

Minutes of the meeting of the board of directors held at Paper Mill Lock, Little Baddow at 10.00 a.m. on Wednesday 29<sup>th</sup> November 2017.

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

In Attendance: David Smart

Apologies for absence: None

### **Minutes of Meetings**

1. The minutes of the board meeting held on 20<sup>th</sup> September 2017, 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. There had been no Health & Safety incidents of any substance since the previous meeting.

### **Finance**

3. (a) Income and expenditure reports for the ten months to the end of October 2017 and other financial information had been circulated with the agenda. The financial results were generally an improvement on budget, with income ahead of budget and expenditure below. The routine operations surplus of about [an amount] was considered a good result for the time of year, but there was some concern as to whether the maintenance budget was being spent fast enough to keep up with maintenance requirements. Most planned maintenance had been achieved, but the principle concern was the need for dredging on the Long Pond, the potential costs for which were difficult to accurately forecast. The board asked that the operation of *Victoria* should appear under routine activities, with the result included within *Gross Profit*, rather than below the line, on future reports. The reports were noted. David Carrington would discuss with Andrew Overy.
- (b) David Carrington had prepared an updated balance sheet showing the *Victoria* loan as a separate loan, rather than a short term liability. The board thanked David for this calculation and agreed that it presented a clearer picture with the net current assets being at a more acceptable level of deficit.
- (c) [Confidential item]
- (d) [Confidential item]
- (e) [Confidential item]
- (f) The board considered the current draft budget and noted that further work was required in considering what capital works could be afforded and achieved during 2018. The cash flow forecast would need consequent re-working. Some costs anticipated for late 2017 might not actually be incurred until early 2018. The board noted that it might be prudent to ask some suppliers to invoice promptly to ensure funds were expended in the current financial year, rather than next. This would be reviewed outside the meeting, and a revised budget circulated

to the board for consideration. This would include a schedule of capital expenditure and method and timing and source of funding.

- (g) The board noted the purchase of the new engine for Dredger and installation (total cost about [an amount]), and that there was a discussion as to whether these costs should be capitalised and/or included within the loan from IWA for capital purchases. David Carrington had asked Andrew Overy to raise this with the auditors.
- (h) The board noted the planned arrangement for refurbishment of Beeleigh Lock, in which EWL was going to undertake the work and then claim costs back from Essex & Suffolk Water. In the budget, both costs and income needed to appear above the line as part of the general activities. Care needed to be taken on cash flow to ensure that a financing cost for the work was not incurred.
- (i) The board noted the current Head Office charge and Neil Edwards explained what this covered.

### **Staff, Volunteer and Management Arrangements**

- 4. (a) The board noted that the Living Wage had increased from £8.45 to £8.75 and it was agreed that the rates for residential caretakers and Victoria crew and bar staff should be increased by [an] amount. Other staff salaries would rise by [an amount]. [Note: David Smart absented himself from the room for the discussion on his salary].
- (b) David Smart reported that he was in process of drafting a job description for the administration role and reported that [a prospective new employee], who had the necessary MCGA certification, would be taken on as an additional skipper for *Victoria* in the New Year.

### **Victoria Trip Boat**

- 5. (a) The board agreed that ‘Chelmer Cruises’ should be used as the trading name for operation of *Victoria* along with the new branding. Alicen Stenner had arranged for a Chelmer Cruises logo to be produced in the style of the new branding, at nil cost to the company.
- (b) The board noted the need for new toilet facilities at Paper Mill lock, and for a canopy for cover in wet weather for passengers before they are allowed to board the boat. The latter was needed since passengers had to be counted on boarding the vessel in compliance with MCGA regulations. The board agreed that these improvements were desirable, but the board was unsure whether these further capital improvements could be afforded just at the moment. The board agreed that further review of the budget was needed and the projected net profit for *Victoria* needed to be reviewed before a decision on these investments could be decided.
- (c) Jim Jenkins reported a chance meeting with the owner [a tour firm], who had expressed a strong interest in adding trips on *Victoria* to his firm’s regular itinerary. Roy Chandler briefed the board on investigation of arrangements for coach turning at the car park at Paper Mill.

### **Discussion Items**

- 6 (a) Roy Chandler reported that the flood risk assessment had been commissioned for the proposed Blackwater Park development, and that other design work was being progressed with a view to making a full planning application.
- (b) Roy Chandler reported that he had withdrawn the planning application for the proposed residential moorings at Springfield Basin, to enable a new flood risk assessment to be

completed. This new assessment was being delayed by the Environment Agency's slowness to provide water level data.

