

Minutes of the meeting of the board of directors held at The Meeting Room, Paper Mill Lock, Little Baddow, at 10.45 a.m. on Tuesday 7th June 2011.

Present: Roy Chandler (chairman), Neil Edwards, Jim Jenkins (to and including item 3(d)) and John Pomfret.

In Attendance: Colin Edmond.

Apologies for early departure were offered from Jim Jenkins who had to attend another meeting elsewhere.

Minutes of Meetings

1. The minutes of the board meeting held on 10th March 2011, 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

2. (a) Colin Edmond reported that vandals had recently set light to part of the Navigation towpath during dry weather, causing a grass fire. The Fire Brigade had responded to a call, but the fire had mostly been put out by people at the scene before the Brigade had arrived. There was little that could be done to prevent a reoccurrence.
- (b) Colin Edmond reported that [a vessel] had sunk at Heybridge the previous day following recent rain. Martin Maudsley was pumping out the vessel, which would be inspected to see if it could be lifted out. The owner would be charged costs.
- (c) Colin Edmond reported that he was investigating various non-slip surfaces for boards at locks, etc. Alternatives of a fine wish mesh, non-slip tape and special paint were being reviewed, one of which would be implemented shortly.
- (d) The risk register, including for vessels in poor condition, had yet to be updated, and a review of the risk assessments for general work on the Navigation was also still to be undertaken.
- (e) [Confidential item]
- (f) An updated schedule of certification held at Head Office had been circulated. Plant and lifting inspections were up-to-date, but it was agreed that the weed-lifter hiab should be brought back into use and got ready for testing, along with the blade lifting equipment on the weed cutter. The blades had recently been repaired. The board noted [two volunteer], chainsaw users were overdue for refresher training. Neil Edwards would ask Jenny Black to write to them. Training undertaken by volunteers in First Aid and boat handling would be added to future schedules when such training was undertaken. The RYA training for Hugh Turner and Colin Edmond's Yacht-master qualifications would also be added to the schedule.
- (g) Neil Edwards reported that Kathryn Gilbertson, a partner at Greenwoods solicitors, had recently visited Head Office and had given some useful advice, and had volunteered to undertake a similar visit to Essex Waterways, which could include Jeff Field as a regular contractor. The board agreed that this offer should be taken up and asked Neil Edwards to arrange.

- (h) Although it was not intended to be used on the public highway, the board asked that a notice of contents be placed on the effluent tanker trailer, and that a method statement outlining precautions in case of spillage be prepared.

Finance

- 3. (a) The board reviewed and approved the Annual Report and Financial Statements of the company for the period ending 31st December 2010, which had been circulated prior to the meeting. The board recommended submission of the Annual Report and Financial Statements to the company's Annual General Meeting later that day.
- (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.

[There was a short interval in the meeting at this point, during which the AGM took place].

- (c) Income and expenditure reports for the three months to 31st March 2011, and for the five months to 31st May 2011, had been circulated with the agenda. The board noted these and considered the financial performance for the year to date was satisfactory and closely in line with budget. Income from the crane operation was slightly above budget and activity was being limited by space to put vessels whilst out of the water. Business rates for Sandford appeared to have been included under Springfield; Neil Edwards would arrange for Head Office to adjust this. The board asked if any end-of-garden moorings income was still being received. Neil Edwards would check at Head Office.
- (d) Jim Jenkins reported that the Environment Agency was introducing new requirements for the installation of eel passes at weirs and at locks, including existing structures, following the adoption of European directives into English law. There was still some time before this became effective, but there were potential cost implications as all costs were down to the owners of structures. John Pomfret offered to research this further, but thought there were relatively cheap solutions that could be put in place using voluntary labour.

[Jim Jenkins departed at this point]

- (e) A cash flow statement was tabled at the meeting. Colin Edmond advised that [an amount] would be due from Wrights for willows to be felled this year. The work at Heybridge North Quay was likely to take place in October. The cash flow position looked to be satisfactory.
- (f) The formal loan arrangements with IWA to finance fixed assets had yet to be put in place. Documentation would be drawn up at Head Office in due course.
- (g) Neil Edwards reported that after some negotiation, agreement had been reached with insurers to cover the Vauxhall Combo at the same rate as for Land Rovers.
- (h) Schedules showing outstanding debts and boats without up-to-date mooring agreements, insurance certificates or Boat Safety Scheme certificates were tabled. The lists of boats in these categories were relatively small and all were being addressed. Colin Edmond reported that (A) [a vessel] did not require a Boat Safety Certificate, as its size meant it could not proceed above Hall Bridge, and that (B) [a customer] intended to leave Heybridge and would settle his invoice prior to departure. Colin Edmond asked if he could be kept informed about the overdue moorings payment re [a] boat as this vessel was a cause of some concern.

