

1 WATERWAYS OMBUDSMAN COMMITTEE MEETING

Held by Zoom
On Monday 20 June 2022 at 09.30am

MINUTES

Present:

Karen McArthur (KM)	Independent Member (Chair)
Jane Brothwood (JB)	Independent Member
Alan Collins (AC)	Independent Member
Lisa Smallwood (LS)	Independent Member

Apologies

David Greer (DG)	Avon Navigation Trust Representative
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In attendance:

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
Emma Taaffe (ET)	Corporate Governance Manager (minutes)

User Representative

Dave Mendes da Costa (DMdC)	Canal & River Trust Council Member
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Action

1. Welcome & Apologies

KM opened the meeting.

Apologies were received from DG.

2. Register & Declarations of interest

The Register of Interests report was noted. No further interests related to the Committee's work were declared.

3. Governance

3.1 Minutes of the last Meeting

Minutes of the meeting held on 14 March 2020 were approved as an accurate record.

3.2 Matters Arising

An update was provided on the open actions in the Action Log:

13 September 2021:

- Item 6: TD provided a brief update on AINA and Peel. Actions to remain open.

- Item 7: TD provided an update on mooring arrears, noting that he had sent a response to DMdC by email the previous day. Discussion to be taken offline. Action closed.

06 December 2021:

- Item 4: to remain open.

The Committee approved closure of all other actions.

4. Ombudsman's Report

The Ombudsman's Report, shared ahead of the meeting, was taken as read. SD talked through key points:

- Ombudsman Association (OA) meeting 27 April 2022 -
The OA had called a meeting to discuss concerns that the Ministry of Justice wanted to create a single portal for disputes with criteria set by courts/tribunals rather than ombudsmen, which could undermine the benefits of ombudsmen; members of the OA were encouraged to unite on what the OA wanted for the future and on the unique value of ombudsmen. KM and SD would attend the OA conference and see whether any further information could be obtained.
- Peer Review – this was now underway.
- Judicial Review – the application from the complainant for a judicial review and the Ombudsman's application to strike out the claim had proceeded to be determined by a judge on the papers; a decision was expected in July 2022.
- Customer Survey – Two pre-decision surveys had been issued and both received positive responses; consideration was still being given to the benefits of a post final decision survey.
- Casework – one open investigation relating to an end of garden mooring. The remaining cases were closed, including complaints about boater smoke pollution and about a leaking underground garage; award made in the latter case as there had been some customer service issues.

5. Finance update

The paper shared ahead of the meeting was taken as read.

Action: TD to check whether legal costs will be shown as separate from the Ombudsman's costs in the report.

TD

6. CRM

The Committee welcomed Sarina Young, the Trust's Customer Service Supervisor.

SY provided an update on the progress of the new Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system, focussing on achievements since she had last presented to the Committee and aims going forwards.

SY presented the system and talked through cases and records. She noted the benefit of the universal view and performance measures, which showed how often service level standards were met and enabled regional performance analysis. The system also provided a better understanding of customer demands and frustrations as well as facilitating focused internal conversations. Visibility of enquiries had improved as had updates and responses to customers.

There was still some work to be done with data management. Regular case management meetings were being held and quarterly reports were made to the Executive Team.

The Committee noted that the system picked up trends such as anti-social behaviour, as cases were categorised. Consistency of approach to issues such as fly tipping was ensured through case management meetings.

Learning from complaints and enquiries was ensured through peer group discussions and increased communications between teams.

The Chair thanked SY for her presentation and noted the positive cultural shift.

7. Mooring Arrears

Considered under Item 3.2.

8. Committee Member Recruitment

The Chair provided an update on recruitment.

The Committee APPROVED the proposed Independent Committee Member Recruitment and Re-Appointment Process, which was shared ahead of the meeting.

The Chair was pleased that AC and LS were happy to stand for re-appointment and noted that they would share their CVs and a short supporting statement, which would be circulated with the December papers. **Action: ET to note on forward planner.**

ET

9. Annual Report Sign Off

The Annual Report had been circulated to all Committee members for comments. Committee members were reminded of the deadline.

10. Any Other Business

The Chair noted that the September meeting would be in person and that ET was looking into venues in Birmingham.

11. Close of Meeting

There being no further business, the Chair closed the meeting at 10.37am.

12. Date of Next Meeting

12 September 2022, In Person.

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

Chair