

Minutes of the meeting of the board of directors held at Paper Mill Lock, at 10.45 a.m. on Tuesday 8th June 2010.

Present: Roy Chandler (chairman), Colin Davis, Neil Edwards, Jim Jenkins (until and including item 6(e)) 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 11th March 2010, 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 that one of the less-than-seaworthy large boats at Heybridge, which had been giving cause for concern, had sunk. It had previously been sold and was due to leave the Navigation shortly. Fortunately, the boat had been easily raised with the use of our own and hired pumps, and was being maintained afloat, and was still due to leave the Navigation shortly, awaiting a suitable tide and weather. The original owner of the craft, which was one of the residential ones, had asked to keep a residential mooring at Heybridge, and was paying [an amount] per month, for a maximum of one year, to do so, pending purchase of a new boat.
- (b) Colin Edmond reported that there had been a number of minor thefts and acts of petty vandalism in the Heybridge area, which had affected some moorings and yacht stores. There had been no damage or loss to Essex Waterways or Navigation property. The board agreed (a) to pursue a planning application for a residential mooring at the top end of the existing moorings to assist security, and (b) to install [security equipment] to see if it had a deterrent effect.
- (c) The potholes on the approach road into Heybridge had been filled, and nothing further had been heard about this issue.
- (d) Colin Edmond reported that, apart from the vessel mentioned above, there remained one other vessel in poor condition at Heybridge that was a cause for concern. Colin Edmond would pursue for a resolution to this with the owner.
- (e) The risk register, including for vessels in poor condition, had yet to be updated.
- (f) Further quotes for the ramps to the lock gates at Heybridge had yet to be obtained. Ideally, it needed a volunteer to take on this project. .
- (g) Colin Edmond reported a recent meeting with the police concerning possible new signs to be installed at two locations on the Navigation, following pressure from some local residents who perceived that groups of younger visitors enjoying the waterway were causing a nuisance to them as property owners. The police had requested that Essex Waterways install signs with a

substantial list of forbidden activities made clear, so that when summoned by the property owners the police could point out to the younger visitors the things that they should not be doing. The signs would cost [an amount], and board agreed, with some regret, that it would be necessary to agree to purchase and installation of the signs.

- (h) A review of the requirement for warnings of cills at locks along the waterway led the board to agree that markers just needed to be painted on to lock sides at Hoe Mill. Colin Edmond was asked to attend to this as a matter of urgency. In remaining cases, the cills were so close to the gates that markers were not needed.
- (i) The board asked that weir warning signs be installed in the river during this summer in those places where it was not obvious to boaters which channels led to unprotected weirs. The size of such signs should be in accordance with Association of Inland Navigation Authority recommendations, and they should be substantial enough to withstand strong flows and any likely vandalism.
- (j) Colin Edmond reported that fire buckets had been purchased, but had yet to be filled with sand and positioned at the places previously agreed.
- (k) Colin Edmond reported that he had yet to complete the draft formal flood management plan. He would also check that all the residential caretakers were signed up to the Environment Agency's Flood-line, as this was a condition of the residency planning permission.

Staffing and Management Arrangements

- 4. (a) [Confidential item]
- (b) [Confidential item].
- (c) [Confidential item]
- (d) The board was disappointed to note that, so far, there had been no response to the appeal for professional assistance with legal work, planning, funding and environmental applications, made in the May 2010 edition of *Waterways*.
- (e) The board agreed to recommend to IWA's trustees that Neil Edwards be reappointed to the Essex Waterways Limited board for a further term of three years. Roy Chandler had prepared a note to submit to the trustees' next meeting.

