

**Notes of Boating Issues Meeting
Held at BW Offices, Hatton
Friday 7 May 2004**

PRESENT:

User Groups

Ann Davies	Association of Pleasure Craft Operators
Tony Mason	Association of Waterways Cruising Clubs
Tony Gallimore	Canal Boat Builders' Association
Adrian Stott	Barge Association, The
Kevin East	British Canoe Union
Geoff Ashton	British Hire Cruiser Federation
Sally Banham	British Marine Federation
Richard Booth	Historic Narrow Boat Owners' Club
Sue Day	Horse Boating Society
Audrey Smith	Inland Waterways Amenity Advisory Council
John Baylis	Inland Waterways Association
Geoffrey Rogerson	National Association of Boat Owners
Stuart Sampson	National Association of Boat Owners
Paul Bryan	National Community Boats' Association
Ivor Caplan	Residential Boat Owners' Association
Beryl McDowall	Residential Boat Owners' Association
Neil Northmore	Royal Yachting Association
John Crisp	Royal Yachting Association
Tim Coghlan	The Yacht Harbour Association
David Dunning	The Boating Association

British Waterways:

Stewart Sim	Technical Director
Eugene Baston	Customer Relations Manager
Peter Wade	Safety Advisor
Amanda Strang	Customer Relations Administrator

Apologies:

Alan Meegan	Amateur Rowing Association
David Pearce	Association of Waterways' Cruising Clubs
James Mason	British Boating Federation
Howard Pridding	British Marine Federation
Barry Smith	Canal Boat Builders' Association
Andrew Burge	Commercial Boat Operators' Association
Tony Boston	Commercial Boat Operators' Association
Martin Jiggins	Historic Narrow Boat Owners' Club
Tony Hirst	Inland Waterways Amenity Advisory Council
Roger Squires	Inland Waterways Association
Neil Edwards	Inland Waterways Association
John Fletcher	Inland Waterways Association
Tony Ellis	The Boating Association
Adrian Birtles	The Steam Boat Association

Sam Bourne
Simon Salem
Richard Clayton

The Yacht Harbour Association
Marketing & Communications Director, BW
Operations Development Manager, BW

These minutes are also circulated to British Waterways' Chief Executive, Executive Directors, Operating Directors, General Managers, Service Managers, Operational Managers & other key personnel.

WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS

Stewart Sim thanked all representatives for attending.

Date of the next meeting has been set for Tuesday 14 October 2004. It was noted that dates for all national boating & corridor issues meetings for 2004 had been published.

1. REPORT ON ISSUES SINCE LAST MEETING

1.1 Craft Dimensions – page 9 of last minutes

Adrian Stott emphasised that in the previous minutes BW committed to completing the craft dimensions and the pinch-points by the end of this year and asked for an update. Stewart Sim

Eugene Baston provided an update on the current status of the craft dimensions document. He commented that BW received around 25 responses from user groups and individuals. These had been supplied to Operating Managers to thoroughly check and had recently been returned. Eugene reported the document would be published at the beginning of June.

Stewart suggested the document be published on www.waterscape.com with a facility for comments to be made on the data. He highlighted that dimensions can change for a number of reasons and if any boater noted changes they would be able to provide an update to British Waterways. Richard Fairhurst

Adrian made special reference to the additional columns that were not in the first draft that showed the location of the gauge points. It was confirmed that these would be included in the next stage of the project.

1.2 Chair of Meetings

Adrian understood from the last meeting that the marketing & communications function rather than the engineering function of British Waterways would now chair these meetings. He felt that this was a better arrangement.

