



**Notes of Boating Issues Meeting
Held at BW Offices, Hatton
Wednesday 8 March 2006**

PRESENT:

User Groups

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| Nigel Hamilton | APCO Hotel Boat Section |
| Ann Banks | Association of Waterways' Cruising Club |
| Edward Burrell | Barge Association, The |
| Adrian Stott | Observer |
| David Dunning | Boating Association |
| Mike Turpin | Boat Museum Society & Historic Narrow Boat Owners' Club |
| Sue Day | Horse Boating Society |
| Tony Hirst | Inland Waterways Amenity Advisory Council (observer) |
| John Baylis | Inland Waterways Association |
| Stuart Sampson | National Association of Boat Owners |
| Beryl McDowall | Residential Boat Owners' Association |
| John Crisp | Royal Yachting Association |
| Bill Hall | Steam Boat Association of Great Britain |

British Waterways:

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|---------------|---------------------------------------|
| Simon Salem | Marketing & Customer Service Director |
| Eugene Baston | External Relations Manager |
| Sally Ash | Head of Boating Development |
| Peter Wade | Safety Advisor |
| Jim Stirling | Technical Director |
| David Bligh | Chief Engineer, South |
| Amanda Strang | External Relations Administrator |

Apologies:

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| Alan Meegan | Amateur Rowing Association |
| Colin Hill | Association of Pleasure Craft Operators |
| David Pearce | Association of Waterways' Cruising Club |
| Kevin East | British Canoe Union |
| Henry Whittaker | British Horse Society |
| Howard Pridding | British Marine Federation |
| Barry Smith | Canal Boat Builders' Association |
| Bernard Hales | Heritage Afloat |
| Martin Jiggins | Historic Narrow Boat Owners' Club |
| Richard Booth | Historic Narrow Boat Owners' Club |
| Roger Squires | Inland Waterways Association |
| Audrey Smith | Inland Waterways Amenity Advisory Council (observer) |
| Neil Edwards | Inland Waterways Association |
| Terry Fell | National Federation of Anglers |
| Paul Bryan | National Community Boat Association |
| David Kent | National Federation of Anglers |
| Rebecca Dixon | Ramblers' Association |
| Neil Northmore | Royal Yachting Association |
| Rod Hartley | SIBUG |
| Hazel Rainer | Towpath Action Group |
| Adrian Birtles | The Steam Boat Association of Great Britain |
| Sam Bourne | The Yacht Harbour Association |

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

WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS

Simon Salem welcomed the group and introduced new faces.

1. MATTERS ARISING

An update paper was provided prior to the meeting outlining the completed actions from October's meeting together with information of interest.

1.1 Revenue Protection Scheme

The group welcomed BW's commitment to tackling licence evasion as outlined in a pre-circulated paper.

Nigel Hamilton commented on regional variations in tackling licence evasion with particular reference to the Bath area on the Kennet & Avon Canal. Simon reiterated BW's commitment to tackling licence evasion. (see press release: **On the bank and in the court room - BW is committed to tackling licence evasion**). More money and resources than ever before is being allocated to tackling licence evasion. In 2006, the planned spend on legal expenses to tackle licence evasion is almost three times the amount spent in 2005 and more than 7.5 times higher than in 2004.

1.2 Boating Etiquette Guide

BW pre-circulated a proposal to review the 'Safe and Friendly Cruising Guide' developed jointly by BW and National Boating user groups in the late 1990's.

Further discussion took place on BW's proposal to re-draft the guide which encourages boaters to act in a safe and friendly manner on the canal, particularly informing them of un-written etiquette on the canal.

Nigel Hamilton believed that the money being proposed to review the guide would be better spent promoting and re-distributing the original guide. Other meeting attendees felt the guide needed to be reviewed to make it clear, concise and contemporary.

