

WATERWAY USER & SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS

Notes of meeting. Wednesday 16 April 2008

- 1 JBry welcomed people to the meeting.

The condolences of the group were offered to the friends and relatives of Brian Watkins, Commodore of Rammey Marsh Cruising Club who sadly passed away last week. DP would pass these on to the family.

Apologies received from ASo of DBA, AM of ARA, CCo of IWAC, CR of TAG, CP of IMBA, DC of CCPR, JBa of IWA and JW of NAFAC.

List of attendees & guide to initials attached at appendix.

- 2 **Notes of meeting held on 24 October 2007**

It was agreed they are a fair representation of the meeting.

BMcD recommended that revised papers are labelled as revised.

HA expressed a desire that where contributions are made all key names should be identified.

- 3 **Matters arising**

Agreed agenda was satisfactory.

New topics raised to be discussed in AOCB – bye-laws, identification of BW staff and hire boats.

No other points to bring.

Lock gearing

It was noted that 'knack', rather than simply strength, is an important element of lock operation. RS is to give examples to VM. Establishing absolute standards is not trivial, leaking gates have an effect. Customer Service standards to be developed in due course.

RS

VM

Gauge information & Pinch points

Discussion around an up to date list. A draft list of dimensions which establish the gauge and measurements of pinch points to be produced and circulated to all members.

JBry

PP offered advice and help to build on the list. Other members to help with final list. Look at options available on Waterscape to add structure/pinch point or comment on existing entry.

SSal

User operated structures

There was a range of views in discussion on the reduction of lock keepers, from inexperienced boaters creating dangerous situations to old hands' skills being underestimated. NH voiced his support of expanding the number of lock keepers, but his concern at the recent reduction on river locks.

VM agreed there is a need to reduce costs without undermining safety and

customer service. Confirmed that a considered response to the IWA paper by BW will be formulated and circulated.

VM

Dredging

JB told the group that certain files on dredging and related discussions appear to have been inadvertently lost. SS proposed that an advisory panel on standards is to be introduced, which was welcomed by the group. One task is to look at a suitably worded dredging standard drawn from WUSIG members. Need to establish the dredging depth standard and how often is to be implemented. SCa expressed concern at overall dropping standards and lack of spot dredging of large obstacles. BMcD pointed out that rivers build up of silt is less predictable. General concern that boats are not using the middle of waterways affecting silt build up. Dredging is also paramount to flood control. Flood defence budget to be looked into. To be followed up.

SSal

4 **BW's role in regeneration & restoration**

EFRA Select Committee notes will be available on the parliamentary website soon.

RS suggested that work at City Mill lock promised for completion in April, has not happened and is blocking a route into the Olympic site. BW to investigate.

SSal

5 **Boat Licence fees 2008-2011**

SA told the group that the weight of arguments were taken account of and BWAf are looking at the many suggestions presented. All responses have been analysed by the chair and an agenda produced for 12 May BWAf sub-group meeting. The Late Payment Charge policy has been expanded upon, BW has no powers to levy fines so a charge must be related to chasing late payments, this would be at a fixed rate. Asked the group whether charge at suggested level (£185) was appropriate. General feeling that it was about right but RS was concerned it might be too high and followed up with this viewpoint after the meeting. Also asked whether it was important for people to be able to use online renewal option. Generally felt online payment was useful. Views were that current BW records on licenced boats still not up to date, not all boaters have internet access, recorded deliveries being resorted to following long delays at the Boat Licence Team (RS), needs to make sure system is foolproof, no delays (DP), unpaid fines to result in loss of ability to renew licence, 7 days to pay is not long enough (BMcD), options to renew for 3, 6 or 12 months? (MB), no licence to be issued until the full payment is received (ASo), use of Post Office to pay (RS & DK). Suggestions that the charge should be structured around cost of online facility, that a percentage of the cost of the licence should be charged and partial licences being issued until full payment received were deemed not possible for legal reasons. Simon Salem suggested a deadline of final regulations for Late Payment Charge of 1 June and implementation on 1 September with a view to alerting boaters in renewal letters to the charge. BW to report back on status at autumn meeting.

SSal/SA

6 **Overstaying at moorings**

HA/NABO had nothing to add to the paper put forward by SSam.

Group contributions included - all patrol staff should be properly briefed and

temporary mooring permits should be placed on either side of the boat, permits should have serial numbers so are more difficult to copy, include boat name and registration number.

Clarification is needed on; temporary permits for historical boats as conflicts with existing rules on overstaying (SCa) and the implications of temporary moorings on rivers (MB).

