

Minutes of the meeting of the board of directors held at Paper Mill Lock, Little Baddow, at 10.45 a.m. on Friday 15th June 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 9th March 2012, 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) The board noted the following three incidents since the previous meeting:
 - (i) There had been damage to three boat canopies from the smouldering remains of a bonfire [detail removed]. The warranty to insurers on bonfires was noted, and it was agreed that this must be adhered to by all contractors undertaking work on the navigation, as well as staff and volunteers.
 - (ii) There was a hearsay report that a visitor had broken a leg whilst walking on the towpath and that an air ambulance had been called. No further details were known.
 - (iii) There had been a sunken vessel at Paper Mill, caused just by rain-water and a heavy outboard engine giving the boat a natural list. The boat owner had previously been warned a number of times about bailing water out of the open vessel. Michael Cole and volunteers had raised the boat and pumped it out, and the owner had been sent a bill. The vessel had since been taken away by road.
- (b) Colin Edmond reported that further work on installing non-slip surfaces on lock boards had not progressed owing to unsuitable weather conditions. An extended period of dry weather was required to make the adhesive stick properly.
- (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. Recently appointed residential caretakers were settling in, but one had still to move to the mooring as his new boat had not yet been completed by its builders. Colin Edmond said that he was conscious of needing to give Health & Safety matters priority and intended to catch up on paperwork matters during convalescence from his forthcoming hospital operation.
- (e) An updated schedule of certification held at Head Office had been circulated. Certification for some contractors was out of date, and updated copies would be obtained before those contractors permitted to work on the Navigation again. The crane and slings had been certified on 18th April, but Head Office did not yet have copies of the certificates. The Buddy Work Boat does not require a Boat Safety Certificate, as an open vessel, and could come off the list. As a relatively new boat it would not need a marine survey for some years. [Personnel detail omitted].

- (f) Neil Edwards reported that discussions were in hand with insurers concerning a review of full coverage for all crane activities. Full cover had been confirmed for all third party aspects, including accidental damage to third party craft and 'on the hook' cover for all vessels not owned by Essex Waterways Ltd. There was, however, a question of 'on the hook' cover for any Essex Waterways owned vessels.

Staffing and Management Arrangements

3. (a) Neil Edwards reported that the job application information packs had been completed for the Navigation Manager and Assistant Lengthsman / Assistant Ranger posts. These had been advertised on the website, in Bulletin, in *Waterways* magazine, and by the Association of Inland Navigation Authorities, both on its website and by circular. Details had also been provided to the waterways and local press in Essex and the posts had been advertised with Countryside Jobs Service. There had already been a number of completed applications and the web pages had been well-visited. The closing date for applications for both posts was 30th June.
- (b) The board, on a review of outstanding work, current finances and the need to increase manpower, particularly to supervise and encourage new volunteers, approved that, provided there were sufficient good applicants, then two Assistant Lengthsmen / Rangers should be appointed. This would likely cause staff expenditure to exceed budget, but it was agreed there was unlikely to be a problem with cash flow to cover the costs since a number of capital works were having to be delayed as there was currently insufficient manpower to deal with everything. The wet spring encouraging above-normal vegetation growth had exacerbated this situation. The long-term affordability and need for two posts would be kept under review.
- (c) The board agreed that a short-list for both posts should be drawn up taking into account the comments from all directors and the present Navigation Manager. Interview panels would then be arranged for each post. A maximum of six candidates would be interviewed for each post (unless a second round of interviews needed to be held for any reason). Neil Edwards would circulate the applications.
- (d) A meeting with all the residential caretakers needed to be arranged as soon as possible. The board asked that Martin Maudsley and Hugh Turner be involved in the process too.
- (e) The probation completion periods for each of the new residential caretaker appointments would be checked, so that reviews were completed in a timely manner. There was an identified need for training, especially to ensure that all the residential caretakers looked after tools and equipment to the same high standard. Such training needs to be documented, even if it is 'on-the-job training'. The board asked that the Heybridge Lockkeeper post should oversee the work of the two residential caretakers at Heybridge Basin.
- (f) Roy Chandler reported that detailed planning for the summer WRG Canal Camps needed to commence shortly, though water levels would be critical for the work at Rushes Weir, and this would not be known until shortly beforehand. Alternative work would be lined up in case of adverse conditions. Bob Crow, leader for the first week, had been in touch. Access arrangements needed to be decided upon.

Finance

4. (a) The directors approved a Letter of Representation to the auditors, the draft of which had been circulated with the agenda. Roy Chandler was authorised to sign the letter.

