

31st Annual General Meeting of DBA – The Barge Association

Cruising Association, 1 Northey St, Limehouse, London E14 8BT, and by ZOOM, at
1700 BST

1. Welcome and Meeting Protocols.
2. To receive apologies for absence.
3. To introduce Board members present.
4. To approve the minutes of the 30th Annual General Meeting held on Saturday 5th March 2022 (Copies are available on the website or can be obtained in advance from the Secretary).
5. To receive and consider the Board's Report and Financial Statements for the year ended 30th September 2022 (In accordance with the decision at the AGM in 2003, abbreviated accounts were in the February edition of Blue Flag – the full financial statements can be obtained in advance from the Treasurer). The Treasurer will be available for questions.
6. To reappoint TWP Accounting as Independent Examiner to the Association.
7. To receive the Chair's Report.
8. To elect Directors.

Mike Gibbons, Andy Soper and Sharon Hammond are retiring by rotation at this AGM. A retiring member of the Board is eligible for re-election. All three are offering themselves for re-election. Jan Pieterse has been nominated for election to the Board. There are thus 4 candidates and 5 vacancies on the Board and as the number of eligible persons is fewer than the number of vacant Director seats they are deemed to have been elected.
9. Volunteers – see Paper by Tim Cadle
10. To discuss proposals for the AGM in 2024.
11. To take and answer questions.
12. Any other business.

Dated 05 March 2023 by Order of the Board.

Mike Gibbons, *Chair*.



DBA

The Barge Association
Association de péniches de plaisance
Vereinigung für ehemalige Frachtschiffe
Vereniging voor voormalige binnenvaartschepen

MINUTES OF THE 31st ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Saturday 15 April 2023

Board members in attendance

Mike Gibbons (Chair)

Tim Cadle (TC)

Sharon Hammond (SH)

Ian McCauley (IM)

Pete Milne (PM)

Scott Pereira (SP)

Andy Soper (AS)

Minute taker

Jan Jobling

| Agenda No. | |
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| 1 | Welcome and Meeting Protocols. MG as Chair welcomed members to the meeting. |
| 2 | To receive apologies for absence. Apologies were received from Stephen Bernhard and James Littlewood. |
| 3 | To introduce Board members present. Board members present introduced themselves: Andy Soper, Treasurer and Representation |

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| | <p>Scott Pereira, Heritage</p> <p>Pete Milne, IT and website.</p> <p>Internationally, Ian McCauley (eNewsletter), Sharon Hammond (Representation) and Tim Cadle (Suppliers) were present,</p> <p>MG confirmed that members could contribute through chat or by using the 'raise hand' reaction, which Tom would pick up.</p> |
| 4 | <p>To approve the minutes of the 30th Annual General Meeting held on Saturday 5th March 2022 (Copies are available on the website or can be obtained in advance from the Secretary).</p> <p>The minutes were approved as a correct record (proposed by Chris; seconded by Tom).</p> |
| 5 | <p>To receive and consider the Board's Report and Financial Statements for the year ended 30th September 2022 (In accordance with the decision at the AGM in 2003, abbreviated accounts were in the February edition of Blue Flag – the full financial statements can be obtained in advance from the Treasurer). The Treasurer will be available for questions.</p> <p>AS reported that there was £82,000 in the bank account. At the start of the year, there had been just over £100,000. This reflected heavy spending on the website, which was a planned evolution. The budget for the year had been estimated to make a deficit of some £30,000 to cover the cost of the website and the increased amount of paid staff. AS noted that the reserves were greater than required, and this been a timely point to invest in IT upgrades.</p> <p>AS requested questions; none were received.</p> |
| 6 | <p>To reappoint TWP Accounting as Independent Examiner to the Association.</p> <p>This was a recurrent formal item; DBA had remained with this company for many years as they had a strong inland waterways focus and gave very good service. They and the bookkeeper offered good support in producing correct accounts. It was agreed to reappoint TWP Accounting as Independent Examiner for the Association (proposed by AS; seconded by SP). This was unanimously agreed.</p> |
| 7 | <p>To receive the Chair's Report.</p> <p>The Chair's Report, along with other papers, had been published in the AGM papers. MG noted that focus this year had been on the running of the association, its employees and the need for members to play their parts.</p> |

