

BRITISH WATERWAYS ADVISORY FORUM

Notes of Meeting held on Friday 16 May 2008

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

1 Apologies

Received from Cathy Cooke, IWAC; Ann Davies, British Hire Cruiser Federation; David Kent, National Federation of Anglers; Gus Lewis, Royal Yachting Association; Mark Lloyd, Anglers Conservation Association; Cedric Rainer, Towpath Action Group; John Williams, Nat Ass Fisheries & Angling Clubs.

Attendees appended.

2 Notes of meeting of 7 November 2007

Approved

3 Matters arising

BW & consultation process Draft paper BWAf 02/08 welcomed. Could usefully be strengthened in terms of when consultation is / is not appropriate with clearer distinction between policy and operational matters. Clear explanations when BW reaches certain decisions following consultations are helpful. Operational matters of material interest to customers should involve appropriate levels of consultation.

JB

Customer service standards People, Safety & Performance standards now in place and being tracked against since April. These mark a transition towards a comprehensive set of practical, useable standards that can be developed with year on year improvements in mind. An advisory panel is to be established. Ideas for potential panel members to Jonathan Bryant.

ALL

Discussion on the status of what had been referred to as Sim standards. These remain relevant and are to be updated / integrated with the set of customer service standards as and when appropriate. Noted that BW is currently funded to only 70% of steady state maintenance and that although £7m a year is being spent on dredging, this does not go as far as anybody would wish.

4 Appointments to Waterway's Ombudsman committee

Following a ballot, Sam Hollis, Geoff Ashton and Ann Davies are appointed BWAf representatives.

5 BW role in restoration & regeneration

BW chairman, Tony Hales, set out the reasons for BW board's decision to withdraw from the Cotswold restoration project. BW's absolute priority, recently reinforced by the Minister, is to maintain the existing system. BW had committed considerable resource to the Cotswolds project and agreed to increase its cash contribution from £1m to £6m over a period of time. However, project risks were not sufficiently contained and BW found itself unacceptably exposed. BW's board understood that its moral support for such projects was important but a £15m cash requirement to repair the Mon and Brec breach meant that it had little option but to withdraw. BW is exiting in an orderly fashion that is supportive of partners'

further work and hopes that the project objectives can still be met at some point in the future. Other restoration and new waterway projects that BW is committed to are not at risk.

John Fletcher had not been surprised by the decision. BW had kept the project alive for longer than he anticipated. He referred to the excellent partnership arrangements on the Manchester, Bolton & Bury.

David Fletcher disagreed with the decision and urged BW to retain an interest. The project may come around again.

6 **Status review and future BW strategy**

Independent consultants KMPG, are shortly to report to the BW board on conclusions they have reached regarding future models for BW and what advantages, if any, these might offer over the current public corporation status. BW's board will consider these and determine which, if any, should be taken forward for discussion with its shareholder governments.

Leading on from this will be a programme of work around how BW can best take its waterway business forward strategically. This is likely to hinge around governance, commercial & borrowing powers and a modernisation programme all linked to public benefit and the funding of it.

BW will consult its stakeholders at key points in these processes and BWAFF has a significant role to play in this. The time frame will be linked to the next comprehensive spending review. JB

7 **The six challenges**

John Dodwell who leads a working group considering these, reported on work to date. A first draft paper was subsequently circulated. It is clear that there are no easy quick fit answers. BWAFF member organisations will continue to work towards improvements which might be achieved over the long term.

Comments to John Dodwell. Working group to draw conclusion by November meeting. BW to arrange research / analysis assistance regarding populations / household in local authority areas benefiting from BW waterways. ALL
JB
JD

8 **Boat licence fees**

Additional paper BWAFF 06/08 had been circulated by the licensing sub group led by the chairman. APCO will have further discussions with BW regarding business licences and results will be considered by the subgroup. Generally agreed that licences should not be based on miles travelled though there may be merit in a differential element for continuous cruisers. Agreed that means testing is not an option though some form of entry level support may be appropriate. General, but not unanimous view, that charging by area rather than length, could be workable. Continuous cruisers who wished to stay within a small geographical area might be offered a roving mooring permit. Group thanked for its considerations which had been captured.

The paper to be updated, setting out proposed principles and specific recommendations. The next step is to model alternative pricing options to show effects on both individual customer groups and on BW revenue. BWAFF will then advise further. NS
SA

9 Allocation / pricing of BW moorings

Draft consultation paper reviewed and discussed. It is a complex subject and this consultation may attract more response from representative organisations than from individual boating customers.

