

CONSERVATORS OF THE RIVER CAM

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CONSERVATORS HELD IN COMMITTEE ROOM 1 (THE HEIDELBERG ROOM) AT THE GUILDHALL, CAMBRIDGE ON THURSDAY 15 JANUARY 2004 AT 9.30am

Present: Professor M D I Chisholm (in the chair)

Conservators: Mr J Adams, Mr L Anderson, City Councillor B Bradnack, Mr C Darbyshire, Mr R C Hardingham, Mr R Ingersent, Dr R Laws, City Cllr I Nimmo-Smith, Mr R E Wakeford and Dr R D Walker.

Observers: Mr R T Bryant, Mr D Bradley, Cllr W H Saberton and Mr W Key.

In Attendance: City Councillor J Rosenstiel, Mr R B Bamford and Mr J R Wakefield (from Archer and Archer - the Clerks), and Mr A Wingfield (Assistant Hon Engineer and Control Officer).

And of the general public (who signed the attendance record): Messrs R Allen, M Arnold, M & L Austen, J Bayliss-Smith, A C G Brown, C Coe, Miss R Collins, A Dalton, Miss J Ferguson, M Gethin, C Graveling, P Hammond, M Kiniburgh, Miss C King, Miss S Kummerfeld, J Leader, J Macnaghten, M Madera, M Mansfield, S Meftah, P Mennell, B Reid, D O'Reilly, J E Peterson, Miss S Powell, M Rogers, Miss C Sellwood, N Spence-Jones, M Smith, A Taylor, G Thomas, R Tidman, Mrs F Tyrell, Miss S Woodall, and Miss M Wright.

Action Required

By

1. Appointment of Conservators: The Clerks had been informed by the City Council that they had re-appointed Mr L Anderson, Cllr B Bradnack, Mr R C Hardingham, Mr R Ingersent, Cllr I Nimmo Smith and Mr C Darbyshire as Conservators, and in place of Beth Morgan, who had resigned, Dr R Laws.
2. Apologies for absence had been received from Dr P Convey.
3. Election of Chairman: On the nomination of Cllr I Nimmo Smith seconded by Cllr B Bradnack, Professor M D I Chisholm was re-appointed Chairman for the ensuing year, unanimously.
4. Minutes of the meeting held on 25th September 2003 were approved and the Chairman authorised to sign them.
5. Matters Arising from those minutes (not dealt with elsewhere on the agenda):
 5. Halingway Surfacing: The County had been informed of the decision at the last meeting (with a follow-up concerning the interests of CFPAS received subsequently) and were progressing matters with a view to having the route open for summer 2005. (N.B. They were looking still at mechanisms to both construct and fund the proposals.)

2004/2

Clerks

7.2 The Chairman referred to the suggestion of a Marina which might assist with some of the mooring problems. The Conservators approved a formal letter being sent to both the City and South Cambridgeshire District Council to ensure that the suggestion was, if possible, included within the relevant local plans.

10.4 Jesus Lock - Electricity: Npower had accepted the position and had not pursued the bill for £400+.

10.11 A new grazing tenant had been found and this field let at a marginal increase in rent for 3 years.

6. Appointment of Deputy Chairman, The Hon Engineer and Control Officer (and Deputy) and the Clerks and their powers:

6.1 Deputy Chairman: On the proposition of Mr R Ingersent seconded by Mr R Wakeford Councillor I Nimmo Smith was unanimously appointed Deputy Chairman.

6.2 The Conservators re-appointed their Honorary Control Officer and Engineer, Mr Peter Littlefair and the Assistant Honorary Control Officer and Engineer, Mr Alan Wingfield, on the terms of the Service Level Agreement as formerly agreed, until new such arrangements were agreed with the City Council.

6.3 The Conservators on the proposition of the Chairman unanimously appointed the River Foreman, Colin Sparkes, as Deputy for the Hon Engineer and Control Officer and his Assistant, Ralph Honey, in their absence at any time from the river and that the River Bailiff, the Deputy Foreman and William Chipchase should have, with the River Foreman, the powers in the Control Officer's stead during his absence, for all matters, concerned with, inter alia, the Byelaws and the Statutes affecting the Conservancy Area.

