

# SAVE OUR WATERWAYS

## NOTE OF MEETING

Held on Saturday 11 October, 2008

Commencing at 1100

In the Lichfield Cruising Club

(With the permission of its officers and members)

**Attending SOW Committee:** Will Chapman (Chairman); David Stevenson (Deputy Chairman); Martin Clark; Bruce Napier; Mike Shefras.

**Apologies from Committee:** Neil Arlidge and Richard Carpenter

**INVITED:** Principal Speaker – John Edmonds

### OTHERS PRESENT:

NAME	AFFILIATION	E-MAIL
Des Barnard	Lowfield CC	<a href="mailto:des.barnard@bramleyway.net">des.barnard@bramleyway.net</a>
Gordon Blackmore	LHCRT	<a href="mailto:bob.williams@lhcr.org.uk">bob.williams@lhcr.org.uk</a>
Heather Blackmore		
Tom Brophy		<a href="mailto:superunknown@fsmail.net">superunknown@fsmail.net</a>
Chris Coburn	TWT/IWA( VP)	<a href="mailto:coburn@nb-progress.com">coburn@nb-progress.com</a>
Clive Henderson	IWA (Chair Elect)	<a href="mailto:clive.henderson@waterway.org.uk">clive.henderson@waterway.org.uk</a>
Brian Kingshott	LHCRT	<a href="mailto:brian@park-cottage.fsnet.co.uk">brian@park-cottage.fsnet.co.uk</a>
Barry Kirby	CCAG	
Alan Law	Dawncraft Owners	<a href="mailto:dawncraft@gmail.com">dawncraft@gmail.com</a>
Stewart Marchant	IWA/SOW	<a href="mailto:stewartmarchant@hotmail.com">stewartmarchant@hotmail.com</a>
Chris Todd	SOW	<a href="mailto:chris@todd.co.uk">chris@todd.co.uk</a>
Jan Todd		
Vaughan Welch	Res Com	<a href="mailto:kvwelch@supanet.com">kvwelch@supanet.com</a>
Frank Weetman	Lichfield CC (Chair)	<a href="mailto:frank-weetman@virgin.net">frank-weetman@virgin.net</a>
Bob Williams	LHCRT	<a href="mailto:bob.williams@lhcr.org.uk">bob.williams@lhcr.org.uk</a>

### APOLOGIES:

Pauline Hinton, Rodney Hinton, Graham Speechley, John Laidlar, Guy Morgan, Mike Bonathan, Barry Keightley, Brenda Ward, John Glock, Richard Tanner, Ann Chas, Mounsey Robinson, Louis Jankel, Tony Collins, Tony Haynes, Tony Lenten, Nick Atkinson, Ray Bultler, Alex Potter, Roger Millin, Colin Lord, RD Hollands, Peter Jordan, Simon Robbins, Sandra Henstock, Richard Carpenter, Stuart Sampson, Neil Arlidge, Brian Rich, Ken Keegan

FOR FUTURE REFERENCE THESE NOTES ARE COMPREHENSIVE ENDEAVOURING TO GIVE THE FULL 'FLAVOUR' OF THE MEETING AN EXECUTIVE SUMMARY WILL BE FOUND FROM ITEM No. 15.

### A. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

WILL CHAPMAN – CHAIRMAN, SAVE OUR WATERWAYS (SOW)

1. Will welcomed those attending the meeting and read out the names of those who had apologised, many with their best wishes for a good meeting. Unfortunately this date clashed with a wedding of an inland waterways personality and a meeting of AWCC.

2. Our principal speaker John Edmonds was not able to be with us until after lunch so the previous agenda will be re-organised to accommodate this. He hoped that this would not inconvenience any attendee.
3. From the inaugural meeting held on 10 April, 2008 the committee were charged to take forward several actions.
  - 3.1 **Co-option onto the Committee** – The committee felt that it should have the power to co-opt to its number, if a suitably qualified person was prepared to become a member.
  - 3.2 **Proxy Voting** – The committee had this still under review but initial thoughts were that it was not a very good idea.
  - 3.3. **Possible candidates for the standing committee** – The committee would always consider any nominations and it will be up to the membership at AGMs to democratically follow this through.
  - 3.4 **Membership Categories** – Was a matter still under consideration with various actions currently being taken. The main proposal being a Group Membership category.
  - 3.5 **SOW members were reminded** that the first Annual General Meeting had already been scheduled for **14 March, 2009** at a venue between Stafford and Rugby. Members would be advised.