ACTION: External Relations to circulate the original 'Safe and Friendly Cruising Guide' to user group representatives with a request to provide final comments on whether a review of the guide is necessary to Amanda by **Thursday 13 April**. Amanda / All Users

1.3 Redundant Commercial Craft – East Midlands Navigations

While noting the content of the pre-circulated update paper, David Dunning remained concerned that East Midlands had not yet provided a suitable solution.

ACTION: External Relations will provide a written response to David outlining East Midland's proposed solution for tackling redundant commercial craft blocking boating facilities points on the River Trent. External Relations

1.4 Alien Species

Beryl McDowall raised particular concern about the problems caused by floating Pennywort on the River Soar. The group felt that BW must react promptly to sightings of floating Pennywort before navigation was affected. Other alien plant species can also cause problems for visitors. Waterway users are encouraged to inform BW of the location of the following:

- Giant Hogweed – harmful to people
- Ragwort – harmful to grazing livestock
- Duckweed and Japanese Knotweed – reduces biodiversity

Waterway Users

ACTION: External Relations will re-circulate BW advice to staff on dealing with floating Pennywort and Ragwort. External Relations

2.0 LICENCE FEE CONSULTATION

Simon expressed empathy with the group and their members about the concern caused by the licence fee structure consultation original proposals.

Simon briefly described the background to the licence fee structure consultation and its current status. From the views expressed by BW's customers it was clear that the majority felt that BW should retain the licence fee structure as it was prior to consultation. Simon invited user group representatives to give their personal and organisational views on returning to the licence fee structure prior to the consultation.

All Users

The group expressed views mainly for remaining with the original structure. Simon informed the group that the current Ombudsman is not bound by any previous Ombudsman decisions. On the current presumption that BW would return to the original licence fee structure, BW would encourage shared owners to submit a complaint that would be fast-tracked through BW's Complaints Procedure. This would ultimately allow the Ombudsman to rule on whether returning to the previous licence fee structure was a viable option.

Simon informed the group that BW and the EA are keen to move to licence fee harmonisation. The review would involve a pre-consultation period with boating user groups before a final decision is made to progress a formal joint review. This would take 1-2 years to implement.

ACTION: Comments on returning to the original licence fee structure should be sent to Simon by **Thursday 13 April**.

3.0 BW OLD WORKBOAT FLEET DISPOSALS

Mike Turpin expressed dissatisfaction at the progress which has been made by BW to dispose of BW's old workboat fleet.

Whilst BW did provide an update at the meeting (see handout), those user groups representing historic craft expressed views that Robin Evan's pledge to involve boating user groups in the project was not being met.

BW's commitment was to consult with users on the decision making process for disposing of the workboats. Mike and others at the meeting felt that appropriate consultation had not taken place to involve the user groups in the decision making process as to whether a craft had historic interest. Simon confirmed that BW will not dispose of boats with an historic interest inappropriately and that a formal tender process will take place That involved interested parties.

The Boat Museum Society, HNBOC and Horse Boating Society have all asked to be involved in the project.

ACTION: External Relations to provide a full summary on the disposals process of BW's old workboats and ensure full and proper involvement of interested parties take place.

External Relations

Further to a post meeting update circulated on the 31 March, please find attached a further press release circulated on 18 April (British Waterways' Commitment to Floating Heritage).

4.0 BOATING FACILITIES GAP ANALYSIS

BW pre-circulated a draft 'boating facilities gap analysis paper' which formed part of discussions held at the last meeting in October 2005.

Sally Ash provided background to the paper and its purpose and explained that it is part of the development of new Waterways Standards focused on user, customer and general visitor expectations.

The paper and proposed future work is aimed at understanding what boaters require in terms of boatyard provision and boater facilities. By identifying gaps in facilities on the network, the necessary financial investment required across the network to provide additional facilities could be deduced.

A working group will be created to carry forward the work of the 'boating facilities gap analysis'. A draft proposal will be circulated to all user groups for comment as soon as it has been developed.