SA

RS suggested notes recorded bank-side or centrally to be automatically updated and immediately available.

NH noted legislation of towing 3rd party boats.

SA to finalise the overstaying at moorings direction for BW staff.

SA

7 **Customer service standards**

JBry opened by telling the group the tracking against the standards starts this month. Integrating assessment by user group members being considered. Advised that standards are not static and will be reviewed and moderated annually.

SSal summarised his letter to NH/APCO. Reiterated the suggestion of an advisory panel and asked for feedback and suggestions from the group. NH told the group his letter to SSal pointed out that items discussed at NUG/WUSIG seem to be abandoned, need to look at the work done over the last 15 years and draw on and take action from these. The knowledge of experienced operations people at BW should be better utilised.

Members felt that some areas of standards should have been consulted on, three holding points in narrow locks used as an example. It is hoped the advisory panel will help BW to improve in these areas. The risk assessment on the three holding points is to be circulated to the group.

VM

MB concerned about a shift in resources to implement the standards. MB will e-mail VM with specific examples of loss of service.

Suggestion that a glossary of terms could be implemented on waterscape as there are colloquialisms etc.

DK expressed his support for a panel that is not static but grows as it moves along and a need for a non-boating presence on the panel.

The group were pleased that the name badge idea, which came from local groups, is being implemented. It is evident that local waterways are trying hard to comply with standards.

It was established that the standards will be measured and reported on for the regular board meeting and that any slipping standards should be reported locally in the first instance.

8 **Moorings pricing and allocation**

Consultation is ongoing. All suggestions and responses to be considered.

9 **Towpath matters**

SD began by thanking BW, on behalf of the Horse Boating Society, for last years boathorse trip. Two certificates have been awarded to BW, one to SSal and the other to north west BW to thank them for ensuring Maria made it to the World Canals Conference.

Discussion about anti-social behaviour. Police can only get involved if sufficient lobbying and crime numbers are sought. NH advised that an aid to police is a list of each waterway structure in an area including post code and grid reference, such as that held by Ian Jarvis for the south west. BMcD told

the group that a Paramedic has a similar list for the Soar. BW should be leading the way in compiling these comprehensive lists.

ASt reported favourably on the commencement of the veg pledge on the Upper Lea, said it is being dealt with extremely efficiently. Significance of change so apparent that is raising eyebrows, reflecting need for annual cut to limit reaction. Was agreed that although vegetation management is needed for safety, it is not always welcomed by local people.

Bollards in carparks which back on to canals. Concern that these have been erected without consultation. Was agreed that there is a need for guidance and this will be reviewed.

VM

10 **Consultation – draft guidance**

JBry asked for the group's views. Discussion on consultation when BW are a partner, was agreed that BW will undertake consultation with stakeholders where appropriate, even if other partners do not.

BMcD asked for a definition of a 'significant number of customers' to necessitate a consultation. SSal confirmed that there is no hard and fast rule. BW had already consulted on the mooring tenders and the licence changes. It is a reflection of the proportion of customers a decision will affect, if BW are in any doubt the preference will be for consultation to take place at an appropriate scale. It was pointed out by PP that a significant impact on a minority would require consultation.

National consultations should be reported back to local user groups.

Consultation paper on G&S operating arrangements had been circulated.

The K&A consultation paper was tabled and will be circulated with the minutes. BW welcomes any views on this.

LH

AOCB

MB asked for BW's bye-laws to be published on the website with links also to relevant Acts of Parliament relating to BW.

JBry

BMcD put forward her concerns over identifying hire boats, i.e. name and number and contact number for emergencies. Was agreed that all boats should be treated the same. If hire boats not displaying name and number it goes against enforcement and all instances should be reported locally. SA confirmed current legislation to clamp down on unidentified boats.

SCa put forward the topic of wooden buffers on cills. Provided instances of when these are not being replaced when worn away, or filled in with concrete. Concerns this is dangerous to both boat and cill/lock if hit. Was established there is no definitive policy on this. Repairs solution depends on the specific location.

RS suggested a table of local events, e.g. rallies, could also be handed out at local user group meetings. DK would like communication of fishing events passed on to Business Units and has since shared the timetable with LH.

The National Championship events for 2008 on online canal fisheries are -
1 - Cadet/Junior/Intermediate - 5th July - Stainforth & Keadby Canal, Thorne - up to 400 anglers

2 - Division 2 - 12th July - Leeds & Liverpool Canal, Wigan - up to 600 anglers

3 - Division 3 - 16th August - Staffs & Worcester Canal, Stafford - up to 400 anglers

HA was concerned about angling pegs/numbers being a permanent fixture, DK confirmed these are decided by the local waterway.

