



OXFORDSHIRE BRANCH

Minutes of 49th Annual General Meeting on Wednesday 26th March 2024

Held Begbrooke Village Hall

Chairman Ian Lindsay taking the chair, welcomed everyone to the meeting.

1. Present & Apologies – The following members and guests were present

Paul Rodgers, Ian Lindsay, Dave Wedd, Verna Smith, Jenny Hodson, Stella Wentworth Terry Yateman Christine Denton Mark Rowan, Maralyn Nott Jim Nott.

Apologies from Rodger Badger

2. The minutes of the Branch AGM on 15th March 2023 were available to all attendees. and were agreed by members present

3. No matters were raised from the 2023 minutes.

4. Branch Chairman's Report.

Ian Lindsay read the chairman's report to the meeting as follows.

I must start with some thanks – to Rodger Badger – who has undertaken the work of branch treasurer for which I am very grateful. We will look to approve the accounts shortly, Rodger has unfortunately decided that he is not able to continue as treasurer for the forthcoming year, a topic that I will come back to.

I must also thank Jenny Hodson, Paul Rogers and Verna Smith who helped put the IWA stand up and man it at the Banbury Canal Festival. The festival is a great opportunity to speak to a much wider audience than many canal festivals that are visited only by canal enthusiasts. At the Banbury festival there are dedicated canal enthusiasts, but also lots of local people with an interest in the canal and quite a few people who had headed into Banbury to shop and tripped over the festival. Exactly the sort of environment for the IWA to really push its renewed campaigning message.

Final thanks to Jenny Hodson, Verna Smith Chris Jones and others who have helped sort out the arrangements for this meeting as I was unable to due to some significant recent family and business challenges.

All of which brings us to the future. The need for the IWA and its campaigning message has never been stronger given the growing crisis the Canal and Rivers Trust, the Environment Agency and other navigation authorities seem to find themselves in. The IWA nationally/

centrally is facing its own significant challenges but is trying to address them. Here in the Oxfordshire branch we face more than challenges the branch faces EXTINCTION.

Verna Smith, who has recently stood down as IWA regional chair, twisted my arm to take on the chair of Oxfordshire Branch a few years ago Robin Williams was the secretary until last year when he relinquished the role and Roger Badger is having to give up the Treasurers role. I cannot, nor would I want to run the branch on my own. For the branch to continue it has to do more than just about function it must run and operate properly, attending events, monitoring and responding to planning applications that affect the waterways and above all actively engaging and campaigning for the waterways.

Unless between 4 and 6 people are willing to put themselves forward at this AGM meeting to take on official branch committee roles then the memberships has only 1 choice which is to vote to close down the branch and furthermore to agree that the balance of Branch funds be put into central IWA funds for general IWA purposes.

If the branch members decide to put themselves forward, stand for committee positions and to continue the IWA campaigning fight I remain very happy to continue with a branch committee role to support this and we can agree an ambition of monitoring and responding to planning applications affecting the waterways in the branch area and manning stands at Oxford and Banbury Canal Festivals in September/ October 2024

5. Branch Treasurer's Report

Copies were available to all those present and were agreed by members present. There was a discussion about the sum of £2000 earmarked in the accounts for the Oxford Canal Basin. This discussion was particularly relevant to the discussion to follow on the future of the Branch. If the branch continues then the funds will be needed for its work but the earmarked £2000 should be used for general purposes as the prospect of the basin ever being restored are remote.

A wide ranging discussion took place about what to do with all the branch funds if the branch doesn't continue. Moving the money to central IWA funds or donating it to an Oxfordshire based canal charity such as the Tooleys Boatyard Trust were the best options, with the latter finding most favour among members.

It was noted that Rodger Badger had very kindly agreed to hand over the treasurers role to a new person if someone comes forward.

6. Election of committee members

Ian Lindsay agreed that he was willing to continue as chairman if at least 4 other people were willing to take on roles to run the branch, which was to be debated at the next agenda item. No one else formally stood for election at that point in the meeting.

7. Future of the branch

There was a wide ranging discussion involving everyone present at the meeting much of which revolved around a strong desire for the IWA to be active and achieve things within Oxfordshire possibly with less focus on formally being a "branch" with the committee structures that that entails. However Ian Lindsay said repeatedly that he could not run the branch or activities as a 1 man band and that other people would have to commit to taking on roles. The conclusions of the lengthy discussions included that someone must take on the role of monitoring the planning applications in the branch area that affect the waterways, someone had to become the treasurer or the branch had to formally fold under IWA rules and that someone needed to

lead a drive to recruit more members and persuade the existing members to become more active.

On the planning monitoring there was a lot of discussion about the improved support from IWA centrally and through the branch planning officers online meetings and forums. Jim Nott, a member newly transferred to the Oxfordshire branch area, confessed to having been the planning officer in his previous region and whilst he wasn't able to take on the role he kindly offered to undertake a little bit of mentoring of a new person in the role.

Mark Rowan expressed a willingness to get involved with motivating members to become more active and others offered to push IWA membership recruitment through putting leaflets in marinas, hire boat fleets and waterside businesses such as pubs and cafes.

Ian Lindsay's summary of the discussions was that there was clearly enthusiasm for IWA activities to continue and that was hugely welcome, but that members who attended the meeting and expressed a willingness to do things, along with any other members would have to commit to undertaking these activities/ roles by the end of June or the branch would have to fold. Everyone willing to help out was asked to contact Ian or Jenny.

8. Any Other Business

There was no other business and the meeting closed just after 9pm.