

LONDON FREIGHT - December 2008

About British Waterways

British Waterways (BW) is a public corporation, which is accountable to the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra). BW manages and cares for a 2,000 miles (3,220 kms) long, 200 year old network of canals and rivers in England, Scotland and Wales. The Government (Framework Document for British Waterways – DETR 1999) charges BW to:

- maintain and develop Britain's inland waterways in a sustainable manner, so that they fulfil their full economic, social and environmental potential;
- fulfil statutory navigation functions;
- conserve waterway heritage and environment for the future;
- promote and enable rural and urban regeneration;
- maintain and enhance leisure, recreation, tourism and educational opportunities for the general public;
- facilitate waterway transport; and
- play a lead role in co-ordinating with other UK navigation authorities.

BW's Corporate Strategy and Mission Statement set out the following:

- the business is to manage the inland water system efficiently for the increasing benefit of the United Kingdom;
- provide safe and high-quality environment for customers, staff and local communities;
- take a commercial approach and strive for excellence in every aspect of work;
- the heritage and environment of the waterways will be conserved, improved and made to work well for future generations.

National policy context

In June 2000, the Government published 'Waterways for Tomorrow' (DETR), which set out the Government's wish to "*promote the inland waterways, encouraging a modern, integrated and sustainable approach to their use. We want to protect and conserve an important part of our national heritage. At the same time, we want to maximise the opportunities the waterways offer for leisure and recreation; as a catalyst for urban and rural regeneration; for education; and for freight transport.*"

The document highlights the scope to increase the amount of freight carried on the inland waterways, the Government's wish to encourage the transfer of freight from roads to

waterborne transport and to enhancing the Freight Facilities Grant scheme. Chapter 6 – Integrating other policies, includes a section dealing with freight (see pages 41-43) and Appendix 3 outlines the relevant Planning Policy Guidance Notes and comments on how the planning system can help the waterways fulfil their potential.

Waterborne freight is therefore firmly on the political sustainability agenda with cross-departmental support from Defra, DfT and DCLG (formerly ODPM) as well as the GLA and importantly Transport for London. This is further supported by a number of policy documents, including the Mayor's 'London Plan'. This strategic support for opportunities for water borne transport has in turn translated into financial support for works that facilitate such opportunities.

Government policy favours the development of water borne freight transport in order to reduce congestion, road accidents and harmful green house gas emissions. BW believes it is in a positive position to help government fulfil its objectives for a greener and more sustainable environment.

In June 2001, the Association of Inland Navigation Authorities (AINA) published a strategy for Freight on Britain's Inland Waterways (see http://www.aina.org.uk/pdfs/strategy_for_freight.pdf). This built on the interest generated by the Government's Integrated Transport White Paper, A new deal for transport: better for everyone.

In June 2003, BW published 'Freight on our Waterways'. This document demonstrates BW's commitment to freight on our waterways and briefly explores the potential for developing waterborne transport particularly for containers, minerals and waste & recyclates. This can be downloaded from our website at: http://www.britishwaterways.co.uk/images/BWFBroc1_tcm6-71390.pdf

In April 2004, AINA commissioned a Best Practice Guide on Planning for Freight on Inland Waterways (on behalf of DfT and DEFRA). BW was involved in the AINA project steering group and endorses the Guide, which can be found as a downloadable document on our website at: http://www.britishwaterways.co.uk/images/waterfreight_v5_tcm6-110106.pdf

British Waterways' Commitment to Freight

In addition to BW's involvement with, and support of, the documents referred to above, 'Our Plan for the Future 2005-2009' sets out a key objective of doubling freight carriage by 2010. BW recognises that freight use declined significantly in the late 20th century and that it is no longer the main use of the canals. However, BW believes that the canals have significant potential to explore niche markets for the transporting of freight.

