

Minutes of the meeting of the Board of Trustees of The Inland Waterways Association held on 9th April 2011 at Lapworth Village Hall, Lapworth, Warwickshire.

Present:

Doug Beard	Clive Henderson (chairman)	Jerry Sanders
Ivor Caplan	Alasdair Lawrance	Peter Scott
Ray Carter	Alan Platt	Jim Shead
Alastair Chambers	John Pomfret	Vaughan Welch
Les Etheridge	Paul Roper	

In Attendance: Neil Edwards [Chief Executive], Helen Elliott-Adams [Finance Manager] and Jo Gilbertson [Campaign and Communications Manager].

Apologies for absence were received from Chris Birks and Ian West.

Clive Henderson reminded members of his observer position on the British Waterways Board and his chairmanship of British Waterways Advisory Forum, and asked other trustees present for any declarations of interest. There were none.

9429

MINUTES

Trustees approved the minutes of the Board's meeting held on 12th February.

9430

REVIEW OF PUBLICATION OF MINUTES

Neil Edwards introduced a paper attached to the agenda, which suggested that trustees should review the practice of publishing edited minutes of meetings of national committees. Edited minutes of trustees' meetings had been published for more than five years, and had a steady following of readers on the web site. Edited minutes of national committees and boards of subsidiary companies had been added more recently, and attracted a much smaller readership, although the minutes of board meetings of Essex Waterways Ltd seemed more of interest than others. Trustees reaffirmed their commitment to transparency of operation and agreed that the edited minutes of meetings of trustees and the board meetings of the two subsidiary companies should continue, but that no further edited minutes of the national committees should be added to the web site to see whether there was any adverse reaction. It was felt that the latter had a greater predominance of administrative arrangements, and that news of the Association's activities was better publicised elsewhere on the web site and in a more timely way.

9431

NEW WATERWAYS CHARITY

Paul Roper summarised discussions with Government, British Waterways and others concerning the proposed new waterways charity and the consultation launched by the Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs on 30th March. He reported on meetings of the British Waterways Advisory Forum and the Environment Agency's National Navigation Users Forum. An RYA stakeholders meeting was due to take place shortly.

Prior to the meeting, Jim Stirling, BW's Technical Director, had given a presentation to trustees and to members of Finance and Navigation committees, which had explained BW's forecasts of the state of its assets and likely scenarios with different levels of funding over the next twenty years. Trustees had felt the presentation timely and helpful in explaining the importance of adequate funding for the new waterways charity, as well as highlighting the difficult negotiations that the interim trustees would face.

Trustees felt that it was important that IWA showed leadership in responding to the consultation and noted the benefits of making an early response. Paul Roper would arrange for an early draft to be circulated to trustees and members of Navigation Committee as soon as possible, with the aim of submitting a final response to the Department in early June, before the next meeting of trustees. Discussion would need to take place by e-mail correspondence.

Region chairmen in particular were anxious that branch members had an opportunity to contribute to the debate. Members should be encouraged to make their own submissions to the consultation, but it was important that they did not do so on IWA letterheads, which might imply an official response that was not intended. Region chairmen were asked to co-ordinate responses in their region and to feed them in to Paul Roper. Jo Gilbertson was asked to prepare a note explaining the position to branch officers as soon as possible.

The Waterway Minister's announcement on the future of the Environment Agency's navigations was noted. It was perceived that the Minister had gone as far as he was able to be supportive, and that much would depend on the views of his successors and their enthusiasm to see the project through. Unfortunately, it had proven impossible to unpick the Environment Agency's funding lines so that the Agency's waterways could be included straight away. Clive Henderson reported that his meeting with the Waterways Minister shortly before this announcement had been beneficial. The Minister had also attended the annual IWA Parliamentary Dinner, as had three former waterway ministers and the Secretary of State for Wales. Trustees affirmed their support for the event and thought in good value for money in campaigning spend. The re-launch of the Parliamentary Waterways Group, announced at the dinner, was also welcomed by trustees. IWA would act as secretariat to the revived Group.

Paul Roper and Clive Henderson reported that there had been general enthusiasm for the new waterways charity and proposals in the consultation from all the user groups represented at the recent meeting of the British Waterways Advisory Forum. There had been some concern as to whether the consultation document was going to be published at all owing to the Secretary of State's and Prime Minister's concern at possible rejection following consequences of the adverse public reaction to the recent Forestry Commission consultation. The support of IWA and others had been important in giving sufficient reassurance for the document to be launched.

In reviewing the consultation document, trustees expressed general support, but were concerned at matters not fully covered in the proposals, particularly financial questions, but also the future of remainder waterways. There was also disappointment, but some acceptance, at the proposed treatment of commercial waterways. Trustees also felt the primacy of navigation should be reasserted.

Clive Henderson outlined to trustees a discussion held amongst some British Waterways Advisory Forum members to launch a petition supportive of the new waterways charity, but which might need to have a more focussed campaigning element for improved funding. There was some discussion as to the exact wording of such a petition, but it was generally thought worthwhile, and that if IWA did not lead on it then it could be hijacked by minority groups with little representation. Such a petition would likely be electronic, possibly hosted on IWA's web site, and in printed format for events during the summer. Trustees agreed full IWA involvement and asked that it be ready, with printed forms available and circulated before the end of April.

9432

STRATEGY

A paper from Jim Shead setting out the importance of the Association having a clear strategy set out by trustees had been circulated prior to the meeting. Jim Shead introduced the paper and outlined the purposes of setting a strategy in determining future direction of the Association. A number of members had responded in writing to Jim Shead's paper, including some detailed comments from Peter Scott concerning

membership recruitment. Ivor Caplan noted concerns in decline in membership. Trustees agreed that strategy should be a permanent item on the agenda.