6.4 The Conservators on the proposition of the Chairman agreed nem con, the re-appointment of Messrs Archer & Archer as their Clerks on similar terms to previous years at a rate of £30,000 per annum plus VAT. The Chairman was authorised to accept the retainer letter as last year amended only insofar as the salary was concerned, which letter would be provided by the Clerks in due course.

6.5 The Conservators were asked to delegate their powers to their officers in the following terms to prevent the necessity of having to call emergency meetings for the Conservators when individual problems arise:-

On the proposition of Cllr I Nimmo Smith seconded by Cllr B Bradnack it was resolved nem con that:-

(a) the Chairman, the Clerks and the Assistant Hon Engineer and Control Officer be authorised to carry out all such matters requiring the authority of the Conservators in the event of any emergency works or works consequential on works approved by the Conservators being required and to take any decisions normally requiring to be given by the Conservators where the obtaining of such approval might delay any matters to the detriment of the Conservators or any third party.

(b) the Clerks be authorised and directed to collect the registration fees, any arrears and all other charges due to the Conservators and to take such steps as may be necessary (through Court action, including power to agree to and to sign proxy for the Conservators in respect of any voluntary arrangements of creditors, bankruptcy or liquidation proceedings in respect of the Conservators' debtors or otherwise) on behalf of the Conservators to complete such collection or to enforce the Byelaws and statutes and to defend actions on behalf of the Conservators, and that the Clerks be appointed to appear on behalf of the Conservators before any Court of competent jurisdiction for these purposes.

(c) The Hon Engineer (or the Clerks, where appropriate) be authorised to issue such notices as may be necessary in respect of all work to be undertaken on the Conservancy Area and the Upper River and to take appropriate steps to maintain the same in conformity with the current statutes and the Byelaws affecting the same.

(d) the Clerks after consultation with the Assistant Hon Engineer be given power to agree special terms for payment, to compromise or otherwise to amend any claim in respect of registration fees due to the Conservators and to agree terms for and to issue (with or without such conditions as they deemed appropriate) licences for work to be carried out in or over the navigation or on the banks to applicants and to refuse such applications and those for registration of boats, for any reason for which the Conservators have that power and without limiting the generality of this authority, particularly if they have any concern as to the safety of the navigation or any boats concerned or their effect on the safety of others to implement such powers. Provided that details of all such licences granted or refused shall be reported to the next ensuing meeting of the Conservators.

- 6.6 Bank Mandate: Following the appointment of Cllr I Nimmo Smith, as Deputy Chairman, the Conservators amended the bank mandate with Barclays plc in the following terms.

The Conservators were briefly shown the Customer Agreement and other documents which their bank had provided and resolved that

1. The Conservators amend their existing mandate to the Bank (except in relation to cheques and other instructions given before the Bank received a copy of this resolution).

2. The Conservators accept the terms of the Barclays Customer Agreement and such acceptance to the Bank by completing the Bank's Form of Appointment of Banker in the form annexed to the minutes so that one of the Chairman, Deputy Chairman or Dr Walker should act as signatories with the Clerks on all instructions save that the Clerks should be able to transfer funds between the Conservators' accounts and that there should not be telephone or computer banking.
7. Chairman's Report: Apart from his input to the various items on the agenda, he had spoken to the Trumpington History Group on 30th September 2003 about the Conservators and their historical background. In addition, he had an interview with Roger Gill of the Cambridge News on Friday 2nd January and with Radio Cambridgeshire on the 16th.
8. Moorings: The Chairman referred to his paper dated 11.11.03 which was before the meeting. He asked Cllr Nimmo Smith to comment. Cllr Nimmo Smith drew attention to the different roles of the City Council for whom he had expected to see Cllr Joy Rosensteil to speak, as riparian owners for all but Riverside, where the County Council were assumed to be the riparian owners and, by contrast, the Conservators' interest in mooring which arose where such mooring caused or tended to cause danger or restriction to navigation. He emphasised that neither the Council nor the Conservators were interested in a total ban on mooring on the river, which was underlined by the Chairman.

(At this point Cllr Rosensteil joined the meeting.)

