

Minutes of the meeting of the board of directors held at the office at Paper Mill Lock at 12.05 p.m. on Thursday 24th September 2009, following a visit to Heybridge Basin at 10.45 a.m.

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

In Attendance: Colin Edmond.

Apologies for Absence

1. (a) None – all board members were present.
- (b) This meeting had been postponed from the previously set date of 10th September owing to the non-availability of two directors. Thanks were given for rearranging diaries to accommodate the revised meeting date.

Minutes of Meetings

2. The minutes of the board meetings held on 10th June 2009, which had been circulated prior to the meeting, including the edited minutes for publication, were approved as a true record of that meeting.

Health and Safety

3. (a) The board noted that, since the meeting in June, three vessels had sunk on the navigation and had had to be raised. Two narrow boats had sunk at Paper Mill, owing to leakage in one, which had brought down the second to which it had been tied. Insurers of the first vessel had accepted liability and paid for refloating both vessels and the second had been written off. Insurers were also meeting the Environment Agency's costs for a boom to avoid fuel pollution. Boat vessels, which were in poor condition, had since been removed from the Navigation. A large wooden vessel had also sunk at its moorings at Heybridge; Colin Edmond had managed to raise it, and the owner had been invoiced a modest fee towards these costs (not yet paid). The vessel was considered unsafe, and its owner had been asked to remove it from the Navigation; the owner had undertaken repair work but had left a considerable mess on the bank-side, and the vessel remained. Colin Edmond would discuss with Martin Maudsley to try to find a way to resolve these issues with the boat-owner.
- (b) Colin Edmond reported that a man-hole cover had given way underneath a boater at the moorings at Hoe Mill. The design and quality of the cover had been poor, and was of a sort no longer used. A replacement was in hand and other existing covers would be checked for safety.
- (c) Colin Edmond reported that the owner of Barnes Mill had drained water from the Navigation to effect repairs at Barnes Mill sluices without seeking our permission, although permission had apparently been given by the Environment Agency. Appropriate remonstrations had been made to the Mill owner, and it was hoped that the repairs that had been undertaken would be of benefit to the Navigation in the long term.
- (d) Prior to the meeting, directors had viewed a number of elderly vessels at Heybridge, each of which was feared to have the potential to sink at its moorings and cause considerable expense and inconvenience to refloat. Directors (i) agreed that the board's concerns should be notified to the relevant boat owners, and they should be asked what actions were in hand to ensure the

safety of their vessels and others at Heybridge, and (ii) asked that the responsibilities of maintaining vessels in good order should be emphasised to the owners.

- (e) Particularly with the vessels that had the potential to sink at their moorings in mind, the board asked that a risk register be set up for vessels on the Navigation that were a cause of concern. The register should show the potential adverse impact of the concerns being realised, and the estimated likelihood of this happening. The register should be reviewed by the board regularly, with a view to recommending any actions that might be needed. This would ensure the situation was actively managed.
- (f) Colin Edmond reported that he had obtained a quotation for installing aluminium ramps to the lock gates at Heybridge, although the contractor had suggested that a rolling footbridge might be cheaper. [discussion omitted]
- (g) Colin Edmond reported that there remained a number of signs to be installed. There had been some complaints from neighbouring house-owners, at [two locations], of swimming in the Navigation during the summer and on occasion the police had been called. The swimmers had not caused any inconvenience to boaters, walkers or anglers using the Navigation, but the neighbours had been unhappy with the young people gathering near their property, and about purported noise. A press release had been arranged with Essex Police to warn of the dangers of swimming near structures in the Navigation, and helpful contacts had been made with the Police. It was generally felt that the swimmers were doing little harm, and causing only minor nuisance whilst enjoying the Navigation, and that there was little else that should or could practicably be done. Colin Edmond would arrange for volunteer work parties to attend to the remaining signs and cill markers.
- (h) Essex Fire Brigade had not sent a written report following their visit earlier in the year, but their visit had been useful and a number of suggestions from oral advice given on the day were being pursued. The board felt that fire-buckets at locks near mooring sites would be more useful than fire extinguishers, as there was an ample supply of water, whereas extinguishers were likely to be quickly exhausted. Hanging buckets with convex undersides and filled with sand were felt likely to be less prone to pilferage and vandalism.

