



**British  
Waterways**

**Notes of Boating Issues Meeting  
Held at BW Offices, Hatton  
Thursday 27 October 2005**

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**PRESENT:**

**User Groups**

David Pearce	Association of Waterways' Cruising Club
Ann Banks	Association of Waterways' Cruising Club (observer)
David Dunning	Boating Association
Mike Turpin	Boat Museum
Henry Whittaker	British Horse Society
Barry Smith	Canal Boat Builders' Association
Bernard Hales	Heritage Afloat
David Daines	Historic Narrow Boat Owners' Club
Sue Day	Horse Boating Society
Audrey Smith	Inland Waterways Amenity Advisory Council (observer)
Tony Hirst	Inland Waterways Amenity Advisory Council (observer)
Roger Squires	Inland Waterways Association
Stuart Sampson	National Association of Boat Owners
Beryl McDowall	Residential Boat Owners' Association
John Crisp	Royal Yachting Association

**British Waterways:**

Simon Salem	Marketing & Customer Service Director
Eugene Baston	External Relations Manager
Sally Ash	Head of Boating Development
Peter Wade	Safety Advisor
Jon Oakes	Service Manager, Central Shires
Amanda Strang	External Relations Administrator

**Apologies:**

Alan Meegan	Amateur Rowing Association
Mark Lloyd	Anglers Conservation Association
Colin Hill	Association of Pleasure Craft Operators
Kevin East	British Canoe Union
Howard Pridding	British Marine Federation
Richard Booth	Historic Narrow Boat Owners' Club
John Baylis	Inland Waterways Association
Neil Edwards	Inland Waterways Association
Vince Christie	Local Government Association
John Williams	National Association of Fisheries & Anglers Consultatives
David Kent	National Federation of Anglers
Rebecca Dixon	Ramblers' Association
Neil Northmore	Royal Yachting Association
Scott Deverell	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 welcomed the group and introduced new faces.

Eugene informed the group of Richard Booth's news that he will not be attending future user group meetings due to personal circumstances, the group wished him well and asked that their appreciation for his work for inland waterways be noted.

### **1. REPORT ON ISSUES SINCE LAST MEETING**

Any matters carried forward from last meeting are included within the notes .

Items 9 & 10 were unable to be covered during the course of the meeting and will be on the agenda for March 2006.

#### **1.1 Hire Boat training**

Sally Ash explained that APCO had asked BW to make compliance with BMF's boat handover audit process a condition for licensing a hire boat. BW is considering this for introduction in 2007.

The group welcomed steps to improve hire boat training. It was suggested that the Boat Handover Audit be distributed to a wider audience (e.g. time share, multi-users, day boats etc) to encourage take up.

The group agreed that safety messages to hire boaters need to be clear and understandable in order to raise standards of safety and etiquette. It was recognised that BW's "Boaters Handbook" was successful in this regard.

It was noted that the AWCC and RYA are working jointly to promote the Inland Helmsman course. This would raise the standard of boat handling for AWCC members. Sally added that BW would review whether it is viable to create a licence discount for those customers who obtain a helmsman certificate to create a greater incentive to boat safely.

Sally Ash

The group recognised that if insufficient hire boat training was given the industry could possibly face enforced regulations by 3<sup>rd</sup> parties. (E.g. the introduction of a driving licence).

BW to circulate details of the Boat Handover Audit to the group.

General discussions took place on improving and raising awareness of canal etiquette which plays an important role of the canal environment and community. It was noted that BW is working with APCO to review and re-circulate the etiquette guide. The group welcomed this move. BW will circulate the document to the group for comment.

Amanda Strang

David Dunning reported that day boats on the canal system are unaware of canal etiquette and The Boating Association are working with local outlets to improve etiquette.

Sally Ash

#### **1.2 Waterway standards & dredging / channel dimensions**

Simon provided an overview of discussions held at the BWA meeting in October. As part of the work on Waterway Standards BW will provide to user groups the working document for comment.

