

Boating Issues Update - May 2006

This paper provides you with an update following the Boating Issues meeting in March. Much of the content concerns matters arising from our last meeting, and where available we have also tried to include other information that we think will be of interest.

A further update will be provided by 31 July 2006 reporting on actions arising not included within this update.

1. BOATING ETIQUETTE

ACTION: *External Relations to circulate the original 'Safe and Friendly Cruising Guide' to user group representatives and ask them to provide comments on the proposed review of the guide to Amanda by Thursday 13 April 2006*

The initial period for feedback (13 April) was extended to 28 April following a small number of requests to allow a longer feedback period.

Two responses were received:

1. A suggestion made that boating etiquette and the traditions of the 'cut' should be kept separate from safety messages which are covered by the Boaters Handbook. Often boating etiquette and the traditions of the canal are forgotten by those new to boating. (RBOA)
2. The IWA welcomed a re-vamp of the guide.

Our original intention was to review the guide this year, however other work such as the boating facilities gap analysis project, mooring contracts consultation and network congestion analysis has meant that the revamp of the guide will not take place this now.

The Boater's Handbook covers many of the key safety messages that boaters should be aware of and we will look to strengthen the handbook with other messages such as boating etiquette and canal traditions.

2. ALIEN / INVASIVE SPECIES

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

British Waterways follows the guidance given by Defra for dealing with Ragwort. The guidance is comprehensive and available to download from Defra's website: <http://www.defra.gov.uk/envirom/weedsact/default.htm>. Colleagues have been notified.

BW's Alien Species campaign will be launched in June 2006 aimed at gardeners, tropical fish enthusiasts, the garden and aquatic trade and the general public. It will highlight the most problematic invasive species on our waterways, for example: Ragwort, floating Pennywort, Japanese Knotweed and to provide information on their identification and advice on how to prevent them being introducing to the waterways.

The guide and media activity will be supported in June by information on our website www.waterscape.com

The National Waterways Wildlife Survey 2006 will begin at the end of May and run throughout the summer until the end of September. A survey leaflet is available in hard copy and on-line at www.waterscape.com. The survey records a variety of species and will specifically focus in 2006 on observing Water Voles.

Since you know the canals better than anyone, we would like your help in promoting the survey and would welcome your support by circulating the survey to all your members. We

will ensure that all waterway canal societies also receive a copy of the survey. Schools will be involved in the survey and invited to book a wildlife walk and survey with their local office in September 2006.

Also in July we will be highlighting some of the finest sites to spot wildlife on our waterways and producing a mini-guide to these sites. The guide will be published in July and circulated to you, ahead of the main summer holiday season.

If you have any questions about this project, please contact Liz Woznicki, part of the External Relations team either by phone (01923 201166) or email (liz.woznicki@britishwaterways.co.uk) who would be happy to explain these in more detail.

3. LICENCE FEE STRUCTURE CONSULTATION

ACTION: *Simon invited user group representatives to give their personal and organisational views on returning to the licence fee structure as it was before the consultation. Comments should be sent to Simon by **Thursday 13 April**.*

We'd like to thank all of you who provided comments on the Licence Fee Structure proposals throughout the consultation period. We recognise that this issue has caused uncertainty amongst many boaters.

After much debate and consideration of the many views expressed we have now come to our final conclusions (see Appendix A). This document will be circulated to those who responded to the main consultation in June 2005 and to the 'White Paper' stage of the consultation in January 2006.

The changes will take effect from 1 October 2006.

4. BW OLD WORKBOAT DISPOSALS

ACTION: *External Relations to provide a full summary on the disposals process of BW's old workboats.*

Following the meeting in March, British Waterways circulated two press releases regarding the disposal of BW's old workboats. The most recent press release can be found by visiting www.britishwaterways.co.uk/newsroom

The auction took place on 27 April 2006, a report about the sale of BW's old workboats is attached as Appendix B. This can also be viewed by visiting www.britishwaterways.co.uk/newsroom

All of the auction lots (65 workboats and two cranes) were sold for approximately £270,000 in total. The proceeds from the sale will contribute to further maintenance and improvements on the system.

