



**Minutes of a Council Meeting of the  
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF BOAT OWNERS  
held on Saturday 17 June 2023  
BY ZOOM**

**PRESENT:** Mike Rodd (Chair), Anne Husar (VC), Peter Braybrook(Sec), Helen Hutt (Treasurer), David Fletcher, John Sadler, Ken Hylins, Sharon Wells

1. **Apologies** have been received from Alan Douglas, CJ Green, Phil Goulding
2. **Minutes of the last meeting**

i) Minutes of last council meeting on 22 April 2023 (Distributed) were approved as a true record.

ii) Matters arising: a) CRT Charity Status. This has been resolved by the Board of Trustees.

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

i) Fund Britain's Waterways - Report by Mike Rodd and discussion on action

Following the decision at the previous meeting, Mike had approached the IWA and other organisations with a view to us all coming together to try to ensure that CRT, the EA and other waterways authorities are appropriately funded by government. It turned out that IWA are running a campaign called Protest Our Waterways but agreed to lead the suggested joint activity. Approximately 30 other organisations attended a virtual meeting on the 5<sup>th</sup> May and agreed to come together with the purpose of addressing the funding question. A steering group has been formed and it will lead a single purpose group, FUND BRITAIN'S WATERWAYS and has prepared a press release for issue when the Government announcement on funding is made. A draft, which has taken many hours of work to prepare is appended to these minutes. CRT are expecting a 5% decrease year on year in the grant from 2027. Mike met with his colleagues on the FBW steering group on the 16<sup>th</sup> July and they agreed that if there is not an imminent announcement, the group will go public ahead of the it. Next Friday 23 June is the group's deadline.

Other action will include a Birmingham protest cruise from 12 -14 August. A petition will be presented to Downing Street; a website is being set up within the IWA website (for simplicity); a logo is being drawn up. A cruise to Westminster is also planned for later in the year depending on permissions. There will be some lobbying at the political party conferences.

Mike asked for approval of funding for the campaign. He indicated a probable contribution of £1000. The treasurer confirmed that funds are available. British Marine and RYA will also contribute. The cost of attendance at political party conferences is very high.

There is considerable experience in the group of influencing politicians. Sir Michael Fabricant MP has seen the press release and will be consulted as chair of the All Part Parliamentary Group for the Waterways.

The press release is added as an appendix to these minutes.

ii) Calor Gas situation – Report by David Fletcher and discussion on action

There are shortages of bottles in various places. There is a real concern that boaters are doing dangerous things. Some pictorial evidence has been submitted to CRT but there appears to be little enforcement action taking place to stop it. David is going to raise a complaint should there be no response from CRT and this situation continues. Some larger 19kg cylinders are available readily from

builders merchants. They do not fit on many boats. Self re-filling is a real safety problem. This will be raised by Peter at BSS AC this week.

iii) Continuous Cruising- funding situation and any action? Boaters are still not all getting the government support. There has been no movement on the government position and applications stopped at the end of May. A petition by NBTA is about to be handed to Downing Street. Media coverage has gone cold. Some contact initially from the BBC has stopped, but recently BBC Wales and BBC Wiltshire have contacted us. Anne will follow up.

#### 4. Reports

##### 1) Meetings with CRT

a) Boaters Rep Meeting: There has been no recent meeting. The next one is probably in July and Helen will join on line.

b) Meeting with Matthew Symonds. The next meeting will be in early July.

c) Regional Meetings There is an upcoming London meeting which we will try to attend.

It was noted by David Fletcher that crime is really horrendous in London and rising where boats are an easy target.

d) Stoppage and Winter Works programme: Mike said there has been no response to the suggestion that the dredging programme be put into the winter works. In absence of Phil details could not be discussed. It is believed the programme is at the second draft stage.

ii) Media & Publicity: CRT Boaters Update has got ahead of the government funding announcement and seems to have leaked details! The Rochdale and the northern canals are being talked about a lot. Their condition is becoming notorious. Water shortages are already a problem with restrictions looming on the Macc and Peak Forest. The Chesterfield is closing too because of lack of water. There has been a bit of publicity about insurance changes because of lithium batteries and charging methods.

