

Minutes of the meeting of the board of directors held at the Navigation Office, Paper Mill Lock, at 10.50 a.m. on Friday 1st March 2013.

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

In Attendance: Graham Brown

There were no apologies for absence.

Minutes of Meetings

1. The minutes of the board meeting held on 3rd December 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) Roy Chandler reported that a boat had become stuck on the weir at Paper Mill on the evening of 30th January, when the residential caretakers were at the Users Meeting. Someone had apparently stolen the (new) ropes to the boat and let it drift down to the weir. No trace of the mooring ropes had been found. The police had been informed, and the boat rescued by Essex Waterways staff. The owner was in touch with his insurers with respect to damage to the boat.
- (b) There had been an oil leak from 'Midnight Kiss'. An oil-spill kit had been used and needed to be replaced.
- (c) Graham Brown reported there had been two engine thefts, one either side of the Navigation, at Sandford. There had also been damage to one of the boats. The Police and vessel owners had been informed.
- (d) Graham Brown and Roy Chandler had reviewed the towpath area at Heybridge between Black Bridge and Wave Bridge, [detail omitted]. The towpath in this area is to be surfaced by Essex County Council.
- (e) Graham Brown reported that there had not been any further progress on putting non-slip surfaces on walkways owing to the cold and wet weather. There were also concerns about potential visual changes to historic structures. The adhesive strips applied at Hoe Lock had begun to peel off and were not considered satisfactory. An appropriate paint with sand was now the favoured option.
- (f) Other than for vessels in poor condition, the risk register had yet to be updated. A complete review of all the risk assessments for general work on the Navigation had been started, but there was considerable work to do.
- (g) The board reviewed progress on the four vessels that had been giving cause for concern:

[detail omitted]

The board agreed to ask Hugh Turner to maintain a lookout for any vessels that were falling into a poor state of repairs and might become 'boats at risk'.

- (h) Since the last meeting, Graham Brown had circulated the draft document on flood management and John Pomfret had made some substantial revisions and additions. An updated version had been circulated with the agenda. John Pomfret reported there were still some quantitative details missing on water levels. John Pomfret would update the document further and re-circulate. [Detail omitted]
- (i) As part of the flood management review, it had been highlighted that the valve controlling water flows into feeder stream to Springfield Basin was probably not being maintained. Ownership was uncertain, but was likely to be with Chelmsford City Council. There were doubts as to whether the valve still worked. The feeder stream, and this equipment was designated Main River for flood defence purposes, and the issue ought be covered on the Flood Management Plan and taken up with Environment Agency and the Council to determine responsibilities, with a view to clarifying all ownerships and getting all equipment working. There were also questions about the drainage of Oak Tree Meadow (opposite Tesco at Heybridge), and whether there was still an operational chunker under the Navigation there. The Environment Agency would be asked about this too.
- (j) Jim Jenkins reported that Essex & Suffolk Water was progressing replacement to the caisson gate at Heybridge; however the Environment Agency had expressed an interest in the having the height of the caisson gate raised, along with the associated walls, as a means of eliminating some of the Agency's own flood defences. This would incur additional costs, which the Environment Agency would need to pay for, but would likely produce a better longer term solution. There was a concern, however, that the Environment Agency's involvement could slow down the work, whereas the need to replace the gate was urgent as it could present a major problem if the old gate deteriorated to an extent where it became stuck. Jim Jenkins would continue to pursue this.
- (k) An updated schedule of certification held at Head Office had been circulated. The following points were noted:
 - (i) [Two contractors] would be asked to supply copies of up-to-date public liability insurances certificates before they undertook further work on the Navigation.
 - (ii) The Land Rover was to have a new gear box, under warranty.
 - (iii) First Aid courses had now been undertaken by all full time staff except Martin Maudsley (booked for later in March).
- (l) Graham Brown reported training [detail omitted] had started, but there was more to do.
- (m) Work on the low brick walls at the entrance to the Heybridge facilities block not yet been undertaken, but preparations were in hand.

