

Medway River Users Association



Minutes of the Monthly Committee Meeting

19:30 hrs 11th November 2008

Present:

Tony Elliston (Chair)
Brian Hegarty
Roger Mobbs
Anna Presswell

Janet Higgins
Ray Chitty (Sec.)
Bob Jennings

Pat Fyfe
Terry Riley
Bev Henderson

Item 1:

Apologies:

Katy Turner
Brian Clayton

Philip Munslow

John Morgan

Item 2:

Acceptance of the Minutes

- The minutes of the last meeting were accepted unanimously.

Item 3:

Minutes & Matters Arising

Roger Mobbs had informed the Lock Keeper at Allington Lock (Steve) that the old slipway was not locked allowing unauthorised access. It was reported that the old slipway has now been locked.

Item 4:

Discussion Topics

A general discussion on the new website was undertaken with the following points being raised;

1. The association sound bite 'Working For A Better River' should be used as the header.
2. New links to be added for the new lock website, tide timetable and ship movement site.
3. Consideration to be given to adding a 'For Sale' page.

Terry Riley was congratulated on his efforts in getting the old 'Crier' issues on to the new archive page.

Item 5:

Report from the Environment Agency

No representative present but an e-mailed update was submitted which was read at the meeting. Following extracts;

1. Our two major capital schemes have started, these being Hampstead Lock Refurbishment and the replacement of East Lock and Oak Weir Lock upstream and downstream landing stages. The river remains closed in these areas, however between Hampstead Lock and Allington Lock the river remains open (subject to river flows).

2. The navigation team are busy with clearance work to small trees above Tonbridge Town bridge. (again subject to suitable river conditions).

3. The lock keepers are continuing with their painting program at Allington Lock 4. The toilet block at Allington will re-open this Saturday 15th Nov.

4. I have not yet contacted Maidstone Borough Council regarding using the land at Tovil as a location for casual moorings - but will do this month. Can someone send me a map of the site boundaries please? (*Address supplied*)

5. Non-powered craft licences. We are increasingly being asked for boat registration figures so we can show patterns of increasing (or decreasing) usage. We have a large contingent of canoeists using our river 99% of whom say they have British Canoe Union membership. This means that although we receive money from the BCU via indirect means, the actual number of registered non powered craft is very low. Our proposal is to provide a free registration sticker to all canoeists who are members of the BCU. That way we can keep an eye on usage and trends.

6. We are looking for sites where we can offer overnight camping for canoeists. Does anyone have any suggestions? Also casual mooring sites for boats. We are very keen for the MRUA to approach land owners to agree suitable locations. If something can be agreed, we'd like to advertise these. Obviously it would be either the land owners' responsibility to charge per night, or, an alternative could be that camping is free to members of the MRUA? This could be a good way of generating more MRUA membership. Obviously the MRUA would then have to pay the land owner a fixed sum per year.

8. Finally, there is now an Allington Lock website (not run by the Environment Agency) It can be found here: www.allingtonlock.co.uk

9. Reminder Medway consultation meeting is 4th December 6pm at Allington.

Having read the update discussion followed as to the location of possible mooring sites along the river. The plan of making camping or mooring on the river bank only open to MRUA members was considered to be difficult to police and not an attraction to joining the association.

Roger Mobbs suggested that landowners should be approached to gain their views on casual camping or mooring.

ACTION: Tony Elliston to pursue the matter of mooring with Philip Munslow

Item 6:

Report from Medway Valley Countryside Partnership

Anna Presswell apologised for her absence over the past months and then informed the meeting that the river photograph competition had gone very well with many excellent entries from a range of age groups. The winners had now been informed and an exhibition of some of the entries was in the process of being planned for December 2008. The next issue of 'Kingfisher' publication will be out in January 2009.

Janet Higgins asked Anna for any current contact information she may have on fishing groups along the river as she was receiving no replies from communications she was sending out.

Item 7:

Planning Report

Brian Hegarty had nothing to report from Maidstone or Tonbridge Councils on planning applications although the issue of the proposed floating restaurant in Maidstone had been publicised in the local newspaper. The paper stated that the restaurant had been given planning permission and everything had been finalised. Brian asked if any member of the committee was aware of this and had anyone actually seen the planning application. Tony stated that there had been no planning application to date and the association would respond to one if, and when, one is submitted.

ACTION: Brian to monitor the situation and attempt to gain further information on this issue.

Item 8:

Boating Report

No report submitted

Item 9:

Commercial Interest Report

No report submitted

Item 10:

Treasurer's Report

Current balance of the account stands at £5,391.44p

Item 11:

Membership Secretary's Report

There have been no new members joining the association since the last report.

Item 12:

Media

Tony Elliston spoke regarding the association offering a First Aid course to river users. There are two types of course available, one of two days and the other of four days, the four day course would provide the student with a first aid qualification. The two day course is replacing the old 'first on the scene' one day course. The courses could be adapted to river user needs.

It was asked if the MRUA would be totally financing these courses and Tony stated that the MRUA had funds and this would be a useful way of using them. It was suggested that affiliated bodies should contribute something towards these courses so that the funding would not be exhausted after only 1 or 2 courses, this was generally agreed. Roger Mobbs felt that there would be a high interest from the rowing fraternity and that numbers could be high.

ACTION: Tony to put Roger in direct contact with the First Aid tutor.

Item 13:

Any Other Business

The Chair (Tony Elliston) informed the meeting that both he and Janet Higgins would be absent from the next meeting. Brian Hegarty to chair.

Meeting concluded at 21:00hrs

Next meeting: **9th December 2008**