

Minutes of the meeting of the board of directors held at Paper Mill Lock, at 11.00 a.m. on Thursday 11th March 2010.

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 meeting held on 8th December 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) Colin Edmond reported [an incident]. This would be reported to insurers in case a claim arose. [detail omitted].

(b) Some of the less-well-maintained vessels were continuing to give cause for concern. One had had to be lifted out after sinking. A small clinker wooden boat had also sunk and had to be lifted out, and another had nearly sunk. The recent cold weather had made some older vessels particularly vulnerable. The board asked that a note be put in the next newsletter to boaters explaining that boat-owners would be charged for pumping out, as well as for lifting out sunken boats.

(c) The risk register, including for vessels in poor condition, had yet to be updated.

(d) Further quotes for the ramps to the lock gates at Heybridge had yet to be obtained.

(e) There were still further signs, and the cill markers to install. Colin Edmond would arrange for volunteer work parties to attend to these shortly.

(f) Colin Edmond reported that he had not yet found a source to purchase hanging buckets with convex undersides that could be filled with sand for fire equipment.

(g) Tree inspections were ongoing. Trees on the Navigation's land at Treasure Island, made unsafe by recent storms, had been cleared.

(h) The board agreed that there needed to be a written formal plan in place for flood management. It was necessary that all parties, including the Environment Agency and other sluice owners, were clear as to who had control over which sluices, and what their duties were at times of high river levels. Jim Jenkins would make enquiries about the sluice at Hoe Mill, where Essex & Suffolk Water had control. Colin Edmond would put together a draft plan.

Staffing and Management Arrangements

4. (a) Colin Edmond reported that he had a meeting planned with the residential berth holders at Sandford Mill.
- (b) [Confidential item]
- (c) Michael Cole had commenced employment on 1st March. The board asked that refresher training be arranged for Michael on any mechanical equipment before use, including chainsaws, strimmers and the like to ensure he had sufficient training and that there was evidence of it. An up-to-date copy of his driving licence would also be sent to Head Office for insurance purposes.
- (d) Neil Edwards offered to write a brief note for *Waterways* magazine, appealing for professional assistance with legal work, planning, funding and environmental applications. This might also be a way of helping to identify potential future board members.

Finance

5. (a) A draft of the Annual Report and Accounts had been circulated to directors prior to the meeting. The audit had yet to commence, but directors had no changes to request other than clarification of the rate of depreciation for the new crane. Depreciation over ten years was suggested, subject to approval by the auditors. The board wished to record its appreciation to Helen Elliott-Adams for the speedy production of accounts.
- (b) The board noted that a report on income and expenditure to date for 2010 would be circulated once the auditors had visited and the previous year accounts had been closed off.
- (c) An updated cash flow statement had been circulated with the agenda. Owing to expenditure occurring on Hall Bridge before the Section 106 grant arrived, cash flow might be tight during April, but there was not likely to be any need to borrow from IWA. The board asked that borrowing from the parent company be avoided unless absolutely necessary.
- (d) An updated debtors schedule was tabled at the meeting. The board agreed to write off [two small debts]. Other debts were expected to be cleared shortly, and the situation was considered acceptable and in hand.
- (e) Colin Edmond reported that agreement with Mark Coverly over use of his hut on the towing path and seating, etc, for his boat hire business had been satisfactorily concluded. A further agreement with [another party] had yet to be dealt with.
- (f) [Confidential item]
- (g) [Confidential item].
- (h) Roy Chandler reported that the sale [of two properties not in our management was progressing. Once these, and clarifications of [another property] were completed the Voluntary Arrangement for the Navigation Company could be concluded.
- (i) There had been no further progress with the issue of business rates. Roy Chandler would chase this up with the Finance Department at Chelmsford Borough Council.
- (j) Roy Chandler reported that he had discussed future grant possibilities for towpath maintenance with Essex County Council, and was hopeful of a grant of £5,300 for the next financial year (2010/11). [Other potential grant details omitted]

- (k) The new crane had been purchased since the previous meeting, and was due to arrive on 24th March, having been postponed from February owing to adverse weather. The old crane had been sold to Mid Norfolk Railway, at Dereham, for the cost of removal. This crane had originally been built for use by British Rail at Ilford car sheds, so the new owners, a charitable rail restoration group, seemed appropriate.
- (l) Colin Edmond reported that there had been a burglary at Hoe Mill. An insurance claim was in progress, and security arrangements at the site would be reviewed and tightened. The thieves had gained access across adjacent farmland, cutting down fences in their path.

