

Minutes of the meeting of the board of directors held at Island House, Moor Road, Chesham, at 10.00 a.m. on Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> December 2010.

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

In Attendance: Colin Edmond.

### **Introductory Announcements and Apologies for Absence**

1. (a) Roy Chandler reported that Colin Davis wished to retire from the board, having served for five years, and had therefore tendered his resignation. The board asked Roy Chandler to write to Colin Davis to express the board's appreciation for his work, and Neil Edwards would inform Companies House.
- (b) There were no apologies for absence as all directors were present.

### **Minutes of Meetings**

2. The minutes of the board meeting held on 2<sup>nd</sup> September 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 the current cold weather conditions had given rise to additional hazards on the Navigation, and it had been necessary to cancel some work parties. The board agreed this was regrettable, but reaffirmed that Health Safety had to be the over-riding priority. Advice would be given to boat owners, as appropriate, to discourage them from moving their vessels where they could be a danger to either their own well-being or potential risk of damage to other vessels through dislodging sheets of ice.
- (b) Colin Edmond reported that a large willow tree from a neighbouring property had fallen across the weir stream at [a location]. The land owner had gone onto the Navigation property to make some minor clearance, but the major clearance works had had to be undertaken by Essex Waterways. The board asked that as a general principle (a) landowners ought to be invoiced for such work incurred, [detail omitted], and (b) that consideration be given to reporting potentially dangerous trees on neighbouring land to the County Councils' tree officer.
- (c) Colin Edmond reported that there had been a further break-in to a vessel moored at Heybridge Basin, but this was believed to be targeted at a specific boater as part of a personal dispute between two parties. The boat owner concerned had now left the Navigation. Martin Maudsley was making regular patrols of the moorings.
- (d) Colin Edmond reported that one large vessel at Heybridge was still in a condition that gave cause for concern, but was being regularly monitored. The owner was co-operating to get remedial work undertaken. Two other vessels were noted as a potential problem.
- (e) The risk register, including for vessels in poor condition, had yet to be updated.
- (f) Colin Edmond reported that there had been a meeting with a Rights of Way officer from Maldon District Council, who wished to see improvements to the footpath along the Sea Wall,

and that this might provide an opportunity for funding to provide the ramps to the lock gates at Heybridge. This would be followed up.

- (g) Colin Edmond reported that all the *No Swimming* signs and cill markers required were now in place, but that signage for weirs required further review.
- (h) [Confidential item]
- (i) An updated schedule of certification held at Head Office had been circulated. The public liability insurance for [a contractor] was out of date but was known to be being renewed. The board noted that the Heybridge crane was due for certificating next in February and marine surveys of the vessels would take place in the early spring. [Confidential item].
- (j) [Confidential item].
- (k) The board asked that accident books be kept at both Paper Mill and Heybridge, and that an annual review should be made of all accident reports.

### **Staffing and Management Arrangements**

- 4. (a) [Confidential item]. Roy Chandler reported that he was working on planning applications for two new residential mooring spaces at Heybridge.
- (b) The board noted the ongoing need for additional office-based support for the Navigation manager and to relieve the chairman of excessive workload, and asked this to be placed on the agenda for a more detailed discussion at the next meeting. The possibility of recruiting an administrator would be considered, possibly aimed at recruiting a working parent with management experience, but for whom flexible working would be an attraction.
- (c) The board considered that it would be desirable to recruit a new director for the company to succeed the place vacated by Colin Davis. There was a need for legal and property management skills with an understanding of the local situation. Directors were asked to make suitable enquiries of the local business community.
- (d) [Confidential item]