- (i) Roy Chandler reported that Hugh Turner would report on the leases schedule and garden incursions shortly, having been preoccupied with setting up the boat handling training arrangements recently.
- (j) Colin Edmond reported that the fencing work to correct the boundary incursion at Freshwater Crescent had yet to take place.
- (k) Colin Edmond reported that the formal agreement with [a] neighbouring landowner had yet to be put in place.
- (l) [Confidential item]
- (m) Roy Chandler reported that the development land at Heybridge was still on the market, with no significant interest being expressed. The board agreed to continue to take no action.
- (n) Prior to the meeting, the board had met with a local solicitor, who had put together a proposal to progress Land Registration issues for Essex Waterways on a commercial basis. Jim Jenkins had been present for this discussion. [Confidential discussion]
- (o) The board noted that electricity supply arrangements were due for renegotiation again, and delegated Paula Smith at Head Office to proceed with this. The board also asked whether our invoices to mooring holders for electricity were keeping pace with prices being charged to us. Neil Edwards would check.

Future Income and Grant Applications

- 4. (a) Roy Chandler reported that owing to the cancellation of the proposed summer WRG Canal Camp on the Navigation, the work at Rushes Weir would need to be postponed until next year. Otherwise all works funded by the Life Raft Trust grant were proceeding to schedule.
- (b) Essex County Council has agreed a grant of [an amount] for towpath mowing this year under the Headland Management Scheme.
- (c) The £3,500 funding from Essex County Council to cover path improvements in the Hall Bridge area has been received.
- (d) Lock landings work, other than at Rushes Lock, has continued. The Chelmsford project has been completed, at a total cost of £24,800 so the full grant to fund this work would be claimed. More substantial works are required at Rushes Lock, which is a remote site, for which [a contractor] had estimated [an amount] for 37 metres of bank work. More piles would need to be bought. The board agreed that this work could proceed provided the estimate was turned into an all inclusive firm quote prior to work commencing.

Staffing and Management Arrangements

- 5. (a) [Confidential item]
- (b) [Confidential item]
- (c) The planning application for two residential moorings at Heybridge had been granted by Maldon District Council, but was initially limited for two years. One possible contender had been identified, who Roy Chandler would interview, but the posts would be advertised. Neil Edwards would make arrangements for this at Head Office.

- (d) Roy Chandler reported that a recent London WRG weekend had made some improvements at [Sandford]. Areas for mowing, with frequency and specification would be documented to assist maintaining standards.
- (e) Neil Edwards reported on potential changes to server arrangements at Head Office, which should improve IT reliability for Essex Waterways' use.
- (f) The board noted that Roy Chandler's current term as director would complete in July 2011 and recommended to IWA's trustees that he be reappointed for a further term of three years. Neil Edwards would progress this.
- (g) A number of potential works for the remaining 2011 Canal Camp had been identified, and the board agreed to request four Canal Camps for 2012 – one each of the February and October half terms and two weeks during the summer school holidays to undertake major works at Rushes Weir. WRG would be asked for a commitment as soon as possible so that the Haybay accommodation could be booked.
- (h) The board considered the potential for further volunteer involvement on the Navigation, possibly with more up-market residential working holidays aimed at people who wanted more comfortable accommodation than WRG could usually provide. Whilst managing such volunteers would be an extra burden on resources, the benefits were recognised, and it was agreed this should be kept in mind.

Report from the Navigation Manager

- 6. (a) Colin Edmond reported that test bore holes at North Quay, Heybridge, were due to be undertaken by Land and Water in the next week, following which specifications for the major work would be produced. Subject to planning permission, EA consent, a footpath closure order being obtained and permission to prune a tree being given, this major work was due to take place in October, which would require some rearrangement of moorings in the area.
- (b) Roy Chandler had circulated drawings for the design of a new toilet block on the north side of the Paper Mill moorings; the new building would be built over a new silage tank. Planning permission and EA consent were needed. Work on the slipway at Paper Mill could be progressed in the autumn, as it was not practicable during the summer with so many visitors around. The facilities at Springfield were being well used, and a key pad lock may be preferable to current key access arrangements.
- (c) Colin Edmond had reported on landing stages work earlier in the meeting.
- (d) Roy Chandler reported that legal documentation for the Heybridge Mill chunker had been completed. This had cost [an amount] in legal fees. Essex Waterways was responsible for operating the chunker and keeping screens clean. The owners of Heybridge Mill had agreed to clear the mill stream and improve a culvert on their land.
- (e) Colin Edmond reported that Chelmsford Borough Council had still to clear out Springfield Feeder, and the Environment Agency had still to fit the promised grille. Roy Chandler would chase up both parties once more.
- (f) Colin Edmond reported that repairs to the weed cutter had cost [an amount] as new blades and bearings had been required. Recent low water flows had meant that cut weed was more prone to accumulate, which could cause an obstruction to boaters, so efforts would be made to lift it out once the hiab on the weed cutter had been tested. Cutting was likely to continue through the summer.

