

**NOTES FROM USER GROUP MEETING 20th April**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Representing</b>
John Ashley	IWA Middlesex Branch
Paul Ayres	Commercial Boat Operators Association
Ron Bishop	IWA Middlesex Branch
John Bolsom	High Line Yachting
Del Brenner	Regent's Network
John Castle	Grand Union South Anglers Consultative
Trevor Gillam	Chairman AWCC London Region & WLMCC
Richard Hill	Lee Valley Regional Park Authority
Martin Jiggins	Historic Narrow Boat Owners Club
Fiona MacLean	London Narrow Boat Association
Nigel Moore	Thames & Waterways Stakeholders Forum
Gilian Oleay	Brentford Waterside Forum
David Pearce	St Pancras Cruising Club
Simon Robbins	Kensal Green Moorings
Roy Walker	Walkers Quay
Nick Wotton	Blenheim Angling Society
<b>BWL representatives</b>	
Phil Bittner	
Amanda Dunk <b>(chair)</b>	
Louise Fishleigh	
Jon Guest	
Donna Kelly <b>(notes)</b>	
Dawn Reid	

## **APOLOGIES**

Mr Barrett	Stort Boat Club
James Bill	Regent's Network
Stu Carrie	Inland Waterways Association (Middlesex Branch)
Mr Morley	British Cycling Federation
Dennis Read	Nazeing Parish Council
Paul Roper	Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
Mike Stimpson	Thames Boating Trades Association
Brian Strong	River Lea Tidal Mill Trust
Richard Thomas	Waterway Historian
Chris Tremain	Cruising Association
Maggie French	London Waterbus Company
Emma Harrington	Lea Rivers Trust

### **1. Welcome, introductions and apologies**

Amanda Dunk welcomed everyone and British Waterways London (BWL) staff introduced themselves.

### **2. Actions arising from previous meeting**

#### **Dredging** (page 3 of previous notes)

Amanda Dunk & Jon Guest both reiterated that £4 million has been assigned for dredging (nationally) in 2005. This is a significant increase from the £2.5million allocated for 2004 and hopefully reaffirms British Waterways' commitment to improving navigation.

Jon Guest confirmed that British Waterways (BW) and Transport for London (TfL) have jointly pledged over £1.6million as part of an initiative to revive commercial traffic on west London's canals.

The funding, which includes £750,000 from TfL and £850,000 from BW, will go towards a number of key infrastructure projects and is part of a wider strategy to create an environmentally sustainable alternative to road haulage.

The dredging programme will be complete by the end of the year.

**Vegetation** (page 4 of previous notes)

A User Group representative asked BWL representatives to confirm the procedure for reporting problems with vegetation.

**Jon Guest** confirmed that BWL supervisors should be notified in the first instance.

**Toll House, Little Venice** (page 6 of previous notes)

**Amanda Dunk** confirmed that Westminster Council has now granted planning permission for the Toll House to be leased as commercial office space. Redecoration work is now underway and the BW commercial team hope to have tenants in place by mid-October.

**Amanda Dunk** confirmed that BWL intends to moor the new front of house boat outside Starbucks at Paddington Central.

**Tourist Information Centre, Camden** (page 7 of previous notes)

**Amanda Dunk** confirmed that BWL actively encourage Starbucks staff to promote the waterways through familiarisation trips and leaflet distribution.

**Park Road development, Westminster** (page 8 of previous notes) - a User Group representative expressed their concerns over the proposed development of flats on this site and pointed out that planning permission has not been granted.

The BWL planning manager, Ian Runeckles, was not present at the meeting. However, BWL advised City of Westminster on 1 November that it had no objections to the proposed development, subject to the removal of the lower deck overhanging the Regent's Canal and to environmental improvements to the canal environment.

**Amanda Dunk** went on to say that BW welcomes such feedback, and also confirmed that Ian Runeckles would be invited to next User Group meeting.

**Issues discussed at previous meeting in October, but not documented in notes:**

**Independent chair** - BWL will nominate an independent chair in advance of meetings where possible. However, our ability to do so is very much dependent on users confirming their attendance in advance of meetings.