### **Finance**

- 5. (a) A report of income and expenditure to 30<sup>th</sup> September had been circulated to directors in advance, along with a commentary on the figures. The position was considered satisfactory, and the board noted that there would likely be a year-end surplus for placing in the restricted fund with IWA.
- (b) The board asked that all future bookings for the crane to lift vessels out on to hard-standing for maintenance purposes, usually for the winter, should be accompanied by a non-refundable deposit of £50.00 towards the full booking cost. This was because a number of late cancellations had resulted in vacant hard-standing space and loss of income.
- (c) Colin Edmond reported that incomes from willows remained satisfactory, but that it had been another poor season for losses to newly planted trees, possibly owing to dry weather. There were an increasing number of neighbouring landowners who had recently taken to planting willows as a crop, and there was concern that this might lead to a glut in future years, which combined with increasing planting and maintenance costs might make this element of the business less profitable. Colin Edmond reported that he had sought advice from the Forestry

Commission about low take-up of plantings. The board asked that consideration be given to diversifying the species of trees planted, and considered that Ash would have some economic benefit and would fit in well with the landscape.

- (d) Roy Chandler reported that Essex County Council was likely to pay a grant again in 2011 for towpath maintenance, albeit possibly under the headlands scheme.
- (e) A cash flow forecast had been circulated to the board, which showed a satisfactory position over the next few months.
- (f) Neil Edwards reported on a recent meeting with auditors and discussion at IWA's Finance Committee concerning arrangements for financing the capital requirement for the major fixed asset, i.e. the crane. [Confidential item]
- (g) Roy Chandler and Colin Edmond had prepared a draft budget, which had been circulated prior to the meeting. This was based on similar mooring income to 2010, as well as completion of works projected under the application for funding to Essex Life Raft Trust and volunteer contributions from Waterway Recovery Group and others. The budget allowed for some utilisation of the IWA restricted fund. Directors approved the budget subject to minor amendments to add in brickwork repairs at Little Baddow sluices and an increased contingency.
- (h) [Confidential item]
- (i) Roy Chandler reported that he had had discussions with a local dealer with respect to replacing the older of the existing Land Rovers, either on a leasing or purchasing basis. Both options were being explored for cost effectiveness.
- (j) Colin Edmond reported on the unreliability of the present weed-cutting machinery. The board agreed that a replacement was desirable, and authorised Roy Chandler and Colin Edmond to investigate and progress accordingly.
- (k) Lists of current debtors and boaters non-compliant with moorings, insurance and Boat Safety Scheme compliance were reviewed. Most of the exceptions were being dealt with and expected to be resolved shortly. The board agreed to write off a debt of £192.66 in respect of [a former boat owner] who had sold his boat and was now seriously ill in hospital.
- (l) [Confidential item]
- (m) Colin Edmond had passed a copy of the agreement with [a party] for buildings rental at Paper Mill to Head Office. Meters need to be installed at Paper Mill to regularise electricity use for those boat owners concerned at Paper Mill.
- (n) [Confidential item]
- (o) Roy Chandler reported that he is working on the leases schedule, and intends to pass on details to Hugh Turner to chase up shortly.
- (p) Roy Chandler reported that Hugh Turner was in correspondence concerning various garden incursions. The board agreed a fee of [an amount] per annum for the major incursion at [a location]. Where neighbouring landowners would not agree to a formal arrangement, it would be necessary to ensure fences were moved back to the correct lines.

- (q) Roy Chandler reported that the Creditors Voluntary Arrangement for the Navigation Company had come to a conclusion, and the Springfield Office purchase had been completed. The sale of land to Aquila Holdings, and of the land at Sandford Lock, had also been completed. The outside of the Springfield Office and Facilities Block had been painted. A letter giving details of the conclusion of the Arrangement was awaited.
- (r) 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.
- (s) Roy Chandler reported that the application to Essex County Council's Life Raft Trust had been successful, and a grant of £45,000 had been offered, albeit subject to a number of conditions, including support for Essex County Council tourism initiatives. The board asked Roy Chandler to confirm acceptance of the grant.
- (t) The board (i) noted [certain insurance arrangements].
- (u) Neil Edwards reported that the revised bank mandate had been completed with Roy Chandler's details and had been submitted to Barclays Bank PLC.
- (v) Neil Edwards reported that Paula Smith had arranged transfer of most of the remaining electricity contracts [details omitted]
- (w) [Confidential item].