- (b) The board reviewed and approved the Annual Report and Financial Statements for the company for the period ending 31st December 2011, 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.
- (c) Income and expenditure reports for the three months to 31st March 2012 had been circulated with the agenda. The board noted these, and that the position was largely as expected. Visitor income at Heybridge was well down on last year, and Colin Edmond reported that numbers of visiting boats from Europe were well down, partly a consequence of poor weather, and partly the economic situation with the Euro. Other income was generally on target, taking into account seasonal factors.
- (d) A cash flow statement had been circulated with the agenda. The position continued to be satisfactory, with funds available for capital works.
- (e) Schedules showing outstanding debts and boats without up-to-date mooring agreements, insurance certificates or Boat Safety Scheme certificates were tabled. The position with [a boat owner] was noted and the position with [another boat owner] needed to be checked with Hugh Turner, otherwise there were no particular issues of concern.
- (f) [Lease details omitted]. The agreements with Bembridge Hotel and Mark Coverly had been signed.
- (g) Both Chelmsford City Council and Maldon District Council had given notice that their discretionary reliefs on Commercial Rates were being reviewed, which would require resubmission of applications. (Note: Chelmsford Borough Council became Chelmsford City Council on 15th March).
- (h) [Property matter – details omitted]. Hugh Turner would be asked to chase up enquiries with the Land Registry, and possibly approach the Highways Engineer for assistance.
- (i) Colin Edmond reported that the land at [a property] had been fenced off, as agreed at the March meeting, and that negotiations were in hand with [another property owner] for a lease arrangement.
- (j) Neil Edwards reported t[a change of power suppliers]. The board wished to record its thanks to Paula Smith for dealing with the power company negotiations again.
- (k) Alternative quotes for the lock gates at Hoe Mill had yet to be obtained, although companies to approach had been identified. The work would not be scheduled to take place until the autumn.
- (l) A new trailer had been purchased, as had been approved at the March meeting.

Future Income and Grant Applications

5. (a) John Pomfret reported that he had not been able to progress the Water Framework Directive grant proposals. He would speak to Dave Carnell, chairman of IWA Lincolnshire Branch, which had recently submitted an application under this scheme. Roy Chandler would also chase up the situation and availability of funds with the Environment Agency.
- (b) Roy Chandler reported that the Headland Management Scheme was continuing. The first payment for 2012 had been applied for, but not yet received. The recent wet weather was making it difficult to keep up with vegetation growth everywhere.

- (c) The potential for the re-grading of moorings 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, would be kept on the agenda for possible review later in the year.
- (d) Roy Chandler reported that a possible funding bid with Essex Wildlife Trust for work on the upper river, which would include some bank repairs, was in hand. The application was to the Environment Agency under a water quality improvement scheme.
- (e) Roy Chandler reported [potential mooring arrangements for a heritage vessel].
- (f) The board agreed to offer an upper limit on crane charges for longer narrow boats, so that charges would not increase with length once the charge for a 40-foot vessel was reached. Colin Edmond would arrange for the crane charges schedule to be updated.
- (g) [Confidential property matter]
- (h) Colin Edmond reported that he had submitted a grant application for £800,000 from the Coastal Communities Fund, with the proposal to purchase the development land on the North Quay. The application had not been successful.

Report from the Navigation Manager

6. (a) Colin Edmond reported that nearly all the electrical, fendering and landscape works at Heybridge North Quay were complete, with just some road dressing to be attended to.
- (b) Roy Chandler reported that the planning application and EA consent for the proposed new facilities block at Paper Mill had both been approved.
- (c) Roy Chandler reported that the planning application for the proposed new facilities block at Sandford was in the process of being applied for. EA consent would not be required for this location, as the proposed building would be outside their statutory area.
- (d) Colin Edmond reported that work had not yet progressed on the proposed refurbishment of the boaters' facilities at Heybridge.
- (e) Roy Chandler reported that a land ownership issue had held up any progress by the Environment Agency on fitting the promised grille to the feeder stream at Springfield. Chelmsford City Council was attempting to register the land, and if this was successful, then the Agency should be able to make progress.
- (f) Colin Edmond reported that there had not been a need for any weed cutting in the Navigation so far this year, but it was likely to be required soon. The weed cutter was thought to be ready for use and would be tested during the next few days – but a replacement was still needed.
- (g) Colin Edmond reported that the proposed ramps and chains at Heybridge Sea Lock had not progressed. The board asked that the safety chains be progressed as a safety issue.
- (h) Colin Edmond reported that the review of weir signage had yet to be undertaken.
- (i) Colin Edmond reported that Wrights had now cleared the mature willow trees on the north bank at Paper Mill, but that there would be little profit from this. There was no news on the disease affecting willows, and it was felt that some areas ought to be replanted with species other than willows to allow for the disease to clear from the soil.