## **B SOW - THE WAY FORWARD**

### **WILL CHAPMAN**

4. Will then gave an overview of how SOW originally commenced its work and how we have arrived at the present.
  - 4.1 In 2006 Defra faced an unprecedented black hole in their finances with the result that funding to navigation authorities was slashed. IWA announced a campaign based on protests in Birmingham and London. Seven volunteers launched the Save Our Waterways campaign with the aim of holding protests around the inland waterways network.
  - 4.2 It obviously hit the mark as in a very short time with the co-operation of other user groups there were 49 vocal protests organised as ‘blockades’ on the water with over a 1,000 boats taking part and a petition of 42,000 signatures that went to government.
  - 4.3. However, it was clear from the protests that they were boat centric whilst 95% of user the nation’s waterways are ‘casual users’. Talking to people watching the protests it was clear that there is a huge misunderstanding by the public on how the waterways are funded.
  - 4.4 BW statistics show 95% of waterways users are the ordinary public and less than 5% are boaters.
  - 4.5 In April 2008 SOW became a membership organisation with a membership fee of £5 per annum. The main objectives being to represent the casual users who are largely unrepresented by any other user group and to take the message of the dangers facing the waterways to the community.
    - 4.5.1 Since April, SOW supporters – many carrying banners on their boats – have been distributing posters and membership flyers around the network. Having laid this

foundation, the next step is to initiate a local media campaign based on the issues that this meeting has been called to discuss and to assess the way forward.

- 4.5.2 Will's background was from Athletics where he was involved in the organisation of national mass participation events many of which involved local authorities and councils. From this he developed the germ of an idea to carry this experience to benefit the Waterways.
- 4.5.3 He is putting to the meeting, that the messages coming out of government – led by DEFRA and IWAC – are that the many government departments that benefit from the waterways should begin to put something back. In particular local authorities reap many benefits and he hoped from the papers presented that we will be able to identify ways of encouraging wider public and local authority involvement.
- 4.5.4 How do we promote the message so that we can include schools, house owners by the waterside; councils and other authorities and other decision makers?
- 4.6 He would hope that from this meeting we would be able to find a **SIMPLE BUT POWERFUL MISSION STATEMENT THAT IS PROMOTED BY ALL USER GROUPS.**

**WITH THAT EARLY MESSAGE HE WAS DELIGHTED TO INTRODUCE THE FIRST SPEAKER.**

## **C. HOW IWA SEES THE WAY FORWARD**

**CLIVE HENDERSON  
IWA WEST MIDLANDS CHAIRMAN  
IWA DEPUTY CHAIRMAN**

- 5. Clive introduced himself as being nominated to take over from John Fletcher as IWA National Chairman subject to election at the IWA November meeting.
- 5.1. He gave his background in boating as a sea scout using canoes on the River Wye and on the Thames and Medway estuaries, which led to service on various waterways committee through the IWA which he joined initially to take advantage of the lower insurance deal which was on offer.
- 5.2 He served on IWA regional committees and became the chairman of the West Midlands which meant that he served on the IWA Council of management.
- 5.3 From initial outings on the Oxford Canal and by attending various rallies he gained a wider knowledge of the British inland waterway system.
- 5.4 IWA has been taking a long look at how it is organised and from 24 "Trustees" the intention was to reduce it to a more workable number, with an initial proposal to do away with its regional structure.
- 5.4.1 The original plan did not meet with full approval and continual improvements were made with the hope that the working council will be more like 9 members representing the regions plus an equivalent number of nationally elected trustees plus one.
- 5.4 2006 was a milestone year it being the 60th anniversary of the organisation. It served to concentrate the mind. The narrow boat "Jubilee" which had been used throughout the country for promotion was in its final year and, whilst there had been a problem in managing the craft, each region took responsibility of the boat and moved it on in good condition it having served its purpose of making the Region aware of the IWA.

- 5.4.1 Each region used the boat to entertain local dignitaries and MPs and the visitors book started to look impressive. It was clear that few local council leaders or mayors knew anything about their local waterways or their importance.
- 5.5 So what was the way forward? Defra ‘fouled up’ in 2006 and, whilst IWA protested vigorously, because of its constitution at the time it was not able to react as quickly as SOW, but did have very good protest on the Thames outside Parliament.
- 5.5.1 It is not certain how much the protests achieved, but whilst it did not attract more money it did raise the profile of the waterways. The situation was not assisted by the Waterways Minister at the time, but he was replaced and Jonathan Shaw started very well when he took his place. Regretfully, he in turn has moved on, but a video statement at the BW AGM on 8 October, 2008, suggests his replacement, Huw Irranca-Davies, appears to be following Shaw's lead.
- 5.6 Probably one of the best things John Prescott achieved in his term of office was to set in train the Waterways for Tomorrow process which turned into a blue print for improvement of the nation’s waterways.
- 5.6.1 We are now promised that there is to be a review on the document which lightly has been named “Waterways for the Day after Tomorrow”. IWA and other user groups [including SOW] will be considering the review of the original paper to bring it up to date.
- 5.6.2 The value of the waterways is not fully recognised by government.
- 5.7 In the past IWA has been slow to make decisions. It hopes to speed the process and has employed two new people to aid the process; Jo Gilbertson and David Padfield.
- 5.8 In the past week IWA has had a meeting with Defra who advised that it was a Cabinet collective decision to guide all public funding to the waterways through Defra to take account of all government departments and they claimed that the current grant represented a full recognition of the value of waterways.
- 5.8.1 IWA will now be working to seek justification for this statement.
- 5.9 Government gives £58m to BW which is just a £1 per person – BW AGM suggested that for the £58m the public benefits to the tune of £500m
- 5.9.1 There is a question on the value of return on the BW Assets.
- 5.10 IWA has published its current Campaign Strategy which was distributed throughout the room.
- 5.10.1 It is a four page document providing an outline of the IWA’s established aims; with four separate annexes. (Annexed to these notes.)
- 5.10.2 Annex A - Ongoing Campaigning Issues
- 5.10.3 Annex B - Long term Campaigning Issues (over 5 years)
- 5.10.4 Annex C - Medium Term Campaign Issues (3-5years)
- 5.10.5 Annex D – Short Term Campaigning Issues (0- 2 years)