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| | <p>Volunteer efforts were critical to member organizations, including DBA, and the report had laid emphasis on this. The issue would be returned to in item 9, led by TC.</p> <p>MG moved on to discuss the question of service delivery and who worked with DBA. The year had been one of transition. He presented an update on arrangements for <i>Blue Flag</i> editorship, which was under the leadership of Chris Grant. Andrew Fells had acted as guest content editor for the last two editions. This was part of a plan for smooth transition in the management of tasks for <i>Blue Flag</i>; seven years previously, Chris had stepped in at short notice following the sad loss of the previous editor, Paul Goldsack. The Board would be asked to approve Andrew's continuing editorial role the following day. Chris would continue with his role in design, proofreading and printing, with Andrew taking on the content editorial work he'd been doing for the previous six months. MG wished to thank Chris very much on behalf of the Board for all of his work. Chris expressed his pleasure in his role, during which he had produced 42 issues, and in Andrew joining the team.</p> <p>Another major transition had been Caroline Soper passing on most elements of her role. The final official task had been this AGM, but administration, membership and much more had been in her very capable remit for many years. MG expressed thanks to Dawn Childs for taking over the financial dimensions of Caroline's role, and to Lisa Hauawert for picking up membership and aspects of administration. MG asked if anyone wanted to do the bookshop, preferably from the UK, as this position was still vacant. MG concluded by thanking Caroline for her hard work and offered her a token of DBA's appreciation. She expressed her thanks.</p> <p>Bob Marsland offered a vote of official thanks both to Chris for his work on <i>Blue Flag</i> and in IT, and to Caroline for all she had done for DBA. MG thanked Bob for this.</p> <p>MG asked if there were any further questions or points on the Chair's Report. None were received.</p> |
| 8 | <p>To elect Directors.</p> <p>Mike Gibbons, Andy Soper and Sharon Hammond are retiring by rotation at this AGM. A retiring member of the Board is eligible for re-election. All three are offering themselves for re-election. Jan Pieterse has been nominated for election to the Board. There are thus 4 candidates and 5 vacancies on the Board and as the number of eligible persons is fewer than the number of vacant Director seats they are deemed to have been elected.</p> <p>MG noted that this meant there were still opportunities to be involved. It was possible to co-opt members to the Board if people were interested. There were also, however, a broad number of roles available. This was also</p> |

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| | important for succession planning. This led to the next item, on volunteers, for which TC had submitted a paper. |
| 9 | <p>Volunteers – see Paper by Tim Cadle</p> <p>TC read out his discussion paper. This placed the difficulty of attracting volunteers in the context of the MG’s intention to step down as Chair by 2024 and AS wishing to significantly reduce his responsibilities in the same timeframe. The Board had formed two sub-groups in response – one dealing with board administration and one specifically on volunteer roles. The Board thought the wider membership should be made aware of the issues and asked for ideas in addressing them. The roles had a significant impact on the level of support for members. Unless key roles could be filled, it might be necessary either to reduce service or possibly to increase membership fees to fund payment for key tasks.</p> <p>He reported that so far the paper had not received any response, but the Board would welcome any suggestions or proposed avenues for exploration.</p> <p>In response to a question about the types of volunteer roles being sought, MG directed attention to a column in <i>Blue Flag</i>. This was written by Andrew, Chris and MG. Highlighted examples included the director role and bookshop administration by someone with a UK address. The organization also operated two Facebook sites in need of support, one social for members and one public-facing for non-members, which needed content to be refreshed regularly. One person would be able to do both roles, as they were very complementary. The fourth role was the newsletter; IM had been requesting assistance to spread the workload and also bring in fresh ideas and perspectives. IM intended to remain associated with it.</p> <p>There were thus a number of roles connected with the online world, including editorial, and one which would need the servicing of DBA books and items such as burgees. The director role included six two-hour meetings a year on Zoom. MG re-iterated IM’s point about the need for organizations to refresh themselves and incorporate new insights and inspirations, especially when the health and future state of the organization were at stake. Ideas or offers to volunteer would be welcomed.</p> <p>Chris noted that the website used to have tick-boxes when people joined, allowing them to indicate areas of interest. The practice had lapsed: he thought because it might perhaps seem over-complicated to be asked such questions immediately upon joining. However, he considered there might still be value in the idea as it would generate a database. This would mean specific people who had already expressed interest could be asked to help rather than putting out a general call.</p> <p>MG reported that the question of communication with new members was under discussion in the sub-group. Chris added that the database still existed and had just been hidden, so it could be re-instated if considered desirable. This was noted as a point for discussion by the group. Jules, from the</p> |