### **Promotion of User Group meetings & varied attendance required -**

**Amanda Dunk** confirmed that meetings are listed on the BW website. She added that BWL update reports and invite letters are sent out to over 150 individuals and groups.

**Donna Kelly** pointed out that BWL find it extremely difficult to get users to confirm their attendance in advance of meetings, and that in most cases receive no response whatsoever. For example, of the 150 invite letters sent on 18 March, just 11 people confirmed their attendance by the requested date of **1st April**.

**Confirmation of attendance** - Dawn Reid encouraged User Group representatives to confirm their attendance in advance of meetings and explained that failure to do so could result in future meetings being cancelled!

**Update reports** – BWL representatives were asked to consider the possibility of producing update reports on a quarterly basis instead of half yearly.

BWL representatives have considered producing the update report on a more regular basis in the past. However, It is a detailed and lengthy document, which takes considerable time and resource to produce. Unfortunately, BWL does not have the additional resource in place to produce this report more regularly.

**Request for Directors to attend meetings** – Amanda Dunk confirmed that Mark Bensted (Director London) is committed to attending two meetings per year. She added that Simon Salem (Head of Marketing) attended the October 2004 meeting, which was held at Ponders End, and that Mark attended both October meetings.

### **3. General comments and questions from the floor**

**Mooring manual best practice** - Dawn Reid confirmed that it's for BW moorings only.

**Liveboard procedure** - a User Group representative asked BWL representatives to explain the procedure.

**Dawn Reid** explained that it is not a documented procedure as such, but rather a series of letters, which are sent to the owners of unlicensed craft, or craft which are moored without permission.

Members of the public can request a copy of these letters by sending a written request to our Paddington office.

Dawn added that it is national procedure which BW is committed to delivering. However, she also said that it is a lengthy process, which has many legal implications.

**Camley Street Bridge** – BWL representatives were asked to comment on the proposed plan to install a new footbridge from King's Cross development into Camley Street Natural Park.

BW representatives were unable to respond to this question. However, our Planning Manager, Ian Runeckles, has since provided the following update:

British Waterways is concerned about the impact of the new bridges on the canal environment. For example, the new road bridge (East Bridge) will be approximately 18m wide to accommodate a primary route through the site. The traffic will include buses and taxis. It is our opinion that such forms of transport travelling across a wide bridge in the heart of the site is not conducive to a high quality, active, vibrant and pleasant canal environment. Furthermore, the bus/taxi route bisects Granary Square and would, as proposed, undermine the role of this important open space.

British Waterways would therefore prefer to see motorised traffic, particularly buses, taxis, routed away from the canal, with access to the north side via York Way. Service vehicles should only be permitted in the area during restricted hours to safeguard to ambience of the canal. British Waterways would like the canal to be viewed as a pleasant diversion and not as a physical barrier. The primary route would then be able to focus on the movement of pedestrians and cyclists and the creation of a pleasant 'walk to work' experience.

British Waterways is also concerned that the proposed pedestrian and cycle bridge at Camley Street Natural Park will be a significant structure, which will dominate views to and from St. Pancras Lock. British Waterways supports improvements to the east – west connections, particularly for pedestrians and cyclists, and understands the reasons for the bridge. We are, however, convinced that our concerns can be overcome with a high quality design.

**Organisational chart** - BW representatives were asked to produce an organisational chart detailing the various internal departments and their respective responsibilities.

**Amanda Dunk** agreed to do so. The information is currently being compiled and should be circulated to all UG representatives by the end of August.

### **Stoppage Programme**

**Jon Guest** outlined the proposed stoppages for 2005/2006. The final programme has yet to be confirmed, but will be circulated to UG representatives on completion. Full details can also be found at [www.waterscape.com](http://www.waterscape.com)

A User Group commented that BWL is failing to notify UG representatives in advance of proposed stoppages.

