for a future issue.
- iv) **Meeting with CRT and Directors:** Mike and Anne will be meeting with CRT senior managers on May 23<sup>rd</sup>. Mike Rodd encouraged forging of links with the Regional Directors and try maintain good relationships. It was noted that some appear not to want to connect with NABO.
- v) **EA Meeting restructure.** Mike Rodd described the new structure of user groups. An overarching group will include all stakeholders maybe twice a year. Below that there will be a regional structure with subgroups. There is little indication of what the sub groups will be. He reported that on the Thames the opinion of boaters was completely ignored. EA appear to be hell bent on doing what they want to do. How it affects boating is unclear. He is frustrated by the implication that EA has a complete change of heart in relation to boaters opinion. Mike reported that the management in the Thames is now by people who have no boating experience. EA/CRT amalgamation, in Mike's opinion, is the only possible reason for the changes. There was some discussion as to the involvement of the RYA. It is hoped that we can work with them. David Fletcher will share contact details of an RYA contact with Mike.
- vi) **Continuous Cruising and Judicial Review:** Peter Fellows received a request from a member to put him in contact with a solicitor who can undertake a judicial review of a Waterway Ombudsman's decision on continuous cruising. It was doubted that there will be a definitive outcome.

## 5. REPORTS

- i) **Covid:** The actual level of infection is concerning. No restrictions are in place. People are quite rightly very wary of covid infection.
- ii) **CRT Council:** Helen will forward a report of her attendance at the recent meeting. The Disability Group will meet soon. There will be a sub-group to draft questions for a fact finding survey of boaters needs, centring on the liveaboard boater. This has been referred to by CRT as a "census". This will be carefully managed to ensure that it is done "properly". The working group will consult widely to ensure that the questions are appropriate. Disability matters are being spearheaded by Tracey Clarke, a blind boater, and Anne suggested that Ken Hylins be included in the pilot preliminary survey of issues. She will put this suggestion forward at the next meeting.  
CRT have brought in a free lance contractor, Darren Burridge, to undertake a full survey of available facilities, commercial and CRT. This will provide a very

interesting report. This data is needed to ensure that there are adequate facilities available across the whole of the system.

Mike Rodd commented that there has been no feedback from the meetings that boating organisations had with DEFRA to inform their review. He wondered whether there will be any feedback in the future or that the DEFRA report will ever be made public. It is anticipated that CRT will receive the outcome in the Summer. Anne believes that CRT will press for the review report to be published.

- iii) **Regional Representatives:** Peter Braybrook (West Midlands) has attended the West Midlands showcase. He is now in touch with the co-ordinator for the Commonwealth Games but has had no further information.. There is a boaters meeting later this month which he and Anne will attend. As far as boating matters are concerned it appears that CRT are leaving it to IWA ( boat parades) and BCNS to organise events. They have indicated that there will be moorings arranged for the games but no details are available yet. There are several other events publicised including paddle boarding, canoe gatherings and an angling event.
- Peter Braley (*East Midlands*): He attended the East Midlands boating conference. He was surprised by the attendance with as many CRT personnel as user reps. CRT are encouraging use of the tidal River Trent. The message is that it is not as dangerous as boaters generally think. This is becoming more important as a means of accessing the northern canals and the fenlands. They had a discussion about who is in charge of the boats in locks rather than volunteer lock keepers. It was reiterated by Matthew Symonds that the skipper is in charge. The East Midlands Annual meeting is on the 6 May 2022. This has not been advertised but he has an invitation.
- Mike Rodd (West of England) He told a sorry tale of the K & A which is in a state with lock failures and other problems, probably because of the lack of ongoing maintenance. He said that CRT's incompetence is staggering. Contractors on the Mon and Brec left a mess that took a lot of sorting out by CRT. This was on top of serious storm damage.
- David Fletcher commented on current problems with evidence of lack of maintenance on the South Oxford this early in the season.
- iv) **Welfare officer:** Ken Hylins He reported that he is getting busier. He described treatment of disabled boaters as disgraceful. He is monitoring the case of an 81 year old boater and national implications. He has regular contact with CRT welfare officers. He is frustrated by the regular issue of emails to persons who are known to have reasonable adjustments. This is down to a real lack of communication and local knowledge. He continues to give advice to many boaters. He is still battling with one local support officer who is acting as a what he described as a “rogue”. He felt that advice from CRT is patchy in the area of “reasonable adjustments”. Ken was thanked for the work that he is doing on behalf of NABIO and boaters.
- Anne reported that CRT are assessing visitor moorings for accessibility and will add appropriate signage on those visitor moorings that they deem suitable.
- v) **Winter stoppages group:** Apologies for overruns were recorded. For staff turnover to be blamed is an indication that management is failing. CRT report that covid had had an influence. There is a stoppage group meeting in two weeks time.
- vi) **Media & Publicity:** Facebook group is approaching 3000 members and Twitter is getting about 1000 viewings. It was noted that last year was the thirtieth anniversary and we missed an opportunity. David would like a history on the website. The AGM Chairman's reports down the years describe an interesting story which could be publicised. He would like them put together in some form perhaps by Peter Fellows or Howard Anguish or may be the Greens. This needs to be talked through with Peter Fellows.