NH updated the group on the red diesel situation. No final decision has yet been made following the talks between BMF and Revenue and Customs. Seem to be forming workable system to make selling red diesel worthwhile. Revenue will receive windfall (between £12 and £15 million) from sale. Could this be hypothecated to benefit the waterways? Unlikely.

HA asked after new Terms and Conditions for shared ownership boats, SA confirmed have not changed since 2006. Business boats - APCO have advised and a sub-committee is to be formed to look into leisure business licences. Results will go through BAAF.

SD

SD suggested resurrecting involvement in others activities. For example the angling day for boaters organised in the past, which she found most beneficial and informative. HBS will be happy to offer familiarisation days, as would HNBOC. SD to put forward an offer to be circulated.

12 **Date of next meeting Wednesday 12 November 2008**

BMcD told the group she will be stepping down her chair in July but will continue to represent RBOA in some instances, Rex Walden will be representing RBOA otherwise. Also asked why there are two representatives from some organisations, this appears to be a hangover from the NUG meetings that were separated into boating and corridor issues. JBry will consider this.

JBry

MB announced that he will be stepping down as chair for the Boating Association and Colin Tuck will be taking over.

JBry reminded the group that Stuart Sampson will not be presenting NABO at the next meeting and that LH will also be absent.

Notes of the meeting to be circulated within a week to ten days.

APPENDIX Those present at WUSIG meeting 16 April 2008 marked *

Adrian Stott	(ASt) *		John Williams	(JW)	NAFAC
Alan Meegan	(AM)	<i>Amateur Rowing Association (ARA)</i>	Jonathan Bryant	(JBry) *	<i>British Waterways</i>
Andy Soper	(ASo)	<i>DBA</i>	Kevin Blick	(KB)	<i>Canal Boat</i>
Andy Wistrow	(AW)	<i>Sustrans</i>	Kevin East	(KE) *	<i>British Canoe Union</i>
Barry Smith	(BS)	<i>CBA</i>	Liz Horne	(LH) *	<i>British Waterways</i>
Bernard Hales	(BH) *	<i>Heritage Afloat</i>	Martin Key	(MK)	<i>Ramblers Association</i>
Beryl McDowall	(BMcD) *	<i>RBOA</i>	Mike Bools	(MB) *	<i>The Boating Association</i>
Cathy Cooke	(CCo)	<i>IWAC</i>	Mike Turpin	(MT)	<i>Boat Museum Society</i>
Cedric Rainer	(CR)	<i>Towpath Action Group</i>	Neil Northmore	(NN)	<i>RYA</i>
Chris Cattrall	(CCa)	<i>Canals & Rivers</i>	Nigel Hamilton	(NH) *	<i>APCO (Hotel Section)</i>
Chris Daniels	(CD)	<i>Waterways World</i>	Phil Prettyman	(PP) *	<i>HNBOC</i>
Chris Leah	(CL)	<i>Wooden Canal Boat Society</i>	Richard George	(RG)	<i>Cyclist's Touring Club</i>
Colin Palmer	(CP)	<i>International Mountain Bike Association</i>	Richard Fairhurst	(RF)	<i>Waterways World</i>
Colin Tuck	(CT)	<i>The Boating Association</i>	Roger Squires	(RS) *	<i>IWA</i>
David Kent	(DK) *	<i>National Federation of Anglers</i>	Sally Ash	(SA) *	<i>British Waterways</i>
David Pearce	(DP) *	<i>AWCC</i>	Sam Bourne	(SB)	<i>YHA</i>
Duncan Carter	(DC)	<i>The Central Council of Physical Recreation</i>	Sam Clarke	(SCI) *	<i>BMF & CBA</i>
Edward Burrell	(EB)	<i>DBA</i>	Simon Salem	(SSal) *	<i>British Waterways</i>
Graham Myatt	(GM) *	<i>AWCC (Midland Regional Chair)</i>	Stuart Sampson	(SSam)	<i>NABO</i>
Henry Whittaker	(HW)	<i>British Horse Society</i>	Sue Cawson	(SCa) *	<i>HNBOC/Saturn Project</i>
Howard Anguish	(HA) *	<i>NABO</i>	Sue Day	(SD) *	<i>Horse Boating Society</i>
James Bryan	(JBr)	<i>National Community Boats Association</i>	Tony Boston	(TB)	<i>Commercial Boat Operators Association</i>
John Baylis	(JBa)	<i>IWA</i>	Vince Moran	(VM) *	<i>British Waterways</i>
John Hustwick	(JH)	<i>Electric Boat Association</i>			