- 5.11 Clive then distributed a glossy A4 eight page leaflet titled “Keeping Our Waterways Alive”. Briefing Notes for Members of Parliament.
- 5.11.1 Regretfully a decision has to be made on progress of this paper as it contains the name of Jonathan Shaw, but it will be progressed very quickly as it gives a full briefing to all members of parliament. It was widely distributed to MPs at the recent two party conferences.
- 5.11.2 It mentions both BW and EA as the main players in providing Waterways with statistics.
- 5.12 Clive covered restoration and looking back to what the waterways used to be like.
- 5.13 He mentioned that the Broads waterways appeared to be under-represented within IWA.
- 5.14 IWA is a registered charity and is constrained in some ways by the requirement of this responsibility however it could represent 50,000 waterway enthusiasts from the 18,000 in current membership if affiliated societies and boat club members are taken into account.
- 5.15 It has been suggested that IWA are too cosy with BW, but it must be right to maintain civilised and co-operation rather than an antagonistic attitude between the two parties.
- 5.16 What department of Government is correct for managing the waterways is open for conjecture – suffice it to say the narrow canal system is unique. It brings tourism for example.
- 5.16.1 It would be very short sighted if waterways were abandoned and reversed into their early pathetic state.
- 5.17 There were several points made from the floor:
  - 5.17.1 Will Chapman – SOW will has a software package that generates topical letters to MPs and he hoped that IWA would find it useful – Clive’s response – we must not overkill with letters to MPs’. The IWA Briefing should fill in the background.
  - 5.17.2 Several on the floor made the point that BW appeared to spend their money in a profligate manner, for example, providing unnecessary bollards on narrow locks. Another example, the fact that restoration groups can bring in contracts at a considerable saving on the way BW carry out their duties and an example of a grass cutting contract was described. A small company was cutting and looking after the towpaths. It was deemed too small to quote because of government guide lines. So a larger company bid for the work at a much higher price and then subcontracted the work back to the same little company who got the same money, but it had cost BW much more money!

**Will thanked Clive for a most interesting presentation and at 1205 introduced Michael Shefras to give an overview on some Environment Agency Issues.**

## **D. ENVIRONMENT AGENCY ISSUES**

**MICHAEL SHEFRAS RYA THAMES REGION CHAIRMAN, THAMES USER GROUP (Navigation) CO-ORDINATOR, VICE PRESIDENT RIVER THAMES SOCIETY**

- 6. Prior to Michael starting his presentation he took the opportunity to comment on what Clive had just said.

