

BRITISH WATERWAYS ADVISORY FORUM

Notes of Meeting held on Friday 15 May 2008

Hatton Meeting Rooms, Canal Lane, Hatton, Warwick CV35 7JL

1 Apologies

Received from;

Andy Soper - Dutch Barge Association

Pommy Sarwal - BW Board Member

Cedric Rainer - Towpath Action Group

James Bryan - National Community Boat Association

David Kent – The Angling Trust

Attendees appended.

2 Notes of meeting on 16 May 2008

Approved

3 Matters arising

None

4 Election of BWAFF Officers

The representatives present at the meeting agreed to amend the BWAFF constitution to extend the term of office for the Chair and Vice Chair to three years. An amended constitution will be circulated before the next meeting for formal approval.

CK

Nigel Stevens was re-elected as Chair for a further 18 months to bring his term of office into line with new constitution. It was also agreed that Dave Fletcher would retain the position of Vice Chair until he had served three years & six months, ensuring the handover and officer elections can be staggered.

5 BW Financial report

Robin Evans had planned a presentation on BW's financial position.

Due to time constraints this was not presented but the presentation can be found at <http://www.britishwaterways.co.uk/listening-to-you/meetings/bwaf>

6 Operational Efficiency Review

Not discussed

7.1 Strategy and Structure Proposals - 2020 – A Vision for the Future

Robin Evans gave a short presentation which can be found at <http://www.britishwaterways.co.uk/listening-to-you/meetings/bwaf>. There followed a general Q & A session;

Q There only seems to be one proposal in the consultation document rather than a series of options, why?

RE - The option of a third sector status appears to be the best option open to BW

and we seek your views on this.

Q The detail of how BW achieves the status of third sector does not appear to be thought through, how can stakeholders comment at this stage?

RE – We are hoping for a high level strategic debate at this time and obviously a lot of detail is yet to be worked through. What is apparent though is that our public and user participation levels need to improve and we will be looking to see how we can restructure our engagement techniques and methods to capture a wider audience.

Q Do local authorities currently see themselves as stakeholders for the waterways, has BW been missing an opportunity, need for LGA membership?

RE - BW hasn't been missing a trick; in fact we have been receiving between £15 - £18 million local authority funding every year for quite some time. Vast majority of funding is in form of small grants for towpath improvements, new facilities etc. On the ground BW is very connected to local authorities but we accept we don't engage strategically. New structure internally will create Regeneration Directorate to target these stakeholders. Changes to the planning system bring exciting opportunities for BW.

SS - It is true that there is a need to change the 'consultative machinery'; we all need to change the way we behave and consult and with whom.

Q Can you explain how the £30 million funding gap will be closed through these changes?

RE - £10 million saving in year 2 and 3 of our current plan through efficiency measures. Inflation may have already brought our funding gap down. RE will not guess at funding available to third sector body, it's a ten year strategy, a journey and all the detailed answers are not yet available.

Q Will users be involved at board level in the new body?

RE – Currently this is a Secretary of State decision. Clearly in the future participation and consultation needs to capture a wider audience, not just users.

TH – Board representation needs to reflect the funding sources of BW. Currently reflects the commercial risk BW holds. BW has recently demonstrated over £500m public benefit through its work, £60m contribution to flood defence measure in the UK. Future board members should reflect the role and funding sources of the organisation.

Q At what stage will it be apparent that govt has bought into the proposals?

RE – The Minister has already welcomed the debate and looks forward to the results.. There will be a gradual move towards a consensus TH – We may just 'catch the mood', given the political climate.

Q What has changed since the last time BW looked at charitable status as an option?

RE – Development of Community Interest Companies and Govt commitment to third sector has strengthened. A general keenness on social enterprise has developed and government is happier to allow local communities to manage public enterprises. Treasury will still need to be reassured that it will not be left with a liability.

EP – Third sector is now £70 billion sector and is now recognised as a major part of this society. Many third sector bodies have contracts with government.

Q Will the proposals require legislative change?

RE - Will depend on exactly what solution is selected.

Q If a future government decides it only needs one major navigation authority – how will this work? Will it help if users consider this at the same time?

RE - It's important the users explore whatever they feel is appropriate to secure the future of the waterways and we can factor this into the debate.

However BW's ability to focus on what's important to the waterways is crucial going forward. Currently we are asked to contribute to govt targets that have no direct benefit to the waterways; social housing, drug addiction etc. In the third sector we can decide what is important to the future of the waterways and how we spend our time and resources.

Q Have BW completed any stress testing for the proposals, does it stack up financially?

RE – Not in that place yet – this debate is the start of a ten year journey. To get to a third sector status we need to change the way in which we consult and engage and this will open up new opportunities. RE can't see a down side of the journey. Financial stress testing comes later. RE wants to get the organisation in a fit state to secure the future of the waterways.

