

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 Monday 12th September 2011.

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

In Attendance: Colin Edmond.

There were no apologies for absence.

Minutes of Meetings

1. The minutes of the board meeting held on 7th June 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) Roy Chandler reported that there had recently been a water leak in the road near Paper Mill which was found to be from a private supply to the tea rooms, lock house, neighbouring residential properties, as well as to Essex Waterways at Paper Mill Lock (an unmetered supply). Whilst not obliged to do so, Essex & Suffolk Water had kindly fixed the leak at nil charge.
- (b) Roy Chandler reported that 3M safety tread had been applied to boards at Hoe Mill Locks by way of experiment for effectiveness and wear. Initial conclusions were that it was a cost effective and good solution, and would be extended to other locks where potential slippery surfaces could cause a hazard.
- (c) 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.
- (d) Colin Edmond reported that the draft formal flood management plan was partially complete, including a check that all the residential caretakers were signed up to the Environment Agency's Flood-line.
- (e) An updated schedule of certification held at Head Office had been circulated. Plant and lifting inspections were up-to-date, although the slings for the crane were due to be inspected again shortly. Driving licences were also due for re-inspection; Neil Edwards passed the file of copy certificates to Colin Edmond for verification and signing off. An updated public liability insurance certificate was due from [a contractor] later in September. The work boats had yet to be surveyed again, as had been previously agreed.
- (f) Neil Edwards reported that Kathryn Gilbertson, a partner at Greenwoods solicitors, had visited Essex Waterways, including a site visit to Rushes Lock with [a contractor] in attendance. The purpose of the visit was a review of personnel, safety and contractual arrangements from a legal perspective. No significant findings had come to light, which had been reassuring, and informal advice gained on the day had been useful, including a suggestion that digital voice recordings of method statements and risk assessments were as equally valid as paper copies.

Staffing and Management Arrangements

3. (a) . [Confidential personnel item]
- (b) The board noted that Roy Chandler had been re-appointed as a director of the company by IWA's trustees for a further three-year term.
- (c) Roy Chandler reported that Rick Forsythe had now left his post as residential caretaker at Hoe Mill, and a potential successor, who had been offered the post, had decided not to take it up. The position had now been offered to Ian Fossett. In the meantime, June Meads had taken on additional duties.
- (d) Neil Ramsden has been appointed as one of the two residential caretakers at Heybridge on a fixed term basis to tie in with the planning permission. There was a vacancy for a further appointee; Neil Edwards would rejuvenate the advertisement on the web site and make the Residential Boat Owners Association aware of the vacancy in case of interest to their members.
- (e) Roy Chandler and Colin Edmond advised that Terry Snell continued at Paper Mill and that his health had improved slightly.
- (f) Hugh Turner had, at Roy Chandler's request, undertaken a review of canoe licence books, and had found good levels of takings at [some locations].
- (g) WRG had responded favourably to the board's request for four Canal Camps during 2012 – the one for the February half term had been finalised, advertised and already attracted a number of bookings. Camps for the October 2012 half term and two weeks during the summer school holidays to undertake major works at Rushes Weir had been pencilled in. Accommodation at the Haybay had been firmly booked for February and pencilled in for the other Camps. The October 2011 Camp was fully booked and a site visited had been made; all plans were in hand.
- (h) The board noted that [two volunteers] had been reminded of the need to undertake chainsaw refresher courses. WRG had not yet decided whether to offer them training grants, but in need Essex Waterways would underwrite the cost.

Finance

4. (a) Income and expenditure reports for the six months to 30th June 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. Most areas of income were ahead of budget. Expenditure on landing stages was ahead of budget due to additional work being undertaken. Spending on capital works was affected by delays in permissions coming through but the major work at Heybridge North Quay was still expected to be complete in 2011. Piles had already been purchased and £30,000 in funding received from Essex & Suffolk Water.
- (b) A cash flow statement had been circulated with the agenda, and Roy Chandler had identified further areas of likely expenditure. The position still looked to be satisfactory, although some money would likely be needed from the Restricted Fund for the North Quay works, as had been planned from the outset.
- (c) 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. Neil Edwards would check that Helen Elliott-Adams has this in hand.