5. BOATING FACILITIES GAP ANALYSIS PROJECT

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***

BW has appointed research agency 'Ecotec' to undertake a study of boaters' needs for facilities on the canal network.

The study will cover services needed for day to day cruising (water points, refuse, visitor mooring etc), boat building, repair and maintenance facilities.

The first meeting between BW and nominated representatives took place on Friday 5 May. Focus groups, recruited at several locations around the network along with the recommendations from the 5 May meeting will guide the development of a questionnaire. The Questionnaire will be sent to 1,000 randomly selected boaters during June to gain an even greater understanding of boaters needs. The survey results will be presented to you and this work will help us to develop a national strategy for facility provisions.

We would like to thank those who are working with us on this important project. It will benefit boaters and other visitors by steering future BW investment in facilities and ensure that money is spent where it is most needed.

6. WATERWAY STANDARDS, DREDGING AND CHANNEL DIMENSIONS

Following the Boating Issues meeting in March Jim Stirling is working on providing a comprehensive response to the issues of dredging principles and standards, channel dimension and pinch-points which will be included in July's update.

7. UPDATE ON AINA SIGNAGE

ACTION: *External Relations to circulate guidance given by BW's legal team on the use of imperial signage.*

British Waterways' legal team produced the following guidance on the use of imperial signage on the British Waterways network:

- The Units of Measurement Regulations 1995 requires, as a general rule, metric measurements to be used in the public sphere.
- There are some exemptions under those regulations for 'road traffic signs' on public highways.
- Waterways are not highways:
 - Accordingly signs erected for the purposes of navigation are not 'road traffic signs' and (under the 1995 Regulations) have to be in metric measurements.
 - Most towing paths are not public paths and therefore are not highways.
 - Any signs erected on a towing path that is not a highway are not 'road traffic signs' and therefore have to be in metric measurements.
 - A minority of towing paths are public rights of way and therefore are highways. A sign erected by a Traffic Authority on such a path (using the powers in s.63 Traffic Regulations Act 1984) may be a 'road traffic sign' and (if so) may be in imperial measurements due to the specific exemption in the Units of Measurement Regulations 1995. A sign erected by a Highway Authority under powers in the Countryside Act 1968 are not 'road traffic signs'.
 - British Waterways is neither a Highway Authority nor a Traffic Authority and is not empowered to erect road traffic signs under the powers contained in s.64 of the 1984 Act. It erects signs as a navigation authority and as a landowner. As such it does not have the benefit of the exemptions in the Units of Measurement Regulations 1995.
 - Thus even where signs are erected for the benefit of pedestrians, (and regardless of whether the towing path is a highway or private path) such signs are not 'road traffic signs' and therefore do not benefit from the exemptions in the Units of Measurement Regulations. They therefore have to show metric measurements.

BW signs comply with British Safety standards and guidance set down by the Disability Discrimination Act.

8. VISITOR SAFETY & ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

8.1 BW Slipway Guidance

ACTION: *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.*

BW has now included the comments from boating representatives highlighted in the above action. Please see, appendix C, the final copy of the leaflet: *BW Slipways A User's Guide*.

9. AVIAN INFLUENZA BRIEFING

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

Following our meeting, guidance on Avian Influenza was circulated. Please see appendix D for an updated version which reflects revised guidance following the outbreak in Scotland during March. This is also available on our website www.britishwaterways.co.uk

10. BW KEY AVAILABILITY

ACTION: *BW will review the provision of free shower facilities and asked users to provide views on where facilities should be provided and the availability of keys.*

Following the Boating Issues meeting a wider discussion of 'shared use of facilities' took place at the Corridor Issues meeting in March.

The outcome was that the meeting attendees favoured BW's development of a universal service card for access and as a charging system for using some canalside facilities. We will progress this work.

11. WATERWATCH SCHEME

ACTION: *External Relations to provide monthly updates to Waterways Press and user group representatives on reservoir holdings and clear messages on any shortages.*

WaterWatch update – April

This is now the fourth month we have provided the waterways press with updates on current reservoir holding levels.

During the last four weeks we have seen mixed weather, with long periods of sunny dry spells followed by heavy downpours. The weather is now starting to warm up and periods of heavy downpours maybe few and far between.

