

Minutes of the meeting of the board of directors held at the office at Paper Mill Lock at 11.00 a.m. on Friday 13<sup>th</sup> March 2009.

Present: Roy Chandler (chairman), Colin Davis, Neil Edwards, Jim Jenkins and John Pomfret.

In Attendance: Colin Edmond.

### **Apologies for Absence**

1. None – all board members were present.

### **Minutes of Meetings**

2. The minutes of the board meetings held on 10<sup>th</sup> December 2008, which had been circulated prior to the meeting, were approved as a true record of that meeting.

### **Health and Safety**

3. (a) Colin Edmond reported that there had been a fatality at Heybridge, which was thought to have been caused by a heart attack leading to a fall in the canal. Whilst not thought to be a contributory factor in this instance, the board recommended that care be taken to ensure vegetation control along busy towing paths, including removal of any low tree-stumps that might cause a tripping hazard.
- (b) Colin Edmond briefed the board on the consequences of recent flooding in the area. A narrow boat based at Paper Mill had sunk, likely owing to an accumulation of rain water and low-level air vents in the hull; the vessel had been raised shortly afterwards at minimal expense to the owner and her insurers. The boat-owner had been advised to move the boat owing to deteriorating weather conditions, from just below the lock, prior to its sinking, but had failed to do so. The floods had also caused damage to some towpaths, including a substantial collapse at Hoe Mill.
- (c) The installation of ramps to ease passage across the Sea Lock at Heybridge had not progressed yet, but access to the gates had benefitted from recent improvements to the footpaths leading to the gates.
- (d) Colin Edmond reported that installation of safety signage continued to progress when opportunities arose. A format for warning notices had been agreed with the local police. Installation of lock sill markings had yet to take place.
- (e) Roy Chandler had made contact with the Fire Brigade, who had undertaken to assist with a review of fire precautions and access arrangements along the Navigation.

### **Staffing and Management Arrangements**

4. (a) Roy Chandler reported that both residential caretakers were now moored at Sandford, but that a supply of on-site equipment had yet to be installed. [Confidential item omitted]
- (b) Neil Edwards reported that the Association's trustees had noted and endorsed the view of this board recorded in the previous meeting's minutes concerning the future appointment of

directors. The board also noted the Association's new practice of appointing officers for fixed terms, and considered that this would be a useful discipline for this board. It would consider this further and make recommendations at the June meeting.

## Finance

5. (a) A draft annual report and financial statements for 2008 had been circulated prior to the meeting. Directors suggested that it would be preferable if the auditors would amend the reference in their report to the Articles, so as to make it more specific. The auditors would be asked. Otherwise the draft was thought to be fine.
- (b) Once the audit was complete, a finalised annual report and financial statements would be put for approval at the brief board meeting due to be held on 16<sup>th</sup> May.
- (c) A report of income and expenditure to date for 2009 had been circulated prior to the meeting. The current format of the 'budget YTD' column was felt to be unhelpful where it was known that the whole expenditure occurred at a fixed time each year; the board asked that this be discussed with Les Etheridge, IWA national treasurer, to see whether a costing could be obtained to rewrite this report to make it more useful, without distracting from other software report work that might be ongoing. The board also asked (a) if income from the residential moorings at Heybridge could be split out, and (b) that quarter-end income and expenditure figures be circulated to the board as soon as possible.
- (d) The board asked that cash flow projections be circulated as soon as convenient after the current audit work was complete, as the volumes of planned expenditure necessitated a close watch be kept on this.
- (e) A report from Christine Walsh showing current moorings debtors had been circulated.  
[Confidential items omitted]
- (f) Colin Edmond reported that monthly payments were being received from Tesco's contractor, and that this item could come off the agenda.
- (g) Colin Edmond reported that commercial rents should be being received [confidential text omitted]. Residential moorers would be allowed one hut to store personal belongings, where a suitable building was available, without additional charge. Apart from the above and the yacht stores at Heybridge, there were no other commercial rents due.
- (h) The schedule of known leases had yet to be completed.
- (i) The board noted that telecommunications arrangements at Heybridge had been switched to Class Communications, as part of the Head Office arrangement, but that BT continued to hold up the switch-over at Paper Mill purporting that a five-year agreement with them was in place, but seemingly unable to show any evidence of this.
- (j) [Commercial contractual item omitted]
- (k) [Commercial contractual item omitted]
- (l) Roy Chandler reported that the draft revised Yacht Stores agreements were under discussion with our solicitors.
- (m) Recent business rate demands from Chelmsford Borough Council were noted; these were being challenged where practicable to do so.

