

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF BOAT OWNERS

NEWS from the Council meeting...

... held on 18th April, 1993 at Hockley Port on the Birmingham Canal Navigations.

NABO was the first to report that the new Railways Bill, currently in its Committee stage in the House of Commons, contains provisions for a grant to be given to projects taking freight away from the roads.

The Treasurer reported continuing solvency. The main source of income is from membership fees, and the main expenses this month were the production of the Boater and payment of our sweatshirt account.

Direct debits and standing orders were again debated, and it was decided that neither could be implemented at present. The reasons for the Council's decision are reported below.

Membership numbers are fairly static overall, with new members replacing lapsed ones. The focus of this summer's attendance at waterway Festivals is to be membership recruitment.

Peter Sterry has given a successful talk at Wolverhampton Boat Club recently. He is to give a light-hearted after-dinner speech at the Canal Boatbuilders Association pre-show dinner in Nottingham - the suggested amusing topic is "Letters from Lord Strathclyde"!

Plans for NABO's attendance at the Nottingham (20-23 May) and Rickmansworth (21-23 May) Festivals are well advanced. Again, volunteers to help with the stands are being requested. There will be free admission for helpers at Nottingham.

NABO will also be taking publicity material to the rallies at Braunston (29-31 May) and the Ashby canal (1-3 May).

The new NABO publicity leaflet, featuring a cartoon by Jake Kavanagh (have you laughed over "The Ups and Downs of a Lockkeeper"?), will be available in time for all these events.

A member reports that invoices for end-of-garden moorings are appearing without warning in the Midlands region, accompanied by threats that licences will not be renewed unless they are paid. There is no basis in law for these threats, and NABO is taking this up with BW.

The Council discussed the latest on the BW Bill, the "filled" Bill, containing BW's most recent amendments. Not much change since the last report. We still await the second reading in the Commons. SEE PAGE 4.

Harry Winter has attended a meeting about the EC directive on Boat Standards. You will be glad to know that stability and floatation tests are not going to be required for inland waterway craft! Unfortunately, NABO cannot make direct representations to the EC, but it appears that the EC regulations will not affect BW's rules.

NABO has made a quick response to a request for comments on BW by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. More on page 4.

NABO, represented by Dave Green and Jon Darlington, attended a meeting with BW on 20th April, with a wide-ranging agenda discussed by the Council, covering everything from the Customer Charter to lock ladders. See below.

Finally, how much is your boat worth? Hammersmith Council are reported to have assessed boats in their area into Council Tax Band G (£160-200,000), in line with nearby riverside properties!

MEETING WITH BW.

Dave Green and Jon Darlington attended a meeting with Jim Kelly and David Allison of BW at Watford on the 20th April. There were no new surprises except that the Customer Charter had been rewritten following consultation last autumn. It is planned to be launched in the summer, but it is not planned to let user groups see it before its launch. We pointed out fairly forcibly that if the Board did not let users comment on the charter they would be leaving themselves open to criticism, to say the least.

Jim Kelly agreed that it would be better if user reps did have the opportunity to comment on the new draft charter, but that the decision to do so, or not do so, would have to be at Board level.

This seemed a good opportunity to give BW a copy of a proposed consultation procedure designed by NABO with the aim of providing a consistent and fair framework for consultation, which should reduce misunderstandings. (Isn't it quite extraordinary that BW has no consultation procedure?) The response to the proposed procedure was that it would be considered. We will inform you of the results of BW's considerations.

We discussed the application of End of Garden Moorings, and in particular two disturbing reports of NABO members who had been asked for 50% of class 1 moorings without notice and with a threat that if the amount was not paid, the cruising licence would not be renewed. Jim Kelly confirmed that notice of the requirement to pay 50% of class 1 mooring fees should have been given before a demand for money was made, and that the cruising licence should not be withheld if there is a dispute over mooring fees. If you have had trouble of this sort, please let us know.

Various other matters were discussed but not being of any immediate concern are not reported here.

TIDAL THAMES VHF CONCESSION

The Port of London Authority have announced a relaxation of the rules requiring full length narrowboats to carry a VHF radio on the tidal Thames between Brentford and Teddington.

The concession from the VHF requirements, which is initially to run for a trial period during 1993, exempts non-commercial narrowboats up to 25 meters in length in transit between the Grand Union Canal and the non-tidal Thames. Boat owners wishing to use the concession must telephone the PLA Navigation Centre at Woolwich before setting out on, and immediately after leaving, the tidal section.