**Amanda Dunk** confirmed that BW is reviewing the process nationally.

**User Group meetings** - BWL representatives were asked if it would be possible to review the frequency of meetings.

**Amanda Dunk** explained that the frequency and timing of meetings is determined nationally and not locally. BWL currently hold four UG meetings per year. However, BWL representatives consult and meet with representatives from various groups throughout the year.

**Access to permanent mooring sites** – Phil Bittner confirmed that BW has installed new access locks at each permanent mooring site in central London. This has been widely welcomed by the residents.

Phil also acknowledged that this could potentially cause problems for trip boat operators and has since issued each operator their own supply of the various keys.

Some users agreed that it was necessary to change the locks, whilst others felt it was unnecessary. It was widely acknowledged that residents of permanent sites are always willing to assist trip boat operators in the event of an emergency.

**Creation of new moorings** – BW representatives were asked if there are any plans in place to introduce new moorings in West London.

Amanda Dunk confirmed that BW is keen to create new moorings across its national network, and is primarily looking at opportunities in new or existing off-line basins as well as small clusters of linear moorings in appropriate locations

With regards to West London moorings, new moorings have been created at Brentford Island. Matthew Bannister (Moorings Co-ordinator, West London) has recently marketed the berths to those on our waiting list and the allocation process is now underway.

**Dawn Reid** added that BW would soon not be legally permitted to manage mooring sites of 50 plus berths. Such sites will soon have to be managed by third party operators (i.e. BWML). Current BW sites with 50 plus berths must be transferred to BWML before the end of the year or transferred to another third party operator.

**Change of policy** - A User Group representative commented that this was a positive change to BW policy and welcomed the clear separation between BW & BWML.

**Dawn Reid** explained that BWML was established after much discussion with national user groups. She went on to say that third parties do not necessarily have to be commercial operators.

**Stoke Wharf** – a User Group representative asked if the existing loading wharf would be retained if this site is redeveloped?

BW representatives were unable to respond to this question. However, a representative from our Commercial team has since advised that the site is subject to various lease agreements and that any potential development will not be imminent.

Please note that BW will carry out a full project appraisal to include the options of retention and relocation before agreeing to any redevelopment.

**Moorings waiting list** – a User Group representative asked if BW representatives were happy for interested parties to contact Matthew Bannister directly to enquire about moorings in west London?

**Dawn Reid** confirmed that Matthew Bannister should be the first point on contact for such queries.

**Waterspace strategies** – Amanda Dunk confirmed that we are currently in the process of putting a section on the British Waterways London website regarding waterspace strategies. It should be up and running by the end of June.

**Commerce Road, Brentford** – Amanda Dunk confirmed that an ISIS representative would be invited to attend the next group of UG meetings.

### **Updates requested in advance of meeting:**

#### **Crossrail**

**Amanda Dunk** explained that BW is broadly supportive of the objectives of Crossrail and the long-term benefits that the scheme could bring to the Capital.

However, BW also acknowledges that Crossrail will have a major impact at various locations on the waterways, particularly within the docks in the Isle of Dogs. BW representatives are therefore scrutinising the plans and talking to the Crossrail team to ensure that the impact is minimised.

BW has appointed a parliamentary agent in order to ensure that our concerns are adequately addressed and considered in parliament.

Amanda urged user group representatives to register their contact details at [www.crossrail.co.uk](http://www.crossrail.co.uk) to ensure that they receive regular updates and progress reports. She also confirmed that the deadline for submitting environmental queries is 17 May 2005.

Further information can also be found at the government's websites or [www.dft.gov.uk](http://www.dft.gov.uk)

**Waste by Water** – Amanda explained that BW will naturally promote and support waste being transported via water.

**Waste by Water, Paddington** – Amanda Dunk confirmed that there is lots of potential to develop such a scheme at Paddington. She went on to say that BWL continue to explore and pursue this opportunity.

