Chairman’s Report

Good to see you all here again. The Show here at Crick is a good opportunity for all our Skippers and helpers to meet in a convivial atmosphere – possibly the only time we all get to meet each other. The Skippers’ Workshop and Boat winterising and Dewinterising are too intensive for much socialising.

A slimmed-down Executive have coped well with the now very competitive nature of the Project’s progress. The efficient use of our Boats is at the heart of all our aspirations and is crucial to our survival as a Business.

Our Boat Bookings are in very good shape thanks to the Marketing expertise of Karl and the hard work of our Bookings Officer, Nigel, both of whom have been instrumental in raising our Profile on the Cut.

It is good to welcome John Moore and Jinty Williamson into management positions. I Hope John will enjoy participating directly with the Project’s affairs. The Executive will benefit from his experience as a Skipper. Jinty’s organisational experience will benefit us in her Trustee’s role.

Over the year we have got to grip with GDPR thanks to Liz and Graham. Alan’s business experience has been invaluable and Chinyere and Charity together with our Auditors represented here by Tara, have worked tirelessly to keep us solvent!

A few personal pointers to the last 12 months:-

C & RT have refunded the Licence Fee for Lancelot which had been wrongly classified (as a Leisure Licence, rather than a Business Licence – which is cheaper). The new (correct) licences are now on the Boats.

Again on the boats new (additional to the original installation) CO alarms have been installed on the rear bulkhead of the back cabin. This is now a BSS requirement and these new alarms will provide a better coverage than just the Skipper’s Cabin and the Saloon.

The ‘Tiller Arc’ yellow line indication has been repainted as it was showing signs of wear. The Boat Safety Scheme Examiner was happy with this but thought that we could mention what this was meant to indicate. As all our Skippers have this included in their training and are always present on the rear whoever is steering, he was satisfied.

New Safety Certificates have now been issued.

From 10th July to 12th July inclusive, myself and 3 other Skippers undertook ‘Taster Days’ familiarising local Societies and Agencies with the Project’s Activities and Purposes by using the boats as floating displays to engender goodwill and interest together with expounding the benefits of booking our boats in the future.

All 3 days had daytime and evening cruises so it was intensive for our Skippers. Many positive reactions (and donations!) have been received. Some of these are on display on our Facebook page. The Wolvey WI were particularly generous and a serious booking enquiry has been received.

From 21st to the 27th July I was joined by Mike Horsley in a new venture for the Project – DIY Hull-Blacking.

This was undertaken in UCC’s Dry Dock – a very intensive 7 days and extremely exhausting – 8 hr days with the odd ice cream/sandwich break, at the height of a Heatwave! For the cost of the Dry-Dock hire + £130 blacking paint and rollers + some red/black gloss for the boats’ stern, I think we have saved the Project something in the region of £1500 over an all-in figure for the above + labour. More boring Facts & Figures available on request but 600 foot ( x 4ft depth) of rollered blacking takes some applying.

In November your Marketing Team made contact with the new Education Coordinator (South-East) at C & RT, Mike Wakeford on November 19th to pursue our relationship. He was optimistic that we can work together under the ‘banner’ of education. He saw his role (although subject to transient changes to C & RT Organisation) as directing enquiries made to the Trust for Canal Experience, including ‘hands-on’ boat handling. We are in a good position to provide this using our Skipper base. He was not aware of any other organisation providing this sort of opportunity. We await further developments.

In January Mike Wilton-Caley and myself kept an appointment with Dave Smith of ‘4 Cancer Group’ in Brighton, to explore the possibility of cooperation with cancer patients and their remedial workers using the boats as a different outlook on life for them. We have formally invited representatives from the Group to visit the Boats at Braunston in order for them to assess their suitability for use by the Group’s clients.

The latest version of the Promotional Video has been presented to the Executive and has met with general approval. A short (1 minute) version have also been produced. These videos have been incorporated into our Marketing strategy.

This year we have recruited and successfully trained (thanks to Chris, Mike and Paul J) 3 new Skippers, Russ, Martin and Paul.

A little background info: -

Russ (Baldwin) is from Bookham and has Scouting roots. He is a BT engineer and frequently views the world from the tops of poles. He is also a Rugby fan (kindred spirit with Boz possibly?)

Martin (Tolley). Again a Scouting background (in N. Oxfordshire) and now runs a fantastic (his words!) Pub.

Paul (Dodford) is from Rutland and is a Major Project Consultant. He is undertaking MCA Boatmaster training in addition to LNBP activities.

Back to the present, many thanks to all our Skippers manning and womaning the Trip Boats at the Show and also our Face-Painters. All of these people are responsible for our highly valued Public Image at this Show.

Thanks are also due to Denise and Paul for coordinating our appearance at this year’s Show and Boz for organising the catering.

Thank You.

Peter Page

Chairman LNBP