- 8.1 Cllr J Rosensteil having arrived, she explained that her Committee were looking, next week, at the problem of the 48 hour moorings on Jesus Green and also considering going out to consultation on the moorings on Midsummer Common and Stourbridge Common. She drew attention to the fact that the County Council had certain health and safety responsibilities which depended on who owned the soil of the roadway at Riverside on which they were taking a long time to decide. Cllr Bradnack commented that the City Council were finding it more difficult to develop a mooring policy than they had expected, requiring consultations and the matter was being deferred. It could certainly be taken much further if a proper marina system could be put in place and perhaps pressure from the Conservators could serve the City as well as the Conservators themselves.
- 8.2 Mr Darbyshire commented that since two months ago the Council seemed to have changed their view about their power to do anything. Cllr Rosensteil said they certainly had the powers to enforce their 48 hour moorings. The difficulty was the legal costs of doing it and the question of whether it was in the best interests of Council Tax payers' money.

- 8.3 The Chairman commented on the navigation issues and asked the Conservators to authorise their officers to make recommendations at the earliest possible meeting thereafter. He accepted that any change to be made had to be considered very carefully so as not to disrupt all the houseboats. All the issues including that of the marina had to be looked at carefully. Cllr Nimmo Smith was concerned whether there was a sufficient navigation problem to warrant no mooring along the full stretch of Midsummer Common. Most of the bottleneck appeared to be well downstream of Midsummer Common and there did not seem to be a safety issue because no boats were travelling fast enough to cause a problem. He referred to Mr Facer's original report where there were objective criteria in respect of visibility/obstruction and surely these were still adequate. Dr Laws mentioned that normally navigations were considered 2 ½ times lock width and he felt that there was more than adequate space on the river and it was just because there was a peak use of it at certain times of the year for the rowers.
- 8.4 Mr Darbyshire stated that the Town rowers had very little trouble, it was only in September with the novice rowers and coxes. Cllr Bradnack said it was unfortunate that the Conservators were discussing this in the absence of Dr P Convey, the University's rowing representative. Mr W Key, President of the CRA, commented that the main difficulty was the number of novices on the river at the start of the year and the increasing difficulty in two boats passing each other in opposite directions when boats were moored on the commons and had other boats moored to them, in effect, creating double mooring.
- 8.5 Mr Leader questioned whether Conservators had considered whether rowing fell within the definition of navigation. The Chairman confirmed that they had not; but he did not think it necessary as "navigation" meant the movement of boats in general.
- 8.6 There was further general discussion, which the Chairman brought to a head by suggesting that the officers be asked to look into the "existing Mooring Policy" to see what if any changes were necessary. This would mean liaising with the City to see what they had in mind with their regulation proposals. It was agreed that while the problem at Midsummer Common had been the trigger for this discussion, the scope of the exercise should cover the whole of the Conservancy Area downstream from Jesus Lock.
- 8.7 The Chairman drew Cllr Rosenstiel's attention to the fact that the Conservators had earlier agreed to write to the City and South Cambridgeshire District Council to draw their attention to the possibility of having a marina (residential mooring) as part of the respective Local Plans.

(R Ingersent left the meeting for the duration of the following discussion.)

9. Punting Safety: The Chairman introduced this by referring to the report of the Sub Committee which met on 23rd October 2003 and which was sent during November and December to all the punt operators. It was clear that between this meeting and April it would be necessary to adopt a formal code of practice with the punt operators. If this was not agreed by all the punt operators then it would be imposed upon them. What had been circulated were suggestions that should be included in such a code of practice but not make it up entirely. The Chairman decided to take the meeting through the report in the order of the recommendations.

(Mr Adams arrived.)

- 9.1 In dealing with the first recommendation there was clearly difficulty at item 5 about the appointment of a Master of the Boat. This was something that would have to be considered further in view of the comments made. However with chauffeur punts it was quite clear that the chauffeur was the master of the vessel for all purposes. It was only in the self punted hire where there might be difficulty. There were clearly difficulties as outlined by Dr Walker if there were a group of foreign students, none of whom spoke English. Even in those circumstances, it was for the punt operator to be sure that the right number of people were in each boat.

Mr John Adams suggested that punt numbers should be painted on the boats. Mr Bamford indicated that it was a requirement that they should be so painted visible from each bank. He would check that that was being enforced.

