



Title LEEDS & LIVERPOOL WITH LANCASTER SPRING USER GROUP
Date 21 March 2007
Venue St Peters Parish Church Chorley

Debbie welcomed everyone for coming to the meeting and thanked Jack Pilkington for suggesting the venue. More suggestions for alternative venues would be welcomed for future meetings. Updates were given regarding the impact that the Defra cuts have had on the North West. The grant this year nationally is £55 million which is £10 million less than originally expected. Negotiations are continuing regarding the grants for the next three years. The North West lost a total of seven posts under the restructure but five of these were already vacant. Mike Marshall and Steve Pugmire positions were confirmed that they were permanent roles.

Alan Carter (Business Development Manager) ran through the new team structure and handouts were made available to everyone.

He stated that one of the main focuses this year was to develop relationships with our business customers in the north west. BW wants to help not hinder businesses.

In the new financial year there would be a lot of focus on “key destinations” in the north west – Whaley Bridge – Garstang – Liverpool South Docks. Societies and organisations are to be encouraged to have links to their businesses posted on Waterscape.com

Land Registry – is 55% complete and it’s hoped to be fully completed by the end of the coming financial year.

£0.5 - £0.75 million was saved by not doing repairs that were the responsibility by other parties. For example a member of the public who caused damage to a breach on the Rochdale canal at Castleton has had an injunction served against him to recoup the cost of repairing the bridge.

Restrictions on the Rochdale canal will be partially lifted next week between the hours of 10am and 3pm. Consent is required to carry out the works at this is a Site of Specific Interest.

Stephen Pugmire (Asset & Programme Manager) ran through his team structure including project managers, asset engineers, building surveyor, M & E engineers and confirmed that the north west has a dedicated water resource engineer.

North West Waterways

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Emergency repairs: –

Lune Aqueduct - leakage problem which caused the canal to be closed in the summer is to have a more robust repair carried out in a few years. It is hoped that funding will be given by interested parties as it is a Grade I listed structure.

Lancaster canal - repairs have been carried out to bridge hit by a vehicle and a scheme is to be put in place to stop further erosion of bywash Lock 4 on the Ribble Link.

Ribble Link – voiding opened on the staircase lock which contractors are currently grouting. It is hoped these repairs will be completed the week after Easter but craft can travel through from 06 April 2007.

The north west now have a licence to pump out the silt from the Ribble Link back into the estuary rather than sending the dredged silt to a tip which is very costly.

Fearn's embankment – repairs are all now complete.

Dredging has been completed around Crook.

Culverts and aqueducts are to be inspected this year (using CCTV) on the Lancaster and Leeds & Liverpool canals and repairs carried out where necessary.

Mike Marshall (Customer Operations Manager) confirmed that there are now ten Supervisors in the north west which is an increase from seven previously. In addition there is now a Works Planner, Iain Weston, who plans general works that need to be carried out throughout the year and in what order of priority they need to be done. There will also be a Contracts Manager who will deal with general contracts regarding vegetation cutting, tree surveying etc.

The Supervisors are no longer allocated particular “patches” but are allocated specific tasks within an area e.g. customer service, rapid response and vegetation control.

Works undertaken include replacing lock gates at Johnson Hillock and repairs on the Wigan flight. Lock gates on the Stanley flight are to be replaced and work completed by the end of the year.

The national stoppage programme for 2007/2008 is expected to be completed by the end of May.

Jim Gardner (Senior Engineer) then gave a presentation showing works scheduled for Liverpool Link, copies of which are available on request. The website for the Liverpool Link is www.britishwaterways.co.uk/liverpoolcanallink

Q & A Session:

(There were no previously submitted questions)

Q.What can be done about the water levels on the flight down to the Mersey?

A.The water levels are not the responsibility of British Waterways. The levels are controlled by the Liverpool Port Authority.

Q.Why can boats not stop on the moorings at the Stanley flight or at Albert Dock?

A. Boats will be able to moor within the Liverpool South Docks complex.

Q. Will the new Liverpool Link have pedestrian access?

A. The land belongs to Peel Holdings but British Waterways only have right of navigation so far but hope that it will be opened in the future to pedestrians.

Q. Will there be facilities at Canning Dock?

A. Yes they will be permanently located on pontoons. There is no pump out facility. This is carried out by visiting vehicles. The showers and toilets are being upgraded in the Albert Dock. Elsan type facilities are hoping to be provided in the future.

Q. How many berths will there be at the docks?

A. Albert Dock, Salthouse Dock & Kings Dock will provide approximately 50 berths.

Q. How much will the mooring fees be if staying overnight?

A. This has not yet been decided.

Q. What other facilities will be in the Liverpool Marina?

A. The Marina is not British Waterways responsibility but the Marina owner is planning to expand the area.

Q. Will the canal be deep enough between the Running Horse @ Lydiate and Liverpool to allow craft to travel to the Link?

A. Yes it will be.

Q. The fees have gone up again and people are being priced out of boating. What are British Waterways plans for the future?

A. British Waterways are aware that the thresholds are getting higher each year and fees are looked at each year, but generally levels of boaters on the network are increasing therefore costs associated with these rises need to be addressed.

Q. Foulridge toilets are closed again. When will they be reopened?

A. They were repaired and opened after Christmas after a main drain was found to be blocked. Another blockage has been reported this week and we are awaiting a CCTV report to show us where the blockage is.