- (c) John Pomfret reported that Defra had published the results of the recent consultation on the removal of exemptions to hold abstraction licences for navigation purposes. EWL was [investigating the need] to apply for abstractions for the water supplies at [various locations]
- (d) David Smart reported that he had submitted an application for a dredging permit for the Long Pond in time to get an answer for the work to be undertaken before March. The EA had delayed the application as the location was close to the Blackwater Estuary, which had wildlife designations, but the application was now going through the usual process. The dredged material would be disposed of on land owned by [a riparian neighbour], who had given his permission. David Smart has been in touch with the fisheries staff at EA to seek advice to reduce risk of any fish kills as a consequence of deoxygenating the area being dredged.
- (e) Roy Chandler reported recent discussions with [relevant parties] concerning proposals for developments on the south bank above Springfield Lock.
- (f) Roy Chandler reported recent discussion with [a public sector body] concerning [a property]. The board agreed that it would like to pursue ideas for a [project] if a funding package could be put together.

## **Matters of Report**

- 7. 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) David Smart reported that he had discussed updating the asset register with Michael Cole.
  - (b) David Smart reported that the first Hi-ab training course had taken place a few days ago. He would chase up the driving licence checks from [two employees].
  - (c) David Smart reported that Bob Barron had confirmed that he is qualified with the 17<sup>th</sup> edition of the wiring regulations and could therefore undertake the fixed electrical wiring inspections across the navigation.
  - (d) David Smart reported that work was progressing on the Sea Lock and he had been attending weekly meetings with Essex & Suffolk Water's contractors. Work was progressing well despite a number of on-site challenges. Installation of the middle gates, built by Hargreaves, was still likely to proceed with the planned timing.
  - (e) David Smart reported that the Environment Agency had said that although it was not planning any works on its flood gates at Heybridge this winter, the Agency was aware of the gates' condition and planned to undertake works in the future.
  - (f) Roy Chandler reported that the Coastal Communities Team of Maldon District Council had installed information panels at Daisy Meadow car park as part of their promotion of the Salt Marsh Coast. David Smart reported that works were planned to improve the steps from the car park and the general appearance of this area.
  - (g) Roy Chandler reported that the towpath works near Tesco would be undertaken by lengthsmen and local volunteers.

- (h) Roy Chandler reported continued discussion with Essex and Suffolk Water on work at Beeleigh, including inspection of Beeleigh weir and works at the flood gates.
- (i) David Smart reported that [a landowner] was trying to clear the horses from his land where damage has been done to the embankment; the owner of the horses has been asked to undertake repairs and make good the embankment.
- (j) David Smart reported that some revetment work needed to be undertaken below Hoe Mill Lock, for which back-fill work would be required; there was ample gravel nearby.
- (k) David Smart reported that he and Michael Cole had inspected Rushes Lock and would maintain a watch to ensure the gates did not deteriorate to an unsafe state.
- (l) Board members saw for themselves, progress on the *Victoria* booking and catering office at Paper Mill Island. The board noted that nearly the whole island would require new piling at some stage in the future.
- (m) Roy Chandler reported that he had been notified of changes taking place on Chelmsford City Council's property at Sandford Mill. David Smart reported that the overhanging willows on the Meads had been taken out.
- (n) David Smart reported that exploratory trenches had been dug by hand (1.1 metres depth) to locate the gas main (medium pressured yellow MDPE pipe) near Springfield Lock. The findings should provide reassurance that heavy cranes could be driven across the site for boat and lock gate lifts without causing any risk to the pipes. Hargreaves were due to lift in new gates at Springfield Lock during the week commencing 15<sup>th</sup> January 2018.
- (o) David Smart agreed to book a venue and arrange a date for the next users' meeting and would prepare text for the next newsletter shortly. There had been little comment from boat owners to the rise in mooring costs for 2018; these were below rate increases on other navigations.
- (p) The board agreed that it would be preferable not to extend IWA's capital loan for the new engine for dredger, notwithstanding that it would probably be capitalised, but this would depend on the final budget and cash flow forecast.
- (q) David Smart reported that he had attended a meeting with Maldon Angling Society [detail omitted].
- (r) A bill had not been received from the Navigation Company for the costs of preparing its accounts recently. [detail omitted]

### **Future Meetings**

11. The next meeting (including the AGM) would be held at 10.00 am on Friday 23<sup>rd</sup> March and other meeting dates in 2018 were agreed as 30<sup>th</sup> May, 6<sup>th</sup> September and 30<sup>th</sup> November, all at Paper Mill, if *Victoria* was available.

No other business was transacted and the meeting closed at 3.30 p.m.