Dr Laws raised the question as to whether or not the Conservators by specifying these requirements and then possibly not being able to enforce them might be liable to anybody who was hurt in the consequence of a breach. The Chairman indicated there was a House of Lords unanimous decision that where someone had injured themselves having dived into a pond which was too shallow, where there were plenty of notices saying "no bathing", that individuals had to take some responsibility, and the Local Authority was exonerated.

On this basis, subject to the further discussions on the question of Master, the first recommendation was accepted.

- 9.2 The second recommendation on signage. This was accepted without question. Mr Wakeford pointed out that such signs should be simple and straightforward so that they could be understood clearly.
- 9.3 The third recommendation of not chaining or tying together punts was questioned by Dr Walker in that he felt that it should only apply to chauffeur driven punts and not to private craft because we would not have any control over those.

There was a discussion on the number of accidents with chauffeur driven double punts but from the floor it was pointed out that accidents between privately punted vessels were often not reported, which distorts the figures. Dr Laws asked whether insurance was affected by tying two punts together. The Clerks said that they examined certificates of insurance but not the policies themselves. It was up to the individual operators to have checked those policies. Mr Macnaghten commented that he did not know the answer to this point.

There was considerable discussion from the floor about the contrasting speeds and suggestions that it was hypocritical to ban doubles and still maintain large punts. The Chairman drew attention to the fifth recommendation to phase these out. Cllr I Nimmo Smith wanted to focus on the vessel not on the person using it. Punts were not designed to be chained together and to have more single punts out would promote more employment. It would also increase mobility.

In view of the fairly disparate views on this recommendation, the Chairman took a vote on the recommendation which was passed on a show of hands.

- 9.4 At this stage the Chairman went back to the last sentence of the first recommendation which he had not specifically drawn attention to. Conservators were perfectly happy that this sentence should stand.
- 9.5 Fourth Recommendation: The Chairman noted that the paper had been loosely drafted in one respect, that by an “authorised” punt station was meant one that had planning permission. Mr Adams felt that the Conservators were stepping beyond their powers and it was up to the punt operators to provide access to the public and the health and safety aspects must be on their shoulders. If we sanctioned something formally, then we could be in danger.

Dr Walker was also unhappy about this aspect and said that the responsibility should rest with the operator. He pointed out that riparian owners were the people to take any action here and many of them already did address the issue. In practical terms there are several banks which were safe and used by some of the independent operators and whether or not they need planning permission was immaterial. The Conservators were reminded that they licensed punts not operators.

After further discussion this recommendation failed but not without the requirement that points of egress and access to punts must be safe and this could be included within the code of practice.

- 9.6 The Fifth Recommendation was to impose an upper limit on beam and length of punts using the middle river. This would be on the basis that the present punts would be phased out. This was approved nem con.

- 9.7 Having dealt with the formal recommendations for the code of practice Conservators then considered the suggestions which should be made following an accident. Mr Adams suggested that this should apply to not only accidents but near misses. There was considerable discussion on what should constitute a near miss; but it was eventually accepted that this was an accident in which no injury occurred. The suggestions were accepted.
- 9.8 During their deliberations the Conservators took note of the replies to the general consultation to punt operators and the Chairman's précis of these and recommendations.
- 9.9 It was agreed that the officers arrange a meeting at the earliest opportunity, for the punt operators to meet to consider a Code of Practice for adoption by the Conservators.

Clerks/Hon Engineer

(Cllr Bradnack left the meeting at this point.)

10. Hon Engineer and Control Officer's Report:

- 10.1 Tree Grants - Large Pollarded Willows - South Cambs DC, through their Ecology Officer, had awarded the Conservators a grant for willow pollarding works for the current financial year, amounting to £3,000 when added to the £6,000 consented by Conservators for this year. This meant up to £9,000 could be ordered and it was intended that the works were undertaken by the end of March 2004.

Of the three quotations returned, Town and County were the most competitive and with the award this increases the number of trees able to be pollarded by 10, which meant that nearly 30 large willows could now be pollarded and reduced to a height which could then be maintained by the River Crew.