- 6.1 He applauded the work of IWA, but it should be put into perspective. BW has approximately 30% of boat licences (Albeit they have a longer number of miles); EA waters cover virtually the same number of boaters; the Broads 11% and the remainder made up by many smaller authorities with differing numbers of boats.
- 6.2 However all of them face the same financial problems and there has to be a way for all the groups to join together to provide a united approach to government to represent both the boater and the recreational user. This is where he sees SOW being able to assist by getting to the “other” beneficiaries.
- 6.2.1 There have been two seminars for the Boat User Stakeholders (BUS) hosted by the RYA chaired by John Edmonds in 2007 and 2008. They were attended by the most active boating organisations including IWA, NABO and BMF as well as several other such bodies. SOW attended the second meeting.
- a. The first discussed which government department was best suited to manage the waterways and actually came forward with the first suggestion of an intergovernmental working group. Successfully taken forward by IWAC.
- b. This year’s session has asked the professionally serviced bodies, i.e. BMF, IWA and RYA to produce a Position Statement and currently the early drafts of this paper are out for consideration. *(After Note: debated at the RYA Inland Navigation Group and will be distributed to all attendees at BUS.)*
- 6.3 In a lighter vein he noted that there were two ladies knitting. He hoped that they would not be calling for his head at the end of his presentation.
- 6.4 As he was not terribly well known in the wider canal environment he offered his credentials for being able to make this presentation. He had a history of 60 years boating both inland and at sea. His first major canal trip was actually in 1959 when he took a commercial working narrow boat up the Grand Union canal to Birmingham with a number of sea scouts. He has sat on Thames Consultative Committees, and despite only now being allowed to serve for six years had just finished on the EA Regional Fisheries Ecology and Recreation committee after 25 years! He remains a member of the region’s Waterways Working Group. He is currently the Chair of the Thames Region RYA which means that he is also a RYA Council member; one of three Vice presidents of the River Thames Society, his other colleagues David Suchet and Susan Kramer MP. He represents motor boaters on the PLA Consultative committees and became a SOW Committee member because he felt it might fill a hole to get to the 95% who do not boat whilst not interfering in the good policies of any of the regular boating users..
- 6.5 The Environment Agency has three main waterways under its control with two or three more minor areas.
- 6.6 The Thames is the major part with 75-80% of the boats; Anglia has the Great Ouse with a major boating association GOBA with 3,000 members. The Nene and the southern rivers of the Stour and Colne with others in the same region. The South Region has the Medway with just 733 boat registrations. All regions have funding concerns. It also manages Romney Harbour waters.
- 6.7 Working with the local EA management Thames users were instrumental in devising the Waterways Plans which have spread to other rivers under EA management and the River Wey on the Welsh borders is now coming on line for un-powered craft.

- 6.7.1 The Waterways Plan provided service targets and the ideal, but required funding to reach their ultimate targets.
- 6.8 For several years into the new millennium registration charges were kept near to inflation. In 2004 there was a requirement by EA to charge above inflation to meet rising revenue and capital costs.
  - 6.8.1 A 'Funding Strategy' was suggested in 2005 with a two year consultation period to reach conclusions to overcome the bickering with users year on year on the level of registration charges. The strategy was actually launched in 2008, but only limped through its birth because the EA Board were not sure it would completely work.
  - 6.8.2 It was suggested in 2006 that there was a funding gap of £12m and this had to be met. Defra were very vocal suggesting that the boater should pay more. Despite the boaters time after time suggesting that a high level of registration charges would lead to diminishing returns a circa 12% increase to cover 2007, 2008 and 2009 was imposed – which means that in real terms an almost 50% real increase in costs to the boater.
- 6.9 EA were very good in negotiating with Defra for Health and Safety improvements and a safe budget has been secured until the end of 2009 for capital works which has really improved much of the infrastructure which was in danger of falling down. This was because of bad management during the time Thames Water (before it became a private company) managed the river not doing very much maintenance work!
- 6.10 However the user sees the revenue budget and wants to maintain service levels. It was apparent that there was a requirement for a review on working practices and the users co-operated fully, sometimes confidentially, on a programme on the Thames called Better Ways of Working (BWoW).
  - 6.10.1 Regretfully early in 2008, despite users advising against it, a Lock House Disposal Plan was introduced and there was a very public furore mainly led by the lock staff and local communities. It was so strong that all the MPs on the Thames led by the senior minister in Defra brought the programme to a stop pending a full review with a report by the end of 2008. The plan is on hold, only postponed, but already it means that more money has to be found to fund new contracts for the lock staff.
  - 6.10.2 Thames User Group (Navigation) is insistent that it should be part of any consultation before the final report is published. Lord Smith the new EA Chairman has promised this will happen for the MPs and the Lock Staff and previous management also promised that TUGn representatives will be included. (TUGn has every regional boating organisation on the Thames to include all disciplines and all trade.)
- 6.11 In the interim the Regional Director has been promoted away from the Thames. The Waterways Manager moved sideways because of personal matters and as of just last week the River Thames management has been re-organised.
  - 6.11.1 For years user groups campaigned to get the Waterways Manager as part of the Regional Directors Management team but the new management scheme brings him/her reporting to a number two who in turn reports to the main regional management team.
  - 6.11.2 The river is split into two for management purposes and there will be Area Operational Waterways Managers reporting to Area Managers who in turn will sit on the Regional

Management Team. With the Area Managers having over 70 separate channels of activity, of course boaters are concerned how this is going to work!