Finance

- 5. (a) The board reviewed and approved the Annual Report and Financial Statements of the company for the period ending 31st December 2009, which had been circulated prior to the meeting. The board recommended submission of the Annual Report and Accounts to the company's Annual General Meeting later that day. The typographical error on the depreciation period would be amended (to read '10 years').
- (b) The directors agreed that a motion to reappoint Saffery Champness would be made at the Annual General Meeting and that the letter of representation previously circulated to the board was agreed and would be signed.
- (c) A report of income and expenditure to 31st May had been circulated to directors in advance, along with a commentary on the figures. The position was considered satisfactory, and the board noted (i) that income from temporary moorings at Heybridge was much lower this year,

likely owing to the economic situation and poor weather, (ii) all income from Hoe Mill moorings had been incorrectly budgeted as solely premium, rather than a mix of standard and premium – the income and expenditure report had correctly identified the balances, (iii) income from the sale of willows this year was likely to be about [an amount] following a visit from Wrights, but that some trees previously sold had yet to be harvested owing to access issues, (iv) income from the Hall Bridge section 106 grant was still awaited, (v) both income and expenses related to the new crane were higher than had been budgeted for, and (vi) expenditure on Land Rovers maintenance had already exceeded the year's budget, which may indicate a need to replace them shortly.

- (d) A cash flow forecast was not available and the board asked for one to be circulated, with a note of the balance on the restricted fund to be added to future cash flow forecasts as a footnote. Cash flow was currently negative, partly because the Hall Bridge payment was awaited, and partly because the crane was being funded from 2010 money, albeit the crane had been purchased in 2009, but the cash for it passed across to IWA as part of the 2009 year's surplus funds for the restricted account. The crane was effectively being financed on current account borrowing with the Association which was not a satisfactory way to operate. Either profits needed to be retained in the company until the fixed asset was fully depreciated, or it needed to be funded by a formal loan agreement or issue of share capital or some other arrangement. The board asked that Neil Edwards raise the issue with IWA's Finance Committee.
- (e) A list of current debtors was tabled for directors and reviewed. Most of the outstanding balances were recent and thought likely not to be a problem. The board asked to have a full list of all those boats on the Navigation without either (i) a formal mooring agreement, (ii) a copy of an up-to-date insurance certificate, and (iii) a copy of a Boat Safety Scheme certificate, where moored above Hall Bridge.
- (f) Colin Edmond reported that an agreement with Sue Clift for the rental of stores at Paper Mill had been agreed. A signed copy needed to be sent to Head Office.
- (g) Roy Chandler reported that Mark Coverly of Basin Pleasure Boats wished to submit a planning application to Maldon District Council to construct a bigger building from which to operate. [Confidential discussion]
- (h) Roy Chandler reported that he is working on the leases schedule.
- (i) Roy Chandler reported that he had now passed over to Hugh Turner the work in respect of garden incursions. [Confidential note].
- (j) Roy Chandler reported that the lease agreement for the Springfield office was nearing finalisation, and there had been considerable correspondence between solicitors. [Confidential note].
- (k) 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.
- (l) Roy Chandler reported that the Essex County Council grant of £5,300 for towpath maintenance had been confirmed, and the grants for lock landing improvements were progressing, but that Environment Agency consents were still needed. Essex Environment Trust had also offered £10,000 (current their maximum level of grant) towards repairs of Paper Mill weirs. Roy Chandler was chasing Environment Agency consents for this work as well as quotes with contractors in hope that the work could proceed this summer. The balance of funding would need to be from the restricted fund with IWA.

- (m) Neil Edwards reported that insurers had settled the claim following the burglary at Hoe Mill reported at the March meeting.

[The meeting adjourned for a short while to allow the company's Annual General Meeting to take place]