All Users

The group agreed that the provision and suitability of slipways should be included in the analysis since these allowed a wider range of visitors to access the network.

David Dunning gave an example where the gap analysis would help to identify 'provision of dry dock facilities'.

The group questioned BW's commitment to involve local authorities with provision of facilities such as rubbish disposal. It was felt that local authorities often have a negative view of boats and boating facilities. Simon responded that Waterway Planners are carrying out presentations to local authorities about BW and the positive impact of waterways on the local economy. It was expected that these presentations would raise awareness amongst Local Authorities of the benefits to communication of boating and the need to provide common facilities.

ACTION: User groups to nominate individuals to participate in a working group to develop the boating facilities gap analysis. Those interested in participating in a working group should email Sally.Ash@britishwaterways.co.uk by **Monday 31 March 2006**

All Users

ACTION: An update report will be provided on the boating facilities gap analysis at October's user group meeting.

Amanda Strang

4.1 WiFi Communication

BW pre-circulated a paper by Adrian Stott on the provision of WiFi communication points including a suggestion for the provision of 10-20 points across the network. Adrian provided an example of where WiFi communication already exists at Limehouse Marina.

ACTION: External Relations will investigate the inclusion of WiFi communication points in the boating facilities gap analysis.

External Relations

ACTION: External Relations will respond to Adrian's views about charging for WiFi access at Limehouse marina.

External Relations

5.0 WATERWAY STANDARDS, DREDGING AND CHANNEL DIMENSIONS

Jim Stirling, Technical Director, asked the group to inform him of the main issues that concern them. He introduced David Bligh, Chief Engineer (South) to present work in progress on developing a national dredging mapping system.

David Bligh explained that the mapping system identifies trigger points for dredging based on surveyed areas at 50m intervals across the network. The mapping clearly shows areas that are compliant, non-compliant and yet to be surveyed according to BW's dredging programme criteria.

David informed the group that all areas of the network are to be surveyed every eight years with the aim to dredge 30-50km per annum.

ACTIONS: Jim Stirling understood the clear concerns of meeting attendees and as a result will respond to the following points:

Jim Stirling

- What was the original commitment made by BW to dredge to original profile?
- What are BW's dredging standards for narrow and broad beam canals?
- Publishing of a set of dredging data which is in user friendly format.
- When will missing data (e.g. rivers) be added and explain any reasons why data will not be included?
- Why the Standard (i.e "the box") has been changed without consultation?
- When will the remainder of the network be surveyed (e.g. non tidal)?
- How many data sets on dredging still require uploading to BW's GIS system?
- What are the principals underlying dredging prioritisation?

Spot Dredging

David Bligh informed the group that there were particular issues in identifying areas where 'spot dredging' is required. In some areas hard material is removed and silt redistributed using river currents.

Pinch Points

- ACTION:** Jim to review the inclusion of pinch-points in the waterway dimensions document. Jim Stirling
- ### Dimensions Process
- ACTION:** Jim to confirm whether BW will consult locally on the gauge of the canal. Jim Stirling
- ACTION:** Jim to provide the group with BW's legal obligation to maintain the River Trent for navigation at low water. Jim Stirling
- ACTION:** External Relations to inform David Dunning who is responsible for Hull's tidal docks. External Relations

5.1 Safeguarding locks against vandalism

John Baylis explained the issues facing users on the variation of anti-vandalism devices used on locks. An example of the problems these cause are as follows: different keys and availability and the variation on the ease of operation.

- ACTION:** BW understands and sympathises with the inconsistent approach to anti-vandalism devices and will investigate how the design can be standardised across the network. Jim Stirling

5.2 Update on AINA Signage

Peter Wade confirmed that the AINA signs document is now in use as of 1 March 2006 and can be downloaded from www.aina.org.uk. BW will implement modified signage as and when new signs are required around the network.