Staffing and Management Arrangements

- 4. (a) [Confidential item omitted]
- (b) The board noted that its recommendations for reappointment had been approved by IWA's trustees. Roy Chandler reported that Clive Henderson had visited the Navigation, and been given a tour round, on 16th September.
- (c) [Confidential item].
- (d) [A director] reported that Essex County Council had some funds available to support possible apprenticeship and training schemes, and that this might be a way of bringing in support for additional manpower on the Navigation. The board asked that further information on the possibilities be sought.

Finance

- 5. (a) A report on income and expenditure to the end of August had been circulated prior to the meeting. The income comparison figures with the same date in 2008 were welcomed, and the board asked that its thanks be conveyed to Helen Elliott-Adams, including for the variances report, which was most helpful. Mooring income was generally above budget and the

particularly good result at Heybridge was noted with pleasure and thanks to Martin Maudsley for encouraging and dealing with extra visitors. Expenditure on Stonhams Lock had been higher than budget owing to the additional work required and longer period for hiring equipment, and grant income had yet to be received. Consequently the cash flow projected in June had turned out very different, as other works had been postponed. The grant of £25,000 from Essex Environment Trust was expected in October and the same amount from Essex County Council in November once the surveyor's report was in. Roy Chandler had kept both funders informed on the position.

- (b) An updated cash flow report had been tabled for the meeting, but required the insertion of further figures once expenditures for the rest of the year had been decided. Roy Chandler would update the report and arrange circulation.
- (c) [Confidential item].
- (d) A list of debts outstanding had been circulated to the board prior to the meeting. The position with [a] boat was noted; tenders for sale had been invited at 28 days notice. Concern was expressed at [another debtor]. The board asked that the small debt re [a vessel] be written off.
- (e) The board noted that the main occasion for any difficulties with boaters was usually at the time of sale of a vessel, with new owners not being aware of their responsibilities and liabilities, and asked that an additional clause be added to mooring agreements at the next revision, to require boat-owners selling their vessel to be liable for the vessel and any debts incurred up until the point that the name and contact details of the new owner were advised to us. Neil Edwards would ask Hugh Turner to draft an additional clause.
- (f) [Confidential item]
- (g) [Confidential item]
- (h) Roy Chandler reported that there had been some incursion on to the Navigation's land by householders at [a location] who had, unauthorised, extended their gardens towards to the waterway. The board asked that these householders be written to see if they wished to pay an annual rent for use of the land (suggested [an amount] per annum for the largest area extended on), or to remove all evidence of occupation.
- (i) Neil Edwards reported that David Forrester had hopefully resolved the remaining difficulties with Class Telecommunications taking over the remaining telephone lines at Paper Mill office. Colin Edmond would make a check after 28th September and report any problems to David Forrester.
- (j) [Confidential item]
- (k) All the current occupiers had signed up to the revised licence agreements for the stores at Heybridge. There was still some incursion on to the property of a neighbouring landowner, who would be encouraged to correspond direct with the party concerned.
- (l) There was nothing to report on business rates.
- (m) [Confidential item]
- (n) There was nothing to report on new grants, other than the situation was no easier.