This rainfall in March and April has helped reservoir levels improve considerably since January's report.

Reservoir Group	January Holding	March Holding	April Holding	Change in period %
Crinan	94%	94%	97%	+3
Monkland Canal	100%	97%	100%	No change
Forth & Clyde Canal	78%	76%	100%	+22
Union Canal	98%	99%	98%	No change
Kennet & Avon Canal	61%	81%	84%	+23
Oxford & Grand Union	80%	89%	92%	+12
Grand Union South	71%	75%	78%	+7
Grand Union North	77%	93%	100%	+23
Lancaster Canal	100%	100%	100%	No change
Leeds & Liverpool Canal	77%	88%	99%	+22
Peak, Forest and Macclesfield Canal	91%	95%	96%	+5
Caldon Canal	70%	79%	79%	+9
Huddersfield Narrow Canal	99%	96%	99%	No change
Chesterfield	72%	76%	97%	+25

Canal				
Grantham Canal	100%	100%	100%	No change
Birmingham Canal Navigations	80%	85%	86%	+6
Staffs & Worcs, Shropshire Union	73%	77%	81%	+8

Although April showed an improving situation, future months could see a negative change in these figures. We remain relatively optimistic that widespread restrictions to navigation over the boating season will not be required.

We have been in touch with some of the water companies to find out more about hose pipe bans and what they mean for our boaters. We would welcome your help to provide the following advice to boaters who express concern about the current hose-pipe bans.

Guidance:

Boaters can continue to use hose pipes to fill up their vessels with drinking water and for their toilet. In addition to this boaters may wash down the deck area of the craft where they enter / exit the vessel but NOT to wash down the whole craft or water plants with a hosepipe.

We'd also be grateful if you could report:

- leaks on water points to your local waterways office
- leaks to the canal embankment or lock structures so these can be addressed to conserve the water on the network.

And

- ensure locks gates & paddles are closed when you leave a lock
- sharing locks where possible.

Monthly updates will continue to be provided to the Waterways Press and these will also be circulated to you on a monthly basis.

12. RESEARCH INTO PERCEPTIONS OF CONGESTION

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

We received two responses from user group representatives regarding the perception of congestion. This work will proceed with focus groups and meetings for nominated user group representatives.

13. MOORING CONTRACTS

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.***

A working group has now been set up and includes representatives from IWA, NABO, RBOA and the AWCC. The group will review the main terms of the existing annual mooring contracts, and current practice, relating to the length of the contract, security of tenure, selling the boat on site and transferring the berth from one customer to another. A constructive first meeting was held on Monday evening, 8 May.

Information of Interest

1. Trial Day and Night-time Stoppages on the Worcester & Birmingham Canal.

British Waterways is trialling a series of day and night-time stoppages in May on the Worcester & Birmingham Canal. This is part of British Waterway's drive to improve efficiency in the maintenance of the canal network and to reduce lengthy winter stoppages.

If deemed successful, this work pattern will significantly increase British Waterways' capacity to undertake maintenance works, as well as save money which can be used for other essential maintenance work and improving boating facilities.

Local staff consulted with hire boat businesses and other interested parties at the end of March. Useful feedback was received from local businesses on the likely affects any trial stoppage may have before going ahead. It was encouraging that many local businesses were positive towards this development, and some user groups helped too by circulating information to members and asking for views.

It is important to highlight that this is a **trial** stoppage. If this trial is successful, further consultation will be undertaken before any changes to the National Stoppage Programme are likely to take place.

The daytime stoppage took place at Lock 12 (Offerton) to replace lock gates on Tuesday 9 May. The stoppage went extremely well, starting at 6am (9 May) and opening as planned at 6am the following morning (10 May). The stoppage went so well that the waterway could have re-opened by 4pm on the Tuesday. No boats arrived who were not aware of the planned stoppage.

Local waterway staff researched lock movements in previous years to identify the ideal time for a daytime stoppage to take place to maximise daylight and minimise inconvenience.

- Tuesday 10th 2005 – 3 lock movements
- Tuesday 11th 2004 - 3 lock movements

The night-time stoppage will take place at Lock 14 to replace lock gates on Thursday 25 May starting at 5pm. It's expected the lock will re-open at 6am the following morning.