Eugene Baston

Discussion on the identification of pinch-points took place. BW will include this issue within the Waterway Standards development work.

Roger Squires repeated an enquiry concerning the Pocklington Canal and spot dredging.

A response was currently being sought from Yorkshire. External Relations would investigate and respond.

Amanda Strang

David Dunning noted particular problems with lack of depth on the River Trent upstream of Cromwell Lock. External Relations to seek a response from East Midlands Waterways on the particular issue raised. Amanda Strang

Debate took place on BW's pledge to remove pinch-points and restore to original gauge. Users remained concerned about BW commitment, particularly after the work carried out by Richard Booth. BW responded that pinch-points would be cleared where maintenance work took place at these locations.

Simon acknowledged concern about BW's commitment to dredging to original profile. Jim Stirling as Technical Director designate would attend the next meeting to explain BW's intentions. Amanda Strang

Roger thanked BW London for clearing a pinch-point in London which was of previous concern.

BW's 2005/06 dredging programme was published in July 2005 and a copy attached to the notes listing all locations per waterway unit.

### 1.3 Vegetation management

Eugene Baston provided an update on the two outstanding actions from the last meeting; Vegetation management guidance to waterways has been re-issued to the waterway units; stove fuel for Boaters - while it was impractical for BW to leave chopped wood for boater's fuel stores in established locations, it would be left where possible.

Tony Hirst was concerned that General Managers had not been issued with BW's guidance on towpath mowing. It was confirmed this was currently being issued.

The results of the consultation will be publicly circulated over the next couple of weeks.

BW's commitment to ongoing vegetation management was reiterated. Staff would be reminded of vegetation management practices and waterways would be asked to report back during business planning rounds. Simon added that additional money (£6m) has been made available this year and next year for ongoing vegetation work, including off-side vegetation management. Eugene added that BW's new workboat fleet will help in this activity.

Users asked if BW could provide an extra cut (above and beyond the 'Veg Pledge') between the water's edge and hedgerow each year. This would be reported back on. Paul Beckwith (NSU)

Users raised concern over BW's ability to tackle aquatic weeds. BW provided the group with an internal bulletin on how it was dealing with aquatic weeds. This would also be the subject of a planned national campaign highlighting the problems of invasive alien species in general disrupting natural ecology systems. Further information on the campaign will be circulated to the users early in the new year. Liz Woznicki

Roger asked if BW could circulate its operational intentions on removing off-side vegetation to the user groups. Amanda Strang

It was recognised that much improvement had been made during the last 18 months. BW continues to encourage useful feedback from users on vegetation management and dealing with offside growth.

David Dunning welcomed the work that had improved the Lower Trent and bankside visibility.

Users thanked BW for its hard work and commitment to improving vegetation management across the network.

## Local Actions

Vegetation pontoons positioned on the BCN near Soho loop were acknowledged as welcome greenery in this urban environment, but they now required maintenance. External Relations would investigate and report back.

Sally Phipps  
(Ops Manager,  
WM)

David Daines provided an example at Buckby Locks (bridge 13) where trees obstruct the navigation and causes a hazard. BW to investigate with local waterway office.

Matthew  
Routledge  
(Ops Manager,  
SE)

### 1.4 BW Workboats

It was repeated that BW Operation Managers raised the issue at 'team talks' and have briefed staff on the issue.

## 2.0 BOATER FACILITIES

### 2.1 Provision of boatyards & wharves

BW's Position Statement and Operating Instruction on Essential Boating Facilities (April 2004) had been circulated ahead of the meeting.

Beryl McDowall expressed concern on the removal and loss of wharves and boatyards which provide important facilities to boaters. (e.g. emergency repairs).

It was recognised that demand patterns have changed and some wharves / boatyards were now in areas where other land use (e.g. residential) was established. In the case of some wharves, the surrounding road network was now insufficient to support use for future cargo handling. BW reassured the group of its commitment to retaining facilities wherever possible and had arrangements in place for influencing planners.