- (o) Despite the current high electricity charges for the facilities block, the board felt that it would be uneconomic to undertake capital expenditure to reduce energy consumption at the present, so the matter could be taken off the agenda.
- (p) Colin Edmond and Roy Chandler would draft a 2010 budget and circulate to directors by e-mail for comment. The board agreed that the budget should be discussed by e-mail with a view to a final version being brought to the December meeting for approval.
- (q) The board agreed that all moorings and other service charges, including licences for the stores at Heybridge, canoe licences, visitor fees at Heybridge, etc, would remain the same for 2010 as they had been for 2009, with the exceptions of (a) the residential moorings at Heybridge for which the pre-advised 3rd year rise of 10%, to bring them into line with other residential moorings within 5 years, would be honoured, and (b) the moorings at Hoe Mill that had benefitted from electrical installations would be re-designated premium moorings in view of the improved facilities. This would not apply to the residential caretakers as they were required to remain in their present positions as a condition of their employment. Alternative moorings at the site could be found for any boat-owner who was unhappy with re-allocated moorings at Hoe Mill. The board agreed that the improved moorings at Sandford would not be upgraded this year, despite the additional facilities, in recognition of inconvenience caused by the closure of Stonehams Lock.

Report from the Navigation Manager

- 6 (a) Colin Edmond reported that Stonhams Lock was fully re-opened and the site had been cleared by the contractor. Some surplus materials at the site had been incorporated into bank improvements so as to minimise waste.
- (b) Roy Chandler reported that refurbishment, including redecoration, of the bothy at Paper Mill had been completed. Proposed works on the slipway, weir, toilets, piling and dredging had not progressed owing to other priorities.
- (c) Quotations for the works required at Heybridge North Quay had not progressed further. It was suggested that an approach might be made to [a potential funder] for possible funding.
- (d) There had been further problems with low flow on the feeder stream, as Chelmsford Borough Council had not cleared it, and the Environment Agency had yet to fit the promised grille, which was, apparently, being 'designed'. The Borough Council would be chased and asked to time their clearances earlier in the year.
- (e) [Confidential item]
- (f) Work around the sluices at Heybridge Mill had been completed. Photos of the work were tabled and received approval.

Update on Issues Discussed at Previous Meetings

- 7. (a) [Commercially confidential item]
- (b) Roy Chandler reported that the owners of the development land at Heybridge had been further frustrated by refusal on their appeal on planning permission. It also appeared likely that the Environment Agency would object to any development. Whilst Essex Waterways has reservations over the proposals, the site staying derelict indefinitely was not attractive.
- (c) [Commercially confidential item]

- (d) [Confidential item]
- (e) Roy Chandler reported that Thos Bates & Son Ltd were progressing the boundary amendments at the Heybridge gravel pits with the Land Registry, which had our co-operation and support.
- (f) John Pomfret reported that no further action was needed concerning the River Basin Management Plan consultations, and that this could come off the agenda. The plans were due to be published in late December.
- (g) [Commercially confidential item]
- (h) Roy Chandler reported that the five new information boards, paid for by IWA's Chelmsford Branch, were now in place. One had been inspected by board members during the visit to Heybridge.
- (i) A new leaflet about the Navigation had been prepared at Head Office and copies delivered to the Navigation. Copies of the leaflet were tabled and met with general approval. Roy Chandler would write to Gemma Bolton at Head Office to convey the board's thanks for her work on this.
- (j) There was no further news on Chelmer Canal Trust's plans to run a seminar on 20th November at Essex Record Office to discuss the various issues that pertain to the way the natural and built environment on the Chelmer & Blackwater Navigation is managed. John Pomfret had diarised to attend and make a presentation at the event if requested.
- (k) Essex County Council had advised that technical approval was required for the proposed refurbishment of Hall Bridge. This had now been formally applied for, and was not expected to be a problem. Once this was gained, tenders would be sought, and it was hoped the work might attract grant funding from [a funder].

Other Business

- 8. Roy Chandler reported that there had been a request to install a memorial seat at Heybridge Basin. The board agreed to accept this in principle subject to the usual agreement of a payment to cover future maintenance costs.

Future Meetings

- 9. (a) The next meeting would be held at about 10.00 a.m. on Tuesday 8th December at IWA Head Office.
- (b) The dates for meetings in 2010 would be set at the December meeting. Neil Edwards would put together a proposed list for the agenda.

No other business was transacted and the meeting closed at 4.20 p.m.