iii) Welfare Officers Report: Ken Hylins is finding financial matters are taking most of his time and he is supporting about eight boaters through the benefit system. He is also supporting disabled boaters. He is also supporting illiterate boaters who have been harassed and their inability to read and write has not been taken into account in dealings with CRT. These are not an isolated cases. A side effect of his help is increasing the membership. Ken will produce an overview for NABO News.

iv) NINF This group have reacted very well to the FBW issues and are participating. Mike reminded the meeting that EA are reorganising and have issued new conditions for joining their forum. There used to be a useful user forum for the Thames and this is being superseded by a new Thames forum which is open to representatives from groups other than boating. This too has T & Cs attached to it. EA is also very short of money and has the same pressures as CRT from the levelling up and well-being agenda. Mike Rodd informed the meeting that there is a move to re-establish the All Parties Parliamentary Group for the Thames.

v) NAG. Nothing to report as we have not heard anything about our application to join.

vi) BSS: Peter will attend the BSS AC next week. Mike Rodd will be at TC on 27 July with the new committee chairman. Lithium-Iron batteries are raising concerns. Fire is a big problem and sinking is the only way to extinguish a serious lithium fire on a boat. Lithium fire extinguishers are available but very expensive and their use is very limited. Containment bags are also available for small items such as mobile phones.

Mike reported that the planned boat electrical publication being produced by IET is now out for consultation at present and it is likely to be published later this year. There is obviously a market for this.

vii) Web & GDPR. David has submitted a report. There is some additional modifications that are work in progress. He pointed out that our Privacy Policy is now five years old and really is in need of a review.

5. **Finance** Helen reported that she is very happy with the accounts situation with a slight surplus and higher interest rates on the Redwood account. Balances Membership is stable.

A budget is being prepared for next year, broadly similar to last this year.

Bank balances today:

Barclays current	£ 4,703.41
Barclays deposit	£ 4,643.37
Paypal	£ 8.72
Redwood	£ <u>15,975.25</u>
Total	£ 25,330.75

Helen suggested a transfer of £3500 to Redwood. She assured the meeting that Redwood is covered by the Government investment losses scheme

Payment for a Zoom license for use at NABO meetings was suggested. At approx £120, it was agreed it would be a good idea. David will organise this in time for the next meeting and AGM.

6. **NABO News:** Deadline for next issue is this next weekend. John is happy that he has enough material for this issue. David commented that if we are tackling big issues like the Lithium Batteries we should not set ourselves up as an authority. The Editor responded that boaters should be made aware of these issues. It was noted that there is a lot of unregulated work going on and care needs to be taken. Emphasis should be made that professional advice must always be sought.

7. **AOB:** A Mercia Marina associate member has written to ask for more action against CRT in support of funding deficit. A reply will be sent indicating thanks etc. suggesting constructive criticism on spending matters rather than direct refusal to pay the licence. It is not our policy to do anything illegal.

With reference to Continuous Cruising a correspondence is in progress with a member on the Aylesbury Arm about his cruising pattern and data interpretation by CRT. We will keep this correspondence going. Peter will take note of the legal advice already received by NABO. We would not be in a position to make any contribution to court costs should it get that far.

8. **Date of Next Meeting** and preparation for AGM 2 September 2023 at Tamworth CC The AGM will be in person in 18 November 2023 also at Tamworth Cruising Club. Mike will not be standing as chair. Anne will consider the possibility. Mike would endorse her nomination. Anne said that she would want to step back from the Facebook role. There will be some changes to the constitution and these will need to be notified to members.

PJB 17 June 2023, MR 23 June 2023, AH 25 June 2023

## APPENDICES

### Appendix 1 Web Report by email 12 June 2023

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, except for an interruption three weeks ago. I was able to clean up. The reason is unexplained. The ISP checking took a dislike to some of the files in the core of Joomla. I have renewed the auto scan for another year.

There have been no recent problems with delivery of mail. The recent bulletin went out without any problems.

I am working on long term plans for the web site.

David

### Appendix 2

Press Release (Draft) from FUND BRITAIN'S WATERWAYS

# PRESS RELEASE

**For immediate release**

**Date: (INSERT DATE)**

## **Fund Britain's Waterways calls on Government to rethink further cuts to inland waterways funding**

The Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (Defra) announcement today (INSERT DATE) of further reductions (INSERT ACTUAL FIGURE/PERCENTAGE CUT) in funding for the Canal & River Trust (CRT) represents another major blow to Britain's inland waterways network, one of its most unique and treasured assets. Our canals and rivers are already suffering from inadequate funding to meet the challenges of the climate emergency and high inflation, which are both at a level unforeseen when current funding was agreed. Fund Britain's Waterways (FBW), a coalition of organisations representing tens of thousands of users and supporters of inland waterways, is campaigning for national and local government to act now and protect the public benefit and natural capital of our waterways.

