

Minutes of the meeting of the board of directors held at Paper Mill Lock office, Little Baddow at 10.00 a.m. on Monday 3rd March 2014.

Present: Roy Chandler (chairman), David Carrington [from item 2(c)], Colin Edmond, Neil Edwards, Jim Jenkins, Peter Martin [to item 6(k)] and John Pomfret.

In Attendance: Graham Brown.

David Carrington apologised for late arrival and Peter Martin apologised to having to leave early.

Minutes of Meetings

1. The minutes of the board meeting held on 5th December 2013, 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 only incident of note since the previous meeting was that a cruiser had sank one night at the Paper Mill moorings. There had been no one on board overnight, and the cause was found to be a failed bung plug. Staff had refloated the vessel, for which the owners had expressed gratitude.
- (b) Roy Chandler reported that parts of the bank at Rushes Lock had been washed out during recent floods. The Navigation had been in flood for much of the winter, and long stretches of towing path had been inaccessible, so it had not been possible to carefully inspect much of the Navigation for damage yet. There would undoubtedly be a requirement for bank repairs and dredging to be done during the year, some of which might be urgent.
- (c) Neil Edwards explained insurers' revised guidance on the legal insurance requirements for motorised plant and agricultural vehicles. An explanatory note had been circulated with the agenda. The board agreed that all such plant, whether owned or hired-in should have motor insurance cover. Neil Edwards would arrange this for owned equipment and Graham Brown would advise details of all equipment to be hired in as far in advance as possible. It would also be necessary to ensure that contractors met the legal requirements.
- (d) Graham Brown reported that he had not been able to progress identification of ownership of any of the Heybridge outfalls. Colin Edmond offered to speak to a landowner in the area who would likely know. The board asked that where satisfactory arrangements cannot be reached, then the outfalls should be plugged.
- (e) Graham Brown reported that there had been discussion with a potential contractor for a procedure to replace all the walked-on boards at each lock over a period of 12 months. EWL might need to specify the order of the work so those most urgently in need to attention would be done first, and the lower gates at Hoe Mill would not need to be done, as the whole gates were to be replaced. Air-dried oak would be used, at additional cost of about [an amount]. The total cost would be just under [an amount]. The board asked for this to proceed, noting the urgent Health & Safety requirement, subject to some detail to be resolved, on the basis that EWL purchased the timber direct, rather than via the contractor. A copy of [the contractor's] public liability insurance would be needed.

- (f) Graham Brown reported that Polden Engineering had been contracted to re-site the second ladder at Hoe Mill Lock and to add self-closing gates to both sides to replace the existing chain arrangement. A gravity-close arrangement would be better than a spring close.
- (g) Directors had provided various comments to the Risk Register, which had been updated and circulated to the board. [Two] additional risks [were] identified. The board agreed that the register should be on each board agenda.
- (h) The board reviewed progress on the four vessels that had been giving cause for concern: [Detail omitted]
- (i) Graham Brown had circulated the updated draft Emergency Plan along with the Flood Management Plan, and it was agreed these should be circulated to the relevant authorities and interest parties promptly, subject to some minor format revisions to the Emergency Plan. John Pomfret would arrange for the amendments and circulation with 7 days.
- (j) An updated schedule of certification held at Head Office had been circulated with the agenda. The following points were noted:
 - (i) Public liability insurance certificates were needed from [two contractors]
 - (ii) The board noted that the crane certification would need renewing in about five weeks time. Graham Brown reported that this was in hand.
 - (iii) Check First Aid certificates. A course had been arranged for [two] local volunteers.
- (k) Neil Edwards had circulated a guidance note agreed with insurers on the use of chainsaws. The requirements for certification, risk assessments and method statements were all noted along with the requirement to work within those limits. [Detail omitted] The existing risk assessment and method statements would be reviewed when Jenny Black was due to visit on 13th March.

Staffing and Management Arrangements

- 3. (a) Graham Brown reported that there were no particular staff matters to report, other than the resignation of Neil Ramsden as a residential caretaker at Heybridge. [Detail omitted]
- (b) Roy Chandler reported that he had prepared the paperwork to apply for planning permission for an additional residential caretaker at Paper Mill, and would submit this to Chelmsford City Council shortly.
- (c) Graham Brown reported that there continued to be a steady stream of volunteer work along the Navigation, with a couple of new regular local volunteers identified. A recent London WRG and KESCRG weekend had been particularly productive.
- (d) Neil Edwards had sent out updated Contracts of Employment following salary increases at the beginning of the year. All but four of these had now been countersigned with returned copies at Head Office. Graham Brown would chase up the four outstanding.