9433

MEMBERSHIP RECRUITMENT

Jo Gilbertson summarised a paper that he had presented to Finance Committee in the morning. He reported that traditional methods of recruitment were becoming harder, and that printed media, including direct mailings were becoming less effective and cost prohibitive. More recent recruitment initiatives had included an offer of free membership for a period on the assumption that sufficient members would renew at the end of the free period to cover costs. This method also passed on some of the recruitment costs to the areas that provided the initial free memberships, and had the further benefit that it enabled targeting to those with a proven interest in the inland waterways. There was concern, however, that even free membership for a period was not proving an attraction. Trustees reported some concern from some branches that the 'free' memberships were distorting recruitment and retention figures. Apart from at shows and festivals, few members were currently recruited by face-to-face methods, and the bounty of £20 per membership offered to branches for such recruiting had had virtually no effect so far.

The poor take-up on membership recruitment gave rise to concerns as to how IWA was perceived by potential new members and whether the organisation appeared active enough to merit people's interest and stimulated their enthusiasm to be involved. Few branches were involved in high-profile activities such as clean-ups, which local residents would consider as having an impact on their back yard, and likely to encourage them to become involved. The training scheme proposed by Geraint Coles through Restoration Committee was noted, but seemed to be making very slow progress, partly owing to a lack of support from British Waterways. It was felt, however, that this had real long term value and would show IWA in a very positive educational role, and should be supported.

Jo Gilbertson felt that changes were needed in IWA's branch and region structure to make IWA fit for purpose, before it would become an attractive proposition for the uncommitted to want to join. He noted the low attendance at branch meetings, overburdened committees, low visibility in the press and perceived low relevance to waterways and waterside communities. He advocated a need to reduce spending on 'supporting members' and refocusing on IWA's 'charitable worth and value to the waterways', and to refocus branches from the current committee structure with large geographical constituencies to much more local action groups where the emphasis was on 'achievement and worth'. This would have considerable implications, dispensing with Per Capita, funds in branch ownership, branch magazines and committee structures – and would replace these with a more action-based approach, better guidance and equipment provision from Head Office and simple newsletters publicising and supporting local action. Trustees agreed with this approach in general and felt the status quo was not an acceptable option. The Rugeley work parties started by members in Lichfield Branch were cited as being a good example of how this might work.

Trustees felt that it was important to have active local events that gained good publicity, and worries over whether participants were IWA members or not could be dispensed with, as such activities would gain their own momentum and bring people in to membership in due course. Clive Henderson reported that he had recently joined in some activities in Lapworth organised by British Waterways, and this had shown how community-based action based in a village such as Lapworth could work well, whereas at present IWA operated only a county – e.g. Warwickshire – or larger basis. In agreeing with the general proposals, trustees also asked for a better tie-in with current British Waterways initiatives. Trustees asked Jo Gilbertson to form a team to progress the initiative and to keep them informed by e-mail.

In referring back to the paper circulated by Peter Scott in response to Jim Shead's strategy paper, trustees agreed that future emphasis should be on the monthly membership rates, rather than annual, with the latter only being given as a secondary option. A suggestion was made that an attempt might be made to recalculate the number of corporate members' members, but this was a lengthy and potentially politically difficult exercise. Trustees' attention was also drawn to the 'Ten Good Reasons to join IWA' aide memoire

cards that had recently been produced following discussion at Promotions and Communications Committee. Jo Gilbertson reported that stocks of these had been circulated to all branches, and was asked to arrange for copies to be provided for all trustees when an opportunity arose.

9434

NATIONAL AWARDS 2011

A paper outlining recommendations from the Awards Panel for 2011 had been circulated by e-mail prior to the meeting. There was a further nomination, which had gone astray, to be considered. Trustees asked that the recommendations be deferred to the 11th June, when a recommendation for the stray nomination would also be to hand.

9435

COMMITTEE AND COMPANY MINUTES

Trustees accepted the following committee and company minutes:

Finance Committee	12 th February (including edited minutes, for publication)
Navigation Committee	12 th February (including edited minutes, for publication)
Restoration Committee	11 th December (including edited minutes, for publication)
Promotions and Communications	5 th February (including edited minutes, for publication)
Waterway Recovery Group	22 nd January (including edited minutes, for publication)
Inland Waterways Enterprises Ltd	December/January electronic meeting (including edited minutes, for publication)
IWA Festivals	29 th January
Essex Waterways Ltd	7 th December (including edited minutes, for publication)

In the light of the Minute 9430, the edited versions of minutes of national committees (i.e. excluding trustees, Inland Waterways Enterprises Ltd and Essex Waterways Ltd) would not be placed on the web site for the moment.

9436

MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS

Neil Edwards had prepared, and circulated with the agenda, a paper covering matters arising from previous meetings. This was noted.

9437

BRITISH WATERWAYS MOORINGS COURT CASE

Paul Roper briefed trustees on the outcome of a recent court case concerning a boat owner on the Kennet & Avon Canal and the definition of 'continuous cruising'. The outcome was welcomed in bringing more certainty to the situation.

9438

NEXT MEETING

Trustees noted that the next meeting of the board of trustees would take place on Saturday 11th June at Rowington Village Hall.

Future Meeting Dates:

13th August (Rowington), 8th October (Lapworth Old School) and 3rd December (Lapworth)

There being no further business, the meeting concluded at 4.45 p.m.