

1 WATERWAYS OMBUDSMAN COMMITTEE MEETING

On Monday 19 June 2023 at 09.15am
Teams

MINUTES

Present:

Karen McArthur (KM)	Independent Member (Chair)
Jane Brothwood (JB)	Independent Member
Alan Collins (AC)	Independent Member
Alison Jack (AJ)	Independent Member

Apologies

Warren Seddon (WS)	Independent Member
Geoff Crane (GC)	Avon Navigation Trust Representative

Navigation Authority Observers

Janet Hogben (JH)	Canal & River Trust Board Representative
Tom Deards (TD)	Canal & River Trust Executive Representative

In attendance:

Sarah Daniel (SD)	Ombudsman
Sobia Saleem (SS)	Governance Assistant (minutes)
Sarina Young	Customer Service Supervisor

Action

1. Welcome & Apologies

The Chair opened the meeting, apologies received from GC and WS

2. Register & Declarations of Interest

The Register of Interests report was noted. SD to include TRA Panel as an interest. No further interests related to the Committee's work were declared.

SS

3. Governance

3.1 Minutes of the last Meeting

Minutes of the meeting held on 13 March 2023 were approved as an accurate record.

- Item 3.2: Boat Safety Scheme Subsidiary - TD to present a paper on the Boat Safety Scheme subsidiary once the subsidiary is in place.

Boat Safety Scheme Subsidiary update was provided. It was noted that the Environmental Agency has assigned someone in place and a structure for the Scheme is being proposed.

AC joined the meeting.

3.2 Matters Arising

From the meeting held on 05 December 2022

- **Boat Safety Scheme Subsidiary** – TD to present a paper on the Boat Safety Scheme subsidiary once the subsidiary is in place. TD will give an update at the next meeting if the Scheme has gone through Board. TD
- **To review if there is an industry body that can offer an affiliated membership for marinas** – To contact and ask the British Marine if they are interested in joining the Ombudsman Scheme. SD
- **AINA** – TD to contact Peter Walker for an update on AINA joining the Ombudsman Scheme following on from the meeting where Peter expressed an interest to join the Scheme. TD
- **Waterway User Observer** – The role profile and request for a User Representative Observer has been sent to Council.

From the meeting held on 13 March 2023

- **To review and amend the Governance documents, including terms of reference for the committee to approve at the next meeting** – On agenda.
- **To invite the Trust's Customer Service Supervisor to feedback on the customer service training** – On agenda.

4. Customer Service Training

The Customer Services Supervisor from Canal & River Trust shared the presentation on the Customer Service Training.

It was noted that frontline staff were experiencing challenges when dealing with customer service calls, one reason being the rise in cost of living. The Trust decided to implement customer service training with three purposes:

- Importance of customer experience
- Improve performance and resilience

- Act on feedback from the Ombudsman, where complaints had escalated following missed opportunities to be clearer.

The Institute of Customer Service was commissioned to provide half day workshops. Following on from the workshops, there has been an increase in customer satisfaction over the last 12 months.

There was discussion surrounding the new CRM system. It was noted that this has been a significant investment and gives the visibility of the historic data that has been documented of any particular case to frontline staff when dealing with the case in question. This enables frontline staff to provide a level of service that wasn't possible before. The data in CRM can help identify the given length a case is open for, and which type of enquiries take longer to resolve.

The combination of the CRM system and customer service training is a step in the right direction and is having a positive impact.

JB noted that the training included feedback from the Ombudsman which was a positive step in learning from complaints to improve systems. It was noted that the Ombudsman's report helped implement aspects of training to empower first line staff to say 'no'.

The committee praised that lessons were learnt from complaints and there was a focus on staff wellbeing.

The Committee thanked SY for her presentation and feedback.

5. Committee Recruitment Update – User Representative Member (non-voting)

The User Representative Profile has been shared with Council members with no responses to date.

Action: TD to speak directly with certain members of the Council about the position.

TD

6. Finance

The Finance Report shared ahead of the meeting was taken as read. TD noted that the figures and expenses are consistent with previous years.

7. Ombudsman's Report

- The hearing date for the Judicial Review has been set for 13th July.

- New Business – This is ongoing with the British Marine and AINA.
- Peer review – The Ombudsman of British Columbia contacted the Ombudsman about the Peer Review, looking to set one up for themselves. They had been impressed with the thorough way in which the review had been conducted and the outcomes presented on the website.
- External training – The Ombudsman attending a two day training course covering sessions on decision making, types of evidence, questioning and chairing hearings, valuable to this role.
- Casework – Enquiry numbers were 15 for the period. Of these 9 had not completed the ICP, 2 were not about CRT, 2 were OTOR, 2 were accepted for investigation. Complaints which are outside jurisdiction usually come via a Google search while the ones who have not completed the ICP come from the Trust's website. It was noted that a clear policy around the process can help manage the complaints effectively.
- Open Investigations –

There has been a complaint about an overstaying boater and anti-social behaviour and the way in which the Trust has handled the complaint. The complainant questions the Trust policy on overstayers that cannot be enforced and the apparent lack of action to move this boat on or stop the noise. The complainant has requested further information. From a GDPR perspective the Trust cannot share information about the boater to the complainant. The Trust has to be cautious and judge what information can be shared on a case-by-case basis.

There has been a complaint about customer services failure to respond to a complaint about the standard and upkeep of customer facilities. The complainant requested details of the complaint and the way in which it was dealt with. This has been treated as a FOI request and the information has been relayed to the complainant.

- Closed Investigations –

A boater has complained about the change in mooring status believing that the mooring was included in the purchase price of the boat. The mooring was in fact part of a business which the previous owner had leased from the Trust. The complainant had been misled by the seller of the boat and thus would have to move the boat from its location as the mooring was not included.

8. Annual Report

The Annual Report is in progress and will be streamlined to focus on the learning and overall objective from complaints rather than the number of complaints. To be shared with the Committee once completed.

9. Scheme of Rules

The Committee noted discrepancies in the Scheme of Rules.

Action: SS/TD to bring back scheme of rules with amendments as suggested by AC, the numbering correction and to include the new term of office for the User Representative Observer. SS/TD

10. AOB

The Committee thanked JB for all her hard work and contribution as her term came to an end.

11. Close of Meeting

There being no further business, the Chair closed the meeting at 10.45am.

12. Next Meeting Date

13 September 2023, Birmingham

These minutes were approved by the Committee as an accurate record.