- 10.2 Halingway Tree Grants - 2004-2008 - It was reported that Donarbons (the Landfill Tax Credit Managers of Dickersons Landfill Site at Milton) had indicated a willingness to support a grant application from the Conservators towards medium term funding of willow tree maintenance works over the next few years through the Landfill Tax Credit Scheme, for a Halingway tree maintenance project that might run over the next 5 years or so.

The Hon Engineer reported that he had been continuing his consultations with South Cambs DC. Whilst SCDC may not be able to assist Conservators further with pollarding funding, they had been speaking to other potential partnership funders who they believe were interested in the long term tree project. SCDC had informed him they operate another grant for crown reduction works, with applications available through their Arboricultural Officer, John Hellingsworth.

The Hon Engineer suggested that Conservators should consider ring fencing at £2,000-3,000 per year for external works to large trees that could be used as a lever for securing matching funds with the contingency to contract out works to large trees if grants do not come to fruition.

- 10.3 City Mooring Policy - Riverside Moorings - The Hon Engineer reported that John Roebuck (Head of Parks and Recreation at the City Council) was to report on the City Mooring Policy to Community Development and Leisure Scrutiny on 22nd January. Mr Roebuck had asked about the possibility of a river level walkway from one end to another. The Hon Engineer had indicated to him that it was unlikely that the Conservators would approve a structure of this type and size there. It was suggested that a series of floating pontoons placed in-between pairs of craft and accessing vessels fore and aft might be a compromise that Conservators might view more favourably. The river was very narrow along parts of Riverside, being less than 20m in places and any structure assisting sideways access to vessels would push moored boats further into the channel, narrowing navigation. The outcome of the report and the meeting would be awaited.
- 10.4 Health and Safety Training - The Hon Engineer reported that the Foreman and Deputy Foreman had completed a 2-day training course at Shuttleworth College covering chainsaw maintenance and crosscutting. Notification is awaited from the College of when formal assessment would take place and, if successful, would lead to the issue of a certificate.
- 10.5 River Incidents - Punt Safety - The Hon Engineer reported that following reports at the last meeting of accidents involving punts along the Backs, a meeting had been held to address the safety issues of punting. The Clerks had reported on the meeting and the Bailiff and Hon Engineer would be working with operators to ensure that the findings were adopted.

Dive Bombing from Sheep's Green Bridge - The Clerks had been in correspondence with Anne Campbell MP who had been enquiring into dive-bombing with the Council. It had long been the Conservators' stance that the Police should deal with these issues but had asked the Bailiff to visit the bridge during warm spells and to report any incidents to the Police and the Hon Engineer.

Hon Engineer

The Chairman enquired of the liaison with the Police which would be followed up with contacts through the City Rangers.

Mr Macnaghten pointed out that it was not Sheeps Green Bridge but Lammas Land Bridge.

11. Financial: Statement and Report; Budget and Registration Fees:

- 11.1 No Budget Comparison was prepared for this meeting. Everything was on course to provide, at the end of the year, the figures shown with the Draft Proposed Budget for 2004/05 presented to the meeting.
- 11.2 Transfer from Revenue Expenses to Repairs and Renewals Fund - In preparing the Budget it was realised that some items currently entered as expenses under repairs and maintenance could properly be transferred against the R&R Fund, these were as follows:-

518	Repairs to Clayhithe Kitchen Floor	204.88
102560	Supply and Fit Sensor for Baitsbite Vee Doors	233.76
102578	Supply and Fit Sigma Switch to Baitsbite Vee Doors	380.02
102610	Relocating Mains Pump from Kitchen at Baitsbite Cottages	152.82
102624	Extra Steel Sections for piling	595.10
102625	Boiler Repairs No 2 Baitsbite Cottages	88.07
102637	Fixing Seals and Hydraulic Hose Assembly at Baitsbite	217.12
		<u>£1,955.31</u>

Conservators confirmed that the transfer of these sums as above should be made.

11.3 Capital matters to be considered for 2004/05:

Conservators were asked to decide what matters from the Business Plan should be considered in next year's work's programme. This decision could be postponed until the April Meeting.

