

River Users Group

Area 3 – Sandford to Cleeve

One of 9 Groups set up for communication and co-operation between all users of the River Thames
Sponsored by the Environment Agency

Minutes of the Meeting held on Thursday the 26th October, 2017 at Benson Parish Hall, Benson

Present: Alan Dawe (Chairman), Rodney Davis (UTMYC and Secretary), Simon Broadbent (Dorchester Parish Council), Pete Eldridge (Benson Parish Council), John and Susan Greenford (Thames Traditional Boat Society), Christy Job (Wallingford Rowing Club), David Mannering (Crowmarsh Gifford Parish Council), Graham Paterson (NABO), Russell Robson (Environment Agency) and Philip Sache (Oxford Ditch Cruising Club)

Apologies for Absence: Amanda Holland, Barbara Wilson and Greg and Shirley Wheeler

22.17: Minutes of the Previous Meeting held on the 15th June, 2017

The minutes were approved.

23.17: Matters Arising

- **13.17** the application for gravel extraction between Appleford and Clifton Hampden is still pending. The application to improve a mooring at Long Wittenham has been deferred at the request of the applicant.

24.17 : EA Navigation Reports

(a) Staffing - 8 new relief lock and weir keepers have been appointed. Of the 20 temporary summer staff, 6 are being retained until March. This should mean that at worst, only double rather than triple manning should be needed. More new waterways officers have also been appointed. Andy Croxford is the new team leader for the river from Osney to Goring.

(b) Shoal Removal – the shoals downstream of Abingdon Lock and upstream and downstream of Benson have been removed. Subject to stabilisation issues, the new dredger is ready to be used.

(c) Volunteers – a reception had recently been held for volunteers – there had been over 250 this year, the best ever. Support was better during the week rather than at week-ends.

(d) Trees – a survey has been completed. A Company called Cleartrack has started work where needed, although funds were short. Recent bad weather had brought down 28 trees from 3rd party land. These had been cleared in two days.

(e) Enforcement – not including marinas, compliance was 94%. Action was being taken in appropriate cases.

(f) Lock Closures – Clifton will be closed from the 2nd January to the 23rd March for the re-sheeting of the lock gates. There is no public power at present; this should be restored in about 2 weeks.

(g) Navigation Charges – there has been no final decision but there seems to have been little in the way of objection to the proposed increase of 5.7%. It was pointed out that the percentage increase for unpowered boats was quite high (7.7%).

25.17 EA Transfer to Canal & River Trust

Little has been heard recently. The CRT are waiting to hear about the size of their “dowry” from Government.

26.17 Thames Visitor Moorings

The Chairman advised that a report is to be presented to the next TNUF meeting.

27.17 Abingdon Flood Schemes

The overall scheme is still short of £12M of the total funding required. EA have updated the flood map between Oxford and Reading. There have been few changes.

28.17: Thames Path

It was reported that there are no special problems in the RUG3 area. Repairs have taken place to the path between Wallingford and Benson.

29.17 Harbourmaster's Notices

- 26th November – Head of the River Race between Moulsoford and Wallingford
- Extension of height reduction at Clifton Lock Cut Bridge until 10th November.

30.17: River Events

- Benson to Cleeve Swim – this had taken place (without much notice) on the 20th August starting at 6.30 a.m.. There had been 110 swimmers.

31.17: Reports from Group Members and A.O.B.

(i) Christy Job produced a report (attached) about tree problems in the Wallingford Reach, highlighting in particular the islands at Moulsoford. It was also noted that the “Channel” sign there had been removed or was certainly not visible.

(ii) Volunteers – Russell Robson confirmed that, contrary to some reports, volunteers on duty are authorised to operate the gate opening/closing buttons.

(iii) Problems are continuing with the new landowner at Days Lock. However, there are reports that the land is up for sale.

(iv) The Dorchester Neighbourhood Plan is the subject of public consultation.

(v) Abingdon Town Council are considering changes to their mooring rules.

(vi) Pete Eldridge reported that some-one had been seen dumping waste from ice cream cartons into the river at Rivermead, the parish council park by the river. Russell Robson advised that the first point of call should be the National Customer Contact Centre on [details awaited from Russell Robson].

(vii) Moorings at Benson Lock Island – Rodney Davis reported that because three boats on summer moorings had been moored a long way apart, two possible overnight moorings had been lost. He

had been advised that the lock keeper had no authority to move the boats and suggested that it should to be a condition of the mooring licence that boats could be moved.

(viii) Floating Pennywort – this has been identified as a problem and the growth near Blake’s Lock will be cleared in 2 weeks’ time.

32.17: Date of Next Meeting

The next RUG 3 meeting will be held on Thursday, the 1st March, 2018 in Benson Parish Hall, commencing at 7.30 p.m..