Stewart responded that he would take the matter up internally. Stewart Sim / Simon Salem

1.3 Stoppage Meetings, page 15 of the last minutes

Richard Booth had previously raised the possibility of amalgamating the Boating Issues meeting and the Stoppage Meeting since last year they had been held close together. John Baylis emphasised that he would not like to see this happen as the issues that are generally raised within each meeting are quite lengthy and require full attention. He would also like to attend the Stoppages meeting

Eugene confirmed that amalgamation of these meetings would not happen without representative's consent. He went on to add that the Stoppages programme was currently being reviewed in terms of the process, delivery, and communication of maintenance works, and as a result this year's meeting between BW and representatives would be based on this work. In response to John's request, Eugene asked if he could submit his comments from Yorkshire and Leeds & Liverpool before the Stoppage meeting. John Baylis / Eugene Baston

1.4 Local User Group Contacts – page 3 of previous minutes

At the previous meeting Ivor Caplan had raised the need for British Waterways to ensure as many local and regional user group contacts were invited to local meetings.

Eugene responded that he was keen to ensure inclusion of all local and regional reps. He asked representatives to provide list of names and address contact details, along with any information on the areas of responsibility, so that these could be shared with waterway units. All Users

Eugene confirmed that a full list of local user group meetings, showing venues, dates and times would be published at www.britishwaterways.co.uk/accountability in the near future. Copies of notes from each meeting would also be available.

Ann Davies suggested that finding these documents wasn't easy. Tim Coghlan suggested emailing the link of any new documents to the users to make it easier to find. Eugene agreed to do this. Amanda Strang

1.5 Freight on the Waterways

Adrian asked Stewart what freight developments were currently underway. Stewart explained that various initiatives to shift up to one million tonnes of waterborne freight were under consideration.

Aggregates on the rivers Trent and Severn continued to be carried. There are a number of live applications for Freight Facility Grants currently being considered by the Department of Transport. British Waterways had recently hosted a freight conference which was widely attended by the private sector and exceeded expectations. Trials are still being carried out in Hackney, on the Forth & Clyde and some traffic is being investigated on the BCN.

1.6 Safety Document – Defra (page 8 of the last minutes)

Ann Davis asked when the new water safety document would be issued by DEFRA.

Peter Wade provided a summary of the meetings he has attended concerning this subject. It was expected the document would take effect from October 2004. Peter Wade

1.7 Craft Licence Delays – page 12 of the previous minutes

Ann Davies highlighted significant problems experienced by APCO members in the efficient and timely licensing of hire craft during 2004.

Eugene acknowledged there had been specific problems with Business Licences and recognised the adverse effect these circumstances had on business reputations. He understood the difficulties had now been resolved, but invited Ann to contact him should she hear of them continuing.

Audrey Smith and Tony Mason reported that their licences had taken up to three months to arrive, while Beryl McDowall described difficulties in communication between a local office and the Craft Licensing Department.

Eugene and Stewart both expressed their apologies and urged boaters to inform them of problems as soon as they happen so that they can be logged and resolved. Eugene reported that he understood that licences were currently being processed within 10-12 days where all paperwork was in order.

John Baylis asked how the BSS certificate and insurance details are checked by those paying with a repeat Direct Debit instruction. Eugene responded that Boat Safety certificates are valid for four years therefore checks do not need to be carried out every year for a boat. To check on the integrity of insurance details BW carry out random checks on the details provided.

Eugene again urged boaters to come forward with any problems they experience with craft licencing so that they can be dealt with.

Stewart Sim concluded that the new computer system was our problem and not the customers, therefore it would be taken to the highest level to get any issues resolved.

2.0 CRAFT DIMENSIONS

Eugene referred to his update given in Matters Arising.

Richard Booth added that the figures were largely correct but it is never an exact science.

Adrian added that the gauge of structure as well as pinch point data would be invaluable in the next stage, improving boaters' understanding of where they can take their craft.

3.0 WATERWAY STANDARDS

3.1 Update on revision to the Standards

Eugene reported on work to date, including useful meetings with various representatives of each type of visitor/customer to the waterways. These meetings had explored the type of experience each visitor may expect when visiting a waterway. The key aim of these sessions was to support the revision of Standards to those expected by the visitor/customer, rather than limit Standards to operational abilities and largely focused just on Standards of navigation.