'Our Plan for the Future' states:

"We will focus on four markets, which we feel have the greatest potential, these are:

- **Minerals (Aggregates)** - *we have mapped the commercial mineral deposits alongside our network and will continue to meet with aggregate suppliers to persuade them to consider water transportation*
- **Waste** - *carrying waste by water has considerable potential, but requires waste collection and handling to be reorganised. We will continue to demonstrate the benefits of waterborne freight to Local Authorities, who are under pressure to recycle more. Wider corporate social responsibility, not just economic benefits, will justify our investment*
- **Construction & Demolition Material** - *we will actively pursue schemes for waterside waste recovery and recycling of construction materials*
- **Containers** - *we are surveying our widest waterways to establish what needs to be done to make them more suitable for modern vessels and container sites*

In order to carry freight effectively, inland waterways often need substantial additional investment, and we need the same upfront investment whether we carry one or one hundred freight carriers. This additional investment is high-risk for us, as we could make a significant loss if we do not encourage enough carriage. We wholly support the additional public benefits this investment will bring, however we have to consider these, along with the financial risks involved when deciding whether to facilitate freight."

'Our Plan' also highlights a number of priority restoration projects, which includes the Bow Back Rivers in East London. This network lies at the heart of the Olympic Zone and arguably represents the single biggest opportunity in the country to revive commercially viable freight transport.

London projects

Docklands

BW has successfully promoted the idea of waterborne freight in Docklands. The transportation of construction and demolition waste in connection with the later phases of the commercial development in and around Canary Wharf has amounted to up to 1.25 million tonnes of materials moved by water. It is anticipated that approximately 2 million tonnes of spoil per annum will be moved by water if the Crossrail Station in West India Dock is constructed. BW also expects to move significant amounts of spoil in connection with the redevelopment of the Wood Wharf site. Currently BW is facilitating the movement of 80,000 tonnes of construction waste from Millwall Inner Dock.

Hayleyford Hanson

Since 2003 BW has had an active freight demonstration project in operation on the Grand Union Canal in West London. Aggregates are being moved between waterside sites - a gravel extraction site at Denham and a concrete batching plant at West Drayton - in a seven year contract, for a total of 450,000 tonnes. The producer is Harleyford Aggregates, the end user is Hanson, with BW and Land & Water Services Ltd fulfilling the operator / carriage function and BW effectively acting as the principal operator. BW believes that this demonstrates a serious commitment to bringing about the first significant freight operation on London's canals in 40 years. The project has saved 11,000 lorry journeys to date and led to investment which has benefited both freight and leisure users of the canal.

Waste by Water Initiative

Trials have been carried out in Hackney on modified refuse carts to assess the potential for moving municipal collected waste (MCW) from sources adjacent to the canal to the waste facility at Edmonton (the 'Waste by Water' initiative). This was a pilot scheme conducted in 2003 and 2004 to test the technical and economic viability of a proposal to use a multimodal method of waste collection and water transport.

BW is encouraged by the findings of the trial and feels that freight by water offers significant environmental, sustainable, economic and social benefits. BW is part of a working group, led by TfL, developing a prototype Multi-Modal Refuse Collection Vehicle (MMRCV) which will facilitate movement of containerised waste between the road and water. It is hoped that a successful trial will help to establish the case for transporting MCW by water.

The Olympic & Legacy proposals

The Olympic Zone is located within the Lower Lea Valley, which benefits from a rich network of waterways, including the Bow Back Rivers, River Lee Navigation and Bow Creek. The Olympic plans offer a unique opportunity to restore these waterways and give them a central role in the delivery of the Games and long term Legacy plans.

BW has worked with the Environment Agency, Natural England and Olympic planners to promote the sustainable restoration of these waterways, maximising their use for transport, leisure, education, access and nature conservation. In transport terms alone, BW believes that the restoration of these rivers presents one of the biggest opportunities in Britain to move commercial freight traffic on an inland waterway and provide a sustainable transport network for future generations.