- vii) **NNUF and TNUF** presently meets twice a year or as necessary. Mike has reported on the website etc. that unlike in the past, these meetings are now dominated by EA speak and boaters views are totally disregarded.
- viii) **NINF** No recent meeting. We have paid our annual fee (£5.00!)
- ix) **Web & GDPR.** No further actions to report.
- x) **NAG** David reported that he has had his last meeting. It has been suggested that there have been no candidates for future membership even though Phil Goulding has applied. This will be brought back to Phil to follow up his application. David and Helen have meetings concerning facilities distribution around the system. David commented that CRT data was erroneous as their result that there were problems on the Rochdale and Chesterfield.
- xi) **Boat Safety Scheme:** No further information on interval changes available. David has requested statistics on failures. It is evident that multiple failures are relatively rare. 30,000 failures annually appears a lot but when multiple failures are taken into account this is greatly reduced. An understanding of the type of failure may enable the perceived need for more regular inspections to be obviated. We need to stay aware of the level of failures and the need for preparation for examinations.
- xii) **Web and GDPR** David has submitted a report.

## 5. Finance : Council

i) Balances: The bank balances are as follows:

Barclays current a/c	£ 2,558.38
Barclays deposit a/c	£4,623.61
Paypal	£ 257.12
Redwood deposit a/c	<u>£15,782.89</u>
Total	£ 23,222.00

ii) Signatories: Since John D has resigned because of ill health we have a need of another signatory. David Fletcher volunteered to take this on. This was much appreciated.

- 6. **NABO News:** Peter F has sent a report. It is Micron Theatre's fiftieth anniversary and they will be given space. RCR will be asked to do another article, perhaps about their apprenticeship schemes.. Stoppage problems may be a good article. Helen offered a contribution on the trials and tribulations of getting to the IWA Cavalcade in London. It was noted that the deadline is 28 April.
- 7. **AOB** Speed of cyclists on towpaths was highlighted with a comment that there was an article about a parent whose child was terrified of going on the tow path in the waterways press. It appears that CRT are washing their hands of it. There is no easy solution. It is discouraging that nothing will work to slow the speeding minority.

**The meeting closed at 1215pm**

**Next Meeting is 18 June 2022 at The Weighbridge, Alvechurch**

Signed as a true record 18 June 2022



Peter Braybrook/Mike Rodd/Anne Husar 27/4/22  
Peter Fellows 28/4/22

## **APPENDIX REPORTS RECEIVED**

### **1. Boat Safety Scheme (David Fletcher)**

Not much this month, there have not been any recent meetings.

There is a TC planned in May at Hatton, and also a virtual MC (which I cannot attend due to another commitment). I am trying to get an electrical sub group meeting going.