A NABO member, David Daines, who is Chairman of the Narrow Boat Owners Club, has been campaigning for over a year to achieve this. BW has also been trying to get the rule changed, and Tim Sideway of British Waterways had negotiations with the PLA in March, which resulted in their announcement.

MONOPOLIES AND MERGERS COMMISSION

Following our written submission to the MMC Inquiry on BW, we were asked by the Commission to provide further oral evidence. This was given by Jon Darlington and Peter Lea on Wednesday 5th May at the MMC's offices in London. To a large extent the questions the Commission asked were not the ones we would have preferred to answer. Nevertheless we were able to get over a number of points we considered to be important. The extent to which these will influence the Commission is anybody's guess. A full report will appear in the Boater, by which time more details will be available.

BW BILL 2ND READING 17th MAY

The second reading debate of the Bill has at last been set for the 17th May at 7.00 pm. The notice is short, but the date was only set on Thursday (6th May). Don't miss your last chance to contact your MP on this important issue.

TOWPATH CYCLING

On 4th May BW announced its decision "to move away from controlling cycling by permit to one of promoting safe cycling on suitable towing paths."

"The current arrangement of issuing permits from regional offices on payment of a fee, which is operationally difficult to enforce, will be phased out in favour of a simpler arrangement of control by signage at access points. The intention is for the signs to be in place by the end of March 1994, but for the time being cyclists wishing to use the towing paths should continue to seek permission from their local BW office. Some managers will continue to operate the permit system."

SOUTHERN REGION

On 1st April the Kennet and Avon Canal was transferred from the Midlands and SW region to what was the SE Region, thus forming the new Southern Region. Peter Coyne the Regional Manager is based at Hemel Hempstead. The waterway managers are: Michael Goodenough (K&A) based at Devizes; Simon Ainley (Oxford & GU), based at Braunston; Caroline Clark (GU South), based at Marsworth; Mark Bensted (London, Lee & Stort), based at Little Venice.

NEWSLETTER SUPPLEMENT

We have delayed the printing of the Newsletter in order to include a press release from IWAAC which announces a new emphasis to its role as defined under the Transport Act 1968. Unfortunately, the IWAAC press release has been delayed, but ... sorry, the fax is printing out the press release as I type. There is no time for us to comment on it. It will be on page 2. A full list of all IWAAC members together with brief biographical details will be on pages 3 and 4.

MIDLANDS AND SW REGION

The restructuring of the Midland Region took place on the 1st April, coinciding with the restructuring of the Southern Region. The Region is still headed by Stewart Sim based at Fazeley. A complicated set of waterways seem to attract to managers in this region. Hence a full list of their waterways is included below:

- David Green (based at Bilston); BCN, Stourbridge Canal to Wordsley Aquaduct, B'ham & Fazeley Canal to Minworth bottom lock, GU from Camp Hill to B'ham centre.
- Stephen Goode (based at Fradley); Coventry & Ashby Canals, B'ham & Fazeley from Minworth bottom to Fazeley, Trent and Mersey from Colwich lock to Shardlow.
- Dave Tyrrell (based at Gloucester); River Severn Navigation, Gloucester and Sharpness Canal.
- Richard Dommett (based at Govilon); Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal, Swansea Canal, Bridgwater and Taunton Canal.
- Andrew Stumpf (based at new offices at Lapworth. Phone 0564 784634); Stratford on Avon Canal, Worcester & Birmingham Canal, GU from Camp Hill to Napton.
- Roger Herrington (based at Norbury); Shropshire Union Canal from Audlem bottom lock to Atherley Junction. Trent and Mersey Canal from Trentham to Colwich lock, the Staffs. & Worcs. Canal, Stourbridge canal from Stourton Junction to Wordesley Aqueduct.

APPOINTMENTS TO IWAAC

Lord Strathclyde, Environment Minister, today (11th May) announced the new membership of IWAAC.

Four existing members have been invited to continue - Dr John Eaton, Alan Smith, David Stevenson and John Hume. There are ten new appointees (listed on pages 3 and 4).

The appointments have been made for between one and three years.

Welcoming the appointments, Lord Strathclyde said:

"I am very pleased to have brought together on IWAAC members of such quality and breadth of experience of the heritage, the environment, waterways, planning and the leisure and tourism industries. They will provide authoritative advice in support of BW's developing strategy for the waterways: a strategy that combines conservation with broadening the customer base and sensitive development of the commercial potential of the waterways heritage and environmental assets.