- (n) [Confidential item omitted]
- (o) Roy Chandler reported that it was becoming increasingly difficult to source new grants in the current economic climate. The board asked for the topic of grants to be kept on the agenda for regular review.

### **Report from the Navigation Manager**

- 6 (a) Colin Edmond reported that refurbishment work at Stonhams Lock was underway, but that the contractor was running behind schedule owing to difficult access to the site consequent to recent flooding.
- (b) Brickwork repairs to the west wall of the bothy at Paper Mill Lock were underway, and were likely to be finished within a week or so. Some internal decoration work would be needed. The work was being part-funded by a grant of £1,000 from Chelmsford Borough Council. Work on the slipway was not being progressed at the moment. Repairs to the weir at Paper Mill required further funding, and so these may need to be undertaken in stages. A quotation had been received from [a contractor]; one was awaited from [another contractor].
- (c) [A contractor] had provided a quotation of [an amount] to Essex & Suffolk Water for works required at Heybridge North Quay. Essex & Suffolk Water would contribute to the costs, but a funding package would need to be put together.
- (d) The development at [a location] was on hold owing to the economic climate. Nothing further had been heard from Chelmsford Borough Council regarding the feeder stream; Roy Chandler would chase this up.
- (e) Essex & Suffolk Water had confirmed that it would finance the repairs required at Beeleigh Lock later this year. Dams and a short stoppage would be required to install a lock ladder.
- (f) The recent flooding had highlighted a need for various minor bank repairs. The landowner at Treasure Island had undertaken some repairs to his property near Paper Mill. Some clearance of fallen trees in the non-navigable water-courses were now seen to be necessary for reasons of flood management; this work was being proceeded with. Minor tree growth on walls in this area was being dealt with at the same time.

### **Update on Issues Discussed at Previous Meetings**

- 7. (a) [Commercial contractual item omitted]
- (b) [Commercial contractual item omitted]
- (c) [Confidential item omitted].
- (d) Roy Chandler reported that registration of the area of water leading into Heybridge Mill had now been completed at the Land Registry, according to Shakespeares. Quotations for works to undertake repairs there are in hand. The owners of the mill had applied for planning permission for three dwellings on the site.
- (e) The specification for survey work for the proposed vegetation management plan had yet to be prepared. There was a need to check with the Environment Agency's habitats report on the river corridor. John Pomfret also thought it likely that the British Trust for Ornithology would have undertaken a bird survey for the area, and he would try to obtain a copy. Checks would

also be made with Essex Wildlife Trust to see if other information, such as surveys for otters and native crayfish had been undertaken. An article in a recent edition of Coates Cuttings was noted; Roy Chandler and John Pomfret would put together a response to this article.

- (f) Roy Chandler showed the board a large scale plan that he had obtained from the Land Registry showing the boundary with Thos. Bates and Son Ltd near the gravel pits at Heybridge. Some minor corrections to Land Registry's records may be needed.
- (g) John Pomfret reported that he had looked through the Environment Agency's River Basin Management Plan for Anglia, and that much of the content was general 'nice to do' things that would be hard to argue against, and not impact on navigation too badly. He would review the planned response on the consultation for the Association and adapt something for Essex Waterways Ltd in liaison with Colin Edmond and Roy Chandler.
- (h) [Confidential item]

### **Other Business**

- 8. (a) The board considered possible opportunities for recruiting IWA members from boaters using the Navigation. Possible opportunities for information boards and leaflet boxes would be progressed at appropriate locations when resources allowed. The Board agreed with the idea of adding panels to the existing Information Boards to advise on the IWA/EWL management of the Navigation.
- (b) Colin Edmond reported that expenditure of about £1,200 had been necessary on the older Landrover. This vehicle was mostly used by contractor Jeff Field, but was necessary to retain for attendance to sluices and locks during floods, and to assist with emergency work in general. There was unlikely to be much overall saving in getting a replacement at the moment.
- (c) The board asked that succession planning appear on the agenda of the June meeting.

### **Future Meetings**

- 9. (a) The next meeting, which would be brief and just to formally approve the annual report and financials statements, would be held on Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> May 2008 at 9.25 am at Rowington Village Hall.
- (b) Other meetings in 2009 would take place on Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> June, Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> September and Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> December.

No other business was transacted and the meeting closed at 3.00 p.m.