- 6.12 The new waterways and area operations managers are still to be announced.
- 6.12.1 There has been a new waterways operation manager on the Great Ouse with a previous BW manger in place – he is obviously finding his feet but I am advised from my contacts with GOBA that he is charged to find additional ways to fund the activity!
- 6.13 TUGn has written directly to the EA Finance Director expressing its strong view that the 12% charge which is already recognised as not sustainable after the initial three years should be reviewed because of the dire state of the boating industry on the Thames and the reduction on registrations since the 12% was introduced as well as many other social concerns. We are advised that there will be a statement on the level of registration charges at the NNUF meeting scheduled before the end of October.
- 6.14 Thankfully the EA Water Ways Working group will continue, albeit with the addition of some other waterway interested parties. This will now be the official conduit to the RFERAC.
- 6.14.1 Included on the agenda for the next meeting will be discussions on the following:
  - a. Report on work on transient moorings and “itinerant” continual moorers. (MS chairs the working party on moorings which is actually under the aegis of the River Thames Alliance. The RTA has 76 riparian bodies under its membership which includes county councils and local authorities. It is serviced by the Thames EA staff but could be an example to be followed if it can be made to work to improve the river.) MS was looking forward to Will’s presentation on this issue.
  - b. The cost of project development (Similar to an earlier debate this morning)
  - c. Red and Yellow warning boards management during high flows.
  - d. Funding issues
  - e. Lock House Disposal PlanAnd many similar issues.
- 6.14.2 TUGn may negotiate that the Regional Strategy Manager who sits on the Regional Management Team chairs the WWG in the future but that is a personal view at this time.
- 6.15 Overall the EA has done a good job in managing its waterways, but suffers from lack of proper funding.
- 6.15.1 TUGn members will continue to forward their thoughts through to their individual National Governing Bodies, but MS’s vision has to be that better use of a Stake Holders Group (BUS) be considered..
- 6.15.2 RYA and TUGn will be present at the Defra workshop considering the review of Waterways for Tomorrow.

6.15.3 TUGn members applaud, as he was sure most of us would, the initiative started by Jonathan Shaw in December 2007 to meet with all the waterways stakeholders and it is reassuring that Hew Irranca-Davies has promised to take this forward.

**As it was approaching lunch-time Will thanked Michael. He asked members attending to consider how pressure could be put on local authorities to assist in taking care of the tow-paths and removing rubbish in the same way that they managed their own green spaces. He could see no difference between parks and the towpaths, although clearly the water management of the navigation required specialist care.**

**A very good lunch was provided by the Lichfield Cruising Club and the meeting re-commenced at 1400, chaired by David Stevenson, Deputy Chairman of SOW.**

**David advised that he was going to be very strict in keeping to the time scheduled so that we could finish by 1600.**

**Before he introduced the next session he advised that he had a long pedigree of cruising the canals and experience of rivers being secretary of the River Stour Trust in 1974. As a school teacher he also took school party on commercial boats on the canals on the Leeds and Liverpool, and the children returned year on year despite the hard conditions. Encouraging schools as well as their parents to use the canals could well be a SOW activity.**

**He introduced Brian Kingshott and Bob Williams.**

**E. THE IMPORTANCE OF CANAL RESTORATION  
BRIAN KINGSHOTT – CHAIR, LICHFIELD & HATHERTON CANAL  
RESTORATION TRUST (LHCRT) & BOB WILLIAMS – TREASURER, LHCRT**

- 7. Bob presented a power point of the work the LHCRT had done in the past years.
- 7.1 The trust is doing well but there is still a lot to do. There is a new generation of young volunteers.
- 7.2 The presentation showed how much work had been done.
- 7.3 Much help had come through from every possible avenue but still more is required.
- 7.4 The massive lobbying with the Highways Authority leading to the underpasses already in situ some times waiting for more restoration work to be completed..
- 7.5 Whilst some MPs have been most supportive, Michael Fabricant being a very good example but others can never be found.
- 7.6 SOW members can always help by promoting the necessary work, especially with their MPs.
- 7.6.1 Will was able to announce that from conversations last week it does appear that there will be seats for two restoration representatives at BWAf.
- 7.6.2 He continued, the restoration societies (and other canal charities) have the same objectives of recruiting supporters from local communities. There may be some mutual benefit if LHCRT and other waterways charities made SOW promotional materials available whenever they had a stand at a show.

- 7.6.3 SOW could donate, say £2 from the £5 subscription from any new members developed through such a promotion.
- 7.7 It makes good financial and social sense to restore and maintain the canals to prevent them deteriorating again in the future. It was also recognised that the more canals restored the larger the maintenance for the controlling bodies.