Katherine  
Wilson  
(Marketing &  
Comms  
Manager, EM)

David Dunning commented specifically on redundant craft (commercial and BW) blocking lock landing structures on the River Trent. External Relations would ask the local waterways unit to investigate and report back.

Users asked if all waterway units have dedicated heritage advisers. It was explained that BW is committed to educating employees on heritage and a wide range of general heritage awareness was needed at waterway units. This was provided by some dedicated heritage advisors, supported by specialists such as archaeologists and conservationists.

Meeting attendees offered to help BW in producing a gap analysis of boatyard provision across the network. This was welcomed, and as a result, BW would produce a brief from which the work could be carried out.

Sally Ash

It was noted that BW was made aware of numerous planning applications as a statutory consultee, but that user groups found hearing of these submissions difficult. As a result, BW would establish a web page which showed all current 3<sup>rd</sup> party planning applications that had been submitted, and would, where possible, notify user group reps by email of when new planning applications were submitted.

Hannah James

Bernard Hales reported that HNBOC disappearing heritage booklet contained information on sites that could be secured for wharves / boatyards. BW to include within the gap analysis.

### 2.2 Variation in waterway service and facilities provisions

It was noted that best practice in design and functionality for facilities such as Service Stations frequently appeared not to be used on new installations. This appeared not to take account of users' comments on what worked well.

Jon Oakes reported that West Midlands business unit was now responsible for establishing best practice in the design of such facilities, based in part on customer comments received by BW.

Amanda  
Strang

The design of facilities would be included in revisions to waterway standards. These would be circulated to user groups for comment.

British Waterways Design Manuals covers guidance on building of sanitary stations and other facilities. BW to circulate to user groups for information.

Amanda  
Strang

### 2.3 Maintenance & rectifying problems

It was noted that users helped by reporting numerous maintenance issues to BW. Meeting attendees were interested to understand how these reports were subsequently actioned.

Jon Oakes referred the group to the 'length inspection' checklist circulated at the meeting and explained its use and purpose. It was expected to be adopted nationally after a trial period of use in Central Shires business unit.

It was acknowledged that wherever possible, small jobs were completed during routine length inspections and attendance at locations for other purposes, e.g. lock keeping.

Attendees stressed to BW the importance of viewing the waterway from a boat rather than the towpath for certain inspections. Jon Oakes reported that the Central Shires Operations Manager made a point of boating the entire length of waterway he was responsible for at least once every year. Jon considered this to be relatively standard amongst all of BW's Operations Managers.

NABO's reporting board web site was noted for its usefulness, but it was questioned as to why BW itself could not host such a site. It was explained that BW supported NABO's work in this regard, and at the time the board was established it was not felt appropriate for BW to introduce a rival facility. Discussions outside of the meeting would now take place to investigate opportunities for BW's development of such a site.

Eugene  
Baston / NABO  
/ Nicky Ross

Roger asked if BW could circulate length inspections prior to local user group meetings. BW agreed to review this, although felt that it would be too much information for local user group meetings.

Service  
Managers

### 3.0 LICENCE FEE CONSULTATION PAPER

A summary paper and the draft consultation report had been issued prior to the meeting. Simon asked that, for the time being, attendees provide their own personal views based on individual experience. It was acknowledged that there would be ample time during the 'White Paper' stage of the consultation for full user group committee consideration to take place, and for further views on the revised proposals to be provided to BW.

Roger remained unhappy with the arrangements and felt unable to provide any views ahead of full consideration by the IWA navigation committee. Simon accepted this opinion and assured Roger that formal IWA views on the document could be made during the 'White Paper' stage.

Sally Ash detailed her work in considering the 480+ responses received during the consultation period. In preparing the draft report she had tried to reflect the major themes that were expressed, both by individuals and by user groups.

Sally explained that BW accepts the pricing framework provided by Oxera, but that some of the assumptions relating to certain categories of boaters had not been sufficiently robust to justify some of the proposals.

BW would provide the web site address for Oxera to the user groups. ([www.oxera.com](http://www.oxera.com))

BW confirmed that, taking the general views of respondents, that they would like in future to work with EA and other navigation authorities towards development of a national licensing system.

