

Minutes of the meeting of the board of directors held at Paper Mill Lock, Little Baddow, at 10.45 a.m. on Friday 9th March 2012.

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 6th December 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 further work on installing non-slip surfaces on lock boards had not progressed owing to unsuitable weather conditions.
- (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 review arrangements for the residential caretakers to be signed up to the Environment Agency's Flood-line once the new appointees were in place.
- (e) An updated schedule of certification held at Head Office had been circulated. Public liability certificates for [two contractors] would be chased up. A new alarm on the crane had been fitted and certification was due later this month. [Confidential items omitted]

Staffing and Management Arrangements

3. (a) The board agreed that a package of documents covering job and person specifications, terms and other information needed to be put together to advertise the position of successor Navigation Manager, which the board had previously agreed should be recruited by the end of the summer. Roy Chandler offered to assemble initial details from the job description that Colin Edmond had outlined. Salary would be set at [an amount]. Neil Edwards would send a copy of the similar package recently prepared by IWA for the branch support officer. Once the pack was prepared, the position would be advertised (hopefully through free editorial) in the waterways press, as well as IWA publications, the Association of Inland Navigation Authorities and other media likely to be read by people working on the inland waterways. Colin Edmond now planned to reduce his time to a three-day week (Tues, Weds, Thurs) from the beginning of August.
- (b) The board agreed that the proposed additional employee to be taken on to assist Michael Cole should be recruited during the summer. The need for earlier recruitment had been allayed through a 4-day per week volunteer, Alex Laybury, being available. A job specification

package would be put together for the assistant lengthsmen during April with a view to advertising in May. Advertisements would be placed locally and through agricultural colleges and the like.

- (c) Colin Edmond reported on the recruitment of three new residential caretakers. Carol White had commenced duties at Sandford on 1st March, Gary Ball would commence duties at Heybridge on 1st April and Sam Holden would commence duties at Paper Mill on 1st April. Roy Chandler would arrange for photos of each of them for the website. Colin Edmond would organise a meeting for all the residential caretakers to attend in April.
- (d) Roy Chandler reported that the February WRG Canal Camp had run successfully. The Camp had comprised mostly young new volunteers, but they had worked well and completed a good amount of clearance at Ricketts. Arrangements were being put in place for the two summer Camps. A leader was in place for the October Camp.
- (e) Neil Edwards reported that all employees had been written to, to confirm new salaries, following the increases approved at the previous (December 2011) meeting.

Finance

- 4. (a) Income and expenditure reports for the twelve months to 31st December 2011 had been circulated with the agenda. The board noted these, and that the financial outturn was better than budget, largely as a consequence of delays to capital works. Income had remained buoyant in all areas, albeit that grant income was increasingly hard to come by. Although there had been some turnover in boat sales during the year, most of the moorings remained at near capacity. An early draft of the Annual Report and Financial Statements had also been circulated to directors, and would be brought to the June meetings for formal approval.
- (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, with funds available for capital works.
- (c) The budget for 2012 had been circulated to directors some weeks earlier and informally agreed by e-mail. The board confirmed its approval for the 2012 budget.
- (d) Schedules showing outstanding debts and boats without up-to-date mooring agreements, insurance certificates or Boat Safety Scheme certificates were tabled. Most of the debts were just late-running Quarter 1 payments, with nearly all those outstanding in December now having been cleared. The board's gratitude to Christine Walsh and Hugh Turner in promptly chasing all debtors was recorded. [Note: Christine Walsh has confirmed that these lists are always circulated to Martin Maudsley, and he has been helping with chasing up at Heybridge.] The sale of [a] boat and termination of [a] yacht stores licence was noted.
- (e) Roy Chandler reported that Hugh Turner had prepared [two] leases. There was a question as to whether VAT was due on these lease-payments; Neil Edwards would check with the auditors and the position on charges for the yacht stores for consistency. Neil Edwards would check that lease payments had been received from [two other leases] [Note: payments of [two amounts] received respectively]. Hugh Turner would continue to investigate other leases and produce a schedule as priority work
- (f) Colin Edmond reported that the boundary situation at Ricketts Lock had been resolved following information obtained from the Land Registry.