- (d) Schedules showing outstanding debts and boats without up-to-date mooring agreements, insurance certificates or Boat Safety Scheme certificates were tabled. [Detail omitted re individual situation]. As a general principle, those without long term mooring agreements should be charged visitor rates. Colin Edmond would advise Hugh Turner.
- (e) Roy Chandler reported that Hugh Turner would report on the leases schedule and garden incursions shortly, having been preoccupied with the boat handling training arrangements recently. There had been a meeting with [a riparian landowner] with a view to reactivating a dormant lease covering a water supply pipe under the Navigation. Terms would include security of our access arrangements for maintenance and extracting willows in return for a lower rent than originally envisaged when the original lease had been drawn up by the Navigation Company. [Solicitors] had been appointed to work on the new lease, with costs to be met by [the landowner].
- (f) Colin Edmond reported that the fencing work to correct the boundary incursion at [a location] had yet to take place as the property concerned was apparently for sale, and terms might be agreed with the new owner. A notice concerning the boundary would be placed on site to try to ensure that prospective purchasers were aware.
- (g) Colin Edmond reported that the formal agreement with the neighbouring landowner at [a place] had yet to be put in place, but this would be attended to.
- (h) Roy Chandler reported that he had obtained forms from Maldon District Council to make application for Business Rate reduction, and would pursue this.
- (i) Three notices concerning land registration had been received, which had required objections to correct boundary lines. The outcome from Land Registry was awaited for those at [a location]. The applicant here was a friendly land owner. One small parcel at [another location] seemed to be unclaimed, and might be Company land that we were previously unaware of.
- (j) Neil Edwards reported that Paula Smith had negotiated favourable electric supply arrangements with British Gas, which had commenced on 1st September and would include the installation of meters that could be read remotely.
- (k) The board noted that it needed to consider mooring and other charges for 2012 so that notice could be given in a newsletter to be mailed out to boaters in early October. The Retail Price Index and Consumer Price Index showed increases of about 5% per annum, and Average Earning Index showed an increase of about 2% per annum. In previous years, the board had agreed a less than inflation increase for 2011 and a nil increase for 2010. After a short discussion, the board agreed that all mooring and other charges (including canoes, visitor moorings, crane fees, yacht stores, trailer park), etc would rise by 4.0% from 1st January 2012, with visitor mooring fees rounded up to the nearest 50p. Roy Chandler would prepare some text for the newsletter and Neil Edwards would advise Christine Walsh.

Future Income and Grant Applications

- 5. (a) Roy Chandler reported that a number of the works funded by the Life Raft Trust grant had yet to take place.
- (b) Roy Chandler reported that one further payment was due from Essex County Council for towpath mowing this year under the Headland Management Scheme. There was a need to ensure that volunteers undertaking mowing on the towpath included grass around lock areas and bridges, etc. Essex County Council had indicated that it wished to apply a chipping

surface to the towpath between Beeleigh Lock and Chapmans Bridge; this would be acceptable.

- (c) The area around Wave Bridge, on the outskirts of Heybridge, was in a poor state and required some attention, including raising the level of the path under the bridge. Essex County Council might be persuaded to undertake this work, along with refurbishment of the steps, if the area was cleared of overgrown vegetation.
- (d) Lock landings work on the towpath side at Rushes Lock had been completed, but there was further work to do on the off-side in the future.