We'd ask boaters to:

- stop below Lock 5 on the way up the flight.
- stop above Lock 16 on the way down the flight.

The rest of the flight will be in use as normal.

We welcome your views on the principle and implementation of these trials. If you or your members have any views, please could you send them to amanda.strang@britishwaterways.co.uk.

3. Tackling Anti-Social Behaviour

At various Boating and Corridor Issues meetings the subject of 'anti-social behaviour' has often been discussed. It is a subject we take extremely seriously and we've implemented methods for monitoring reports of anti-social behaviour through complaint tracking and visitor incident report forms.

Local waterway units are developing a range of initiatives to help combat anti-social behaviour. Some of these initiatives are highlighted below:

Crimebuster cameras set to be installed – Shropshire Union Canal

Wales & Border Counties' waterways provided £5,000 as part of the Market Town Initiative to support Ellesmere Town Council and the local police force to install a new £45,000 CCTV system to tackle crime and anti-social behaviour in Ellesmere. The council has been given the go-ahead to install nine cameras in the town which will be up and running by June.

British Waterways' involvement in the project came as a result of isolated incidents of anti-social behaviour and vandalism to boats moored along the Ellesmere Arm and one of the initiative's cameras is being installed along the canal side.

South East Waterways – working with local police forces

The South East Enforcement team are working with Daventry Police to implement a 'Boat Watch scheme' to tackle crime and disorder issues affecting boaters and other waterway visitors to Northamptonshire's canals.

The initiative was trialled previously and the team are looking to re-introduce the scheme to create a safe and pleasant waterway for users and visitors around the district of Daventry.

In the meantime South East Waterways is working with the Environment Agency and Daventry Police to produce leaflets, posters, stickers for craft and signage to promote reporting of incidents.

Staff at South East Waterways are also ensuring that local police forces have maps of all access routes to and from the canal corridor to ensure that they are able to attend incidents in a timely manner.

4. National Stoppage Programme – 2006/07

Plans are already well underway with the Stoppage Programme for 2006/07.

A National Stoppage Programme meeting will take place with boating representatives on the 28 June at Hatton.

Ahead of this meeting on the 24 May we will be sending out a 'draft' stoppage programme together with the invite to the meeting. We'd like to receive your initial comments to the 'draft' programme by 14 June so that we are able to check comments with Waterway Units and incorporate any revisions within the programme ahead of the meeting on 28 June.

You will then be given another opportunity at the meeting to make any further comments on the programme before final amends are made.

Volunteers will be invited to attend a final proof day at either Watford or Hatton to ensure that there are no errors on the programme before it's published for the August bank holiday.

I hope you will agree that this year we are providing a greater opportunity for you to provide comments on the programme.

Please feel free to pencil in your diary the meeting on the 28 June and an official invite will be sent with the draft programme on 24 May.

If you have any questions in the meantime, please contact Amanda directly either by email or phone.

5. Crick Boatshow Ticket

We'd like to offer you a complimentary ticket to this year's Crick Boat Show (27-29 May 2006). Over 250 exhibitors provide a true flavour of outdoor adventure on the waterways and an amazing variety of displays, activities and events will keep visitors entertained all day.

If you don't yet have a ticket, but would like to join in the festivities, please contact Amanda who will arrange for one to be sent to you. If you are still in two minds... don't forget that a wide range of fabulous local and organic produce will be available at the Farmers' Market this year, as well as over 30 different real ales to indulge all taste buds!

If you would like further information on the weekend's displays, activities and events please visit www.crickboatshow.com.

6. **Waterfront Magazine**

We produce a twice yearly customer magazine sent mainly to our 30,000 boat licence holders plus other stakeholders. It covers topical news and features including:

- Then and Now - looking at waterside cities and towns, past and present
- This is my Patch- meeting staff and their section of the waterways
- Just Ask...we put the questions you're asking, to the right people
- Letters – a chance for you to tell us what you think!

If you do not currently receive *Waterfront* and would like to be on the mailing list, please email waterfront@britishwaterways.co.uk with your contact details and we will arrange for you to receive future editions.