The Standards have been split into five visitor/customer segments; day visitors, walkers, cyclists, boaters, and anglers. These are supported by a set of Universal Standards that are proposed to apply to all parts of the network regardless of the specific purpose of a visit.

While the original aim had been to issue the document for consultation at the start of 2004, it had been felt by Directors that further work internally was required to separate and prioritise those Standards that had a direct relevance to overall safety on the waterways. It will now be taken to the board in early June.

It was now expected that consultation would take place in the summer between BW and the main waterways' user groups.

Adrian added that there is a significant gap between deciding what the Standard ought to be and then working to meet that Standard. Stewart agreed but believed this was a good start in recognising the needs of individual users of the waterways.

Adrian suggested that priorities for achieving these Standards should be set, for example the ability to move a craft along the waterway should have precedence over the provision of water points.

Eugene responded that there is this focus in the Standards and BW will be asking the users if we have this balance right in the consultation. In previous years we have developed our works programme and then attempted to meet the Standards. These new Standards will drive the works programme.

John Baylis enquired whether reporting on the Standards would show a) below the standard b) the expected standard or c) below the standard. Stewart confirmed this would be the case.

4.0 WATERWAYS CODE

Eugene asked for comments and suggestions about the code to make it more relevant to our users and help foster better relationships.

In response, Geoff Ashton commented that the BHCF are currently re-printing The Safe and Friendly Cruising Guide and welcomed BW's use of the information within it. Tony Mason added that this guide is a very good document as it's easy to read and understand.

John Baylis stated he'd like to see the Code being supported by other organisations and for all to have input. Eugene said this was the idea, to ensure buy-in of the Code, not only be representative groups but also by their individual members. Eugene Baston

Richard Booth expressed grave concerns about new boaters coming to the canal network since values were being eroded and there was less evidence of the waterways' community working together. Eugene responded that we all needed to work together and educate new boaters about the network. The Waterways Code was one part of this, along with other initiatives that highlighted proper practice when out on canals, including volunteers at lock flights, for example, who could help boaters through and share knowledge.

Ann Davies added that BW started addressing this issue via the Thrift Campaign. The potential of conflict often arises during queues at locks. The restructuring has seen a removal of some key lock keepers on flights of locks that acted as a guidance for efficient transit. This could cause potential problems with new boaters at busy times when there was no one to advise them.

Audrey Smith suggested that the waterway press might be able to help promote best practice like the 'watch your wash campaign'.

Tony Gallimore asked for stocks of the Waterways Code for inclusion in the CBA manual issued to new boat buyers. Amanda Strang

Ann asked for an update on the Boaters Handbook DVD / Video. Eugene replied it was expected to be launched at Crick Boat Show. The idea was to create an entertaining instructional video provided free of charge to hirers and to new boat owners. A charge of £2.50 for the DVD and £3 for the video (inc. P&P) would be made for general enquiries.

Tony Gallimore said that more people who are buying new boats are asking about finding out for a boat-handling course. Eugene responded that there were some good courses available from various sectors of the inland waterways. He added that the video was supported by the RYA and have RYA staff providing instruction at locks and other structures.

Sue Day commented that previous versions of the Waterways Code mentioned horse boats and asked if this could remain the case with any future publications. Stewart agreed.

Amanda Strang

5.0 MOORING FEES

5.1 Farmer Fields & EOG

Audrey Smith raised the issue of a previous request for terms & conditions for EOG moorings. It has taken 12 months since she first raised it with the marketing manager.

Eugene apologised for the oversight in responding to Audrey's questions. The Terms & Conditions remain the same as for all other BW moorings.

Eugene added that BW had commissioned OXERA to conduct a review into mooring fee charges.

Audrey remained dissatisfied and commented that previous guidance for EOG moorings referred to 50% of the lowest class local mooring, but there had not been any new guidance since the matrix.

Sally Ash

Eugene confirmed that it does still remain 50% of the lowest grade mooring. Stewart added that we would make a commitment to deliver the T&C to Audrey.

