

**Minutes of the Council Meeting of the
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF BOAT OWNERS**

Saturday 3 September 2022 by teleconference 10 AM
Dial: 0333 0110 464 Room Number: 23732157 PIN:8521

Present: Mike Rodd (chair), Anne Husar, (VC), Helen Hutt (Treasurer), Peter Braybrook (Minutes), C J Green, Ken Hylins, Peter Fellows, David Fletcher, Phil Goulding, Peter Brayley

Apologies: None received, Matt Thompson has not been in contact or contacted

1. Minutes of the last meeting

- i. Minutes of last council meeting were approved as distributed.
- ii. Matters arising from the Minutes
 - a) **GDPR: Training:** David will circulate details of his correspondence course which has now completed. The main topic is that it is the responsibility of everybody to keep data safe. Data breaches can be caused by human error such as sending information to the wrong address. All our actions are important. He agreed to take a half hour at a council meeting to cover some of the common problems.
 - b) **MP Correspondence:** still little response from some including Michael Fabricant MP
 - c) **NAG:** Our nomination still has not been accepted or rejected. It was also suggested that this forum lacks expertise. David will ring Michael Carter again.
- iii. **BSS and Lithium Batteries.** There has been a sinking in Europe and it was noted that fire extinguishers are ineffective on exploding Li batteries. To be considered under Boat Safety Scheme later.

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

- i. **Increase in CRT License Charge** This is a very worrying occurrence. Our representations have resulted in the response from Richard Parry that the future of canals cannot be safeguarded. It is accepted that there are increases in every part of life. The rise in effect is about £40 per year which is small in relation to other living costs. The priorities and financial decisions made by CRT have very little in the way of accountability. There was a general feeling that we are doing all we can by keeping this in the public eye and by writing to our MPs. Helen urged an examination of our priorities and picking appropriate actions. It was noted that we are a small representation of the 35,000 boats. It is a matter of opinion as to where money is spent. It was asked whether the Trustees should be targeted. Helen said it is difficult to contact trustees. The next CRT Council Meeting is where the new Chair is to be elected. Annee would find out about the Board of Trustees and a means of communication. If there are cut backs to be made we need to be clear of our priorities. Keeping the infrastructure workable must be top priority. It was pointed out that if the DEFRA negotiations fail this is certainly CRT's fault. There is a gap in the Trustees for a person who has infrastructure experience. There is a civil engineer amongst their number but he is a director of Mothercare. The example of the reservoir failures appear to

be a dereliction of duty. It was suggested that we align with RBOA and IWA. It was noted the one Trustee has experience with Welsh Water. Mike Rodd will contact him using his Welsh connection. An action group was suggested. Phil Goulding emphasised that we must remain supportive. He said we must pull together all that we have been saying. It is like dealing with an injured animal. CRT have run out of money and have done some things wrong but kicking them again will not necessarily be helpful and possibly not influential either. His feeling is that we know what the situation is nationally and that we know the difficulty they have in maintaining the money they have got let alone getting the money required to meet inflation etc. We need to be "critical friends", as Mike would say. We should be supporting them in any way that we can but also be pointing out to them that what they are responsible for is a set of inland waterways and that they have got to be useable, navigable. It is from that angle that we need to emphasise that they make sure they are prioritising those things because if they don't exist the whole thing will die. He said that it is the boaters who are taking care of it on a daily basis spotting things wrong and reporting them and making sure that things get done. Working on the basis that we are in some kind of a partnership we need to be supportive, bring people together to reiterate some of the things we have been saying but emphasise that CRT must look at their budget in such a way that it prioritises maintaining the waterways and not anything else including the wellbeing agenda. It is not a great intellectual process to come to this conclusion. But that is his opinion. Mike indicated that he felt we all were thinking the same way. CJ emphasised that we need to ask CRT what "Plan B" is. Between now and the next meeting we will all clarify our thinking on actions that can be taken to improve the situation. We must remain the status of critical friend. We also need to remember that in these hard times we still do not know that the grant will be slashed. In hard times the wellbeing stuff is as important as ever. The Defra debate is ongoing and the All Party Waterways Group meeting is on the 20th September and all can Zoom in.

- ii. **London Congestion Consultation** update. It was noted that the boating aspects are quiet on social media. There is a lot of posting concerning the level of crime around the waterways. We still lack local knowledge.
- iii. **Heritage and infrastructure:** Mike assured council that CRT know that we are watching them in this aspect of their estates management. More caution has been used in flogging off assets. Anne reported that a NABO member is keeping an eye on the progress of a development in Gnosall that could impact the canal.