From other discussion I report this:

The examiner training goes well with more than 100 examiners up to date, and with two (or three) modules still to release to them. The formal roll out of the new private boat ecps is delayed a bit because of this.

There is a second group of new examiners in selection to start training.

The examiner re-registration (1st April) has gone well, and the PI insurance cost has not become a problem despite only one broker. Examiners appear to be busy.

The consultation on the two "new" ecp items is in progress.

I understand that the rate of fail on private boat examination in the year to April 22 is 36%. I am digging into numbers. I see that there are very few boats with a high number of failures (highest 56). The bulk of volume of the numbers of failures is the proportion that get say 3,4,5,6 items wrong. There is a large number of boats (13%) that fail on just advisory checks like ventilation (and therefore still get the certificate). Some of these numbers are hard to tie down, because of retesting and then getting counted twice.

We published the common failure ECPs in NN this month.

### **2. Web and GDPR (David Fletcher)**

The web site is running on the latest software in all categories except the membership system. This is awaiting my time, and will get done in May. The Joomla 4 upgrade has been completed. I am open to suggestions on layout etc. A preliminary scan and correction for spelling mistakes has been completed. There is more to do on this. Backups have been done. The software checking site integrity is reporting clean every week.

There is still one member who has never acknowledged privacy policy etc despite many letters. I have sent a recorded delivery letter for the renewal but there has been no response.

### **3. Report from Thames Navigation User Forum (Mike Rodd and Andy Soper-DBA)**

Hi all

I had to leave this very bad EA meeting early but Andy has captured it all very well. I will put a version of this on our website later today.

Mike

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**From:** Andy Soper <soper.andy@gmail.com>

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**Sent:** 13 April 2022 21:06

**To:** Chris Turner <chris@turner-web.co.uk>; Mike Rodd <mike.rodd@nabo.org.uk>; Rex Walden <rex.walden@live.co.uk>; Tony Riley <tonyriley@tmba.org.uk>; Verna Smith <verna.smith63@gmail.com>; Mel Hide <Mel.Hide@rya.org.uk>; Stuart Carruthers <stuart.carruthers@rya.org.uk>; Andrew Phasey <theoldmainline@fastmail.fm>; chair@barges.org; Charles Foster <cbf@androne.com>; Michael Shefras <michael@shefras.com>

**Subject:** TNUF meeting 13 April 2022

For your info - my report on this meeting to DBA members

I attended a meeting of the Thames Navigation Users Forum on Wednesday 13 April. Some 25 people attended with about 15 from user organisations including all of the principal boating user organisations (RBOA, NABO, RYA, ATYC, TMBA, IWA ) along with British Rowing and Canoe England.

Less than a week before EA circulated 46 pages of papers for consideration at this 2.5 hour virtual meeting (EA not embraced face to face meetings yet). Many attendees expressed disappointment at the expected range of topics but welcomed the delivery of papers before the meeting.

I met virtually with a number of boating reps two days before the meeting to agree likely lines of discussion, agreement and challenge.

In this note I will summarise the key points and issues:

### Item 3 – Thames Waterway Overview

There has been some unreported shrinkage in headcount between 2018 (60 Resident lock-keepers (LWK) and reliefs) to today (about 55 Resident lock-keepers and reliefs). There was some confusion as none of the managers were in post in 2018! Some 24 temporary LWK are being recruited this year but may not be fully inducted until late April. The 2018 figure for volunteers was 250 but only 153 had reported for duty last week. EA advised at the meeting that there were now 183 returners and some 78 new volunteers for training.

The estimated minimum to achieve 7 day cover is about 78 LWK so 55 + 24 should be adequate to single man all locks – although there is still some significant absence due to COVID which may explain some of the dual and triple siting of LWK this Easter weekend. EA have assured us that they will deploy managers to cover some of the gaps but no update of the rota yet.

Boat registrations so far this year are down on both 2021 and 2020. Accommodation charges (for jetties and piles) are similarly down, there is a software problem and gapped posts in the licensing team. Both of these issues are resulting in a loss of income for EA.