Staffing and Management Arrangements

- 3. (a) New contracts of employment had been issued for all staff. This had initially caused some concerns, but these had subsequently been resolved.
- (b) The board noted that Gary Ball, residential caretaker at Heybridge, had resigned by mutual agreement. Renewal of the planning approval for the residential caretaker positions at Heybridge was awaited from Maldon District Council, and due shortly. Once received the vacant position would be advertised. There had been an expression of interest.

- (c) Appraisals had been undertaken for all staff other than [one]. The board noted that Graham Brown had completed a very busy and successful first six months, and was congratulated accordingly; his contract was on a permanent employment basis.
- (d) An emergency phone number was now available on answerphones and on the web site.
- (e) A new noticeboard has been ordered for Heybridge. The old one would be refurbished and then moved to Paper Mill for use there.
- (f) The residential position at Sandford occupied by Lynsey Crump had been transferred to her husband, Colin Crump, by mutual consent.
- (g) The owners of the Haybay had advised that it was no longer available as accommodation for two of the 2013 WRG Canal Camps accommodation. The February camp had been held, and the October Camp would be held, at Danbury Outdoor Centre at a cost of [an amount]. The February camp had been successful and undertaken a good amount of vegetation clearance along the towpath at Heybridge. The accommodation had worked well.
- (h) Local Essex WRG and Chelmsford IWA branch work parties had continued, sometimes combined to make the numbers viable. A visit from Ford employees was planned. Jim Jenkins suggested that a group from Essex and Suffolk Water might be available.

Finance

4. (a) Income and expenditure reports for the twelve months to the end of December had been circulated with the agenda. The board noted the reports, and that income was largely just a little above budget, and expenditure was largely just within budget, other than for a number of capital projects which had not yet commenced and would not now start until later in 2013. The board noted comments from IWA's Finance Committee's about the need to explain to boat owners that surplus funds would be spent on capital works during 2013.
- (b) The board noted that the cash flow position remained satisfactory. Details of restricted funds had been circulated with the agenda.
- (c) Schedules showing outstanding debts and those boats without up-to-date mooring agreements, insurance certificates or Boat Safety Scheme certificates were tabled. The board was pleased to note that the number of vessels on these lists had reduced since the December meeting.
- (d) Neil Edwards outlined revised Boat Safety Scheme arrangements and that Christine Walsh now had access to Boat Safety Scheme data on line. The new procedures would be explained in the next Boaters Newsletter.
- (e) An updated draft of the proposed new mooring agreement had been circulated with the agenda. Neil Edwards suggested that the wording might be revised further to allow for a new agreement to be signed every five years, rather than every year as originally envisaged. The board agreed. A consultation on the revised agreement would be announced to boat owners in the next Boaters Newsletter.
- (f) An updated Leases Schedule had been circulated with the agenda. Roy Chandler had found documentation for some additional leases to be added to the schedule. Updates to a number of leases were being followed up. The board noted that the 'National Grid' and 'British Gas' leases on the schedule were in fact the same one. The Environment Agency leases at Heybridge, Rushes and Ulting were being chased up.

- (g) Roy Chandler reported that Chelmsford City Council had extended the discretionary relief on Business Rates for Essex Waterways until 31st March 2014, as it had run out of time to properly consider the case. There had been no response so far from Maldon District Council.
- (h) There had been no progress with the installation of further electricity remote meter readers.
- (i) Quotes for the lock gates at Hoe Mill had been received from Martin Childs and Jeff Field. Work to cills was also required at Barnes, Little Baddow and Paper Mill. The board agreed Jeff Field should be asked to undertake the works [Detail omitted]. The contracts would need to stipulate tight time deadlines with no delays to commencement of works acceptable, and all hire fees including insurance of hired plant to be inclusive in the prices.
- (j) A quote from Land & Water for the bank works below Paper Mill Lock had been received for [an amount]. The board agreed that this work needed to take place as soon as possible, as the bank was rapidly eroding. Planning and Environment Agency permissions were not yet in place, as they had needed the designs from Land & Water. John Pomfret suggested putting in a paper to the Agency setting out arguments under the Water Framework Directive and firmly mentioning the safety requirements. The board agreed that applications for planning and Agency consents should be submitted as soon as possible and that additional quotations should be sought from other companies; Jim Jenkins provided suggestions for alternative contractors.