**David thanked the presenters for a very informative session and moved on to introduce Will Chapman.**

## **F. LOCAL COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT**

### **WILL CHAPMAN – SOW CHAIRMAN**

8. As already trailed Will explained that his thesis was that there should be Local Community involvement in maintaining and funding the tow paths.
- 8.1 An estimated £5-8m pa is spent by BW for towpath maintenance, keeping the waterway clear of fly-tipping, removing graffiti, supermarket trolleys and prams and providing litter bins to remove rubbish that is largely made up of packaging from goods purchased in local riparian communities.
- 8.1.1 He felt it was inequitable that local authorities expected BW to remove this accumulated rubbish.
- 8.2 Tow-paths should be treated like parks that happen to be located alongside waterways and their maintenance should be part of the local authority's recreation budget and enhanced as a resource for the pleasure and recreation of the local community.
- 8.2.1 It is understood that BW hold them in trust and give “permissive consent” which presumably means that BW could theoretically say to a local authority that they can't continue to maintain them without local assistance.
- 8.3 The challenge must be to get local authorities to take the responsibility of maintaining the tow paths as they do with their existing footpaths and parks.
- 8.4 The current SOW campaign is under the slogan “SUPPORT YOUR LOCAL WATERWAY” and posters, flyers and banners are available to promote this work.
- 8.5 The next phase is to start a local media campaign and encourage the formation of local groups of activists hopefully with the cooperation of other user groups – IWA branches, local Ramblers groups, AWCC Clubs, waterways societies, etc.
- 8.6 SOW has developed an internet-based application that creates topical questions based on a database of objectives related to the waterways drawn from various government documents. By entering their postcode, a user is presented with a letter addressed to their MP that contains a leading question based on one of the published government objectives and asking the MP to request a response from the Minister responsible for said objective. The idea is that by getting supporters to send these letters to MP, both the MP and responsible minister will be reminded of waterways issues and commitments that government have made in various policy documents.
- 8.7 Points from the floor suggested that participation at local council level is a way forward, but it requires dedication and perhaps becoming a local councillor.
- 8.8 There was a caution from the floor – there had already been asset stripping of the BW waterways to the detriment of the canal system.

David had advised that the session had met its time allocation and moved on to ask Michael Shefras to introduce John Edmonds who had arrived during the previous presentation. Michael welcomed John who has had a brilliant previous career in the Trade Union movement, was an environmentalist of some note and until May 2009 is the director responsible for navigation at the EA. More importantly for us he is currently the chair of IWAC and it is Michael's hope that he will be there for at least the next six years.

## **G. THE INLAND WATERWAYS POLITICAL SCENE**

### **JOHN EDMONDS – CHAIR INLAND WATERWAYS ADVISORY COUNCIL (IWAC)**

9. John commenced by apologising for not being able to be present earlier and apologised if what he is about to say had already been said by previous speakers.
- 9.1 IWAC is looking into the future. There is a huge gap in empirical information but the main focus has to be sustainable funding into the future and all the work stems from that.
- 9.2 KPMG have suggested that there is £29m gap in the BW funding, ISIS has been cut in half; the EA are saying they have a gap of between £9m and £12m.
  - 9.2.1 How do we address these gaps in funding? Do we sell assets? Boaters certainly do not approve of that.
- 9.3 It appears that the waterways system requires £40-50m to fill the gap to put the system in a sustainable condition for the future – government will not greet that very easily or comfortably.
  - 9.3.1 There are many reasons why – funding the waterways is not a high priority for government – there is no electoral prize!
- 9.4 Boaters will continue to 'shout'. Boaters have a loud voice, but regrettably this will not do much to improve the funding.
  - 9.4.1 The pressure will probably prevent any reduction in funding, but it is not likely that it will bring much increase.
- 9.5 IWAC is seeking another approach.
- 9.6 IWAC is geared to search for the real facts. To seek the diversity of benefits for leisure and the environment and all the other issues appertaining
  - 9.6.1 We cannot continue to make assumptions and guess work on how the canal system delivers benefits. There is nothing comprehensive to show the benefits either local or national.
  - 9.6.2 This has to be a very bad basis to seek additional funding!
- 9.7 IWAC instructed Hallam Sheffield University to seek where the gaps in the knowledge are, and with this information Defra has financed research to give the value of waterways
  - 9.7.1 Be advised, this is a research exercise, not a propaganda exercise; we might not like the final outcome!