**Make a Difference projects** – Mark Blackwell

**Camden - Community safety project. Improvements include:**

- Graffiti cleaning from Regent's Park to York Way
- Street Warden Patrols along towpath
- Railing improvements at Hawley Lock and Camden Lock
- Extensive lighting scheme on towpath and improvements to underbridge lighting from Gloucester Avenue to St Pancras Way.
- Access point improvements at Royal College Street and St Pancras Way
- Enhanced planting
- Installation of CCTV

**Docklands Public Realm project: Improvements include:**

- Procured 150 new lighting heads to enhance the lighting on the quay edge walkways for visitors and the general public
- Relayed areas of block paving on quay edge walkways
- Renewed areas of bredan gravel (these areas are generally around tree pits and in walkway areas)
- Carried out repairs to damaged quay edge furniture
- Pressure washed quay edge coping stones, to bring back to original colour
- Carried out weeding of public areas
- Painting of quay edge stanchions and lamp posts
- Installation of additional lifebuoy holders
- Re-bedding of dislodged quay edge coping stones
- New safety ladders
- Fabrication of new mooring in south dock.
- Improved security measures at Masthouse Terrace pier

### **Limehouse Basin – Visitor Improvements Include:**

- New interpretation panels detailing the history of the basin and facilitating circular walks
- Lighting improvements under DLR viaduct
- Landscape improvements
- Extensive graffiti cleaning
- New finger post signage

### **Harlow – project includes:**

- Bridge refurbishment
- Towpath improvement between Burnt Mill Lock and Bridge 18
- Signage improvements between Harlow Lock and Burnt Mill Lock
- New gateway into Harlow Town Park and the River Stort from Burnt Mill and at Harlow Mill
- Improved public facilities at Moorhen marina
- New guided walk leaflet
- Non-towpath side improvements through woodland to create a circular walk from the pub/marina.

All improvements to the area to be complete by end of Summer 2005.

**Mark Blackwell** went on to explain that BWL has limited funds for the forthcoming year, but confirmed that £125k has been allocated for boating improvements on the Upper Lee and Stort.

### **Comments and questions relating to planning applications:**

**Kentish Town Lock** – a User Group representative raised concerns over a planning application which has been submitted for this site, his main concern being that the area does not need anymore pubs!

BWL representatives urged the UG representative to document his concerns in writing to Ian Runeckles.

**Waterloo Wharf** - a UG representative asked for a progress report on this development?

**Amanda Dunk** confirmed that BW is still working up a development proposal for Waterloo Wharf in Uxbridge which will involve residential properties. However, a revised planning application has yet to be submitted. Consultation with the adjacent Uxbridge Boat Centre will automatically take place, and any revised scheme is likely to involve substantial improvements to the boatyard.

**Planning applications** - BWL representatives were asked if it would be possible to list details of all current planning applications, including their reference numbers, on BW website?

BW Directors have since considered this request and agreed that such information should be available on-line nationally. However, the project is still in its infancy and we do not have a projected timescale as yet. User Group representatives will be notified as soon as the information is available on-line.

**Brentford** – a User Group representative is concerned that elements of this development are not being built in accordance with original planning permission.

The BW planning team has since been notified. However, User Group representatives were advised to contact planning team directly about such issues. It is not necessary to wait for User Group meetings. BWL representatives are more than happy to answer such queries on a day-to-day basis.

**Any other business:**

**TfL West London Canal Network Freight Study** – BWL representatives were asked if they knew when this report will become a public document?

BW representatives were unable to respond to this question. However, our Regeneration Manager, Richard Rutter, has advised the report is currently being finalised and should be available to the public by the end of summer.

**Motorbikes on towpath** - Amanda Dunk explained that this is a nationally recognised problem which BW is committed to tackling. She went on to explain that our national design project team are currently looking at a new motorcycle barrier design which would allow wheelchair, pushchair and push bike access.

**Norwood office** – Amanda Dunk confirmed that the team from Norwood will transfer to Brentford upon its completion. The operations team will also benefit from the new workshop which is currently being set-up at Adelaide Dock.

Amanda also confirmed that there are plans being drawn up to develop residential flats at the Norwood site.

**Autumn meetings** – dates and venues to be confirmed