In February 2007 BW's contractors, Volker Stevin, began construction work on a £20m lock and water control structure at Prescott Channel to open up safe navigation for large (350-tonne) barges accessing the Olympic Park and Stratford City developments. The lock is funded by a range of partners (incl. Olympic Delivery Authority, London Thames Gateway Development Corporation, Transport for London, Department for Transport and BW) and will be operational by March 2009. The lock will have a capacity of approximately 5,000 tonnes of materials per day and will help deliver the Olympic aspiration for moving 50% of construction materials by sustainable means. In the longer term it will create a transport route for the movement of recyclates and other materials into and out of the area and create a range of leisure boating opportunities. For further information visit www.britishwaterways.co.uk/olympics.

West London Canal Network

British Waterways has been collaborating with a range of bodies, including Transport for London, Park Royal Partnership and Powerday plc to explore opportunities for moving bulk materials on the West London Canal Network (the 26-mile lock free pound stretching from Camden to Slough). The establishment of Powerday's new state-of-the-art recycling centre at Willesden Junction (at the interchange between the canal, road and railway), has created a major opportunity to move materials on West London's canals and led to significant investment by British Waterways and Transport for London, including dredging works, a new wharf and winding hole and a major study by Peter Brett Associates into the economics of modern freight transport. BW believes that up to 500,000 tonnes of construction material, waste and recyclates could be moved on the West London Canal Network each year, with important knock-on benefits and investment for leisure boating on the canal.

Canalside developments

There are currently a large number of canalside developments planned or taking place on BW's London network and a growing interest among developers for using the canal to move materials to and from their sites. Various projects are taking place on the Regent's Canal and major planned developments such as King's Cross and Southall Gasworks will create further freight opportunities in the future.

Future potential freight development in London

As part of BW's collaboration with TfL's freight unit, TfL funded a report by Peter Brett Associates "Developing water borne freight on the West London canal network". The broad conclusions were:

- there is low demand for waterborne freight - economics and apparent lack of viable sites, being the key issues;
- movement by barge can be a more cost effective solution than road for certain commodities over short distances where both ends of the journey are close to the canal;
- transport economics are not the main constraint on freight movement but rather the location of 'origins' and 'destinations';
- canal journeys within lock-free sections are most economic as aggregation of barges is possible;
- 4 or 5 suitable locations in west London should be identified, and then protected, as MMRCV containerised transfer stations;
- wherever economic to do so, development sites, waste handling sites and construction depots should have canal freight access points;
- where economically feasible, developers should be encouraged to plan developments in order that waste can be transferred to the canal in the future.

It is clear that the economics are difficult and the biggest potential exists in niche markets, particularly where point of origin and destination are waterside. On this basis, BW will continue to promote freight on the London canal network and continue to explore the 'grant' availability to fund required infrastructure investment.

BW currently promotes, wherever feasible, the opportunity for moving materials by water in London's canals, but is mindful of the significant costs associated with this revival. BW seeks to ensure that the responsibility of promoting environmental sustainability is considered alongside its economic sustainability commitments. Costs associated with freight include:

- dredging;
- lock refurbishments;
- lock automation;
- wharf development;
- new fleets and barge operations, etc.

What else is BW doing to promote freight in London

- BW promotes freight by water in its representations on third party planning applications, regional and sub-regional planning strategies, local development frameworks, development briefs, local implementation plans and supplementary planning documents.
- BW is a Member of the London Sustainable Freight Partnership, the London Waterways Commission Freight Group and the Park Royal Freight Partnership.
- BW participated in the Examination-in-Public of the Draft Alterations of the London Plan (Waste & Minerals) and will advocate the use of the London canal network for the transporting of waste and minerals, wherever feasible.
- BW's website has pages dedicated to freight at the following links:
<http://www.britishwaterways.co.uk/london/freight/index.html> and
http://www.britishwaterways.co.uk/about_us/business_activities/freight.html

Summary

BW is a public corporation with sustainability as a core value and is a strong advocate of the use of the London canal network for the transporting of freight. BW does though recognise that this will only be an attractive proposition for freight operators and developers, etc, in certain circumstances where it is viable to do so. BW will promote freight on the canal network, wherever it is practical and seek to ensure that the feasibility of freight is explored, wherever possible.