

WATERWAYS OMBUDSMAN COMMITTEE
Minutes of the meeting held at
Canal & River Trust, The Toll House, Delamere Terrace, Little Venice
London, W2 6ND
on Thursday 23 July 2015 at 10.00 a.m.

Present:

Steve Harriott (SH)	Chairman (Independent)
Tom Franklin (TF)	CRT Trustee
Jackie Lewis (JL)	CRT General Counsel
Kevin Fitzgerald (KF)	Independent Member

Apologies

Jenny Murley	Independent Member
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In attendance:

Andrew Walker (AW)	Ombudsman
Yetunde Salami (YS)	Assistant Company Secretary (minutes)

Action

1. Welcome & Apologies

Apologies were noted as above and the Chair welcomed all present to the meeting.

2. Minutes of the Meeting held on 8 April 2015

2.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 8 April 2015 were adopted.

3. Matters Arising

3.1 It was noted that most of the matters arising items had been dealt with and the annual report was on the agenda.

4 Draft Annual report

4.1 AW outlined the highlights of the draft annual report explaining that it is in a new format with provision for Chairman's foreword and a list of completed investigations with a link to more details on the website.

4.2 Committee members discussed the report and felt that the report should include more information on the role of the Committee. The Chairman's foreword should also address the Committee's plans regarding accountability to users and the Committee's clear commitment to stakeholder engagement. It was also noted that a broad range of the cases investigated were complex and the reasons for this should be highlighted in the report. SH will circulate an updated Chairman's foreword to Committee members for approval.

SH

Action

It was agreed that some case summaries in the report need to be further anonymised. AW to discuss with JL after the meeting.

AW

5. Report of the Waterways Ombudsman to the Committee

- 5.1 Committee members noted the report. SH noted that it would be useful to see the numbers of cases opened, closed, on-going etc. and so future reports should include more case load tracking

6. Update on submission of application to TSI for approval as a Consumer ADR Body

- 6.1 AW reported that the application and supporting documents had been submitted to the Trading Standards Institute. It was noted that the TSI had allocated a case officer for this Scheme and he had sent his initial comments via email to AW. AW will respond to the email by Friday 24th July.

The costs of the certification are to be met from the WOC budget.

JL

7. Discussion on how to track customer satisfaction with the scheme at various stages of the customer journey

Customer satisfaction

- 7.1 The Committee agreed that there is a need to establish some form of user liaison in order to get feedback from users and to monitor customer satisfaction. It was noted that AW is scheduled to make a presentation at the Trust's Council meeting on 23 September and KF will attend on behalf of SH. It is expected that the presentation at the Trust's Council meeting would be a way of getting consumer feedback.

AW/KF

- 7.2 It had already been agreed that SH will include the commitment to user engagement in his Chairman's foreword in the Annual report.

SH

- 7.3 The issue of Customer surveys were discussed and the Committee accepted that there were difficulties when carrying these out after the Ombudsman's decision has been made because customer views might well be coloured by the outcome. KF suggested that his might be addressed by carrying out a short survey towards the end of the investigation by the Ombudsman and before the draft decision was issued. AW agreed that he would produce a survey which would concentrate on how well the overall process had worked and SH said he would send AW questions he uses for this purpose

AW/SH

Grounds to refuse to investigate a complaint

- 7.4 Committee members noted that the grounds set out in the Rules are entirely in line with the grounds set out in the new Alternative Dispute Resolution for Consumer Disputes (Competent Authorities and Information) Regulations 2015 but there is a need for to explain to users why the changes were included in the Ombudsman's Rules.

AW

Admissibility of complaints with value less than £50

- 7.5 The Committee agreed that the £50 cap will be removed. JL will amend the Rules accordingly.

JL

8 Appointment of the Ombudsman

The Committee noted that the Ombudsman's appointment was effective from 1st November 2012 for an initial four years and due for review in October 2016.

9 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- 9.2 AW's proposed presentation at the Trust's next Council meeting should be included in the next meeting agenda.

YS

10 Date of Next meetings:

10 September 2015 at 10.00a.m
25 November 2015 at 10.00a.m

CLOSE OF MEETING

There being no further business, the Chair closed the meeting at 11.42a.m.

Chairman