

Minutes of the meeting of the board of directors held at Island House, Moor Road, Chesham, at 10.00 a.m. on Tuesday 6th December 2011.

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

In Attendance: Colin Edmond and Helen Elliott-Adams [items 4(a) to 4(c) only]

There were no apologies for absence.

Minutes of Meetings

1. The minutes of the board meeting held on 12th September 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 there had been no Health & Safety incidents since the previous meeting.
- (b) Colin Edmond reported that the trial of 3M safety tread, which had been applied to boards at Hoe Mill Locks, had worked well and would now be extended to other locks where potential slippery surfaces could cause a hazard. However, dry weather was needed to make the tread material stick, so the work would not be undertaken straight away.
- (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 remained partially complete, and he would check that all the residential caretakers were signed up to the Environment Agency's Flood-line next time he saw them.
- (e) An updated schedule of certification held at Head Office had been circulated. The hiab on the weed boat and the crane slings had recently been surveyed, but certificates had not yet been sent to Head Office.
- (f) The dredger barge was being inspected by a marine surveyor this week, but would need to be lifted out of the water, probably at Maldon, at some time for a more thorough overhaul.
- (g) Colin Edmond's First Aid certification was due for renewal very shortly, and in view of his planned retirement in 2012 he would arrange for Martin Maudsley and Michael Cole to attend courses, as well as himself, in the near future.
- (h) The board asked that Michael Cole be given full training on operation of the crane in the near future, albeit he has already assisted on some lifting work.

Staffing and Management Arrangements

3. (a) Colin Edmond confirmed his wish to reduce his hours to part time [during 2012 and to retire fully before the year-end. There was also a confidential discussion on successor recruitment]

- (b) The board also thought that the proposed additional employee to be taken on to assist Michael Cole should be recruited earlier than was considered at the previous meeting. A job specification needed to be drawn up, so that the post could be advertised, including at local job centres and colleges with relevant courses. Colin Edmond would involve Michael Cole and Martin Maudsley in the process of setting out the job specification and the training process.
- (c) Roy Chandler recorded the recent death of Peter Warr, residential caretaker at Sandford, and that Terry Snell, residential caretaker at Paper Mill, had retired owing to ill health. This meant there were three vacancies, one each at Sandford, Paper Mill and Heybridge. Ian Fossett had commenced duties at Hoe Mill. The website to advertise the vacancies would be updated and possibilities of advertising elsewhere would be pursued.
- (d) Colin Edmond reported that a joint meeting with all the residential caretakers would be held in the New Year, and would include emphasis on collecting canoe licences. The need for a metered electricity supply for Terry Snell's boat had fallen away, as his successor would be located at a mooring where electricity was not available. There was, however, a longer term wish to extend electricity availability at Paper Mill moorings when resources permitted. There needed to be a complete review of the electrical lines at Paper Mill, as some were quite old and records of their exact locations had not always been well kept.
- (e) Colin Edmond reported that The Haybay accommodation had been booked for each of the 2012 Canal Camps. Neil Edwards reported that the February Camp was nearly fully booked.

[Colin Edmond absented himself for the following item]

- (f) Salaries for all Essex Waterways Limited employees were reviewed, and the board wished to record its gratitude for the hard work and initiative of everyone on the Navigation. Inflation, price and salary indexes and the Company's ability to pay were all considered, and it was resolved [2012 salary levels omitted - confidential] Neil Edwards would send written letters to each employee to advise them.