Q. When we have to use white diesel with the marinas provide two tanks for the different types?

A. British Waterways do not provide diesel, so it will be up to the individual marina operators.

Q. The hawthorn bushes at Ongar moorings are not being trimmed and people are getting scratched by them. When will this problem be resolved?

A. Hedge cutting has now been completed adjacent to the moorings and the towpath is clear. Further works will be carried out in the winter, east of the moorings to further improve this area. Craneboat has also visited the site and picked out large underwater debris from the mooring area.

Q. On the Ribble Link down to Tarleton the guide says that toilets are at Sparks Bridge but that is not correct. When will the book be amended?

A. The 2007 skippers guide does not refer to the facilities at Sparks Bridge. However the the documentation that goes out with bookings, refers to the need to empty refuse and fill water tank at Sparks Bridge.

Q. The subsidence on the Ribble Link – have we a guarantee that this will not happen again?

A. British Waterways are in discussions with our legal department and also with the contractors to clarify our position on this.

Q. What is being done about the presence of the weeds on the Lancaster canal?

A. British Waterways are aware of this problem and as part of our standards will be working to clear this problem.

Q. When will the trees at Red Rock be checked again?

A. The tree management plan is being started in April, and the trees at Red Rock will be programmed into the plan.

Q. The tree across the canal at Arley – when will it be moved?

A. There was a delay because a crane was needed to be used to move the tree. This has now been removed.

Q. The rally at Glasson at the Whitsun weekend why are charges going to be applied in the future?

A. The charges to put up tents and marquees will probably be implemented next year and are national administration charges as British Waterways now have to check that events are safe to be held.

Q. There are problems with boats mooring on the Lancaster canal over the winter. Are they charged for mooring and why can't they be moved?

A. The moorings are paid for as the boaters are unable to get back through the Ribble Link. Any craft that have moored over winter on the Lancaster are charged for a BW winter mooring or in a marina.

Q. Why do visitors have prime mooring sites?

A. Prime sites have been given to visitors on moorings at Hest Bank and Garstang. It is a balance to provide desirable moorings for our long term and visiting customers. All long term moorings on the Lancaster canal at Hest Bank, Tythe Barn and Salwick are the most desirable moorings in the NW. We understand the popularity of the moorings at Hest Bank and at Garstang and the Rangers have successfully ensured that all visitors to these sites do not overstay giving the opportunity for other customers to use this site. All customers have received written confirmation that their winter mooring expires on 31.03.07 and they will return to visitor status and they must adhere to continuous cruising guidelines.

Q. Will this happen next year so this doesn't happen again?

A. Boaters will be given notice to move when the Ribble Link is open and British Waterways will start using enforcement notices if necessary.

Q. Some boats with Section 8 notices on them at Galgate are still there 18 month later – why?

A. We are currently reviewing all boats on the Lancaster Canal and will take steps to remove all unauthorised boats, focusing initially on the boats which already have section 8 notices at Galgate and Garstang.

Q. Why were 13 moorings taken away from Galgate?

A. This is because a member of the public wrote in to complain about Health & Safety at that site.

Q. An e mail was sent asking who owned the land on the offside bank at Galgate but no reply was received – why?

A. Apologies for not replying. Please send e mail again to enquiriesnorthwest@britishwaterways.co.uk

Q. Why has the burnt out sunken boat at Leigh Bridge still not been removed?

A. This is due to delays with the insurance companies regarding moving the boat. However they have been told that if the boat is not moved within the next month British Waterways will arrange to have the boat moved and send the insurance company the bill for the cost of the removal. This issue is currently being handled by Steve Hayes.

Q. Why are boaters who have booked passage onto the Lancaster (Ribble Link) not chased off after their stay so that the moorings can be freed up?

A. It is a condition of booking that they have to book their passage back. Ribble Link staff advise the office of any craft that have not turned up for return passage. They automatically will be charged a fee of £10 to their customer account and our staff will make phone contact to query their non arrival. We then try to arrange alternative passage or advise them of the Terms and Conditions of continuous cruising. For 2007/2008 BW are looking to keep one date free so that customers who do not turn up for passage can be asked to return on an alternative date.

Q. Why are only 6 boats allowed through the Link at any one time?

A. This is for a couple of reasons. The bank staff are always on hand helping people to go through the Link. As British Waterways have recently lost £1.5 million we do not have enough resource to help any more boaters through at any one time, especially as this would lead to extended working hours and overtime. Also, boaters have to wait for the right tides in order to go through.

Q. There are two sunken boats on Salterforth with 05 licences in the window. Have Section 8's been issued and what is happening with the money?

A. One owner has signed a disclaimer, boat awaiting removal. Other craft is licensed and with a valid mooring permit. BW received a call to say a boat was sinking and are in the process of contacting the customer to advise them of this.

Q. The sign on the gate at Salwick is always ignored and the gate is constantly left open. The lock and bolt was removed during the winter. What are British waterways doing about this?

A. The landowners and tenants in that area have already been written to asking them not to leave the gate open. A new lock gate has been put onto the gate.

The meeting was closed after a poem entitled "Canals" was read out by Jack Pilkington from the Ramblers Association. Copies are available and Jack has asked that donations to Derian House would be gratefully received.

The next User Group meeting will be confirmed in due course. Once again, suggestions for an alternative would be gratefully received. Please contact Denise Bradshaw on 01942 405793