- (g) Colin Edmond reported that the householders who had extended their gardens in Coates Close had declined to pay for leasing this land, so Colin Edmond confirmed that he would arrange for this land to be fenced off as a matter of urgency. The board asked that this work be completed with two weeks so that we were seen to be backing up Hugh Tuner's letters with action.
- (h) [Confidential item]
- (i) Roy Chandler reported that the application to Maldon District Council for Discretionary Rate Relief had been successful, and a 50% reduction had been offered. The board congratulated Roy on this outcome.
- (j) Nothing further had been heard from the landowners about the proposed land registrations at [two locations]; our offers of a meeting had not been taken up. A letter had been received from Land Registry saying that the application had been discontinued, so no further action was required.
- (k) Colin Edmond reported that British Gas had some installed some of the electricity meter readers, but their engineer had run out of time to do them all, and some locations required other works to be undertaken before meter readers could be installed, and that might not be cost effective from our perspective. Paula Smith had complained to British Gas, and compensation of £100 had been received. Colin Edmond would follow up those instances where the meter readers could still be installed now, and would liaise with Paula Smith for any paperwork needed.
- (l) Roy Chandler reported that the new purchase order procedures had been put in place, but were proving to be a bit of a nuisance without providing any benefit in some instances (e.g. material supplies where there are on-going agreements for supply and terms, etc). The board agreed that arrangements should be modified to avoid paperwork for the sake of it, but that all planned expenditure of over £10,000 should be recorded in board meeting minutes.
- (m) Roy Chandler reported that [a contractor] had submitted a quotation of [an amount] for [certain] works. [detail omitted], it was felt that alternative quotes should be obtained, at least to demonstrate the reasonableness of costs put forward by [the contractor].. [Other contractors], were suggested as one possible option, [further detail omitted].

Future Income and Grant Applications

5. (a) The board noted that funds for the works at Rushes Lock (weir), Sandford Lock (facilities) and Paper Mill (facilities) to be funded by the Life Raft Trust grant were recorded in the Annual Financial Statements as a creditor balance.
- (b) Roy Chandler reported that the Headland Management Scheme was continuing for 2012 and that the same grant as 2011 would be available for towpath mowing. The County Council had also agreed to surface the path from Beeleigh Lock to Maldon Golf Course, and was being asked to consider surfacing the path from Heybridge to Wave Bridge.
- (c) The board approved that a new trailer should be purchase to assist safe transportation of grass mowing, the mini-digger and other equipment between lock sites and for use by residential caretakers. The cost would be [an amount].
- (d) Roy Chandler reported that he had attended a Big Lottery Fund conference in Chelmsford, but as the funding available was directed towards disadvantaged groups, it was doubtful whether we could be successful in any application to this Fund.

- (e) Roy Chandler reported that he was pursuing possible funding under the Water Framework Directive grants scheme, and a list of potential projects had been submitted, including the river bank below Hoe Mill Lock. Formal application forms were awaited, but John Pomfret offered to try to put together an application.
- (f) The board considered the potential for increase in moorings income through re-grading of certain mooring areas once facilities had been improved. This would apply at Sandford Lock (off-side, not towpath-side) once new toilets had been built there, and also on the north bank moorings at Paper Mill once the new toilet facility was available there.

