

BRITISH WATERWAYS ADVISORY FORUM

Minutes of the Inaugural Meeting held at
Moot Court, Bentham House, University College, London
On Wednesday 11th May 2005 at 1.00pm

PRESENT

Professor Jeffrey Jowell, QC (in the Chair)

Waterway Organisations

Adrian Stott	Barge Association
Alan Meegan	Amateur Rowing Association
Arthur Bennett	Yacht Harbour Association
Barry Smith	Canal Boat Builders' Association
Bill Hall	Steam Boat Association of Great Britain
Charles Trotman (Dr)	Country Land & Business Association
Colin Hill	Association of Pleasure Craft Operators
David Blagrove	Commercial Boat Operators' Association
David Dunning	Boating Association
David Kent	National Federation of Anglers
David Pearce	Association of Waterways' Cruising Clubs
Henry Whittaker	British Horse Society
Howard Pridding	British Marine Federation
Ivor Caplan	Residential Boat Owners' Association
John Fletcher	Inland Waterways Association
John Williams	National Association of Fisheries & Angling Consultatives
Kevin East	British Canoe Union
Martin Banyard	National Community Boat Association
Martin Jiggins	Historic Narrowboat Owners' Club
Michael Turpin (Dr)	Boat Museum
Neil Northmore	Royal Yachting Association
Nicky Crowther	International Mountain Bike Association (UK)
Nigel Hamilton	APCO Hotel Boat Section
Rebecca Dixon	Ramblers' Association
Simon Talbot-Ponsonby	Sustrans
Stuart Sampson	National Association of Boat Owners
Sue Day	Horse Boating Society
Tony Mason	Association of Waterways' Cruising Club

British Waterways

Dr George Greener	Chairman
Robin Evans	Chief Executive
Nigel Johnson	Legal Director (Secretary of BWAFA Inauguration Committee)
Simon Salem	Marketing & Customer Services Director
Eugene Baston	Customer Relations Manager
Cornel Howells	Company Secretary
Amanda Strang	Customer Relations Administrator
Hannah Kitchener	National Marketing Co-ordinator

Observer

Audrey Smith – Inland Waterways Amenity Advisory Council

Apologies for Absence

Karen Capper	Anglers Conservation Association
John Hustwick	Electric Boat Association
Cedric Rainer	Towpath Action Group
Chris Leah	Wooden Canal Boat Society
Scott Deverell	Yacht Harbour Association

WELCOME & INTRODUCTION

Professor Jowell, Chairman of the Inauguration Committee, welcomed everyone present to University College, London and briefly set out the day's proceedings. Professor Jowell had chaired the meetings of the Working Group that had prepared the draft constitution of the British Waterways Advisory Forum (BWAF).

RESOLUTIONS

In considering the proposed formal resolutions to establish BWAF the meeting had before it the following documentation:

- Agenda for the Inaugural Meeting of the BWAF;
- A background note to the setting up of the BWAF, its intended purpose and an outline of its framework;
- Draft Constitution of the BWAF.
- Draft Memorandum of Understanding between the BWAF and BW.
- Statements from candidates for election to Chairperson and Vice-Chair of BWAF.

The following resolutions were then considered and voted on by a show of hands.

1. Adoption of the Constitution for the British Waterways Advisory Forum.

There was a short debate about whether heritage should be added as a separate constituency for Agenda Meetings (Para 29) but it was agreed the proposed arrangements for such meetings should ensure this was properly covered.

The resolution was then adopted unanimously.

2. **That the Chairman of the Forum to be elected at the meeting be authorised to agree a memorandum of understanding with British Waterways, in, or substantially in the form of the draft circulated with the notice of the meeting.**

In the discussion, it was agreed the Chairman should be cognizant of the meeting's view that the reference in Para 5.2 of the draft memorandum, which had the effect of excluding issues which were already subject to other consultation or public consideration initiated by BW, was unduly restrictive.

The resolution was then adopted unanimously.

