



## MINUTES of a MEETING of the COUNCIL

on SATURDAY 22nd April 2023 at 10.30 in  
The Junction Inn, Norbury Junction, Stafford ST20 0PN

**PRESENT:** Mike Rodd (Chair), Anne Husar (Vice Chair), Helen Hutt (Treas), Peter Braybrook (Sec), Phil Goulding, John Sadler, Sharon Wells (Nominee), Nick Roberts (Trentlink)

1. **Apologies** Alan Douglas, Ken Hylins, C J Green, Peter Brayley (resigned), David Fletcher, and Peter Fellows (now an Associate Member)

Mike introduced Nick of Trentlink and noted that Peter Brayley has stepped down.

In the light of the vacancy created, Mike invited Sharon Wells to join the Council. This was put to a vote and AGREED by all.

2. **Minutes** of the last meeting held on 11<sup>th</sup> March 2023

- i) Approval of the minutes: Approved with a typographical amendment.

- ii) Matters arising from the minutes

- a) CRT Charity Status. The confusion has apparently been cleared up and Defra have been removed from the Board of Trustees. The operation of CRT is unaffected.

- b) **Heritage and infrastructure:** Anne reported that there is no news of the Stop House at Braunston. There is little that we can do to influence the policy of selling off lock cottages etc for "development".

- c) Letter to Attorney General has been received but there has been no response

- d) Water Quality It was noted that CRT Hydrology manager indicated that some water quality measurements are recorded in the West Midlands area.

- e) Calor Gas: Following BSS pressure there has been a slight change made in Calor's position. They are accepting bottles for refill at their distribution centres until they are date expired.

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

- i. **NABO and what our actions should now be regarding CRT's future.** In the light of the lack of a decision on future funding by Defra, what should we be doing to urge adequate financial support? Also there is evidence that EA will be subject to funding cuts. Hence, boating is threatened nationally. Mike had invited Nock Roberts of Trentlink to join the meeting. Nick introduced himself and then gave us a reasoned view that CRT are putting their money where the people are. He indicated that the NE has fewer lock movements than other regions and gets less funding. He started Trentlink to encourage the use of the tidal Trent to access the NE waterways. Trentlink has over 1000 members who have an interest in using the tidal Trent. He indicated that this demonstrates a considerable interest in visiting the river. The River Trent link is 43 miles from Cromwell Lock to Keadby. The facebook group is "Trentlink Safe Navigation on the River Trent". The fundamental problem that faces all is the funding question. He asked "What do we want to do with CRT?". He informed the meeting that there is an ISO Standard 9001 for Asset management. This requires an audit system. This requirement could be used against CRT. There is no Health and Safety management on the River Trent. No one knows how many boats go aground or get into difficulties. He highlighted that there is no hazard reporting data available for the River Trent. However CRT do have an asset management system and this has been adopted by EA. It was noted that we do not have the safety culture among boaters that will highlight every hazard on the system. The discussion advanced to conclude that we are essentially stuck with CRT and we need to get everybody together to express our criticisms of their policies toward boaters. It was noted that

we have many criticisms of CRT's spending priorities and without government funding some of the waterways will close. All organisations need to get together. Traders and hire operators as well as boating organisations. Mike has a meeting in the near future with the new Chair of CRT Board of Trustees as well as the CEO. It was noted that CRT do not generally consult boating organisations to find out the real issues facing them. An example noted was of wasted money dredging the wrong areas of the K & A. There are many other areas where we are critical of CRT's spending priorities. The fact is that we actually do not know the rationale of CRT's financial decision making. It was concluded that Mike will get in touch with the chairs of other boating and related organisations to discuss joint representation.

- ii. CRT consultations. There are various consultations and trials out on mooring times. It was agreed that changes should be data driven rather than on a whim. Examples of changes were given in Birmingham, Worcester and Milton Keynes. It was noted that the recent "Census" results have been withdrawn because of mismanagement of data by the consulting company.
- iii. Campaign for Fuel Payment for "CC"s: Our representation to the Attorney General has received no response to date. It was noted that some District Councils are paying the Energy Bills Support Payments.