- (j) Colin Edmond reported that the recent wet weather had encouraged rapid vegetation growth in all areas. An additional mowing machine was required, which the board agreed could be purchased. A lack of man power in tackling this would become cumulative, so the additional resource to be provided by the assistant lengthsman appointments was essential.
- (k) Further brickwork repairs at Baddow Mill had not been progressed owing to recent high water levels.
- (l) Colin Edmond reported that there was a problem with one of the lock gates at Barnes Mill, for which a stoppage was likely to be necessary to resolve. This was urgent, as it was impeding navigation at present. There was also a problem with a paddle at Rushes Lock that might require the lock to be drained to investigate the culvert containing the paddle.
- (m) Colin Edmond reported that the proposed survey of the electrical arrangements at Paper Mill had not yet been arranged as the volunteer who would undertake them had been busy completing the works at Heybridge North Quay. Work had, however, been undertaken on the water heater overflow in the toilet at Paper Mill, which had been causing the cesspit to fill with clean water. The opportunity had been taken to change the toilet to reduce wastage of water and further reduce costs of emptying the cesspit.
- (n) Roy Chandler reported that he had preliminary discussions with Chelmsford City Council concerning the proposed repositioning of the gate at the entrance to the car park at Paper Mill Lock, and it had been confirmed that planning permission would be necessary as some realignment of the hedge line would be needed.
- (o) Colin Edmond reported that some of the lock reduction gearing, originally manufactured and purchased prior to Essex Waterways taking over the Navigation, had now been fitted at Sandford Lock as a trial. There had been few comments from users so far. Fitting the reduction gear did not have any heritage implications, as it was a 'bolt-on' arrangement that could easily be removed to restore the original appearance of the gear.
- (p) Colin Edmond reported that there was a small amount of piling repair work to be undertaken at Hoe Mill.

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. The Japanese Knotweed previously reported had now been cleared by a contractor, but repeat checks would be needed at the site to ensure the Knotweed was completely dealt with. Patches of Himalayan Balsam had been identified along the Navigation, but additional volunteer resource was needed to deal with them. Neil Edwards would ask Alison Smedley to consider trying to revive Chelmsford IWA branch work parties remotely without burdening existing officers.
- (c) Roy Chandler reported that he had a further meeting with the landowner hoping to promote the Langford Leisure Park proposals.
- (d) Colin Edmond reported that the Navigation was free of graffiti at the moment.

- (e) Roy Chandler reported that nothing further had been heard about the planned A138 Chelmer Viaduct replacement.
- (f) Roy Chandler reported that the Caravanning and Camping Club had approved the application for a Certificated Site at Hoe Mill, and that this was now in operation. There had, however, been few bookings, many of which had been cancelled owing the poor weather and flooding at the site. Both the Hoe Mill and Heybridge sites would be advertised on ukcampsite.co.uk.
- (g) Roy Chandler reported that the proposed redevelopment of the Travis Perkins property at Springfield Basin was likely to gain planning permission shortly. It was believed to be at the legal documentation stage. The newly created towpath would be maintained by the developers, who would also install electric bollards and a dinghy store. These would be managed by EWL and we would gain income from them, as well as mooring rights. Work was likely to start before the end of the year, with first completions on the site before the end of 2013.
- (h) The Helmsman's Training Courses were believed to continue to attract a good level of enquiries. The article in the May edition of *Waterways* magazine was noted.
- (i) Colin Edmond reported that the unused telephone line 01245 222045 at Paper Mill had been cancelled, and that the Broadband line was now supplied by Class Communications. There was an answering machine at Paper Mill, and the Heybridge line diverted to the lockkeeper's mobile if unanswered. This item could be taken off the agenda.
- (j) Roy Chandler reported that the revisions to Mark Coverly's boat operation at Heybridge were now all in operation. This item could be taken off the agenda.
- (k) Roy Chandler reported that the landing stage had been constructed at Bembridge Hotel.
- (l) The board agreed that the suggestion to install a handrail at Springfield Lock Bridge would be dropped as the difficulties of doing so outweighed the potential benefits.
- (m) Colin Edmond reported [on a matter concerning moorings at Heybridge Basin].

Other Business

- 8. (a) [Confidential item]
- (b) Roy Chandler reported that he was in correspondence with the Land Registry over a boundary dispute concerning mineral rights on land on the outskirts of Heybridge. Copies of the correspondence were tabled and would be filed at Head Office.
- (c) Jim Jenkins reported that he would be chairing the next meeting of the Advisory Group, due to take place at Paper Mill office at 2pm on 26th June.

Future Meetings

- 10. (a) The next meeting would be held at 10.45 am on Friday 21st September at Paper Mill. The following meeting would be held on Monday 3rd December at Chesham.

No other business was transacted and the meeting closed at 2.30 p.m.