From the list laid before the meeting, after long discussion it was agreed to omit the workshop extension and fittings, which would have to have the sewerage work done at the same time. The Clerks' recommendation that if all the works were to be done on Clayhithe House were to be carried out and the Cyril C was to be overhauled (it may be necessary to hire in a replacement) then the R&R contribution for the year should be increased by £6,000 to £24,244 from the figures shown in the draft attached budget, with a similar extension of the Revenue deficit, was not specifically noted.

It was agreed to put forward the following works after further consideration in April.

	Capital	R&R
Cyril C upgrade		5,000
Baitsbite Lock - replacements - essentials		125
Jesus Green Lock House - towards cost of outside painting		1,000
1 & 2 Baitsbite Cottages - towards cost of outside painting		1,000

Barn		
Workshop heater		2,200
Workshop insulation	1,200	
Clayhithe House		15,000
Totals	£1,200	£24,325

- 11.4 The Budget: The Clerks had used an increase of 5% for costs except where otherwise indicated in the notes. It was very difficult to predict because expenses for the Conservators seem to rise well ahead of RPI and more and more requirements under Health and Safety Rules were being imposed.

Conservators approved the Budget based on 10% increase in Registration Fees.

11.5 Registration Fees

Conservators were reminded of the Chairman's Paper of December 2001 updated last year, reminding everyone that in January 2000 it was agreed that a progressive increase in multipliers for the punt operators should continue with annual increases above the agreed inflationary increases for normal charges to a top limit, not yet reached. For 2004/05, the multipliers for owner categories on this basis would be:-

- 4 Colleges for their own members and non-paying guests should rise from 2.10 to 2.15
- 5) As above AND/OR for hire to the general public should rise
-) from 4.7 to 4.8
- 6) For commercial operators for punts etc should rise from 4.7 to 4.8
- 7 Hire of all other boats (we do not have anyone registered in this category) 3.4 to 3.5

Conservators confirmed these increases in multipliers.

- 11.6 While discussing registration the Clerks' attention had been drawn to a slight anomaly in the description of category of ownership 4 (which also affects category 5). Category 4 refers to use of punts solely by members of a College or Corporate Owner "and non-paying guests". There is no way that Conservators' staff can keep a running check on the users of punts in this category. The difficulty was that no sensible College or Corporate Owner would allow its punts to be used without some form of charge. The whole point of their owning a punt was that their members could enjoy this privilege at a discount. The multiplier for this reason was set at less than half of that for the commercial punt operators. Furthermore, it has always been accepted that where "conferees" become temporary members of a College under that College's rules they can also use these punts as may all other temporary or other class of members. However, if the general public

use them, then those Colleges had to register under category 5 and pay the increased charge. It was agreed to remove the words “and non-paying guests” because quite clearly there are no punt operators in this group who allow free use except to their College staff and this change would not prejudice that arrangement.

12. Agreement for River Lowering:

12.1 The Conservators agreed to set out the dates of the “windows” when applications may be considered for winter lowering of the river for repair work to be carried out to riparian properties for the next three years. A plea for change from Scudamore’s had been received. It was agreed that this could be discussed with Riparian College Bursars for possible introduction in 2007/08. At the same time a maximum length of closure for the initial fee (say 14 or 21 days) with a daily rate thereafter could be considered.

12.2 The Conservators confirmed the windows for the next two years as:

1.12.2004 to 14.2.2005

1.11.2005 to 14.3.2006 (a longer gap - agreed every 3 years).

And agreed that for the following year:

should be 1.12.2006 to 14.2.2007.

12.3 The Conservators agreed the fees on a 10% increase:-

For lowering middle river	£880
For any obstruction where scaffolding up to 1 ½ m in from bank lasting for 14 days	£438
With per week or part week thereafter	£180
Approval of plans, without obstruction	£92

12.4 The Conservators agreed to reserve the right to waive the fee where appropriate and to set a different fee where obstruction is more than 1 ½ m into the river. The powers of the Conservators being dealt with by the Hon Engineer and Clerks in consultation with the Chairman under the standard power of delegation.

12.5 The Clerks agreed to forward these details to the Secretary of the College Bursar’s Committee and to raise the questions posed by Scudamore’s so that these could be considered.