EA are very excited about their first net zero carbon lock – Northmoor. Members were delighted that the historic paddle and rhymer weir has been retained.

### 24 hour moorings

EA presented a somewhat disjointed plan for managing short term moorings. Members were not impressed as it has no electronic payment options, inadequate oversight and enforcement and a slew

of relaxations for breakdowns, medical issues etc. that will be easy to abuse. Discussion was guillotined due to shortness of time and further discussions will take place.

#### Water Points and Pump-outs

Again guillotined due to time constraints. EA do not seem to understand the problem, solutions or the impact on users. Further discussions will take place.

#### Item 4 – Winter Works

While EA were congratulated on opening the river fully on 31 March after the winter works it was unfortunate that they immediately closed Rushey lock for two weeks for further work the disrupting up-river hire trade.

Probably the biggest disappointment of the winter works is the failure to address the unreliability of the operating pedestals under public power as they failed to find a competent contractor for the second year running.

#### Item 5 - Enforcement

Enforcement following up reported registration and other issues is in the hands of a manager and just 6 warranted officers. The fairly good news is that the cost comes out of the central EA funds and not navigation but as the top-slicing of earnings is 47.6% navigation deserves to get some attention.

EA were keen to report their success in prosecuting Alastair Trotman (owner of 5 bnb slumboats) including awarding of costs to EA of £20K. Sadly at the court awarded rate of £200 per month it will be some time before we see the money!

Thames Motor Boat Association (TMBA) carried out a desktop survey of the Thames via Google. This shows that the number of boats on the Thames in 2019 is very similar to that in 2021.

Unfortunately – see above- registrations are down. No enforcement no income. I reminded the meeting that in the grey areas of Facebook it is common knowledge that declaring ‘Mickey Mouse’ ‘no fixed abode’ will get you through Teddington lock and even if you are chased up as long as you pay the registration fee before court day there will be no penalty. EA will drop the case.

I am told it will be different this year.....

#### Item 6 Finance

I welcomed to much clearer financial reporting in the pack. However, a 1 January registration year for Thames and a financial year start on 1 April continues to make understanding of income and expenditure very difficult. Both Anglian and Medway EA waterways start their registration year on 1 April matching the financial year. I have again asked why Thames registration year cannot be matched to the financial year. No satisfactory response was forthcoming – it was either DEFRA / EA or Treasury rules but no-one was sure!

#### Item 7 National Navigation

EA has a National Navigation department under the oversight of Deputy Director Andy Wilkinson. His report to the meeting was re-hash of his newsletter to National representatives (DBA is a national rep). I reported in February on the rather unsatisfactory meeting of the National Users. His report repeated his plans for a new complex ‘Engagement’ model unchanged despite the challenges at the National Users meeting. I explained our disappointment that despite strong representation by boater organisations no amendments appear to have been made. The arrogance was clear – we know best – no changes. Apparently there are some 49 organisations that EA are approaching to improve the diversity of their Forums. A request for sight of the list was ignored.

#### Item 8 Communication

Two members of the Forum attend an Agenda drafting meeting with EA. This item was a surprise addition! EA stated that they will be re-instating (!) their customer newsletter which will be emailed to all registered customers. Their proposed list of statistics was a dull as ditchwater and we suggested that something similar to the Volunteer newsletter might be more interesting. EA were reminded that the Forum has a Comms Sub-group which might usefully have been involved in

preparation of this proposal.

Item 9 AOB

Proposed voluntary Code of Practice for Rowers, Sailors, and Swimmers by RUG8 . Short of time only limited discussion and a reminder that RUG6 have had a Code for some years.

Item 10

Date of next meeting – Hybrid – week commencing 17 October.

As ever – happy to take any questions or provide amplification or explanation.

Best Wishes

Andy Soper

Vice-Chair and Treasurer

DBA - The Barge Association,

mv Neeltje

Cormorant, Spade Oak Reach, Cookham SL6 9RQ