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| | <p>Cruising Association, mentioned similar experiences and the importance of people realizing they were joining a volunteer organization. On the other hand, one did not want 'pressed men and women'.</p> <p>MG asked for any further points. Tom pointed out that Chris and Andrew were always looking for contributions to <i>Blue Flag</i>; this was another important way of volunteering and, again, getting diverse perspectives and content.</p> <p>Differentiated membership fees were also put forward as a suggestion. This might incorporate people who had sold their boats but possibly still continue to have an interest.</p> <p>On the bookshop, it was queried whether an Isle of Wight address would be suitable. This was confirmed, and Caroline would send further details personally on needs such as storage.</p> <p>Bob Marsland made a plea for more volunteers with some French language skills who might be willing to attend local VNF meetings and give a report to the membership. A number of people were contributing significantly but more assistance was still needed. Bob was encouraging different parts of the VNF to use the growing practice of video-conferencing in addition to in-person, which would also help with coverage. He encouraged people to contact him. MG thanked Bob and requested that he write a small paragraph for <i>Blue Flag</i>.</p> <p>Glynis queried what would be involved in helping with Facebook; it was agreed that she and PM would have a discussion.</p> <p>Sian asked whether owning a boat was necessary to volunteer; it was clarified that this was not a criterion.</p> <p>TC drew the meeting's attention to potential need in upcoming months for a chair, a treasurer, and the many other responsibilities held by AS.</p> |
| 10 | <p>To discuss proposals for the AGM in 2024.</p> <p>MG commented that changes in circumstances had altered the format of the AGM; this was the second held in hybrid form. He sought input on what members felt about the way forward, for consideration at the Board meeting the following day.</p> <p>Bob endorsed the current arrangements as they enabled people all over the world to attend, although it looked as though in-person attendance was lower than in his previous experience. MG agreed that the online dimension widened access, whilst noting the value also of personal contact. He asked, therefore, whether the format should continue as hybrid and reported nods from around the meeting venue. Zoom attendees also thought that the option to attend remotely was valuable.</p> <p>MG raised the issue of catering when in a hybrid mode, as this changed the character of dinner. In terms of the lower in-person numbers for it, a mixture of factors were felt to be in play. This included the AGM date - a number of</p> |

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| | <p>people had begun cruising, and a March date was thought better. There were also broader social changes, with a shift in attendance mode preferences when meeting online was an option. It was suggested that polling members might generate better data about what factors were in play. As well as time and date, it might include perceptions about the value of attending, or not knowing the benefit of what was involved.</p> |
| <p>11</p> | <p>To take and answer questions.</p> <p>MG opened the floor to general points or questions.</p> <p>SH wanted to note that one of the most useful developments, particularly during COVID, was the introduction of monthly Zoom meetings, offering opportunities for members to be interactively involved and engaged. She would like to see this continue, but added that it should not necessarily always be the Chair's responsibility.</p> <p>MG asked whether it would be worth continuing this during the summer cruising season; SH responded that it probably had most value during the winter months (from a northern hemisphere perspective).</p> <p>Membership numbers were queried; MG reported that there was a gentle downward trend which had been visible for some years – not yet significant, but discernible. AS added that about seven years ago in 2017, there were around 1500 members. Since then, there had been a drop of some 20% to about 1250. This total only counts the first, not the second, members. Therefore, the actual number of people involved was nearer 1500–1550. In the last financial year, numbers were down some 36 net. So numbers were still going down, but more slowly, with deaths a contributing factor. Over previous years, Brexit and COVID had also had impact.</p> <p>MG noted that boating survey figures generally showed age of ownership increasing, fewer people buying boats later in life and significant increases in costs. However, people were still investing in boats with many boat yards not taking new orders, and a younger demographic emerging able to work from home.</p> <p>Rebecca asked if the meeting venue being at the Cruising Association signalled closer co-operation with DBA. It was noted that the two organizations had been working together for some time on the impact of external factors on boating and worked well together. AS added there were also increasing links with ANPEI; generally, it was beneficial for boating and waterways associations to work together and share information, whether or not there was any formal agreement in place. Bob confirmed the growth in communication with ANPEI and recommended this trend continue.</p> |
| <p>12</p> | <p>Any other business.</p> <p>IM drew the meeting's attention to the announcement in <i>Blue Flag</i> of a scheme by which existing members could help recruit new members through</p> |

encouraging them to join. The website would be set up to deal with this and there would be promotional benefit for both parties (six month membership extension for the 'recruiter', and half-price membership for one year for the new joiner).

MG also mentioned the production of fliers which would be at the rallies in July. He thanked Tim and Glynis for organizing the Hurleyford Rally on the Thames, and also members who had signed up for that and for Auxerre. Barges were signed up for both.

SP was invited to show the members a silver-plated cannon trophy which he had come up with for the previously proposed DBA Chatham Challenge. This would be between Dutch sailing barges and Thames sailing barges. This year would see a small preliminary trial at the Blackwater Barge match in June; in future, it was hoped it would be part of the Medway barge match.

MG asked if there was any other business, then closed the meeting. He thanked everyone for their attendance and looked forward to seeing them in the future.

The meeting closed at 6pm.