If the key issues could be summarised in a few pages then more individual boating customers are likely to participate in the consultation. The response form upfront alongside a summary might also assist – it could make the consultation accessible to more people.

SA

Noted that BW has around 4,500 directly managed moorings and around 160 had been tendered so far. Point made that the consultation avoids the question of residential moorings and geographical factors.

Noted that breadth of view within BWAFF on this subject is considerable. However, it would provide a high level steer on the main factors.

NS

10 Report from heritage sub group

Notes of the group chaired by David Fletcher had been circulated BWAFF 05/08. He commended BW's policy and direction documentation. Also implementation manuals. The group was recommending some minor amendments which BW would consider. The plan to have volunteer heritage experts supporting BW teams in each area was welcomed.

RE

DF

Robin Evans asked BWAFF members to inform him if they learned of instances where BW had fallen short on a heritage perspective. Occasionally things can go wrong and BW needs to take lessons from such circumstances.

ALL

The group requested that BW considers the appointment of a non exec with specific heritage experience. Tony Hales pointed out that three board members have experience of railway preservation, historic dockyards and building preservation trusts, respectively. In addition Sir Neil Cossons, a previous BW board member remains close to the board and available when required.

Disposal policy for BW working boats was questioned. Why are private individuals currently prohibited from acquiring them? Robin Evans welcomed this question since individuals are often better placed to care for boats than charitable bodies. Current policy reflects previous representations to BW by waterway organisations but BW will amend the policy in the light of this discussion. BWAFF through its heritage subgroup might advise, if required, on relevant matters relating to such disposals.

RE

11 Water abstraction

Item deferred.

12 BW residential property portfolio

BW is undertaking a review of its residential property portfolio to determine whether there are better ways to care for and generate income from it than existing directly managed arrangements. Professional advice being sought. All tenants have been informed.

13 Emergency services / access to boats

Stuart Sampson noted certain instances where emergency services have declined to board boats or BW structure to assist. Each BW business unit liaises appropriately with their local services and any such occurrences should be few and far between. BW to check position.

RE

AOCB

Residential moorings to be discussed at next meeting. Rex Walden would prepare a discussion paper.

RW

David Stevenson thanked the chairman for his invitation to Save Our Waterways to attend the meeting. SoW does not intend to encourage waterway enthusiasts to defect from other organisations to it.

Date of next meeting Friday 14 November 2008

Jonathan Bryant

27 May 2008

Attendees *

Nigel Stevens *	Chairman	Tony Hales *	BW Chairman
David Fletcher *	Vice Chairman	John Bridgeman *	BW Board member
		Pommy Sarwal *	BW Board member
James Bryan	Nat Community Boat Ass	Eric Prescott *	BW Board member
Edward Burrell *	The Barge Ass	Duncan Sutherland *	BW Board member
Ivor Caplan	Residential Boat Owner Ass	Robin Evans *	BW Ceo
Cathy Cooke	IWA Council (observer)	Simon Salem *	BW Director, marketing
Ann Davis	British Hirer Cruise Fed	Jonathan Bryant *	BW Customer service
Sue Day *	Horse Boating Society	Sally Ash *	BW Boating
John Dodwell *	Commercial Boat Owner Ass		
Tony Dunn	Steamboat Ass	Rex Walden *	Residential Boat Owner Ass
Colin Tuck *	The Boating Ass	Dean Maragh	Ass of Canoe Traders
Kevin East *	British Canoe Union	Alan Meegan	Amateur Rowing Ass
Ian Ferguson	The Barge Ass	Neil Northmore	Royal Yachting Ass
John Fletcher *	Inland Waterways Ass	David Pearce *	AWCC
Nigel Hamilton *	APCO Hotel Boat Section	Cedric Rainer	Towpath Action Group
John Hustwick	Electric Boar Ass	Stuart Sampson *	Nat Ass of Boat Owners
Colin Hill	APCO	Barry Smith	Canal Boatbuilders Ass
Sue Cawson *	Historic Narrowboat Own Club	Andy Soper	The Barge Association
Mark Lloyd	Anglers Conservation Ass	Mike Turpin	Boat Museum Society
Howard Pridding *	British Marine Federation	Mark Weston	British Horse Society
David Stevenson *	Save our Waterways	John Williams	Nat Ass of Fisheries & Angling C
