

Minutes of the meeting of the board of directors held at Paper Mill Lock office, Little Baddow at 10.00 a.m. on Friday 5th September 2014.

Present: Roy Chandler (chairman), David Carrington, Neil Edwards, Jim Jenkins, Peter Martin (to item 6(c) inclusive) and John Pomfret.

Apologies for absence: Colin Edmond. Peter Martin apologised for having to depart before the end of the meeting.

In Attendance: Graham Brown.

Declarations of Interest: Peter Martin declared that he was a trustee of Essex Community Foundation, to whom a grant application was being made.

Minutes of Meetings

1. The minutes of the board meeting held on 27th May 2014, 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) Graham Brown reported that there had not been any incidents with a Health & Safety impact since the previous meeting.
- (b) A written report had been circulated with the agenda updating on actions and matters arising. John Pomfret advised that he was working on the list of COSHH assessments, and would circulate a sample assessment to check it was okay.

Graham Brown reported that a lot of work had gone into preparation of risk assessments, and the volunteer introduced by Peter Martin had been very helpful. A set of the assessments would be circulated to directors.

A 'man down' electronic system had been put in place for lone workers, which includes a 'panic button' system – total cost about [an amount]. Twelve fire extinguishers have been acquired at nil cost from the former IWA festivals store.

- (c) Roy Chandler drew directors' attention to the recently received claim in respect of [an incident]. An on-site meeting was being set up with a claims handler from insurers, who had adopted the claim.

Insurers' request for past documentation of risk assessments and maintenance inspections had drawn attention to the need to progress the assets register for the navigation as a whole and for each site, which in turn would lead to more formal asset inspection registers. The board agreed that this work needed to be treated as a priority, but kept simple so that it was manageable.

- (d) The board noted the updated risk register and agreed that it would be considered in greater depth at the next (December) meeting. The top risks needed to be considered in greater detail to check that sufficient mitigation was in place.

Staff, Volunteer and Management Arrangements

3. (a) The report given in section D of the Navigation Management report was noted. Graham Brown reported that, subsequent to the preparation of the report, he had held a meeting [with some] residential caretakers.
- (b) Roy Chandler reported that there was potential to engage with more volunteers, but this required volunteer management resource. A volunteer who can take a more proactive role in organising other volunteers would be particularly helpful.

Finance

4. (a) Income and expenditure reports for the six months to the end of June 2014, along with a commentary, had been circulated with the agenda and were noted. The board noted that a number of areas of income were a little below budget and some expenditure was running ahead of budget, caused primarily by one-off expenses for repairs to the Heybridge Lock House and improvements to the store at Hoe Mill. David Carrington advised that recent capital expenditure had created a tax loss, so there would unlikely be the need to pass on profits to the restricted fund held by IWA, as had usually happened in previous years. This scenario would continue into the following year, whilst the tax losses were available. David Carrington would check with Helen Elliott-Adams that the funds noted in the tax calculations as needing to be paid across to IWA to take advantage of the capital allowances had been paid across.
- (b) Roy Chandler reported on the purchase of the weed cutter and the wish to purchase a new weed lifter (cost about £35k), for which funding was being applied for to a number of potential grant-giving organisations. The old weed cutter had been sold. A weed lifter would make the operation a lot more efficient. The fundraising report, prepared by Toby Gomm, attached to the agenda, was noted. If the purchase were to proceed then the bookkeeping arrangements, and whether any cost was included in the capital purchases loan, would need to be considered with the auditors. A new trailer, to carry the Avant tractor, was needed and could be purchased using a grant from IWA Chelmsford Branch. An approach would be made to the Environment Agency to see if they would assist with the purchase of the weed lifter from their flood defence budget as weed clearance in the Chelmsford area was required for flood prevention work.
- (c) A recommendation to increase mooring and other service fees (excluding the current 'round £5' fees) by 1.5% from 1st January 2015 had been circulated with the agenda. The board noted that there were a very small number of mooring vacancies at most sites, but no waiting list. The increase would be in line with the major navigation authorities and just below the Consumer Price Index, but above the average earnings increases. The proposed increase was approved and would be notified to users in the next newsletter.
- (d) The aged debtor and non compliance lists, circulated with the agenda, were noted. The proposed write-off of debts from [two boat owners that] had both left the Navigation without forwarding addresses, was noted and endorsed. The situations with [two boat owners] were noted. Graham Brown would discuss the present situation with solicitors and circulate a brief note to the board.

Major Works and Other Matters of Report

6. (a) A comprehensive report on works and other management issues along the Navigation was provided as part of the Navigation Management report that was attached to the agenda.
- (b) Roy Chandler updated the board on the delays caused by failures of contractors to provide quotes for work on lock chambers, including lock gates. Whilst gates and cills were holding

up, there was concern that a backlog of maintenance work was building up covering a number of sites. Alternatives, of carrying out the work in-house, and using smaller local contractors, were being investigated. Another approach would be made to [a firm] for manufacture and fitting of lock gates, and local specialist piling firms would be approached. The quote received from [a contractor] for piling work at Hoe Mill was considered to be too expensive. The planned sewage treatment plant at Paper Mill and cost [an amount] was noted.

- (c) Roy Chandler reported that Chelmsford City Council had offered a 20-year full-repairing lease, [on a building at an amount]. The original intent had been for a lease entirely on a peppercorn rent. The building had no insulation and would require change of use consent for most usages; services were available but would require some work to make them usable. Roy Chandler would make further enquiries.
- (d) The board noted the need for a schedule of planned maintenance work over the following twelve months and beyond as a revolving plan. The challenges of dredging work on the Long Pond at Heybridge were noted.

Management Plans for the Navigation

- 7. (a) There had been no further comment received on the emergency procedures, flood management plan and vegetation management plan. The vegetation management plan had been sent to Essex Wildlife Trust.
- (b) Roy Chandler reported that there had been no progress on preparing a management plan for the Heybridge Basin area. Graham Brown would discuss the requirements for a plan with Martin Maudsley to ask if he could start off such a plan.
- (c) The Long Term Management Plan, which was completed about four years ago, required minor amendment other than the future works programme. The works programme needed a full update and which would be informed by the Asset Management Plan.

Objectives and Budget for 2015

- 8. (a) The board noted that the 2015 budget was under preparation. For routine expenditure there were no substantial changes anticipated, other than adjustments for inflationary increases. Graham Brown would discuss budget arrangements and requirements with Helen Elliott-Adams and progress.

Other Business

- 8. (a) Roy Chandler reported that Taylor Wimpey had appointed surveyors to act for them in respect of Smiths Yard, Springfield Basin. Taylor Wimpey had also offered that the same surveyors could act for Essex Waterways at Taylor Wimpey's expense. Roy Chandler would follow this up, being careful of any potential conflict of interest for the surveyors.

Future Meetings

- 9. (a) The next meeting would be held at 10.00 am on Thursday 4th December (Chesham). John Pomfret offered his apologies for absence for that meeting.
- (b) Dates for 2015 would be set at the December meeting.

No other business was transacted and the meeting closed at 2.10 p.m.