The consequences of failing to maintain waterway infrastructure were clearly shown by the evacuation of 1,500 local residents in case the dam at Toddbrook Reservoir collapsed in 2019. This event has shown the need for increased spend on CRT reservoirs of up to £25m per year, but it is as if the lessons have not yet been learnt.

Management of Britain's 5,000 miles of navigable inland waterways is fragmented. CRT has the greatest responsibility covering 2,000 miles, and others such as the Environment Agency and Scottish Canals face a similar challenge. Today the entire network is at risk due to significant underinvestment.

The Covid-19 pandemic demonstrated the value of Britain's inland waterways as people sought blue and green spaces to help recover. This was acknowledged in Defra's own Environmental Improvement Plan, providing levelling up, economic, environmental, health and well-being benefits for us all.

The combined annual economic and social value of CRT waterways alone has been quantified as £6.1bn, including cost savings of £1.1bn for the NHS from active use of the waterways and towpaths – leveraged from current government investment of only £52.6m per year.

Despite this greater understanding of their value, and the deteriorating state of the infrastructure today, the Government appears intent on significantly reducing its funding for the waterways, says Les Etheridge, Chair of the FBW steering group.

He said: "Government needs to recognise that saying they value the inland waterways is not enough to prevent their decline. Whilst we in FBW understand the financial pressures that everyone faces, the financial cuts are too deep, and adequate public funding needs to be allocated to maintain these national assets."

ENDS

For further information, please contact the IWA Press Office.

Email: [pressoffice@waterways.org.uk](mailto:pressoffice@waterways.org.uk) or call: 01494 783453.

## AND/OR FBW EMAIL ADDRESS

### NOTES TO EDITOR

The initial member organisations of Fund Britain's Waterways include:

- **Accessible Waterways Association**, set up to inform, represent, and assist people who live with disabilities, impairments or accessibility issues, and who want to enjoy the Inland Waterways and their surrounding environments
- **Association of Waterways Cruising Clubs**, a grouping of individual and independent clubs which offer their members facilities related to boating on the inland waterways of the United Kingdom
- **British Marine**, the trade association for the UK leisure, superyacht and small commercial marine industry, with 1,500+ member businesses
- **Commercial Boat Operators Association**, the prime trade organisation involved in the effort to sustain and increase freight carriage on our waterways for economic and environmental reasons
- **DBA – The Barge Association**, the club for people interested in leisure barging on the inland waterways of Europe
- **Inland Waterways Association**, the only independent, national charity dedicated to supporting and regenerating Britain's navigable rivers and canals as places for leisure, living and business
- **National Association of Boat Owners**, listening to boat owners, speaking out for boat owners, representing boat owners
- **National Inland Navigation Forum**, a forum bringing together organisations with inland navigational interests
- **Roving Canal Traders Association**, a non-profit making organisation run to help support and promote the diverse array of existing and potential Canal & River Trust registered Roving Traders on our waterways
- **Royal Yachting Association**, the national governing body for dinghy, motor and sail cruising, all forms of sail racing, RIBs and sportsboats, windsurfing and personal watercraft, and a leading representative body for inland waterways cruising in the UK
- **Thames MotorBoaters Association**, representing owners of powered craft registered on the non-tidal Thames

with the stated intention of widening membership to any organisation or individual with an interest in using or supporting inland waterways whether canal, river, tidal river or estuary (excluding navigation authorities).

The benefits of Britain's inland waterways are documented in:

- 'Waterways for Today' report published by the Inland Waterways Association (November 2022) <https://waterways.org.uk/campaigns/waterways-for-today>
- 'Valuing Our Waterways' report published by the Canal & River Trust with social-value experts Simetrica-Jacobs, with all methodology aligning with 2022 HM Treasury Green Book valuation techniques (November 2022) <https://canalrivertrust.org.uk/about-us/valuing-our-waterways>