IWAAC's primary role will be to advise Ministers and the Board on the development of the general policies, strategy and criteria that might be adopted by the Board with respect to its priorities, especially on heritage and environmental issues. IWAAC will continue to fulfil its other statutory duties. IWAAC's main focus will be on the future, especially the long term development of the amenity value of the waterways.

Decisions on the matters on which advice is given remain wholly for the Board and Ministers. The Board also remain responsible for operational decisions, for relationships with users and customers, and for dealing with any complaints that may arise. Following extensive consultations, the Board will shortly be announcing further improvements in its Customer Charter for liaising with customers and dealing with individual complaints, including the appointment of an ombudsman.

The combination of a clearer, strategic, focus for IWAAC and improved arrangements at BW for responding to customers, will, I believe, provide a better framework both for current operations and for the future development of the waterways."

IWAAC : NEW COUNCIL MEMBERS

Biographical Details

Mr G H BAKER - CHAIRMAN

Managing Director of Anglo Welsh Waterway Holidays 1965-89. Former Chairman of the Association of Pleasure Craft Operators.

Mr I F BLOMFIELD OBE

Former deputy Director-General of the National Trust and Deputy Chairman of National Trust Enterprises Ltd. A qualified Land Agent and Surveyor. Former manager of National Trust properties, including the River Wey navigation.

Dr J W EATON

Senior lecturer in Freshwater Ecology, Environmental Biology Department, University of Liverpool. Member of IWAAC 1984-to date.

Mrs C J ELVY.

Elvy & Co (Chartered Surveyors). Previously a farmer, combining farming with the development of leisure businesses including fishing and conservation.

Mrs J M FREEMAN BA Dipl ConS (AA)

Director of the newly formed Historic Chapels Trust and Chairman of Freeman Historic Properties Ltd. She is the author of 2 books and lectures and broadcasts on topics relating to historic buildings. Secretary of the Victorian Society 1982-85.

Mr J R HUME.

Principal inspector of Historic Buildings, Historic Scotland 1990 to date. Inspector of Ancient Monuments to what is now Historic Scotland 1984-90. University Lecturer in Economic and Industrial History, University of Strathclyde 1964-84. Author of more than 20 books and pamphlets on Scottish industry and economy. Chairman of the Seagull Trust (Canal cruising for disabled in Scotland). Member of English Heritage and Welsh Industrial Archaeology Panels. Chairman of Scottish Industrial Archaeology Panel.

Miss A M LEES

A planner with experience at national and local level. Member of the Department of Transport's Standing Advisory Committee on Trunk Road Assessment and the Department for Education's Assessment Board. Former Chairman (for England) of the Nature Conservancy Council and a Board member of the Groundwork Foundation.

Mr R H B NEAME

Chairman and Chief Executive, Shepherd Neame Ltd (Brewers). Chairman of Folkstone Racecourse and Gatwick Airport Consultative Committee. Director of the Royal Insurance South East Region Advisory Board, Marr Taverns PLC, Pubco PLC and UBSN Ltd. Former Leader of Kent County Council. Former chairman of South East England Tourist Board.

PROFESSOR J A PATMORE

Vice-Chairman of The Sports Council. Member of the Countryside Commission. Emeritus Professor of Geography, University of Hull. Interest in recreational sports.

DR A M POWELL

Consultant. Currently Project Manager, Oxford Brookes University. Chairman of the NRA Thames Regional Fisheries Advisory Committee.

Mrs A C ROBERTS

Managing Director of the National Trust (Enterprises) Ltd. Former Operations Manager and Personnel and Training Manager of Next Ltd.

Mr A T SMITH

Chairman of Trevis Smith Ltd. Managing Director of Fellows, Morton & Clayton. Vice Chairman of the Stourbridge Navigation Trust. Vice President of the Staffs and Worcs Canal Society and Dudley Canal Trust. Chairman of the West Midlands Historic Buildings Trust. Member of IWAAC 1978 to date. Private Boater.

Mr D A STEVENSON

National Chairman of the IWA. A member of various canal societies and restoration organisations. A member of IWAAC 1990 to date.

Mr P V WAGSTAFFE

Executive Director of the British Marine Industries Federation. Member of the CBI main Council and former member of the CBI Smaller Firms Council. Vice President of Association Executives. Former member of IWAAC 1986-90.

Dr M E WITHERICK

Geographer. Visiting Fellow, University of Southampton. RSPB Council member and Chairman of Conservation Committee in 1984-86 and 1989-93. Chief Examiner and Moderator of GCE A-Level Exams and a member of the Schools Examinations and Assessment Council Geography Committee.