Finance

- 4. (a) Income and expenditure reports for the twelve months to the end of December 2013 had been circulated with the agenda and were noted. There had been savings on operating costs during

2013 as less dredging and weed-cutting had been required than forecast. The expenditure recorded as being on Paper Mill Car Park would be checked.

- (b) The draft Financial Statements were noted – there were no comments.
- (c) The updated 2014 Budget in a revised format had been circulated with the agenda and was noted.
- (d) The board noted the current restricted fund balance and that there were no cash flow issues.
- (e) Schedules showing outstanding debts and those boats without up-to-date mooring agreements, insurance certificates or Boat Safety Scheme certificates were tabled. There were no particular issues not covered elsewhere.
- (f) Roy Chandler reported that the Environment Agency had still not sorted the leases at Heybridge, Rushes and Ulting, and they would again be chased up.
- (g) Roy Chandler reported that he had resubmitted applications for relief on Business Rates to Maldon District Council; otherwise there was no change in position.
- (h) The board noted that there had been no progress with the installation of further electricity remote meter readers. There would be a new meter at Indigo Wharf for the new dinghy store. Graham Brown would chase up with UK Power Networks and British Gas.
- (i) Graham Brown reported that a system of weekly or monthly reports for canoe licence sales had not yet been set up, but would action this shortly.
- (j) The board noted that the purchase order for the new Avant tractor had been placed following board agreement by e-mail. Graham Brown would investigate purchase of a tracker device. The store at Hoe Mill would be modified to accommodate the machine; the work was within existing confines, so planning permission was not required.

Future Income and Grant Applications

- 5. (a) Roy Chandler reported that Essex Wildlife Trust had postponed the planned works above Little Baddow Lock owing to flooding, including along the access route over neighbouring farmland. It would take some weeks before the land would have dried out, and for environmental reasons the work would not now be able to start until September. Roy Chandler noted to the setting up of a new group 'Essex Hub' to look Water Framework Directive issues in the area, and he had been invited to join the group to represent Essex Waterways Ltd, to which he had agreed.
- (b) Roy Chandler reported that the Headland Management Scheme was continuing.
- (c) Roy Chandler reported that there had not been any progress on identifying a site for potential volunteer accommodation. He had looked at a former factory unit in Heybridge, but had found it not to be viable.
- (d) The board noted the need for a new weed-cutter, but it was unclear how grant funding could be obtained for this.

Report from the Navigation Manager

6. (a) Graham Brown had circulated a paper to directors prior to meeting, providing an update on various projects along the Navigation. The board noted this and thanked Graham for the report.
- (b) Jim Jenkins reported that Essex & Suffolk Water was now unlikely to undertake replacement of the caisson gate at the Sea Lock until next year. The board was reminded that the lock cills at Beeleigh Flood Lock and sheeting to the wooden gates at Heybridge were also in need of attention.
- (c) Graham Brown reported that the recent storms had highlighted the need for some roof maintenance work at the lock house at Heybridge, which had been undertaken. Shed 11 on yacht stores had collapsed in one storm and would need to be replaced.
- (d) Graham Brown reported that there had been little progress on proposed utility crossings since the previous meeting owing to recent weather conditions preventing access to the sites.
- (e) Graham Brown reported that progress on the Paper Mill toilet block had been slow as work from various contractors was awaited. There was then a need for some path surface work and electrics to be installed. Opening was still likely to be about three months away. The board noted that there had been some slight subsidence on the island at Paper Mill, which had probably been exacerbated by the wet weather. The island would be built up again with dredgings from the moorings in due course, but some piling replacement would be required first. There was no planned timescale for this work.
- (f) Contractors had yet to be sourced for the gate and cill repairs at Paper Mill and Little Baddow and Hoe Mill locks. [Detail omitted].
- (g) Roy Chandler reported that work to move the car park gate at Paper Mill had been held up awaiting Council-approved contractors to undertake related highway work.
- (h) Roy Chandler reported that there had been no progress with the Sandford toilet block as a contractor had yet to be sourced for the piling foundations.
- (i) Roy Chandler reported that repairs to the wharf walls at Indigo Wharf were now complete in so far as the current funding permitted. There was still more work to do, but this would depend on further [funding].
- (j) Graham Brown reported that there was unlikely to be much income from willows over the next few months, as Wrights were fully occupied in dealing with storm damage. There was considerable damage from fallen willow trees in the Freshwater Crescent area, including some large root balls to be removed. Graham Brown would contact [a contractor] and the highways department at Essex County Council .
- (k) Roy Chandler reported that he was in discussion with Maldon District Council about tree management. There were some areas where felled trees had not yet been replaced, but this was mostly a timing issue on availability of suitable saplings. The Council had yet to review the tree management strategy, so Roy Chandler would make a formal application to match that agreed with Chelmsford.
- (l) Graham Brown reported that the schedule for works planned in 2014 was dependent on the various quotes being obtained.