John Baylis and Beryl McDowall both gave examples where there is still an inconsistent approach to signage on the waterways. (e.g. the correct wording on signage, size and type of signs)

It was accepted that while BW has a consistent approach to signage across the network it appears that internal guidance provided to waterway units is not always adhered to.

- ACTION:** External Relations will re-issue corporate signage guidance to ensure consistency is met. External Relations (Russ Camplin)
- ACTION:** External Relations to circulate guidance given by BW's legal department on the use of imperial measurements, rather than metric, on signage. External Relations
- ACTION:** External Relations to report back to David Dunning and John Baylis on concerns raised about East Midlands Waterways where speed limit signs have changed from MPH to KPH and large navigation signs have been replaced with smaller corporate signage. External Relations

6.0 VISITOR SAFETY & ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

6.1 Visitor Incident Reporting

Peter Wade reported that 386 Visitor Incident Report forms had been received between October 2004 and February 2006.

Analysis of the forms showed that of all waterways visitors, boaters are most likely to complete a form and return it to BW. BW will work with user groups from the angling, cycling and walking groups to actively encourage their members to complete these forms. This included raising press awareness and making the forms readily available from waterways offices and boater leaflet boxes along the network.

Peter informed the group that AINA will be using the same form as BW to encourage all navigation authorities to report visitor incidents in a consistent way.

ACTION: BW is investigating an automated notification system that will allow visitor incident reports to be accepted by phone. This would be reported back on at the next meeting.

6.2 Tunnel Safety

BW pre-circulated a paper on tunnel safety which is being reviewed internally.

ACTIONS: Progress on BW's Tunnel Safety review will be reported on at October's meeting External Relations

6.3 BW Slipway Guidance

The group welcomed the draft 'slipway guidance' which was pre-circulated ahead of the meeting and made specific comments which would be incorporated within the final document, i.e:

ACTIONS: Information about licence requirements, navigational speed limits and ensuring a rope is attached to the shore when launching a boat from a slipway will be included within the BW slipway guidance. Peter Wade

ACTION: Peter Wade will re-circulate BW's design guidance on slipways to all waterway units. Peter Wade

6.4 Working on Craft on BW Property

Peter Wade presented to the group three documents covering guidance on:

- Working on craft in dry docks
- Working on craft in dry storage
- Craft lifting on BW's property

These documents can be found by visiting http://www.britishwaterways.co.uk/downloads/craft_information/index.html

BW will be producing a combined document relating to: working on craft in dry docks and dry storage which will be published to improve user awareness.

ACTION: External Relations to confirm whether customers can stay on their craft when they have been lifted out and stand on BW property. External Relations

6.5 Maritime Coastguard Agency's (MCA) Small Passenger Boat Code

ACTION: Peter Wade confirmed that guidance is being produced to advise individuals and business customers on the implementation of the MCA's Small Passenger Boat Code. This would be circulated to user group representatives when ready. Peter Wade

7.0 Avian Influenza briefing

Simon explained that BW's guidance is based on the latest scientifically-based advice available to BW from ADAS who provided support throughout the Foot & Mouth epidemic. The guidance explains that the risks of human infection even if the H5N1 strain of bird flu is found in the UK are very small.

BW is encouraging all waterway users to continue to enjoy the waterways. BW suggests visitors use common sense and wash hands and outdoor shoes after being out on the waterways to eliminate any potential risk of infection.

The group generally felt that BW is in a good position to tackle any impact that Bird Flu may have on the network.

ACTION: External Relations will produce scientific-based guidance to circulate to all of the user group representatives and ask them to distribute to all members.

External Relations

8.0 Any other business

8.1 Veg Pledge

BW confirmed that the standard in most rural locations will be to carry out a cut to the edge for up to 100 metres in every 600 metres to allow boats to moor up in emergencies and / or provide a temporary, overnight informal mooring.

8.2 Castlemill Site, Oxford

Eugene provided a brief update on the Castlemill site in Oxford. BW has sought alternative boater facilities before the site is sold for redevelopment.