Report from the Navigation Manager

- 6 (a) Colin Edmond and Roy Chandler reported that the major culvert replacement by the Environment Agency was underway, and still on schedule to be complete in time for Easter, albeit that contingency time had been used up owing to the adverse weather and a nearby building fire. Leakage from an embankment onto a lawn at Heybridge Mill had been identified, and the Agency asked if this could be remedied whilst equipment was on site. The embankment was the property of the Mill, rather than the Navigation.
- (b) Demolition work at Hall Bridge had been successfully undertaken by the February WRG Canal Camp, and rebuilding the parapets by contractors was underway. New timber boarding for the bridge had been supplied by Jeff Field, and the work to re-open the bridge was on schedule.
- (c) Roy Chandler reported that Essex County Council's Highways Department was due to undertake repainting work at Wave Bridge during the next few days. This work was also planned to be complete by Easter.
- (d) The dams, to allow remaining work at Beeleigh Lock to be completed, had not yet been installed owing to high water levels. The work needed to be done as soon as possible to enable Essex & Suffolk Water to cover from this year's budget. The board asked that Jeff Field be strongly encouraged to complete the work in time for re-opening at Easter.
- (e) Roy Chandler reported that [a contractor] had confirmed prices for the proposed work on the weirs and small island at Paper Mill. Further Environment Agency consents and a comparative quote from [another contractor] were still required.
- (f) A funding package still needed to be put together to progress proposed works at Heybridge North Quay.
- (g) Chelmsford Borough Council had still not cleared the feeder stream in Chelmsford, and the Environment Agency had yet to fit the promised grille. Both would be chased again.

Update on Issues Discussed at Previous Meetings

- 7. (a) Prior to the meeting, directors had inspected Sandford Lock and Mill area. There had been little progress on the proposed development since the last meeting owing to the current recessionary climate. The Environment Agency remained resistant to all residential development in flood-risk areas.
- (b) Vegetation management plan specifications had yet to be progressed.
- (c) Roy Chandler reported that there had been some gentle progress with [some] proposals, and the main landowner continued to be enthusiastic. The Environment Agency was also receptive to

the ideas being put forward. A meeting had been arranged with the head planner at Maldon District Council.

- (d) A visit to the Navigation by members of The Inland Waterways Advisory Council the previous Tuesday has gone well. Roy Chandler had given a presentation prior to the visit, and it was clear that members of the Council were impressed with the work that had been achieved. [Declaration of interest: Neil Edwards is a member of the Council, and John Pomfret a former member].
- (e) John Pomfret tabled a copy of a response he had submitted to the Association of Inland Navigation Authorities on residential moorings.
- (f) Work on removing graffiti at Sandford Mill and elsewhere had yet to be attended, but would be taken on by Michael Cole, now that his employment had commenced.
- (g) The boundary amendments at the Heybridge gravel pits with Thos Bates & Son Ltd had now been agreed with the Land Registry and the revised boundary had been formally registered.

Other Business

- 8. (a) Roy Chandler reported on compulsory purchase order documents received from The Highways Agency. Roy was in communication with Richard Porter of the Company of Proprietors, as it would be necessary to work together on this. The board agreed that a dialogue should be opened with the Highways Agency to gain an insight into their perceived requirements.
- (b) Roy Chandler briefed directors on proposals for the Chelmsford Flood Defence Scheme, which had been published in the Essex Chronicle a few days previous. A formal consultation was now underway. Roy would visit the Council offices and follow up. Most of the proposals appeared to be with raising walls and looked non-contentious.
- (c) Correspondence had been received from solicitors to the Environment Agency concerning landownership on an access track to a gauging station in the Ulting area. It appeared, from sale documents, that land had incorrectly been registered in the 1970s and required amending. It appeared that the company should agree to the proposed revision, in consultation with the Company of Proprietors, but insist on maintaining access rights.
- (d) The board felt that a long-term plan for the Navigation was needed to assist with grant applications. This should appear on the next agenda.
- (e) The Association of Inland Navigation Authorities had asked for the completion of a questionnaire concerning historic structures and nature conservation areas. Roy Chandler would complete the first part, and John Pomfret the latter.
- (f) Roy Chandler reported that a dragon boat racing event would take place on the river in Chelmsford over the weekend 12th – 13th June.
- (g) John Pomfret offered to put together a draft response for the government's consultation on *Waterways for Everyone*.

Future Meetings

- 9. (a) The next meeting would be held at about 10.45 a.m. on Tuesday 8th June at the office at Paper Mill. The company's Annual General Meeting would take place on the same day.

- (b) The following dates were set for further meetings in 2010:
Thursday 2nd September
Tuesday 7th December

No other business was transacted and the meeting closed at 4.10 p.m.