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

- 6 (a) Roy Chandler reported that the proposed maintenance agreement from the Environment Agency was with William Marriage of the Navigation Company for consideration, who would also be a party to the agreement. The remaining parts of the old wooden chunker had not yet been sent for conservation, and there was doubt as to whether this was now worthwhile.
- (b) Roy Chandler reported that the October WRG Canal Camp had undertaken work to link-in Hall Bridge with the nearby footpath network, and this work had attracted favourable local comment. Funding for this work had been promised from Essex County Council, but had yet to arrive. This needed to be chased up.
- (c) Roy Chandler and Colin Edmond reported that the Land & Water works at Paper Mill had been completed satisfactorily and all invoices were now paid. Work on the toilet at Paper Mill would be funded from the Life Raft Trust grant.
- (d) Colin Edmond reported that there had been a blockage in the feeder stream at Springfield Basin, which had been cleared. Chelmsford Borough Council had yet to clear out the feeder and the Environment Agency had yet to fit the promised grille. Roy Chandler would chase up both parties once more.
- (e) Colin Edmond reported that most dredging work on the Navigation now appeared to be up-to-date. Useful advice had been gained from the Association of Inland Navigation Authorities and The National Trust re the River Wey Navigation. Weed clearance had been completed only late in the season, owing the mechanical equipment failures, which was being addressed.
- (f) Colin Edmond reported that the lock landings project, being financed by Essex County Council, was underway. There was a need to buy some piling, which the board authorised.

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

7. (a) Roy Chandler reported that Chelmsford Borough Council's development plans covering the Sandford area had now been published and showed a workable area for the Sandford Mill site.
- (b) John Pomfret had yet to progress the vegetation management plan specifications, but would try to do so shortly.
- (c) Roy Chandler reported that the Langford Leisure Park proposals were quiet at the moment.
- (d) Colin Edmond reported that the graffiti at Bundocks Bridge still needed to be attended to.
- (e) Roy Chandler reported that although he had nothing further about the Chelmer Viaduct replacement, he was aware that ground testing was taking place. He had discussed access arrangements with neighbouring landowners.
- (f) Roy Chandler reported that nothing further had been heard on the access arrangements along the track at Ulting gauging station.
- (g) Neil Edwards reported that the proposal to provide IWA membership to boat owners on the Navigation had been approved in principle at IWA's AGM on 25<sup>th</sup> September, and in detail at a trustees meeting on 4<sup>th</sup> December. IWA Head Office would write out to boat owners early in the New Year with assistance from Christine Walsh. Neil Edwards would arrange for draft letters to go to Roy Chandler and to IWA Chelmsford Branch so that they were prepared in advance.
- (h) Neil Edwards reported that the Long Term Plan document had been further updated for the Life Raft Trust grant application, and with comments from Colin Davis. The current document would be re-circulated to directors shortly.
- (i) Copies of recent electrical installation instructions for the Sandford moorings were passed to Neil Edwards for safe keeping at Head Office.

## **Other Business**

8. (a) Roy Chandler reported that an objection to Chelmsford Borough Council's proposals to turn the Chelmsford to Sandford section of the towing path into a cycleway had been successful. There was a nearby alternative that was more suitable.
- (b) Colin Edmond reported that there been some complaints that dirty boats on the Navigation were an eyesore. The board noted that there was no requirement within the terms and conditions for moorings to keep vessels to any particular standard of cleanliness, and although this might be considered at the next revision, a polite request with explanation would be put in the next newsletter sent to boaters. er
- (c) Roy Chandler reported that the old outboard motor on the IWA raider vessel was now beyond economic repair. The board authorised the purchase of a new one.

## **Future Meetings**

9. (a) The next meeting would be held at 10.45 am on Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> March at Paper Mill. Subsequent meetings would be held on:

Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> June

Wednesday 21<sup>st</sup> September  
Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup> December

No other business was transacted and the meeting closed at 2.45 p.m.