[Colin Edmond rejoined the meeting and Helen Elliott-Adams joined the meeting]

Finance

- 4. (a) Income and expenditure reports for the nine months to 30th September 2011 had been circulated with the agenda. The board noted these and considered that the financial performance for the year to date was satisfactory and generally in line with budget. Heybridge income was ahead of budget, and it was noted that it had been a busy year with a good level of crane-lifts and winter moorings; the storage area was now full. Direct debits income for all moorings was now above [an amount] per month. Expenditure on mooring jetties at Heybridge was above budget, but this included materials for other sites and represented additional work being achieved. There had also been additional work at Little Baddow and on lock landings throughout the Navigation, but there was likely to be an excess of income over expenditure at year-end as some other capital works had been delayed. The unspent portion of the grant from the Life Raft Fund would need to be separately identified in the accounts as this was restricted to certain works.
- (b) A cash flow statement had been circulated with the agenda, and Roy Chandler had identified further areas of likely expenditure. The position appeared to be satisfactory, and it was now looking very unlikely that any money would be needed from the Restricted Fund for the North Quay works.

- (c) Documentation for the formal loan arrangement with IWA to finance fixed assets had been drawn up and approved by IWA. The national chairman and national treasurer had signed for IWA. The board approved the documentation and delegated Roy Chandler and Neil Edwards to sign for Essex Waterways. The loan would be drawn down before year-end, which would further improve the cash flow position. Helen Elliott-Adams would arrange for the charge to be registered with Companies House.

[Helen Elliott-Adams left the meeting]

- (d) Schedules showing outstanding debts and boats without up-to-date mooring agreements, insurance certificates or Boat Safety Scheme certificates were tabled. [Actions re individual boat owners omitted – confidential]
- (e) Roy Chandler reported that Hugh Turner would be giving priority attention to the leases schedule and garden incursions in the New Year. The board agreed that any licensed incursions should be invoiced a fixed fee of £500 per annum. Where lease agreements were not agreed, land would be fenced off.
- (f) Colin Edmond reported that the formal agreement with the neighbouring landowner at [a location] had yet to be put in place, but this would be attended to as a matter of urgency.
- (g) Roy Chandler reported that he had submitted an application to Maldon District Council for Discretionary Rate Relief, and the outcome was awaited.
- (h) Nothing further had been heard concerning the proposed land registrations at [two locations]. Roy Chandler would make enquiries, and in particular point out the long history of Navigation Company management of the willows on the land in question.
- (i) Neil Edwards reported that Paula Smith was chasing up, with British Gas, the installation of electricity meters that could be read remotely.
- (j) Prior to the meeting, the board had been made aware that the rental agreement for the washing machines in the Facilities Block was due for renewal. Terms for renewal were less favourable, and it was resolved that the current agreement would be ended and authority was given to purchase two of our own washing machines and a dryer, and to dispense with token operation, which overall should make a good cost saving.
- (k) Further to the decision at the September meeting on 2012 mooring rates, the relevant schedules had been updated and circulated and would be placed on the web site. On a recommendation from Martin Maudsley the temporary mooring rates at Heybridge had been adjusted to make them easier to explain to visitors.
- (l) Roy Chandler reported that he was preparing a draft budget for 2012, and that this would be circulated to the board for comment once available.
- (m) Neil Edwards drew attention to a new Purchase Order procedure that had been approved by IWA's trustees on recommendation from Finance Committee following consultation with budget holders (including Essex Waterways), and which was recommended for use throughout IWA and subsidiary companies. The board agreed to adopt these proposals.

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 the final payment from Essex County Council for towpath mowing this year under the Headland Management Scheme had been received. The same grant was likely to be available for 2012. The need to mow around lock areas was again noted.
- (c) All the lock landings work under the Community Initiatives Fund agreement had now been completed, albeit there had been considerable additional expense beyond what the grant had funded. The results were thought well-worthwhile and had attracted favourable comment.
- (d) Work at Wave Bridge, including the towpath being raised to avoid flooding, and the construction of new steps, had been completed by WRG and had attracted much favourable comment, including from Essex County Council.