Beryl McDowall asked if a sentence could be included that End of Garden moorings are for BW Canal and canals only. The RBOA were aware of an assumption that people who purchase a canal side property now assume that they can automatically moor a boat outside it.

Audrey commented that there are two distinct issues

- farmers who have a piece of land and looking to rent moorings out for profit
- house owners who purchase property and would like to have a mooring

Ann also added that some farmers think they can sell strips of land for boaters.

Adrian agreed it would be a good idea to provide guidance. He was aware of one instance where a land owner wanted to dig into his garden and did not know the guidance on this type of thing as it was not classed as a marina or an online mooring.

Sally Ash

Tim Coghlan commented that there was guidance set down a couple of years ago stating that BW would not allow any new linear moorings and called for BW to make more effort in facilitating the construction of off-line marinas.

Geoffrey Rogerson observed that the creation of on-line moorings was continuing at the western end of the K&A. Eugene explained that these were special circumstances associated with problems of over-stayers in that area. A small number of temporary permanent moorings had been created to cater for those who wished to remain in the locality. These were offered on a first-come first served basis and provided an alternative for those who would be forced to move their boats to comply with the British Waterways Act 1995.

Adrian rejected this approach, stating that BW was not obliged to provide any moorings, regardless of the circumstances.

Tony Mason supported BW's approach, suggesting that it was better to earn income through the moorings' provision, provide a legal alternative for some of the boaters and bring the boats under some form of regulation.

Sue Day highlighted the problems with horseboating and linear moorings on the towpath side, which made passing with a horse very difficult at times.

Tim observed that he was unaware of any new marina construction underway south of Rugby. He considered this to be a significant problem, since the numbers of boats on the network were increasing without the necessary berths being created.

Adrian commented that he was creating moorings on the River Lee and that BW had been very supportive. He called on BW to lobby Local Authorities to encourage recognition of the value of creating moorings.

Sally Banham added that a meeting had been called with the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister to discuss the provision of more moorings (BMF, TYHA).

5.2 Long Term Mooring Fees & Waiting List

It was agreed that Eugene's update on the future work of Oxera in reviewing moorings dealt with this item.

5.3 Supply & Demand

Ivor asked whether mooring fees had increased because of market demand. Eugene replied that market forces, i.e. the price of moorings in a vicinity, could have an effect on the annual rate, along with demand at certain locations and other factors. It was generally accepted that BW's moorings had been at the lower end of the market, preventing private operators from increasing prices and thus reducing the capital available across the industry to create more berths.

6.0 OPENNESS & ACCOUNTABILITY

Audrey Smith asked for an update on work associated with Local User Group meetings.

Eugene thanked those representatives who had provided views on the format of these important meetings. He reported that these views had been supplemented by a BW working party tasked to review the meetings. Guidance on local consultation would be issued shortly, setting minimum standards for Waterway Units to adhere to.

Audrey enquired whether the meetings would be open to all users, and not just invited representatives. Eugene advised that priority would be given to user group representatives at these meetings, and where possible individual users would be able to attend via a pre-registration process.

7.0 CONTINUOUS CRUISING GUIDANCE

Geoffrey Rogerson expressed his concern at the delayed publication of the guidance notes, which would now take effect in the third week of June. He also enquired whether overstaying stickers were being used by patrol officers.

Eugene advised that observation of overstaying boats was ongoing and that stickers were in use. Observations made during this period would supplement those made after the short period of final consultation was concluded.

Geoffrey asked why, when patrol resources were stretched, it was necessary for two staff members to complete each patrol duty.

Amanda Strang replied that in some places there may be a threat to the safety of BW employees.

Richard Booth spoke of the double standards that existed where BW workboats occupied visitor moorings for long periods of time without obvious purpose. Stewart responded that he was determined to stop this practice and asked for details of where this is happening on an ongoing basis.

Tony Mason asked where enforcement efforts would be focused.