Report from the Navigation Manager

- 6 (a) Colin Edmond and Roy Chandler reported that work on the major culvert replacement by the Environment Agency was largely complete other than the planting of some trees. The legal agreement covering maintenance was in the process of being finalised.
- (b) Colin Edmond and Roy Chandler reported that the work at Hall Bridge was largely complete, other than surfacing the ramps, but a link with existing footpaths was needed. It was felt that Essex Waterways should not have to fund this. Roy Chandler planned to submit the works to Maldon District Council for their heritage awards, and Colin Edmond would organise a formal opening of the bridge to gain local publicity.
- (c) Roy Chandler reported that the work at Wave Bridge had been completed by Essex County Council's Highways Department.
- (d) The board noted with pleasure that the work at Beeleigh had been completed in time to get the lock fully reopen for Easter, and was hopeful of further funding towards the balance of costs from Essex and Suffolk Water.
- (e) Other than the work on the weir and islands at Paper Mill, it was unlikely that further works here would progress until at least the autumn.
- (f) There had been no progress on proposed works at Heybridge North Quay as insufficient funding was available at the moment.
- (g) Roy Chandler reported that Chelmsford Borough Council had still not progressed clearing out the feeder stream, probably owing to difficulty of access, and the Environment Agency had yet to fit the promised grille. Both would be chased up.
- (h) A requirement for repairs to the towpath bridge at Ulting had come to light, as the bearers on the underside of the bridge were rotting. Essex County Council's Highways Department had undertaken to carry out the work, but it may prove quite a major task.
- (i) There would soon be a need to undertake weed cutting, and it was likely that Michael Cole would do this work. It was rumoured that the Environment Agency may be prepared to favourably dispose of some of its, currently unused, weed cutting equipment. Roy Chandler and Colin Edmond would follow up.

Update on Issues Discussed at Previous Meetings

7. (a) Roy Chandler reported that there had been little progress on the Sandford Mill proposals owing to the current economic situation. It may be necessary to look at a smaller scheme to get it moving forward again. Elliott Cox, owner of *Victoria*, had offered use of the vessel for a trip for councillors, and it was agreed to progress this.
- (b) John Pomfret had yet to progress the vegetation management plan specifications, but would try to do so shortly.

- (c) Roy Chandler reported that there had been some further gentle progress with the Langford Leisure Park proposals, and the main landowner continued to be enthusiastic. The planners at Maldon District Council appeared to be supportive.
- (d) Work on removing graffiti at Sandford Mill and elsewhere had yet to be attended to owing to difficulty of access. The board considered that the work needed to be addressed urgently to avoid attracting more graffiti, and suggested that a cherry-picker be hired.
- (g) Roy Chandler reported that planning permission had been agreed for the Chelmer Viaduct replacement, and that the Highways Agency had dropped its proposals for compulsory purchase of a small part of the bed of the river and towpath, and now just required an access licence for a short possession to demolish the old viaduct. Opportunities would be sought, if practicable, to gain improved access to the Navigation at this site as a consequence of the works.
- (h) Roy Chandler reported that he had viewed plans for the proposed Chelmsford Flood Defence System. No particular problems were envisaged, and he would maintain a watching brief.
- (i) Roy Chandler reported on continued correspondence with the Environment Agency's solicitors to maintain, on a legal footing, the current informal access arrangements along the track at Ulting gauging station.
- (j) The board reaffirmed the need for a document setting out a long-term plan for the Navigation with maintenance requirements and past achievements, etc, to assist grant applications. Neil Edwards agreed to assemble a draft outline for directors to consider at the next meeting.
- (k) Roy Chandler and John Pomfret reported that the questionnaire requested by the Association of Inland Navigation Authorities had been completed and submitted.
- (l) John Pomfret reported that, following the General Election, it was unclear if and how the Government's strategy document for inland waterways, *Waterways for Everyone*, was likely to progress.

Other Business

- 8. (a) [Confidential item]
- (b) Roy Chandler reported that Essex Wildlife Trust had made an approach for permission to trap mink on the Navigation. The board agreed that we should co-operate with the request, but that we needed to maintain control over exactly what was being done. The Trust would be advised accordingly.
- (c) Roy Chandler reported that the Chelmer barge *The Susan* had been taken to dry dock at St Osyth for repairs.
- (d) John Pomfret reported that Entec UK Ltd, his employer, was undertaking a study on the use of towpaths for The Inland Waterways Advisory Council, and might wish to use the Chelmer & Blackwater Navigation as a case study. This was welcomed.

Future Meetings

- 9. (a) The next meeting would be held at about 10.45 a.m. on Thursday 2nd September at the office at Paper Mill. The following meeting would be held on Tuesday 7th December at Chesham.

No other business was transacted and the meeting closed at 2.50 p.m.