3. **Proposed resolution from the Association of Waterways Cruising Clubs that either the Chairman or Vice-Chairman of BWAFF should automatically be entitled to occupy one of the places on the Ombudsman Committee.**

In the discussion the Inauguration Committee's reasons for not recommending such a course of action were explained. These included issues of workload for those involved, that the bodies had different roles and skills requirements. Further, as free-standing bodies, people were not precluded from standing for both.

The motion failed (8 in favour and 17 against).

4. **Election of Chairman and Vice-Chairman to serve from the close of the Inaugural Meeting.**

Before proceeding with the vote, Professor Jowell referred to the written statements received from the nominated candidates and invited additional questions to them. None were received.

Following the vote, which was scrutinised by Audrey Smith, it was announced the Howard Pridding, BMF, had been elected Chairman of BWAFF and Dr David Fletcher, RYA, had been elected Vice-Chairman.

Professor Jowell also announced that in a separate vote for membership of the Ombudsman Committee, those receiving the three highest votes were Nigel Stevens, (BMF), Sam Hollis (RYA) and Ann Davis (APCO).

Howard Pridding then thanked the meeting for its vote. He felt there were now important opportunities for all involved: for BW to demonstrate its commitment to Openness and Accountability and for the Forum to come together constructively and build its reputation and credibility. His approach would be inclusive and he would want to ensure he had met everyone involved as soon as possible. [Dr Fletcher was unable to attend the meeting].

Dr Greener responded for BW welcoming the election of Mr Pridding and emphasising BW's commitment to engage with the forum. As an exemplar public organisation, it needed to take account of all the people it served. With its improved consultation procedures, the establishment of the Ombudsman Committee and now the Forum, where it could exchange views on important strategic issues, this goal should be secured.

TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION AT FORTHCOMING FORUM MEETINGS

The meeting considered suitable topics for discussion at forthcoming meetings.

Three topics covered in a note provided by AWCC were agreed:

- The Property portfolio;
- Dredging Strategy
- Affordable Boating

Other suitable topics were then proposed as follows: -

- allied to dredging was the environmental quality of the rest of the canal corridor, particularly towpaths and vegetation;
- on the property portfolio, robust and succinct arguments to counter unhelpful political stances were needed;
- a comprehensive network strategy prioritising enhancements and new waterways;
- balanced approach to use of the towpath, including addressing illegitimate use ;
- crime and anti-social behaviour on waterways;
- national standards for facilities, particularly moorings, water points and rubbish removal;

- access for trail boats;
- increased attention to environmental quality of canals and their benefit e.g. as green corridors. Also water quality. Ensuring canal works are not detrimental to these;
- heritage;
- communication by BWAf to stakeholders;
- arrangements for BWAf to use local user groups as sounding boards.

Dr Greener then commented generally on the future work of BWAf and some topics proposed by BW.

He felt that one consequence of the Forum would be an increase in mutual trust with greater sharing of information and added value to published documents (e.g. Annual Report/Plan for Future).

He re-emphasised the Forum's focus on policy and strategy and that not all the suggested topics came within that ambit. Some should properly be referred to other bodies e.g. canal corridor and boating forums.

He felt that formal procedures would evolve in the Forum to cover important issues whilst informal debate continued in parallel.

Dr Greener then referred to the specific issues raised. BW welcomed the focus on the property portfolio, including the political context, and on dredging on which it had much information to share. Affordable boating was a vital strategic issue on which there were many ideas and these needed to be discussed and refined into a workable proposal.

Additional issues that BW would raise for consideration were:

- freight – including public subsidy questions;
- intensity of use (congestion and water resources).
- on restoration, which had been raised by the meeting, BW would wish to widen the strategic debate and to introduce ideas of its own, including standards of the existing restorations e.g. (Rochdale), due diligence on them, risks, unfunded elements balanced against other funding priorities (e.g. in context of Droitwich).

CONCLUSION

On behalf of the meeting, John Fletcher thanked Dr Greener and Professor Jowell for all they had done in bringing into being the Advisory Forum.

Professor Jowell also expressed thanks for the contributions of Nigel Johnson and Eugene Baston.

The meeting concluded.