Report from the Navigation Manager

- 6. (a) Colin Edmond reported that work at North Quay by Land & Water was progressing well, and that the major parts of the work would be finished within a few days. Tidying and electrical installation, by volunteers, would continue into the New Year.
- (b) Roy Chandler reported that he had taken site levels for the proposed new toilet block on the north side of the Paper Mill moorings. Planning permission and Environment Agency consent would now be applied for. Work on the slipway at Paper Mill was planned for the second week in January, subject to suitable weather. Authority for the purchase order for this work was agreed.
- (c) Colin Edmond had reported that work on all the landing stages work at Rushes Lock was now complete.
- (d) Roy Chandler reported that he had again spoken to the Environment Agency about fitting the promised grille to the feeder stream at Springfield; this will be put in writing. However, it now looked unlikely that Chelmsford Borough Council would do any se-silting work on the feeder stream in the near future.
- (e) Colin Edmond reported that further repairs had been made to the weed-cutter. It remained a very frustrating vessel to use, however, and so a lookout was being maintained for a suitable second-hand replacement.
- (f) A design needed to be worked up for the proposed ramps to lock gates at Heybridge, although this was a low priority job. Chains would be fitted to stop anyone wandering along the walkways of open lock gates, as this had been identified as a potential hazard.
- (g) Colin Edmond reported that the review of weir signage had yet to be undertaken
- (h) Colin Edmond reported that Wrights had identified about 120 mature willows ready to be purchased and felled. In order to try to reduce losses, it was planned to plant sets with shorter stems during the winter, as they were believed to be more drought resistant.

Update on Issues Discussed at Previous Meetings

- 7. (a) Roy Chandler reported that there had been no further 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 shortly, having recently reduced his employment commitments. Some

Japanese Knotweed had been identified, and the board asked for it to be removed as soon as possible.

- (c) Roy Chandler reported that there had been no progress on the Langford Leisure Park 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. Graffiti at Wave Bridge had been removed.
- (e) Roy Chandler reported that nothing further had been heard 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. There was no benefit to EWL in pursuing this, so the matter could be taken off the agenda.
- (g) Colin Edmond reported that those boat owners who had made an encroachment on to neighbouring land at Paper Mill, as well as those previously reported at Heybridge, had been written to.
- (h) The application to the Caravanning and Camping Club for a Certificated Site at Hoe Mill had yet to be progressed.
- (i) Neil Edwards reported that there had been no further responses to the consultation, in the July newsletter, on residency documentation being required to avoid unofficial living on boats. As all consultation responses to the proposals had been favourable, the requirement would be introduced in 2012.
- (j) Roy Chandler reported on details of the proposed redevelopment of the Travis Perkins property, which had been made available. Planning permission was being applied for, which generally Essex Waterways would be supportive of. It was likely that the towpath and potential for moorings would be made available, with public access being secured.
- (k) Hugh Turner had submitted a report on the Helmsman's Training Courses activity, which continued to be well supported and appreciated by customers. The board noted the reported and recorded their thanks to Hugh Turner for pursuing the initiative.
- (l) Roy Chandler reported that he would be asking a volunteer with appropriate expertise to undertake a survey of the telephone line arrangements around Paper Mill, as there was scope for improvement.
- (m) Neil Edwards reported that, following the discussion at the September meeting, there had been correspondence with [a boat owner] concerning anti-social activity at Heybridge. As a consequence a [resolution had been agreed].

Other Business

- 8. (a) Roy Chandler reported that Mark Coverley had made a planning application for an extended shed for his boat hire operation at Heybridge Basin. Although he had mentioned his intent for this, he had not discussed the detail and the board felt that the proposals as they stood should be checked on site, although the general proposal was acceptable. This would be conveyed to Maldon District Council and to Mr Coverley.

- (b) Roy Chandler reported that Maldon District Council had approved the planning application from the Bembridge Hotel for the construction of moorings alongside the property, subject to a satisfactory wildlife survey.

Future Meetings

10. (a) The next meeting would be held at 10.45 am on Friday 9th March at Paper Mill.

- (b) Dates for other meetings in 2012 would be:

Monday 18th June (Paper Mill)

Friday 21st September (Paper Mill)

Monday 10th December (Chesham)

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