Future Income and Grant Applications

- 5. (a) Roy Chandler reported that Essex Wildlife Trust was seeking consents for the bank protection works above Paper Mill Lock. It was now more likely that the work would be done by contractors to Essex Wildlife Trust rather than by volunteers.
- (b) The Headland Management Scheme continued for 2013. Volunteer work parties, including the recent Canal Camp, had undertaken a substantial amount of towpath clearance. Essex County Council planned to put surfacing on the towpath from Heybridge to Wave Bridge (road scalping with a fine granite topping). The board noted that this is an urban section of bridleway and very heavily used.
- (c) The potential re-grading of moorings at Sandford Lock (off-side, not towpath-side) remained to be reviewed once new facilities block had been built there, and also on the north bank moorings at Paper Mill once the new facilities block was available there.
- (d) There were no other potential grants under application.

Report from the Navigation Manager

- 6. (a) Graham Brown had circulated a detailed paper with the agenda, providing an update on various projects along the Navigation. The board commented that this was particularly helpful and the report was noted. The following points were raised from the report:
 - (i) The work at North Quay, Heybridge was now complete. The access road to this area, which is owned by the Navigation, had deteriorated with recent poor weather and would now benefit from a hard surface. [detail omitted]
 - (ii) Building regulations consent was still needed for the facilities block at Sandford, but otherwise the project was ready. Because the ground was in a flood plain, various types of specialist piling were being investigated, including chemical and helical-screw piles. Jim Jenkins offered to supply technical details of chemical option to Roy Chandler. The

board authorised up to [an amount] additional expenditure, as it was felt worth the additional cost for a long-term solution.

- (iii) The construction of the facilities block on the north bank of Paper Mill Lock had not progressed owing to water-logged ground. Work would recommence once the ground had dried sufficiently to gain access.
- (b) Graham Brown had obtained a quotation for construction of ramps to the lock gate crossings at Heybridge Sea Lock. An alternative option of raising the concrete surface with a shallower ramp was being considered, as this would have the benefit of eliminating some trip hazards on the current surface. Listed building consent was needed, but it was doubtful whether Environment Agency consents would be necessary.
- (b) Graham Brown reported that weir signs had been ordered, and would be installed from the water.
- (c) Graham Brown reported that 890 willow sets had been planted and a further 90 were on order.
- (d) Roy Chandler reported that the Maldon District Council tree officer had visited to look at willows to be taken out by the February Canal Camp, which had been agreed to, but in the process it was discovered that [a company] had failed to inform the Council when taking out willows by the school. Both Maldon and Chelmsford Councils had agreed that they would consider a blanket tree management plan to avoid excessive paperwork in the future. These would be progressed with the vegetation management plan.
- (e) The board agreed not to progress the potential site for the slipway at Hoe Mill, as it was felt it would have an adverse impact on the landscape.
- (f) Local volunteers, overseen by Bob Barron, were likely to commence electrical survey and investigation works at Paper Mill shortly.
- (g) A planning application had been submitted to relocate the gate to the entrance at the boaters' car park at Paper Mill. Timing for this work would depend on the bank repairs below the lock.
- (h) Preparations to replace the caisson gate to the Sea Lock had been reported under item 2(j) above. A meeting with Land & Marine had been held on site. The rollers for the new gate were likely to be on the bottom of the gate, rather than on the floor of the recess. Essex & Suffolk Water was arranging for the metal fencing around the caisson mechanism to be replaced or repaired as necessary.
- (i) Roy Chandler noted that the cill on Beeleigh Flood Gate was leaking and was likely to need repairs. Jim Jenkins thought that this would probably be an Essex & Suffolk Water responsibility under the Hanningfield Agreement.
- (k) Roy Chandler reported that the owners of the fishing lake near Cuton Lock had complained when recent heavy rain and flooding had washed fish out of their lake and into the Navigation.