- (g) An approach to Essex County Council had revealed a possible source of funding for the proposed ramps to lock gates at Heybridge. Roy Chandler would prepare an application when time permitted.
- (h) An inspection by boat to review future needs for weir signage had yet to take place.
- (i) There were willows to be felled at Heybridge, near Tesco's, and also at Paper Mill. The latter would need to be felled across the Navigation, with some temporary rearrangement of moorings. Michael Cole had been watering recently planted willows during the dry weather so as to try to reduce losses.

Update on Issues Discussed at Previous Meetings

7. (a) Roy Chandler reported that there had been no progress on proposals for the Sandford Mill site.
- (b) John Pomfret had yet to progress the vegetation management plan specifications, but expected to be able to do so during the summer as he was reducing his employment commitments. The priority was to assess mooring sites, and then more general plans for lock areas and other parts of the Navigation.
- (c) Colin Edmond reported that a small area of Japanese Knotweed had been identified alongside the Navigation, and arrangements were being made with a neighbouring landowner and his contractors to have it removed at the same time as a patch on the neighbouring land. There had also been sightings of Himalayan Balsam, which the board asked should be removed as soon as possible. Roy Chandler would circulate identification information for this plant.
- (d) Roy Chandler reported that one yacht store holder at Heybridge was still trespassing on the neighbouring property and cultivating a patch of land; the board asked a letter be sent asking the yacht store holder to desist. Another yacht store holder had put up a fence; the board asked for a letter to be sent asking for it to be removed.
- (e) Colin Edmond commented that occasional informal camping activity, especially amongst canoeists, had recently taken place at Heybridge and Hoe Mill, for which modest charges were made. The board agreed that this should be encouraged so long as it could be accommodated without planning permission or nuisance to others, and that consideration should be given to applying for Certificated Site status with the Camping and Caravanning Club at Hoe Mill. This would allow for up to six caravans at any one time without the need for planning permission.
- (f) Roy Chandler reported that there had been no progress on the Langford Leisure Park proposals.
- (g) Colin Edmond reported that the graffiti at Bundocks Bridge would be attended to whilst the work vessel *Julie* was at Sandford. There was also a small amount of new graffiti at Springfield Bridge that needed to be tackled quickly.
- (h) Roy Chandler reported that nothing further had occurred about the Chelmer Viaduct replacement.
- (i) Roy Chandler reported that nothing further had been heard on the ownership and access arrangements along the track at Ulting gauging station. He would make enquiries with the Environment Agency.
- (j) Neil Edwards reported that the offer of IWA membership to boat owners on the Navigation had so far recruited 24 new members.

- (k) Neil Edwards reported that there had been no further correspondence from [a visitor to the Navigation].
- (l) Roy Chandler reported that he was following up correspondence with [a boat owner] on security issues, but this tied in with the need to settle mooring regimes around the Heybridge moorings, as part of the management plan specifications.

Other Business

- 8. (a) Neil Edwards had circulated a paper with the agenda suggesting the draft for a letter to be sent to all mooring holders on the Navigation with proposals for occasional checks to be made on their residency status. [Detail omitted]. Some revisions to the draft were suggested, and Neil Edwards would circulate an updated draft shortly.
- (b) Roy Chandler reported that the new owners of Benbridge Hotel, adjacent the Navigation in Heybridge, wished to install a landing stage, from which they might run one or more vessels. The board agreed this was acceptable provided there were firm arrangements concerning future maintenance of the landing stage.
- (c) Roy Chandler reported that the restaurant currently occupying Waterfront Place in Springfield was closing, as the owners had been unable to make it profitable. The future of the building was unknown. Roy Chandler also reported that he had attended a meeting with [developers interested in a certain location].
- (d) Roy Chandler reported that Hugh Turner had recently achieved the necessary RYA qualifications to become a tutor for the Inland Helmsman's Course, and that plans were progressing to establish a modest training base at Paper Mill. Assessors from RYA were due to visit Paper Mill on 9th June. *Caffell* could be hired when a boat was needed. The board congratulated Hugh Turner on achieving the qualifications.

Future Meetings

- 10. (a) The next meeting would be held at 10.45 am on Wednesday 21st September at Paper Mill.
- (b) The following meeting would be held on Tuesday 6th December.

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