BW reassured the group that Nigel Crowe, Head of Heritage carefully evaluates all buildings that potentially had an historic interest before plans are carried out to redevelop them. There was no historic interest found in the buildings on the Castlemill site.

8.3 BW Key Availability

The group gave examples where the common availability of the BW key to access facilities such as showers could cause problems. David Dunning expressed the views of some of his members who felt that boaters pay to use these facilities while other users pay nothing and leave the facilities in a mess.

ACTION: BW will review the provision of free shower facilities and asked users to provide views on the general availability of keys to members of the public.

All Users

8.4 Inland Marina Investment Guide

Simon provided a brief background to the Inland Marina Investment Guide which was launched on 8 March with support from the British Marine Federation and The Yacht Harbour Association. The launch achieved national media coverage, while a dinner for potential investors had been well received.

BW's aim is to increase offline moorings by 11,700 berths over the next ten years to satisfy current demand for moorings. To provide a balance of offline / online moorings, it is expected that approximately 1,200 boats will come off online moorings into marinas in the next ten years.

Beryl expressed concern over the guidance given to smaller operators which is felt to be onerous in comparison to that of the larger investors. BW encouraged users concerned about any aspect of designing and building a marina to visit www.britishwaterways.co.uk/marinainvestment and to make their views known to Sally Ash.

The group highlighted specific issues regarding the supply of End of Garden moorings and mooring fee increases. Simon explained that local mooring strategies are being developed for each of the Waterway Units to help identify where new mooring locations are needed and the type. (E.g. Marina, Lay-by, visitor mooring).

8.5 WaterWatch Scheme

Simon provided the group with an article written for the Waterways Press on BW's WaterWatch Scheme. A monthly update will be produced to keep the Waterways Press and User Groups up-to-date with reservoir holdings and identify areas that may be affected by water shortages.

External
Relations

Stuart Sampson suggested that BW carries out basic maintenance to water point facilities to cure leaks and save water.

ACTION: External Relations to provide monthly updates to Waterways Press and user group representatives on reservoir holdings and advise on any predicted shortages, along with tips on conserving water supplies.

8.6 Research into Perceptions of Congestion

It was noted that more key areas of the network are experiencing congestion which is reducing the enjoyment of the canal to many existing boaters.

Sally Ash circulated a paper outlining proposals to carry out focus groups on the South East and Central Shires Waterways to understand congestion in these specific areas.

A general discussion took place about congestion on the waterways and how it is currently affecting boaters.

ACTION: BW invited user comments on the proposal which should be emailed to Sally.Ash@britishwaterways.co.uk by **Thursday 13 April**.

All Users

8.7 Mooring Price Review for 2007

Sally explained that BW was keen to consult boating user groups on the mooring price review for 2007.

ACTION: Sally Ash will provide a briefing paper to the user groups on mooring price review for 2007 by May 2006.

Sally Ash

8.8 Mooring Contracts

BW circulated a proposal for a pre-consultation to develop a strategy for improving mooring contracts and address customers' demand for longer term security of tenure.

General discussion took place about boats being sold on their moorings. BW confirmed that its terms & conditions state that selling boats on moorings is not permitted.

Beryl expressed concern that new work would overlap with work being carried by Residential Boating Issues Group (RBIG). It was noted that the work of RBIG and the outcome of the recent Office for the Deputy Prime Minister consultation should be considered in tandem.

ACTION: BW invited users to participate in a pre-consultation to develop a strategy for improving mooring contracts and address customers' demand for longer term security of tenure by emailing a nominated representative to Madge Bailey (madge.bailey@britishwaterways.co.uk) by **31 March 2006**.

All Users

SUMMARY

Simon highlighted key themes of the meeting which included BW's commitment to pre-consult on key issues and to provide consistency of approach and delivery along the waterways.

Date of next meeting

4 October 2006, BW Offices, Hatton