- 9.8. However, early results suggest that for every £1 spent £10-£15 comes back to the public!
- 9.9 Secondly; we have decent ideas, but what should the Waterway system look into the future?
- 9.10 How the Waterways all work is shrouded in mystery. The main systems covered by BW and EA are mainly in reasonably good shape considering the parlous state of the continuing funding issue, but there are many minor waterway systems in a delicate condition and there are significant problems.
- 9.11 IWAC has identified amenity and recreation canals and rivers around the world and by spring 2009 we will have reports on ten major waterways. It is recognised that there are considerable commercial implications on the French and Dutch waters for example.
- 9.11.1 They might produce some good ideas, or perhaps bad? Early indications are that central governments are trying to get the systems in good shape and then pass them down to be managed and financed by local authorities.
- 9.11.2 Sometimes Europe can show better ways.
- 9.12 It is a hard challenge. IWAC will try to deliver a framework that shows why the system should be funded.
- 9.12.1 These will be the principles, but what do they mean in practice? How do we handle the flood issues – nationally or locally? What about the transport and commerce? The journey is important not the travel!
- 9.13 We would expect to have a full report with funding options by 2010.
- 9.14 Moving on, how do we establish what government department should be in control if it is not Defra?
- 9.14.1 From work last year and taken forward by IWAC we do have the Inter-governmental Working Group initially led by Jonathan Shaw – we hope that this will continue under the new minister.
- 9.15 Lastly a more difficult concept to master – it is not just boaters. For example there are anglers, bird watchers, cyclists and many more. There are also respectable developers.
- 9.16 If it was possible to have a grand coalition of all and every user of the Waterways then that would make a difference.
- 9.17 **A united voice from the boaters would be a good start.**
- 9.18 This could work to make peace with the wild life interests. Perhaps joint partnerships with green groups to show that there is no inherent conflict between boaters and conservationists.
- 9.19 Not all members of RSPB watch birds, but what a powerful lobby!
- 9.20 If I have started a thought process then that would be good.

9.21 IWAC's target is to have the work completed by the comprehensive spending review in 2010.

**Will Chapman as chair of SOW thanked John for a most illuminating address. SOW's main aim is to do exactly what John has just suggested and it needs to work harder to meet this objective. SOW felt that if it had just one active member in each constituency then it could make a difference by using that member's right – namely the device of writing to their MP - to require ministers to respond to topical, leading, questions about the waterways**

**SOW was most grateful for John taking the trouble to come all the way to the Midlands on a Saturday to talk with us. His message would be widely circulated through the notes of this meeting and to other interested parties who could not attend.**

**David Stevenson then continued with the meeting – in passing he commented that in his time as chairman of IWA, he invited the NFA Chairman to join Navcom which led to a policy of encouraging boaters to maintain a steady speed and course in the centre of the waterway, when passing anglers, which satisfied the requirement of each.**

**He introduced Bruce Napier.**

## **H. CONTINUOUS CRUISING**

### **BRUCE NAPIER – SOW COMMITTEE MEMBER: A CONTINUOUS CRUISER**

10. He was concerned that this was actually not a part of SOW's campaign agenda, but appreciated the opportunity to give the problem an airing publicly.
- 10.1 It is very low in the RBOA agenda, and BW continually "take a bash" at those who do not have permanent moorings and cruise the system as their chosen way of life, many in their retirement.
- 10.2 BW waste a lot of money chasing very little and he believed that the three reasons stated by BW that continuous cruisers should pay more is deficient.
- 10.3 Continuous cruising following BW's rules of movement does not put much strain on the system.
- 10.4 There must be more equitable ways of assessing actual costs! Perhaps it is a similar argument that of finding the market price of moorings?
- 10.5 Bruce noted that some marinas pay a substantial element to BW in connection charges, others none at all. He suggested that a far more transparent and justifiable approach would be to remove from all mooring fees the element that is a contribution to the maintenance of the waterway, and recover that funding by an across the board increase in licence fees.
- 10.6 Most boaters would thus find themselves comparatively unaffected overall, their mooring fee going down by the same amount as their licence fee has risen.
- 10.7 Those who to date have been escaping such a contribution, either because they are continuous cruisers, or because they happen to have been the beneficiary of some historical arrangement, would hardly be in a position to complain that they were now being expected to pay the same as everyone else.

- 10.8 As he suggested when he started, it is perhaps not a SOW campaign issue, but he hoped that as Clive Henderson from IWA was here, it would be higher up the priority scale leading to proper consideration at BWAF.

**David thanked Bruce and asked Will to wind up the day.**

11. Will felt that it had been a most useful day.
- 11.1 He still felt that SOW should get communities involved, and SOW could use their sophisticated letter writing programme to some considerable advantage but the noted concerns voiced.
- 11.2 How group activities moved forward is something that needs more consideration but he hoped that all user groups would find a common platform to address the key central issues.
- 11.3 SOW's aim must be to move the membership drive on to others than boaters.
- 11.4 Clive H said that there needed to be a massive educational drive from all parties. There must be a way for SOW to be part of IWA and suggested that SOW might become a corporate member of IWA.
- 11.5 Will Chapman said whilst he could see the benefits of such a proposal, the counter view would be that one of SOW's strengths was its independence.
- 11.6 Clive was concerned that any SOW letter campaign to MPs might be counter productive if it turned out to be seen as crying wolf without any substance and reminded the meeting of the A4 glossy IWA briefing document he circulated at the beginning of the meeting.
12. **CHRIS COBURN** – asked permission to make a few points. He is an IWA Vice President and a member of BMF active on the River Thames as well as an enthusiast narrow boater with his boat Progress.
- 12.1 He felt an affinity with Will, and was quick to join with him during the early protest actions. He was always ready to support any just cause.
- 12.2 SOW did a good job, and if it was able to get to the wider public more to the good, but he suggests that it was not SOW's job to lobby continually as that could be counter productive.
- 12.3 We must ensure that the right people are in the right job. Those who have no soul and who are just in place without any 'love' of the waterways will never deliver what we all want – it is more than a job!
13. Others speakers made the following points from the floor:
- a) Really important that the message gets right to the top decision makers
  - b) We must not re-invent the wheel
14. The meeting closed with Will Chapman thanking everyone who had taken the trouble to attend and hoped that they would take the issues and ideas that had been raised and make sure they are discussed in other forums.