#### 4. Reports

- i. Meetings with CRT
  - a. Boaters Rep meetings. Helen reported that there is a Boaters Rep meeting coming up in the coming week. She expects the issues will be similar to the meetings with Matthew Symonds. She will report back after the meeting.
  - b. Meeting with Matthew Symonds. Mike is also meeting with David Orr and Richard Parry on Tuesday next.
  - c. Regular Regional meetings. Mike reported that there is little interest in the South West. He cited a meeting where there were 6 CRT personnel and only 8 from the boating and user community. The WM Meeting was well attended and very vocal in some aspects. Particularly concerning charges for events. There were presentations on hydrology, ecology and fisheries.
- ii. Stoppages and winter works programme. Phil Goulding reported that there had been "chaos" last year with many of the members of the planning group very disgruntled about the way stoppages were handled, particularly where they affected hire fleets and traders. He reported that they have just reviewed the first draft of the plans for next year. There have been 40 projected works sent back for review and clarification. There are changes in the management of the programme as the co-ordinator, Sophie, is leaving. Many events are dependent on third parties such as HS2. Mike asked whether winter dredging was discussed. Phil responded that these are not considered stoppages.
- iii. Welfare Officers report. Ken Had emailed a report. (See appendix)
- iv. Regional Representatives reports: none received
- v. Media & Publicity: Facebook and Twitter have been busy. There have been discussions on the possibility of closing one of the three Pennine crossings; the recent license consultation and other issues. Anne said that she will circulate a response from Richard Parry suggesting boaters as an easy "cash cow". Membership has increased because of the discussions on facebook. Instagram has 70 followers, Twitter approx 2000 and Facebook 3.8k.
- vi. EA Mike outlined the EA Structure. Since the first meeting of the User Council (reported at our March meeting) there has been no progress. The Thames Navigation User Forum has made progress and has consensus to enable them to confront Thames section of EA. This was well received by EA Thames. EA has lost a large proportion of its boating funding. As with CRT, it is important to get the boating organisations to come together as one.
- vii. NAG. Phil Goulding reported that he has had contact and the Chair wants to talk to him!
- viii. BSS: The main topic has been the Calor issue reported earlier. The issues of boat inspection intervals and boat electrical standards continue to progress slowly.
- ix. Web & GDPR David Reported " Dear all, The web site is running on the latest software in all categories. Backups have been done. The software checking site integrity is reporting clean every week. There have been problems with delivery of mail to Peter Braybrook's BT account. BT are blocking. This is similar to the problems several years back with Peter Fellows. Tiscali also blocked the bulletin this month. I will work on this before the next edition, David"

x. NINF No recent meetings

5 **Finance** Helen reported a satisfactory end of year result. She tabled an updated budget document showing a surplus of £874 against a budgeted deficit for the year of £1085.

Totals (received by email):

Barclays current	£ 2,835.71
Barclays deposit	£ 4,633.71
Paypal	£ 426.93
Redwood	£15,975.25
Total	£23,871.60

6 **NABO News** Mike wanted to record that NABO news is to be commended and is of very high quality. Jon Sadler needs reports from Regional Reps.