Report from the Navigation Manager

- 6. (a) Roy Chandler reported that planning permission and Environment Agency consent for the works at North Quay had been applied for and were awaited.
- (b) Roy Chandler reported that he needed to take site levels for the proposed new toilet block on the north side of the Paper Mill moorings. Planning permission and Environment Agency consent would be applied for once the levels had been worked out. Work on the slipway at Paper Mill could be progressed in the autumn or winter, as it was not practicable during the summer with so many visitors around.
- (c) Colin Edmond had reported on landing stages work at Rushes Lock earlier in the meeting. Mooring stage replacements were now complete at Sandford, near complete at Hoe Mill and progressing well at Paper Mill and Heybridge.
- (d) 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.
- (e) Colin Edmond reported that further refurbishment had been undertaken on the weed cutter, but despite best efforts the weed situation on the Navigation had not been satisfactory over much of the summer, partly owing to cut weed accumulating where it had not been possible to lift it out. Better equipment was needed and a lookout for suitable second-hand water-based plant would be maintained.
- (f) An approach to Essex County Council had revealed a possible source of funding for the proposed ramps to lock gates at Heybridge. A design needed to be worked up.
- (g) An assessment of the Heybridge Lock site had been undertaken by Visit England as a consequence of the Life Raft Trust grant, and the report had been circulated to directors with the agenda papers. A lack of signage for visitors and information for telephone enquirers had been identified, and a separate area of specific information on the web site would be useful. An approach would be made to Maldon District Council to assist with signage. Neil Edwards would ask David Forrester about a possible telephone answering system. The web site could be extended if a volunteer was found to prepare draft text.
- (h) Colin Edmond reported that further willows had been identified for felling for sales, partly owing to an increase in Watermark Disease. Whilst this was likely to lead to increased income in the short term, the longer term outlook for willow sales was less good, especially as the rate of losses of new plantings continued to be too high. The poor establishment of new trees and the disease may be related and consequent upon lower rainfall in the summer months, stressing the trees.

- (i) Roy Chandler reported that Crown Build had undertaken extensive brickwork repairs around the sluices at Little Baddow Mill. The work commissioned was near complete, having been extended from the original remit when more works were found to be necessary. Clearing vegetation from the area had revealed a long history of neglect at this site, and it would be necessary to commission further substantial brickwork repairs in the next year.

Update on Issues Discussed at Previous Meetings

- 7. (a) Roy Chandler reported that there had been no progress on proposals for [a] site. The recent Government announcement from the housing minister to encourage planning permission for residential boating sites may give the project renewed impetus, especially as it might make new funding accessible.
- (b) John Pomfret had yet to progress the vegetation management plan specifications, but expected to be able to do so shortly as having just reduced 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) Roy Chandler reported that there had been no progress on [a site] proposals, although the landowner remained interested.
- (d) Colin Edmond reported that there was still some graffiti at Bundocks Bridge to be attended to, and also at Chapmans Bridge. The graffiti at Springfield Bridge had been tackled quickly, but the porous nature of the stone had left prominent traces.
- (e) Roy Chandler reported that nothing further had occurred about the A138 Chelmer Viaduct replacement.
- (f) 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.
- (g) Colin Edmond reported that boat owners had made an encroachment on to neighbouring land at Paper Mill, as well as those previously reported at Heybridge. Hugh Turner would be asked to write to offenders telling them to desist, and Roy Chandler would include a note in the next newsletter.
- (h) Roy Chandler and Colin Edmond reported that the camping space at Heybridge Lock had become a victim of its own success, and had placed an excessive burden on the lockkeeper and boaters' facilities. The board agreed to stop advertising the site with a view to restricting campers to canoeists, boaters and walkers, etc. An application to the Caravanning and Camping Club for a Certificated Site at Hoe Mill would still be progressed, where the circumstances were different.
- (i) Neil Edwards reported that so far there had only been one response to the consultation, in the July newsletter, on residency documentation being required to avoid unofficial living on boats, which had been entirely supportive. The consultation runs to 30th September, but if there were no further responses, then the requirement would be introduced in 2012.
- (j) Roy Chandler reported that he had prepared a draft 'mission statement' for submission to Chelmsford Borough Council covering Springfield Basin. This was intended to guide the Council in considering planning matters around the Basin area for purposes of consistency in supporting an overall vision for the area. A design brief for the Waterfront Place property was noted. There had been no developments with [a] property.

Other Business

8. (a) A report from Hugh Turner, covering the first couple of months operation of the Inland Helmsman's training courses was noted. The level of bookings and enquiries was satisfactory, and feedback from course participants was encouraging. Correspondence from Ron Abbott on the subject was noted.
- (b) Colin Edmond briefed the board on some recent anti-social behaviour at Heybridge Basin from a visiting boater (who had been asked leave) and from a boat owner [details omitted].

Future Meetings

10. (a) The next meeting would be held at 10.00 am on Tuesday 6th December at Chesham.
- (b) Dates for meetings in 2012 would be considered at the December meeting.

No other business was transacted and the meeting closed at 3.05 p.m.