

Minutes of the meeting of the board of directors held at Paper Mill Lock, Little Baddow at 10.00 a.m. on Thursday 2nd March 2017.

Present: Roy Chandler (chairman), David Carrington, Colin Edmond, Neil Edwards, Craig Holliday (to item 9(j), Jim Jenkins (to item 9(b)), Peter Martin (from item 3(d) to item 9(b)) and John Pomfret.

In Attendance: David Smart

Apologies for absence: Peter Martin for lateness; otherwise none.

Declaration of Interest: Peter Martin declared that he was a member of the board of the Rural Community Council of Essex which administers the county's LEADER funds.

Minutes of Meetings

1. The minutes of the board meeting held on 1st December 2016, 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) David Smart reported that there had been an incident where an elderly residential boater at Heybridge, who was in poor health, had fallen in the Basin when crossing an adjacent vessel to get ashore, [detail omitted]. David had held a long discussion with the boater concerned to express our concerns at the on-going situation and had submitted an accident report to Jenny Black at Head Office.

(b) There had been a small number of fallen trees during Storm 'Doris' on 23rd February, but there had been no major damage.

(c) David Smart reported that he was still working on Site Safety Audits and would circulate these as soon as possible.

Finance

3. (a) Income and expenditure reports for the twelve months to the end of December 2016 and other financial information had been circulated with the agenda. The financial results were largely in line with expectations. The routine activities had shown a net surplus of [an amount], which was [an amount] above budget. The reduction from 2015 [an amount] was solely down to the high sale of willows in 2015.

(b) Looking forward to 2017, Roy Chandler reported that he hoped there would be small saving on the budgeted costs for the capital works, including lock gate repairs for Hoe Mill, which had been undertaken during February. Roy Chandler said that he had asked Andrew Overy to supply a detailed report of individual project costs, and would be grateful if this could be supplied on a monthly basis in future. Neil Edwards would draw this to Andrew's attention. The board noted that project costs were generally coming in lower than budget as the in-house arrangements were producing good cost savings on previous contractor experience.

(c) A cash flow for the next 12 months had been circulated with the agenda, [detail omitted]

- (d) Roy Chandler explained that it had generally not been practice to pay mileage to locally based volunteers undertaking work on the Navigation, but extensive use had been made of some volunteers to assist with various works over the winter, and there was a need to pay mileage costs otherwise the volunteers would probably not be able to afford to offer their services. The payments would need to be controlled to those occasions where we had particularly asked the volunteers to do work for us because of their skills, etc, in order to keep costs under control. The board (i) authorised the Navigation Manager to offer a rate of 20p per mile for such volunteers, at his discretion (ii) asked David Smart to circulate a forecast estimate of likely costs, and (iii) asked that care should be taken not to allow such arrangements with volunteers to develop into contracts of employment, albeit unpaid.

Risk Register

- 4 (a) Neil Edwards had updated the Risk Register and circulated with the agenda papers. The board noted that the Stakeholder Engagement Plan, previously identified, had not been progressed so far. Colin Edmond and Peter Martin offered to draft some notes and a matrix of the stakeholders who needed to be considered.
- (b) The high risk for sufficient income generation was noted, and that various actions were in hand to endeavour to try to address this.
- (c) The next two highest risks [detail omitted] were both briefly discussed. David Smart had been in touch with local volunteer bureaus, and this was proving successful.
- (d) John Pomfret reported that there were some minor changes to terminology that needed to be updated, and he would send a note of these.
- (e) [Confidential item]

Staff, Volunteer and Management Arrangements

5. (a) [Confidential item]
- (b) The board approved a recommendation from Andrew Overy that the company should register with NEST (Government pension arranger) for the compulsory pension arrangements that were required to be put in place later in the year. Neil Edwards would ask Andrew Overy to make the necessary arrangements and to notify staff accordingly.
- (c) Neil Edwards handed out register of interest, consent and confidentiality forms and asked board members to complete these for IWA's overall Register of Interests. This was done during the meeting, and forms would be passed to Jenny Black at IWA Head Office for overall consolidation in IWA's Register of Interests.
- (d) [Confidential item].

Management Plans for the Navigation

6. (a) [Confidential item]
- (b) The board noted the current Asset Register, and asked for a list of 'D' and 'E' grade assets to be circulated.
- (c) Roy Chandler advised the following projects had been identified for work over next winter.
- Heybridge Sea Lock caisson gate

- Beeleigh Locks
- Springfield Lock gates
- Overhanging trees
- Dredging on the long pond

- (d) The WRG summer camp was planned to repairs some culverts with bank repairs downstream of Paper Mill Lock. The present state of the culverts was preventing access along the towpath with the Avant for towpath maintenance. An experienced WRG leader would be needed. Neil Edwards would pass these details to Jenny Black.