Update on Issues Discussed at Previous Meetings

- 7. (a) Roy Chandler reported that Countryside Properties had arranged a series of public workshops to consider proposals for a possible Country Park in the area between Chelmsford and Sandford. Roy Chandler and Graham Brown had attended and reported that the general view had been against any development. A report was likely to be made public in due course. Roy

Chandler updated the board on other initiatives with Chelmsford City Council in the Sandford area.

- (b) John Pomfret had circulated an initial draft of the vegetation management plan (to be re-titled 'policy'). Board members agreed to submit comments so that John Pomfret could update and re-circulate. Roy Chandler agreed to add some notes on planning aspects but the board decided that the report should not extend to safety and method statements.
- (c) Roy Chandler reported that there had been no further progress with the Langford Leisure Park proposals.
- (d) Graham Brown reported the boundary dispute with [a company] appeared to have been resolved following an approach he had made to the company. A lease had been drafted and terms agreed. Essex Waterways would remove the tree by the bridge.
- (e) Roy Chandler reported that the planned A138 Chelmer Viaduct replacement had now been deferred by the Highways Agency. The reasons for this were unclear, but may be connected with a possible redevelopment of the former gas works site. The viaduct was visibly deteriorating, with small lumps of concrete regularly dropping off.
- (f) Neil Edwards reported that advertisements for the Heybridge camp site on external websites had been changed to Hoe Mill, and page on the Essex Waterways website had been updated.
- (g) Roy Chandler reported that redevelopment of the Travis Perkins site at Springfield Basin, into the Indigo Wharf housing development, continued to proceed well.
- (h) Hugh Turner had submitted a report on the Helmsman's Training Courses activity. The report was noted.
- (i) [Confidential item]
- (j) Roy Chandler reported that the owners of the development land at Heybridge had decided, at the last moment, not to sell the property.
- (k) Colin Edmond reported that he had not yet progressed a resolution for the lighting arrangement that would satisfy Trinity House requirements for the traffic light system at Heybridge Sea Lock, but would do so shortly.
- (l) Roy Chandler reported that the payment from the Environment Agency for a further year on the lease for the measuring station at Rushes Lock had not yet been received. It had not yet been decided whether to retain the small building that housed equipment.
- (m) Roy Chandler reported that the annual users meeting, held at Ulting on 30th January, had gone well. Notes of the meeting had been published on the website. Graham Brown had addressed some issues raised by boat owners at Paper Mill subsequent to the meeting.

Other Business

- 8. (a) Roy Chandler reported increased usage of the towpath (part of which is a public bridleway) by cyclists, and it was possible that Essex County Council might be willing to improve the surfacing in the area between Sandford and Chelmsford.
- (b) The existence of two pre-emption agreements on assets sold by the Administrator was noted.

- (c) A potential candidate for future invitation to the board was identified, and Roy Chandler was asked to follow this up.
- (d) The board agreed that it would be desirable to have an expanded Visitors Guide, including a possible Canoe Trail, when resources permitted.

Future Meetings

- 9. (a) The next meeting would be held at 10.00 am (earlier time) on Monday 3rd June at Paper Mill.
- (b) Dates for other 2013 meetings were agreed as Monday 3rd June (Paper Mill, including AGM), Monday 23rd September (changed from 6th September - Paper Mill) and Monday 2nd December (Chesham).

No other business was transacted and the meeting closed at 4.25 p.m.