**J. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

15.	4.4	5% boaters against 95% other users
16.	4.5.4	How does SOW get the message out
17.	4.6	Simple But Powerful Mission Statement That Is Promoted By All User Groups
18.	5.4	Re-organisation of IWA
19.	5.5	New Waterways Minister Huw Irranca-Davies
20.	5.6	John Prescott and Waterways for Tomorrow
21.	5.6	Waterways for the Day after tomorrow!
22.	5.6	Value of the waterways not recognised by Government
23.	5.8	Cabinet view of disbursement of Waterways Funding
24.	5.8	IWA seeking further information on 5.8
25.	5.9	£58m to BW – just £1 per person
26.	5.1	BW Campaign Strategy
27.	5.11	IWA Briefing for MPs
28.	5.13	Broads not fully represented at IWA
29.	5.17.2	How BW spend their money unwisely
30.	6.1	How many different waterways and usage
31.	6.2	Multitude of different boating user organisations
32.	6.2	RYA annual hosted seminars chaired by John Edmonds to include all Waterway user bodies. (Boating Users Stakeholders (BUS))
33.	6.5	Environment Agency waterways
34.	6.6	Thames a major player with approximately 30% of all registrations.
35.	6.7	Waterways Plans
36.	6.8	Registration charges and EA Funding Strategy
37.	6.8	EA Navigation funding gap £12m
38.	6.11	Lock House Disposal Plan and Better Ways of Working
39.	6.13	Correspondence with EA Financial Director re 2009 Registration Charges
40.	6.14.1	Mooring issues
41.	6.15	EA has done well in managing their waterways despite lack of funding
42.	6.15.1	Effectiveness of Boating User Stakeholder Group – Terms of Reference required
43.	6.15.3	Applaud the Jonathan Shaw initiative in December 2006 to invite 31 boat user groups to meet (Including Government agencies.)
44.	7.3	More volunteer and financial help to restore canals.
45.	7.5	Assistance from MPs some good and some none at all.
46.	7.7	Good to restore canals, but they will need to be maintained into the future.
47.	8	Involvement of Local Authority to finance tow paths.
48.	8.1	BW spends £8m on clearing up for the benefit of local authorities.
49.	8.2	BW permissive consent to use the tow paths
50.	8.3	Challenge to get Local Authorities to take possession of tow paths as parks.
51.	8.4	SOW campaign to SUPPORT YOUR LOCAL WATERWAY
52.	8.6	SOW letter writing software
53.	9.1	IWAC looking forward into the future
54.	9.2	Funding gaps - BW £29m, EA £12m
55.	9.2	How do we fill the gaps in funding
56.	9.3	£40-50m required – unlikely government will fill the gap!
57.	9.5	IWAC seeking new approach
58.	9.7	More “warts and all” research
59.	9.8	Study suggests that for every £1 spent on waterways, £10-15 comes back in benefits

60.	9.11	IWAC research how it is done in waterways in other countries
61.	9.13	Full report in 2010
62.	9.14	Which Government department to control waterways.
63.	9.16	Grand coalition of all users of the waterways
64.	9.17	United voice of boaters? (BUS again)
65.	9.18	Make peace with conservationists?
66.	9.19	Why RSPB – a very powerful lobby
67.	9.2	Comprehensive Spending Review scheduled 2010
68.	10.1	Continuous cruising very low in user groups agendas but BW continually see it as a way to get more money
69.	10.5	A fairer way to ensure that continuous cruisers 'pay their way'
70.	11.3	Move on SOW membership drive
71.	11.4	Finding a way for IWA and SOW to work together
72.	11.6	Duplication of work might lead to lack of support because of mixed messages.
73.	12.2	Continual lobbying without due cause can be counter productive
74.	12.3	The right people for the right job!
75.	13	Get the message to the right people and do not reinvent the wheel

**MICHAEL SHEFRAS – 1015 – 151008 – SOW Meetings**

**MICHAEL SHEFRAS - 1450 – 171008 - Amended and approved by Will Chapman, Clive Henderson, John Edmonds, David Stevenson; Martin Clark and Bruce Napier**