



Minutes of the Medway River Users Association Committee meeting
Held on 14th October 2008 at the East Farleigh Club

Present: Tony Elliston (Chair), Bev Henderson, Janet Higgins, Brian Hegarty, Terry Riley, Katy Turner. Roger Mobbs, Philip Munslow, Bob Jennings

1. Apologies for Absence

Ray Chitty, Pat Fyfe,

2. Minutes of the Previous Meeting and Matters Arising

Tony Elliston was not allotted to attend the Ann Widdecombe service, Pat Fife and Bev Henderson represented the MRUA.

The floating restaurant barge is not in Stangate creek, but another creek in the tidal river.

With these amendments, the minutes were agreed as a true record.

3. Matters Arising

Brian Hegarty wrote to Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council and visited their offices, re planning applications and was advised they do not have a mailing list, but planning applications are on their web site which is updated regularly. Brian has looked at this and advised there is nothing of interest to us currently.

Katy had spoken to a fisherman from MVAC and tried to encourage them to send a representative to the meetings.

4. Discussion Topics which are not regular Agenda items

Relationship with Environment Agency.

Tony advised this item was a continuation from last month and related to our new Terms of Reference; looking at where we are now, how to develop further, what do the EA want from us and how best to shape EA decision making as a consultative group.

Philip understood that the original remit had changed, the river was no longer in danger of being closed and the waterways plan supports use of the river. The input of the MRUA as users was important in planning and day to day maintenance. It could perhaps be helpful in bringing pressure to bear on local and national government particularly in relation to funding issues.

Specifically the MRUA could be involved in the review of the Waterways Plan which is due in 2010 and work with the EA on planning issues.

Tony summarised that the MRUA should

- Support and challenge the EA
- Support funding issues if necessary
- Be willing to be involved over tree issues
- Be involved in reviewing the consultation document – the Waterways Plan

5. Report from Environment Agency.

There was discussion regarding fallen trees and whether the responsibility for removing dangerous/overhanging or fallen trees lies with the EA or the landowner. Philip informed the meeting that the EA is only responsible when it is obstructing navigation, otherwise it is the responsibility of the landowner.

Brian advised that the local Council can tell landowners to trim or remove greenery which is an obstruction to the highway and will contact them for advice as to whether the EA would be able to do this along the river.

Action: Brian

Moorings: there was discussion as to whether individual committee members of the MRUA approaching landowners directly would be more successful than a formal letter from the EA. Katy said that the Great Ouse Boating Association (GOBA) rented and maintained land on behalf of its members and agreed to contact GOBA for advice as to how the MRUA could try this approach.

Action: Katy

Philip had agreement from the landowner for moorings on the left bank below Cannon Bridge at Tonbridge. Other sites identified were on EA owned land. It was suggested that Maidstone Council be approached re land at Tovil.

Action: Philip

The works at Allington have now been completed and the official opening was successful. There have been electrical problems in the toilet block and this is in hand. Brian read out his write up on the day.

There has been an audit of boat licenses, and 16 boats have been contacted re not displaying a current license. Terry said there was a problem with getting the license to stay on the windscreen, as the sun caused it to dry and crack. He asked if a different type of license holder could be issued.

“Tidying” works only will be carried out on the locks not due for refurbishment this year.

Hampstead lock will be closed from 27th October to allow contractors to remove and renew both the lock walls, install a new base and steps. It will reopen by Easter.

Work has been completed on the canoe pass at Sluice Weir lock, but it would remain closed for a further week to allow time to harden.

The replacement of landing stages at Oak and East locks are starting this week.

Katy reported that a number of boats in EFCC, HYCC and Strood Yacht Club had encountered problems with grounding between the Meadows and Tonbridge. Philip was not aware of any problems, but would note this.

There was also concern regarding boats launching around Watlington and speeding in the stretch of river past the EFCC land at Teston. Philip advised that the EA did not have the manpower to monitor this and suggested talking to the Marina owners about boats launching there. The EA has been talking to them regarding boats launching without valid river licenses.

Katy asked whether Farleigh lock was to be closed for works. Philip said no.

The slipway outside the Tennis Courts in Maidstone now has a new padlock which is welded to a chain. This can only be opened with a key from either the leisure club or the Allington lock-keeper. Members were asked to let the lock-keeper know if this is left open outside of 9.30am – 4pm. He also asked for photographs if possible of speeding boats to assist them in tracing the boats.

Roger offered to prune some of the overhanging tree branches, but required a boat to put the cuttings onto. Philip was unable to offer the use of the EA boat for safety/insurance reasons. Katy to ask the EFCC committee if their raft could be borrowed for this purpose.

Action: Katy

6. Report from Medway Valley Countryside Partnership.

As Anna was not present there was no report

7. Planning Report.

Discussed above.

8. Boating Report.

EFCC: As above

Maidstone Rowing Club: Will be holding a Small Boats Head on 14th December and will be putting out marker buoys beforehand. The last event went without incident.

The rowing club are looking for volunteer first aiders to be on hand during events. Tony will give Roger details of a first aid trainer. It was suggested that the MRUA could organise and fund courses for its member clubs.

Action Tony

9. Commercial Interest Report.

Nothing to report

10. Treasurer's report.

£5,401 in bank, printing and postage for Crier paid out and data stick purchased for transferring of information.

11. Membership Secretary's Report.

No new members this month – it was noted that membership had fallen.

12. Media

Terry had problems loading items onto the Website, as the software Ray had given him would not load onto his pc. He will talk to Ray on his return from holiday.

It was agreed that "Review of the Website" would be the discussion topic for the next meeting.

13. Any Other Business

None

Date of next meeting:

The next meeting will be held on Tuesday 11th November 2008.

Items for the agenda to Ray please by the 1st November.