Anderton Lift: Closed as a fault has been located. A lifting beam needs fixing. This is to be considered routine but on a listed building will have its own constraints in design and implementation.

- iv. **Support for CRT boater's survey** Some found it confusing. It appears to ask a lot about continuous cruising. There is nothing about shared ownership. There is a small opportunity to put remarks in at the end. It was noted that the survey was a starting point and is intended to provide information that CRT did not previously hold. It is an anonymous survey and will remain so. It was agreed that we should say that all who are able should complete it.
- v. **Planning for AGM:** As always we need new members to keep the Council fresh. Mike Rodd indicated that he would be more than happy to stand down as Chair. He would stay on Council.

It has been suggested that the AGM part could be on Zoom/Teams. David will think about what is possible. Details can be finalised at the next meeting.

3. Reports

i. Meetings with CRT

- a. Boaters Rep meetings: It was reported that the "Census" has taken up the meeting time.

There is a CRT Council meeting on 21st September 2022

- b. Meeting with Matthew Symonds : It was noted that Matthew is now head of Customer Services as well as his boating operations role. John Horsfall has moved to be interim director of the West Midlands .

- c. Regular Regional meetings. WM User Meeting is on 22 September 2022. It is face to face at Titfield. Peter Braybrook informed Council that he cannot attend this one.

- #### ii. **Stoppages and winter works programme.** The full programme has been published. It was identified that a north south route will be available at all times. An article was requested for NN which informs the membership of the rationale of the programme production process. It was suggested that Sophie, the CRT chair of the group, might contribute this. It was noted that there are reps on the group who have good local knowledge and comments received are acted on.

- #### iii. Media & Publicity:
- Facebook is very busy. Anne emphasises the need to report faults when people post about problems. Comments concerning the census are very negative. A post about a crumbling lock beam received many hits and comments. 3200 hits were received from a post about a houseboat from Amsterdam that has not been out of the water for 134years.

Twitter is lively. It has also highlighted activities like Mooring time changes in Birmingham. It is keeping NABO's profile up.

It is hoped that we might get some more people joining. It was noted that we are gaining members slowly.

- #### iv. **EA** Mike Rodd said that he had little to say about EA except that all comments on their new structure have been ignored. Restructuring will happen and boaters will be sidelined it would appear.
- #### v. **NAG.** Vegetation is the big topic. It appears that CRT do not know what is going on. There is evidence that the years cutting is a fiasco. Only one cut will be made now.
- #### vi. **BSS** : David reported that there is a TC next week including looking at safety issues relating to lithium batteries. There is also discussion brewing about the applicability of Gas Regs to private boats. Compulsory Smoke alarms will go to consultation next year. There have been a few accidents and details will be circulated. It was noted that David will step down as chair of TC and it is important that the successor is on the boater's side so to speak.

vii. **Web & GDPR.** A report was circulated (see Appendix) . Since writing that a website recovery was required. Nothing was lost. A software update is awaited.

4. Finance: Helen Hutt reported bank balances as follows:

Barclays current a/c	£3,634.10
Barclays deposit a/c	£4,623.96
Paypal	£ 390.40
Redwood	<u>£15,782.89</u>
TOTAL	£24,431.35

We are healthy and have funds to cover legal advice, if required.

5. NABO News: Peter F asked Council to agree that the free membership offer for cover photographs be withdrawn. Agreed

Articles for next News : Drought and stoppages; License Fee Increase, Extract from the Ombudsman's Report; Public Authorities Article, with other articles Peter reported that it is not looking too bad. Deadline is at the end of next week, Friday 9th September.

Mike commended the last issue as a very good advertisement for the Association. Mike also thanked David for the excellent monthly newsletters.

6. AOB : David reported a conversation at an IWA event that he had with an officer of the RBOA who are struggling at the moment with costs of the magazine and lack of committee members. He reported that they have many people who ask for advice without joining and others reject sound advice. From the conversation he had he thought we should not beat ourselves up over our own performance. We have a good opportunity to increase our own membership.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 1222h

7. The next council meeting will be 8th October 2022 by teleconference

The AGM and Council Meeting will be at 10.00am on 12th November 2022 at Tamworth Cruising Club

4/9/22 Peter Braybrook, Mike Rodd

5/9/22 Helen Hutt