7.1 **Strategy and Structure Proposals - Internal Structure Review**

Robin Evans gave a short presentation which can be found at <http://www.britishwaterways.co.uk/listening-to-you/meetings/bwaf>.

RE explained that BWAf can help during the internal consultation phase (12 weeks) by engaging with our staff. Support for the new structure will assist our staff in understanding the external viewpoint.

SS gave details of the public consultation launched recently on the geographical boundaries and names. Details of this can be found at <http://www.britishwaterways.co.uk/listening-to-you/meetings/bwaf>

Several BWAf members welcomed the proposals, in particular the creation of a single trade contact point and the creation of the 11 smaller operational units.

RE pledged to publish a booklet at the completion of the changes which clearly identifies named customer contacts in the business.

SS

NS commented on the professional approach that BW staff have maintained since the announcement. Despite the current difficult circumstances it appears that BW staff are remaining positive about the future and presenting a professional image to customers.

8 **Asset Inspection Procedures**

Jim Stirling answered questions relating to the data circulated before the meeting (attach link) and gave a short presentation which can be found at <http://www.britishwaterways.co.uk/listening-to-you/meetings/bwaf> . Aim of this

session was to build a general awareness of the asset management process to enable members to appreciate the prioritisation of expenditure.

EP stated that the BW board are reassured that the risk management processes in place are working.

BWAF members commented that they found the presentations and discussions helpful and felt prepared to respond to external questions when required.

9 **BWAF Heritage Group**

Dave Fletcher gave a summary of the minutes of the BWAF Heritage Group Meeting held on 9th March 2009 <http://www.britishwaterways.co.uk/listening-to-you/meetings/bwaf>.

CH suggested that BW could make use of waterscape to publicise the sale of waterside cottages. RE agreed to explore this good suggestion. RE

RE agreed to consider a wider consultation policy in relation to the sale of heritage buildings. RE

Post Meeting Update

1. BW has pledged to give BWAF HG advance notice of any sales of Grade II or Grade I Listed Buildings.*

2. BW will also undertake consultation with Local Planning Authorities, statutory heritage bodies and key local stakeholders including BWAF Heritage sub-group, where practicable and appropriate, when developing and regenerating BW owned sites which contain historic buildings and structures'.

10 **Online Mooring Policy**

Rex Walden outlined work being done by RBOA and BW. A full report will be available post 8th June. RW

11 **AOB**

Date of next meeting

12 November 2009 Hatton

Caroline Killeavy
28 May 2009

Attendees *

Nigel Stevens *	Chairman	Tony Hales *	BW Chairman
David Fletcher *	Vice Chairman	John Bridgeman *	BW Board member
		Eric Prescott *	BW Board member
		Pommy Sarwal	BW Board member
James Bryan	Nat Community Boat Ass (Trevor Roberts*)	Duncan Sutherland *	BW Board member
		Robin Evans *	BW Chief executive
Sam Bourne	Yacht Harbour Ass	Simon Salem *	BW Director, Marketing
Cathy Cooke	IWAC (observer)	Jim Stirling *(part)	BW Director, Technical
Ann Davis	British Hirer Cruise Fed	Caroline Killeavy*	BW Customer Relations
Sue Day *	Horse Boating Society		
John Dodwell *	Commercial Boat Owner Ass	Alan Meegan	Amateur Rowing Ass
Tony Dunn	Steamboat Ass	Gus Lewis	Royal Yachting Ass
Colin Tuck *	The Boating Ass	David Pearce *	AWCC
Kevin East *	British Canoe Union	Cedric Rainer	Towpath Action Group (Andy Screen*)
Clive Henderson *	Inland Waterways Ass		
Nigel Hamilton *	APCO Hotel Boat Section	Stuart Sampson	Nat Ass of Boat Owners
John Hustwick	Electric Boat Ass	David S Fletcher *	Nat Ass of Boat Owners
Phil Prettyman *	Historic Narrowboat Own Club	Barry Smith	Canal Boatbuilders Ass
Mark Lloyd	Anglers Conservation Ass	Andy Soper	The Barge Association (Julian Tether *)
Howard Pridding *	British Marine Federation		
Will Chapman *	Save our Waterways	Mike Turpin	Boat Museum Society
David Kent	Nat Federation of Anglers	Mark Weston	British Horse Society
Renata Edge	Wooden Canal Boat Society	John Williams	Nat Ass of Fisheries & Angling C
Martin Key	The Ramblers Ass	Andy Wistow	Sustrans
Andrew Goldsmith	Ass of Canoe Traders	Rex Walden*	Residential Boat Owner Ass