Update on Issues Discussed at Previous Meetings

7. (a) [Confidential item]
- (b) Roy Chandler reported on correspondence and meetings at Bassetts Farm, near Rushes Lock, [Detail omitted]
- (c) Roy Chandler reported that there had been no further developments on Sandford Mill, and that he was continuing to chase the matter with Chelmsford City Council.
- (d) Roy Chandler reported that he had held a further meeting with the Environment Agency and Countryside Properties about the Heybridge local plan proposals for the development of 900 homes. There was some concern at flood water risks, which might be mitigated with new drains into the Navigation, and it was possible that this could be used to develop the Langford park ideas.
- (e) John Pomfret reported that he had finished all the text for the draft vegetation management policy, and has added an appendix with flora details obtained from Essex & Suffolk Water. John Pomfret would get the finished report to Roy Chandler within the next week
- (f) The board noted that the Japanese Knotweed site on the Long Pond that had previously been dealt with by contractors needed to be checked again. Colin Edmond would show the site to Graham Brown and check the position. If necessary the contractors would be brought back.
- (g) Roy Chandler reported that, in conjunction with the Navigation Company, Strutt & Parker had been appointed to negotiate the A138 viaduct replacement arrangements with the Highways Agency, as the firm had also been appointed by adjacent property owners from the Marriage family and Countryside Properties.
- (h) Roy Chandler reported that Taylor Wimpey was progressing work on Smiths Yard and Waterfront Place and that hoardings around the site had been put up.
- (i) Roy Chandler reported that there was to be an unveiling of public art and seating in Springfield Basin on 5th April at 3pm. The barge *Julie* would be made available for the event, as a link between the old commercial purposes of the Navigation and current recreation activities.
- (j) Hugh Turner had reported that there was little activity on the Helmsman's Training Courses activity owing to winter flooding.
- (k) A quote of [an amount] had been received to get the former WRG work boat re-plated so that it could be brought back into use. The board felt that this was too expensive and decided not to pursue this project at the moment.
- (l) [Confidential item]
- (m) Graham Brown reported that the owners of *Francoise* had now signed up to take the previously vacant authorised residential mooring.
- (n) Roy Chandler reported on the users meeting held in February, the notes of which had been circulated to the board and were available on the website. A suggestion had been made that there should be a representative of the boat owners on the Advisory Group; a note would be placed in the next boaters' newsletter.

- (o) Graham Brown reported that he had arranged a meeting with William Marriage to discuss arrangements with Chelmer Canal Trust.
- (p) Roy Chandler reported that the proposed development at Blackwater Timbers, Heybridge, was still under consideration by Maldon District Council. .
- (q) Hugh Turner and Martin Maudsley had prepared a report on some of the yacht stores at Heybridge. The board noted a number of unsatisfactory aspects, but concluded there needed to be a management plan for the site as a whole. This would need to include proper demarcation of the site boundary with the neighbouring landowner. The requirements of the plot leases needed to be adhered to.

Other Business

- 8. (a) Hugh Turner had prepared a draft code of conduct for canoeists, which had been circulated with the agenda. This was approved.
- (b) John Pomfret noted that there was a need to update EWL's environmental permits, for burning and dredging. John Pomfret would send some notes for assist the process.
- (c) John Pomfret noted the report in WRG's *Navvies* magazine covering the incident with the dumper truck during the October Canal Camp and felt that the tone was rather unfortunate. The lessons from the incident in terms of site management were well noted. The board also noted the importance of proper arrangements being in place for all plant and machinery, including the new Avant.
- (d) [Confidential item]

Future Meetings

- 9. (a) The next meeting would be held at 10.00 am on Tuesday 27th May at Paper Mill Lock.
- (b) Dates for other 2014 meetings were agreed as Friday 5th September (Paper Mill Lock) and Thursday 4th December (Chesham).

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