Trip Boat Victoria

7. (a) Roy Chandler updated the board on the LEADER funds application, for which staff at the Rural Community Council of Essex had been very helpful. David Smart reported that it had required a great deal of time to prepare the information required, but he was hopeful of a successful outcome.
- (b) Roy Chandler reported that Elliott Cox had formally served notice on the Navigation Company under the pre-emption agreement. Advice of this had been received from both Elliott Cox and the Navigation Company.
- (c) The board noted the proposed external funding arrangement that would be required to finance the balance of costs, or the full capital funds, should the LEADER funds grant application fail. The board agreed the rate of interest to be paid should be the same as for the IWA long term loan and asked Neil Edwards to check the proposed loan agreement with solicitors, inform IWA chairman and national treasurer (as shareholder) and then advertise the loan for take-up. The board noted that legal costs would likely be [an amount], but agreed that was a necessary expense.
- (d) David Smart reported that he had prepared further financial projections and management planning for operation of the vessel as part of the LEADER funds application. The vessel would run as 'Chelmer Cruises'. Sue Clift would be engaged to undertake administration, marketing and on-the-day greeting of passengers and organisation. Peter Martin and Jim Jenkins offered contacts with other tourist attractions in the locality. David Smart would put together an operational plan / business case for information for IWA Finance Committee.
- (e) The board resolved, subject to satisfactory negotiations with the vendor, and satisfactory funding arrangements, to proceed with the purchase of the trip boat Victoria and authorised the chairman to conclude negotiations and sign such agreements as may be necessary on behalf of the board.

Avant Tractor

8. David Smart reported that, following board approval by e-mail, the replacement Avant tractor had been ordered and was believed to have been brought into the country ready for delivery. The sales agents had been reminded that their invoice would not be paid until we had received written confirmation from the manufacturers that this tractor unit was compatible with the flail accessories. David Smart had achieved a further price reduction, down to [an amount] and an additional hydraulic attachment for no extra cost. David Smart would check on registration with DVLA.
9. [Confidential item].

Matters of Report

10. A comprehensive report on works and other management issues along the Navigation had been provided as part of the Navigation Management Report that was attached to the agenda. Reports on aged debtors, boaters' compliance, boat movements, fundraising and certification held were also circulated. The following were amongst the points noted:
- (a) [Confidential item].
 - (b) [Confidential item]
 - (c) David Smart reported an approach from a canoe adventure firm, including the provision of bike hire, for possible operations on the Navigation. [detail omitted] The board was supportive of the idea in principle and asked David Smart to progress a meeting with the inquirer.
 - (d) [Confidential item]
 - (e) Roy Chandler and Craig Holliday reported on progress with installation of the caisson gate at Heybridge Sea Lock. Essex & Suffolk Water had given a presentation the previous week, which had explained that work was running behind schedule and that Essex & Suffolk Water had decided that they would not have time to install the caisson gate and re-open the lock before 31st March, so had therefore decided to postpone installation until the autumn. There were a number of reasons, including availability of plant and commitments for outgoing vessels, why the work could not be allowed to over-run. Essex & Suffolk Water had proposed the additional work should commence in mid-September, but this date had been put back to 2nd October; work should be complete by Christmas. The new top gates had been installed and were due to be tested shortly. The lower mitre gates would be inspected and re-furbished in the autumn and further dredging of the gut (the channel from the lock into the estuary) would also be undertaken. The new sewage pipe connection was due to be installed within the next two weeks.
 - (f) A number of trees, marked as requiring attention on the tree survey, had been made safe. Resultant timber and brash was being dealt with. Trees pruned by a neighbouring commercial landowner in Heybridge had been checked by Colin Edmond and were now considered safe.
 - (g) Concern was expressed at the Environment Agency's lack of maintenance of sluices under their control along the waterway, and at the Agency's poor attitude to remedying the situation. David Smart was asked to express the board's concerns to the Agency in writing, including a request to test these structures. Roy Chandler offered to attend a meeting (along with David Smart) with the Agency, if appropriate. The board also noted that procedures set out in the Essex Waterways Flood Management Plan were jeopardised by the Agency's poor management, and that the Agency's concrete chunker by Heybridge cemetery was currently blocked.
 - (h) [Confidential item]
 - (i) Essex & Suffolk Water had advised that it was looking at the possibility of replacing both top and bottom gates at Beeleigh, and working on the retaining walls, next winter.
 - (j) Roy Chandler reported an inquiry as to when Beeleigh Weir had last been surveyed. Craig Holliday would make enquiries within Essex & Suffolk Water.
 - (k) David Smart reported that he was setting up campsite arrangements at Hoe Mill with the new residential caretaker. Electricity supply options would be looked at again with Bob Barron. An on-line booking system would also be investigated.

- (l) Roy Chandler reported that £65k in Section 106 funds had been secured for repairs to wharf walls in Springfield Basin, but the funds were unlikely to be available until early 2018. It was believed that the Waterfront would likely be reopening as restaurant shortly.
- (m) Roy Chandler reported a donation of £1,000 from IWA London Region had been promised for a new engine for the WRG work boat.
- (n) The board asked Neil Edwards to check that Sarah Frayne had the finalised version of the Social Impact Study. .

Future Meetings

- 11. The next meeting would be held at 10.00 am on Tuesday 6th June (including AGM). The following meetings would be on Tuesday 19th September and Wednesday 29th November.

No other business was transacted and the meeting closed at 3.25 p.m.