Report from the Navigation Manager

- 6. (a) Colin Edmond reported that nearly all the works at Heybridge North Quay were complete, with just some electrical work to be attended to. A second phase of works, to extend to the lock, was underway and would complete a smartening up of the whole area. Some timber fendering was needed to protect against metal edges, and path works once the ground had settled. Car parking arrangements would be looked at for income potential from unauthorised vehicle owners. Colin Edmond reported that Martin Maudsley was experiencing considerable difficulty with the electric-powered sliding gate at the Sea Lock.
- (b) Roy Chandler reported that a planning application had been submitted to Chelmsford Borough Council for the proposed new facilities block at Paper Mill, and that drawings were in hand for a similar building at Sandford Lock.
- (c) Roy Chandler reported that the retaining wall and surfacing around the slipway at Paper Mill Lock had been completed, which had greatly improved the facility.
- (d) Roy Chandler reported that he had followed up with the Environment Agency about fitting the promised grille to the feeder stream at Springfield and a meeting had been arranged for 14th March.
- (e) Colin Edmond reported that the weed-cutter was out of the water for maintenance work; the lifting equipment had been painted. It was thought that replacement of this equipment might have potential for grant applications in the future.
- (f) Colin Edmond reported that the proposed ramps and chains at Heybridge Sea Lock had not progressed.
- (g) Colin Edmond reported that the review of weir signage had yet to be undertaken.
- (h) Colin Edmond reported that Wrights intended to clear the mature willow trees on the north bank at Paper Mill before Easter, as access had now been arranged. 350 new trees had been planted over the winter. A meeting with Chelmsford Borough Council's tree officer was planned with a view to taking out any diseased trees on Little Baddow Island.
- (i) Colin Edmond reported that good progress was being made with towpath and offside vegetation management in the Beeleigh area, utilising recent WRG visits, but there remained lots more work to be done.
- (j) Colin Edmond reported that the electrical arrangements at Paper Mill required some major investigation to see what had been inherited, as there were few plans. The water supply to Paper Mill was being separated out following realisation that it was controlled from the former lock cottage (now in private ownership).

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. A meeting had been arranged with a neighbouring landowner to address the identified Japanese Knotweed.
- (c) Roy Chandler reported that there had been no progress on the Langford Leisure Park proposals, although the landowner remained interested.
- (d) Roy Chandler reported recent graffiti at Springfield Lock. He had met with Essex County Council to look at the possibility of installing a handrail over Springfield Lock Bridge following a complaint about the slippery surface (put down by the Council); our view was that a handrail was not needed, but a quote would be obtained from Andy Nichols (blacksmith) to see if something that fitted in with the site could be manufactured, if the County Council would pay for it.
- (e) Roy Chandler reported that nothing further had been heard about the A138 Chelmer Viaduct replacement.
- (f) Roy Chandler reported that a meeting with the Caravanning and Camping Club to progress the application for a Certificated Site at Hoe Mill had been arranged.
- (g) Roy Chandler reported that there was no further news on the proposed redevelopment of the Travis Perkins property at Springfield Basin.
- (h) Hugh Turner had submitted a report on the Helmsman's Training Courses activity, which continued to attract a good level of enquiries. Further publicity would be arranged, including a link on IWA's main web site.
- (i) Colin Edmond reported agreement that the telephone line 01245 222045 could be cancelled, and the board asked Paula Smith to search out a favourable broadband supply quote, as the BT supply was now 'out of contract.
- (j) Roy Chandler reported that there had been a request at the recent users group to see if the gate to the boaters' car park at Paper Mill could be recessed, so that drivers could pull into a space to park temporarily whilst unlocking and opening the gate. The request was thought reasonable as the present practice required drivers to temporarily leave their car on the road potentially causing inconvenience to other motorists. It would probably require the entrance position to be moved, and would be looked into further.

Other Business

8. (a) Roy Chandler reported that he planned to attend the Annual General Meeting of the Association of Inland Navigation Authorities on 27th March.
- (b) Roy Chandler reported that Martin Maudsley had counted 574 visiting boats through Heybridge Sea Lock during 2011 – the highest number on record.
- (c) Jim Jenkins reported that effluent pipes in the area were likely to be renewed in the near future, and this might include pipes under the canal near Chelmsford and the pipeline that crosses Langford Cut.

- (d) The board noted that the vessel Grebe, which had been of some concern whilst moored at Heybridge, had been sold, left the Navigation and sunk whilst out at sea off the Essex coast, after being piloted the wrong side of Osea Island.

Future Meetings

- 10. (a) The next meeting would be held at 10.45 am on Friday 15th June at Paper Mill (a change of date from that previously agreed). The Company's Annual General Meeting would be held on the same day.

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

- Friday 21st September (Paper Mill)

- Monday 3rd December – also a change of date (Chesham)

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