Clerks

13. Suggested Changes to Interchange Agreement:

13.1 Mr Bamford read out the Clerks’ Report on this subject to the meeting so that those who had not seen it might know what it said. He drew attention to the fact that he had received a letter from one cruiser owner who had pointed out that he spent far longer than 28 days off the Conservancy Water. It had been suggested to Mr Adams of the

Agency that perhaps a second 28 day licence could be considered. Mr Adams confirmed, at the meeting, that this would be unsatisfactory for him because then others would want the same privilege and it would end up with the result of his registration fees being considerably reduced.

- 13.2 Mr Adams confirmed that there were no agreements with other navigations similar to the one with the Conservancy but there were reciprocal agreements which acted like the Gold Licence.
- 13.3 Cllr Nimmo Smith was fairly comfortable with the proposals which he equated to the cost of a visa, with parallels to second homes and Council Tax. Dr Laws indicated that he was not happy with the arrangements without any consultation to put up fees for some individuals by at least 25%. Mr Darbyshire stated that he had no idea that this was going on and he had arranged a meeting at Stourbridge Common as soon as he received the papers. The main problem for narrowboat repairs were that people had to go to March or Bedford.
- 13.4 A great number of points were made from the floor including the paucity of provision at Cambridge, unfairness and the effect of charging adding to the cost of a Gold Licence fee.
- 13.5 Mr Bryant was reassured that the Sailing Club's auxiliary engined boats would be able to go above Clayhithe Bridge on a 28 day basis; but Mr Hardingham pointed out that at present his Club's members' boats could go up 365 days.
- 13.6 The Chairman drew the discussions to a close by asking Conservators if they had heard enough. Only two were prepared to support the proposals; but others perhaps would have supported it with amendments and with a different timescale. Therefore, the proposal would not proceed as set out. It was agreed that the matter would be looked at further by the officers who were instructed to discuss matters further with the Agency and bring matters forward, hopefully, by the September meeting for the next year.

14. Clerks' Report:

14.1 Correspondence

(a) The correspondence from Anne Campbell MP and the Clerks' reply was noted.

(b) Mr Starling's letter and the Clerks' reply was noted. The Clerks were instructed to take a very strong line with this matter.

Clerks

14.3 Rubbish Clearance

Conservators authorised the officers to continue to negotiate arrangements for rubbish clearance on lines that would be to the Conservators' benefit.

14.4 Mooring at Clayhithe - Mr Taylor

Clerks

The Conservators were unhappy with the arrangements and with the apparent preferential treatment for Mr Taylor, and refused to consider the proposal.

14.5 Notice of Closure of Baitsbite Lock for Inspection

This was noted.

14.6 Prosecutions

Mr Bamford indicated that these were underway and summonses should follow shortly. He did not wish to discuss matters further to avoid jeopardizing the case.

14.7 CORGI Certificates

Conservators confirmed that it was not necessary for Corgi certificates to be seen for registration or otherwise with effect from 1st April 2004.

14.8 Wolfson College Cycle Damage Claim

The Conservators confirmed the Clerks' action and recommendation.

14.9 Possible future transfer of administration to the Environment Agency

The Clerks had written to the Agency in accordance with the expressed intention in the new Business Plan, to pursue all courses open to the Conservators to provide their service in as economically viable a method as possible, to find out the Agency's views on the future of the navigation. A helpful reply dated 2nd December 2003 had been circulated to Conservators who unanimously confirmed the interpretation by the Chairman and Clerks that only if the Conservators should fail in their duty would the Agency seek the necessary powers from DEFRA and the Agency Board to effect a transfer of responsibilities. Thus it was agreed that the Conservators should continue with the existing administration, as at present, for the foreseeable future.

15. Appointment of Observers:

The following observers were appointed:-

R J Bryant: Sailing and River Cam Users

D Bradley: IWA

W Key: CRA

Councillor W Saberton: South Cambridgeshire District Council

16. Dates of Next Meetings:

The meetings for Thursday 15th April, Thursday 1 July 2004 and Thursday 23rd September 2004 were confirmed and 13th January 2005 was agreed.

Cllr Nimmo Smith suggested that the Conservators should write to thank Beth Morgan for service to the Conservators over the past years.

This was passed unanimously.

Clerks

The meeting closed at 12.15pm.

SIGNED M Chisholm 15.4.2004