Eugene responded that BW intended to focus on the 'hot spot' areas previously identified, with enforcement procedures then being applied to other areas.

Sue Day reported an instance where overstaying notices were placed on a boat immediately, even though there were extenuating circumstances related to the vessel and its mooring. She felt that in some places there was no flexibility or pragmatism being applied.

Eugene replied that this was a fine balancing act. BW would be criticised for not acting by others who would be unaware of the circumstances behind this boat.

Geoffrey questioned whether penalty charges were actually collected by BW.

Eugene responded that in many cases the stickers and signs acted as a good deterrent, as shown recently on the southern Oxford Canal. He did however recognise that collection procedures were necessary to prevent the initiative from being abused.

Richard Booth questioned the rationale behind the imposition of time limits of less than 14 days at popular mooring places. It appeared that these were not consistently applied across the network. Stewart Sim noted this point and referred it to the next Service Managers meeting.

Peter Wear

Adrian Stott reiterated Richard's comments, and added that where there is a popular site visiting boats should take a priority over the long-term moorings. There have been too many long-term moorings developed at popular sites e.g Braunston and Stoke Bruerne, to the detriment of visiting boats.

Stewart Sim responded that a national moorings strategy was being prepared which would take account of these issues.

It was noted by Stuart Sampson that spot dredging in rural locations would encourage a greater spread of overnight temporary moorings, easing pressure on popular town and village mooring sites.

8.0 LOCKS & MOVEABLE BRIDGES

8.1 Landing Stages & Lift Bridges

John Baylis raised the issue that in most places on these structures the only place to stop is on the towpath side when the operation is on the non-towpath side, which creates difficulties for a single-handed boater. It would be useful for a landing area on the towpath side to be installed at these structures.

Beryl added that a single bollard would be helpful, even if a landing stage was not feasible.

Adrian asked that BW provide signs at each moveable structure stating weather it should be left open or closed.

Richard asked why the operation (relating specifically to electrical or hydraulic operation) could not be moved to the towpath side.

Stewart responded that there is no practical reason why not, however there is a significant cost implication involved, but as and when the canals are drained for general works then this will be considered, cost permitting.

8.2 Ease of Operation

John Baylis commented that newer lock furniture appeared to be heavier, resulting in changes to the balance of lock gates. He added, with reference to the re-gating of Home Lock on the River Trent, that the baffles fitted made it twice as long to fill. Stewart noted this as an ongoing issue and would take it up locally.

Stewart Sim /
Peter Wade

Adrian recommended that baffles were fitted horizontally rather than vertically. Stewart noted and would investigate.

Stewart Sim

9.0 ENCOURAGING REPORTING

9.1 BW Comment Cards

John Baylis noted that comment cards had previously been available from every waterway office. It was also noted from Beryl that BW bank staff usually had a supply of these.

Eugene responded that the comment cards had recently been redesigned and individually addressed to each waterway unit. They operated on a FreePost address basis and should be readily available from waterway offices and staff members.

It was suggested that distribution of comment cards to individual boaters and other users could be achieved through Waterfront, licence renewals correspondence and supplies provided to user groups for distribution.

Amanda
Strang

9.2 Visitor Incident Reporting

Peter Wade produced a draft version of the BW visitor incident reporting card. This form was intended to record accidents and other incidents experienced by visitors to the network, and would, in time, form a database to identify where action needed to be taken. Peter asked for comments on the draft within the next two weeks.

ALL

John Baylis suggested that there should be space for a boat name, index number and report number. Tony Mason suggested that a space be made available for a police reference number, if they were involved.

Peter Wade

10. RED DIESEL

Ivor Caplan asked for BW's position on the possible inclusion of tax on Red Diesel from 2006.

Stewart responded that BW had not formed a view on this as of yet, and would share it with user group representatives when it was available.

Stewart
Sim/Eugene
Baston

Between representatives it was recognised that combining lobbying efforts would produce more consistent results.