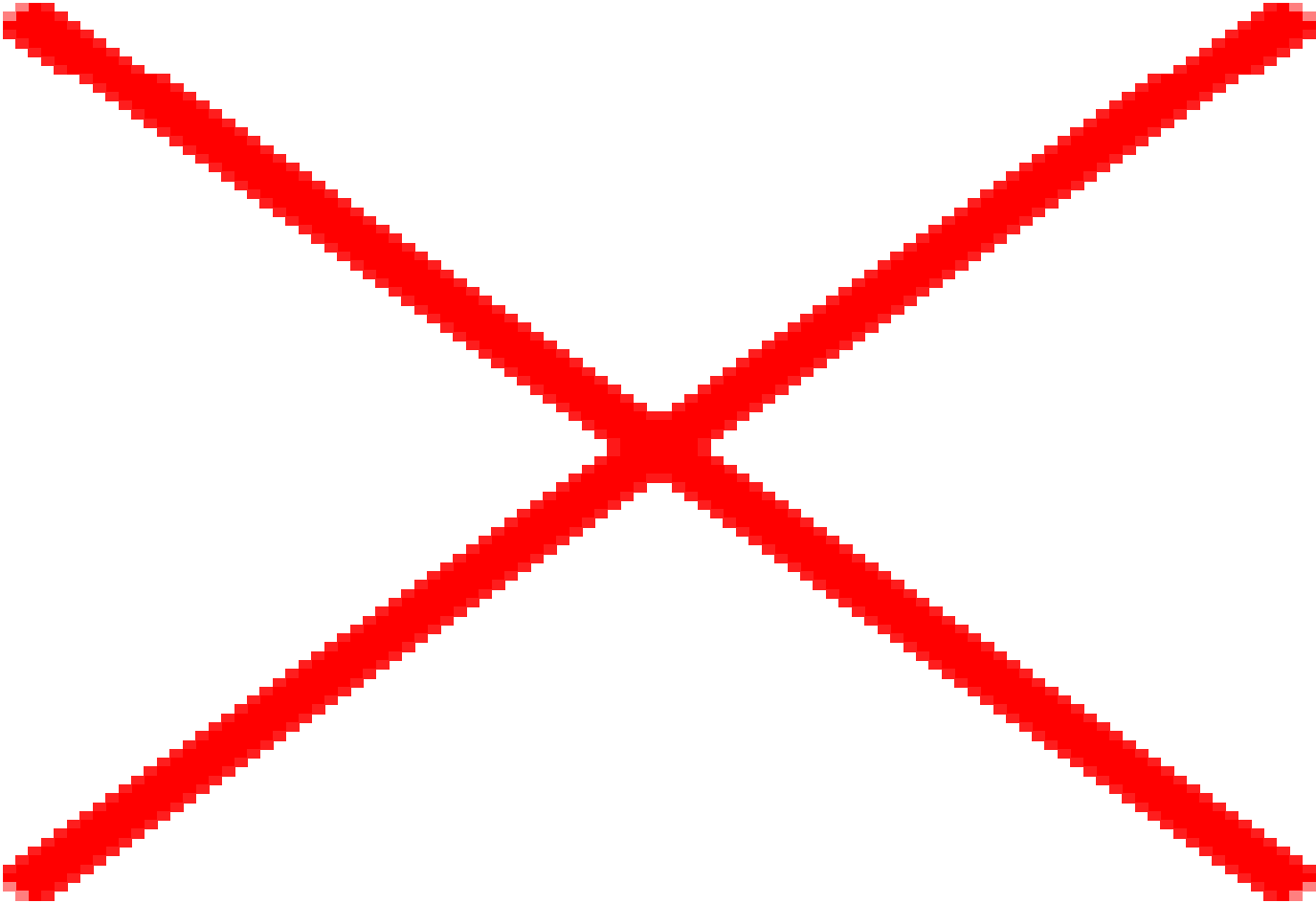
7 **AOB** None discussed

8 **Next meeting: June 17<sup>th</sup> 2023 by Zoom or similar.**

**Meeting closed at 1350h**

**APPENDICES**

**Appendix 1  
Budget update for the Year 2022/2023**



## **Appendix 2 Welfare Officers Report (Ken Hylins)**

### **My report**

I am unable to attend the council meeting with you so please accept my apologies.

There has not been a lot of activity as regards of boaters needing help but I have been giving advice on various welfare issues to boater when I have been contacted by phone.

One of the boater couples I have been helping with illness her husband has sadly passed away. I have visited his wife and offered our condolences and will be supporting through this traumatic time both dealing with Canal and River Trust (CaRT) and helping her to continue her life on the canal.

The other issues which have been drawn to my attention is the amount of boaters which are being put on six month licences. There seems to be a nonchalance generated by CRT of its severity and a lack of understanding of its severity by the boater. There have been no considerations by CRT, about the weather conditions, or individual circumstances or even the current financial difficulties. There is a case of where the boater has moved sufficiently yet received a six month licence I am monitoring these matters and on speaking to the boaters I have advised them to Join NABO for help if needed on these matters.

The other part of being our welfare officer is that I am always looking to network and increase my sphere of contacts and keep present contacts updated. I intend to contact age concern and chat with them again to create a symbiotic relationship where we can be a reference point for them as they can be a reference point for NABO

Regards Ken