

## Lancaster User Group Meeting

18 October 2004

**In Attendance:** Mr D Smith, N Lancs & Cumbria IWA, Mrs A Smith, IWAAC, Mr Jackson, Moons Bridge Marina, Mrs Jackson, Moons Bridge Marina, Mrs S Kenny, Lancaster Canal Boat Club, Mr P Hood, ACE, Mr S Tonge, Pendle Marine, Mr P Simmonds, IWA, Mrs M Fletcher, IWA NW Region, Mr K Broom, Mrs M Sadler, IWA NW Region, Mr E Sadler, IWA. N Lancs, Mr I Parrington, LC Boat owner, KJ Saziker, Ribble Link Trust, Miss M Dean, IWA. N Lancs, Mrs J Naylor, LCBC, A Greer, Arlen Hire Boats, Dave Gerrard, NABO.

No matters arising from the minutes of the last meeting

### **PRESENTATION BY JOHN WARRINGTON – OPERATIONS MANAGER**

#### **Dredging / Vegetation Management**

The grass cutting contractor ceased business just before the first cut of the season. This resulted in the first cut being delayed and ongoing problems throughout the summer creating a backlog of works and an unmanageable towpath condition. It has been acknowledged that this year has witnessed exceptionally vigorous growth in all areas of the country.

A vegetation management plan for the Lancaster Canal will be prepared and issued for consultation during March 2005. Survey work is being progressed.

Additional funds are being dedicated to vegetation management to address these issues over the next 18 months.

Dredging of reed beds at the margins is constrained by the clay bed and the original design profile of the canal. Currently assessing a practical approach that will enhance access to the bank from a boat.

Dredging on the remaining sections of the Rufford Branch is planned to commence in 2005.

Introduction of lease scheme for maintenance craft. Priority is new craft in Greater Manchester. Weed clearance plan for Lancaster will be included in programme.

Strong feelings were expressed that British Waterways have not got the balance between Health and Safety and environmental protection right on the Lancaster Canal. Next years towpath maintenance will include two full width and three intermediate cuts. Plans are developing to create towpath access at regular intervals. Greater clearance of reed fringes needs assessment of canal bed, particularly south of Galgate.

## **RIBBLE LINK – QUERIES AND COMMENTS**

Q. Why are lock gates not left open when the link is in flood?

A. BW need to be careful in management of flows through the link. Opening the gates could lead to stronger flows and worsen erosion problems. Safety is also a very important consideration. British Waterways will be looking into operational aspects of the Ribble Link during winter in consultation with the Environment Agency. This will include a review of operation of the gates during flood conditions and how this may affect siltation within the link.

Lights on Seagate need to be made more visible and light is green not red. A new Skippers Guide is being drafted for next years passages which will correct this error. Double light to increase visibility not practical but British Waterways will review the options.

Better communications with Preston Docks is needed next year with regards to bookings and those who may be re-directed due to tide times and conditions.

Customer Comment: It was suggested that priority should be given to Lancaster moorings for Ribble Link passage.

User guide – Preston Dock both ways, needs to state this in the navigation guide.

## **SERVICE QUERIES / COMMENTS**

### **Moorings**

Mooring improvements at the end of the Rufford Branch are awaiting final towpath surfacing.

General preference for a mix of time periods for moorings rather than a max 48 hours on signed sites.

More visitor moorings are needed

Hest Bank disabled moorings will be at closest point to the road There will, therefore, be a need to reposition some permanent moorings in this area.

Garstang Visitor moorings (48 hours). Overstaying is a problem. JT to review enforcement policy. By agreement can extend to 7 days.

### **Boating**

Demand for moorings on the Lancaster Canal remains high. Canal is at capacity for boat numbers and visitor mooring availability is limited in peak periods.

British Waterways are considering how best to encourage creation and use of off-line mooring to free up on-line visitor / shorts stay moorings.

Perception is that boats are coming through link and are staying on the Lancaster. British Waterways monitors two way passage and has no record of overstaying.

## **OTHER OPERATIONAL QUERIES / COMMENTS**

Request for comprehensive itinerary of works inclusive of dates for commencement and completion. BW to provide and discuss programme for 2005/ 06 at Spring meeting.

Considerable dead trees overhanging on way into Lancaster between bridge 78 – 82. Also at Bridge 10, tree overhanging winding hole.

Comment raised about cyclists speeding through mooring sites (top end of Carnforth).

GM to join Lancaster B.C. for 3 day end to end service survey in June 2005.

#### **GENERAL Q&A'S**

Q. Waterbus goes down centre on canal and will not move out of the way for other boaters. Boat driver said that BW had advised him to do this.

A. BW have issued no such instruction.

Q. What is the progress on Lady Fiona?

A. Currently in Nantwich for restoration. HLF funding to be confirmed.

Q. BW customer service inspection by boat, when is this taking place?

A. This week. Starting from Preston.

Q. Why has money from the Lancaster Canal been diverted to other canals.

A. British Waterways Northwest allocate monies to works not to canals.

Q. Will British Waterways be introducing VHF for the Ribble Link?

A. One of the conditions of the booking is that a mobile phone is available on board for emergency contact. This makes the need for VHF unnecessary.

**Next Meeting will be held on: 26th April 2005**

**Venue to be confirmed**