John Crisp noted that the current situation encouraged the use of diesel engines. Should the taxation measures be applied, there would be little financial incentive for boaters not to use petrol-driven engines, increasing the risks of fire and explosion.

Neil Northmore extended the RYA's support to user groups to maintain the status quo with regard to Red Diesel.

11. ELECTRICITY CARDS

John Baylis reported continuing discrepancies between card readers, unit cards and facilities.

Stewart informed the meeting that Mark Bensted had been tasked with resolving these issues following on from the u-turn made by OFGEM in Autumn last year.

12. STOPPAGE NOTICES

This issue was covered earlier in the meeting.

13. DREDGING

David Dunning raised the subject of spot dredging on the River Severn and the growing concern that dredging is not being carried out. The Boating Association had noted that some customers had put claims into BW about damage to boats allegedly caused by a lack of dredging.

David also enquired about the method of dredging on the River Trent.

Stewart replied that injection dredging by contractors was planned for both navigations.

14. ALCOHOL ON BOATS

Stuart Sampson asked for BW's position with regard to the current consultation on the imposition of alcohol limits for inland skippers.

Peter Wade replied that BW was currently assessing the consultation questions and considering the impact of any legislation not only on the enjoyment of boating and on the hire trade, but also in terms of enforcement of any such legislation.

David Dunning added that his understanding was that any legislation would only be applicable to the skipper of a craft that was underway.

Stewart advised that BW would be considering the proportionate risks involved in inland boating while under the influence of alcohol, and suggested that it would be unlikely BW would oppose any future legislation, in the interests of overall safety.

Neil explained that the RYA would be opposing the imposition of any legislation on craft shorter than 21 metres. He noted that BW staff would be asked to detain boats until police arrived, placing them in a difficult and possibly dangerous position.

Stewart responded that safety must remain paramount, and while canal boats may travel at slower speeds than coastal craft, the potential for an accident was still there.

John Baylis asked under what circumstances BW could be required to carry out breathalyser tests along the network. Stewart confirmed that existing powers held by the British Transport Police applied.

Sally Banham urged all representatives to submit their responses by 1st August.

15. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

British Waterways Board Minutes

Adrian Stott welcomed the publication of BW Board Minutes at www.britishwaterways.co.uk. He asked Stewart to explain references to modernisation of statutory maintenance dimensions.

Stewart responded that the legislation currently being adhered to was now 40 years old, and had been drafted when waterways had significantly less leisure traffic and more commercial craft. This had the potential to place an inappropriate responsibility on BW to maintain navigations to a standard no longer required, and deprived other parts of the network of necessary funding. A report was being prepared.

Licence Disks

Stuart Sampson noted that licence discs were now printed as squares rather than circles, and that they had become larger as a result. This had the effect of blocking more light from boat interiors, particularly in the case of porthole windows.

Eugene explained that the change had been made to save money; printing square licences according to the size of a sheet of A4 paper helped considerably. He noted the comments, although explained that to change the disc shape again would cost a significant sum.

Lock Gate Painting

Richard Booth had observed a number of lock gates requiring painting, and asked whether further cuts in expenditure had resulted in this.

Stewart responded that all gates would be painted in time, although it was likely that newer gates recently installed may not be painted immediately. There was no expenditure issue associated with this observation.

Provision of Water

Ann Davies wanted to thank BW for providing adequate water supplies during last year's exceptional dry spell.

Request to Support Boatyards

Ann Davies also reported that following a discussion with Robin Evans at the National User Group meeting in December a policy statement had been produced.

Waterway Standards – Horse Boating

Sue Day asked BW to consider including in the new Waterway Standards the provision for horse boating,

Eugene acknowledged the importance of horse boating, but explained that individual Standards could not be justified for the activity. He confirmed that horse boating would be covered within the Universal Standards.

Eugene
Baston

SUMMARY

Stewart closed the meeting, thanked all for attending and pledged to detail the action points and pick up all the issues that were outlined

Amanda
Strang