The Ombudsman's case that had led to the licence fee structure review was explained by Sally Ash. The consultation had addressed the issues of ensuring an equitable and fair definition of licensing categories. It was noted that, in line with the DVLA practice, BW was proposing that a boat must be licensed by a single individual or legal entity.

**Charity Boats** – it was felt that the current draft proposal that boats run by charities for fundraising purposes – as opposed to trips for specific disadvantaged groups - to be charged the higher rate licence fee was unacceptable. This would have a detrimental effect on the fund raising activities of small canal trusts and societies and appeared to be in contradiction to BW's aims for greater social inclusion. BW would consider this viewpoint and confirm the legal position in relation to competition law.

**Elasticity of demand** – David Pearce asked for elasticity of demand within the boating market to be explored. This was acknowledged by Simon.

**Enforcement** – the need for practical enforcement arising out of any changes to the licence fee structure was stressed by many meeting attendees.

**Definition for Shared ownership and/or timeshare vessels** – it was felt that BW's current draft proposals still gave room for abuse and users commented specifically on the need to identify legal and operational ownership. BW would further consider the way forward on this particular matter.

**Continuous Cruisers** – the group was pleased to note that BW had now dropped this element of the original proposals.

Both David Dunning and Roger Squires stressed their objection to 'usage' of the network as being a determining factor for charging.

BW will consider the views expressed at the meeting and make any necessary changes to the final 'White Paper' stage proposals before circulating to user groups and individuals for at least a 6 week feedback period. The final documents will also be available at [www.britishwaterways.co.uk/accountability/consultations](http://www.britishwaterways.co.uk/accountability/consultations).

Other comments on the licence fee consultation included issues surrounding discounts for historic craft, disconnected waterways and discount for pensioners.

#### **4.0 LICENCE FEE PRICE INCREASE FOR 2006/07**

Sally briefed the meeting about BW's licence fee pricing index and how it is applied to annual increases in licence fees. Additional information is attached.

Sally confirmed that BW normal licences were refundable so there was no undue switching cost in changing to a gold licence at any time of the year. (All Gold licences run for 12 months from January and are not refundable because of statutes underlying EA registration schemes). David Pearce believed that BW's website was not clear on this point.

Waterscape.com

Roger asked if there was any possibility of the Gold Licence running in the same manner to that of BW and not January – December. BW responded that this is EA's legislation which BW has to follow.

## 5.0 REVENUE PROTECTION SCHEME

Simon briefed the group about BW's revised procedures for tackling licence evasion.

A national boat check week would take place in November (7-11) and thereafter on an annual basis. Patrol staff supported by colleagues from local offices would log every boat on the network, and use the information gathered on boat names and index numbers to identify the licence and mooring permit evasion rates. The check will therefore result in clear case loads for patrol staff to tackle via appropriate enforcement action. Results of the National Boat check will be circulated to the user groups.

Amanda  
Strang

A range of other revised ways of working were outlined, including: new patrol notices; dealing with Section 8 craft and liveaboards; licence & mooring renewal refusal process in cases where anti-social behaviour or poor payment records existed; greater emphasis and pressure placed on those who failed to display a valid licence, despite possessing one; better internal reporting systems and more publicity about BW' efforts to remove licence evasion from the waterways.

Meeting attendees welcomed these new efforts on the part of BW.

### ***Actions arising from last meeting:***

Sam Clark (APCO) had commented that marinas no longer receive reports from BW on boats recorded as having a marina mooring, for checking against their lists.

BW responded that Patrol Staff are asked to check marina records, but there is concern that some marinas may harbour unlicensed boats.

## 6.0 MOORINGS

### 6.1 Marina Investment Guide

The draft content of the Marina Investment Guide was explained; in general, the Guide was aimed at attracting investors and existing marina operators to invest in the inland marina market, to alleviate the current shortage of moorings.

The Guide would also contain supportive information for addressing planning and other local authority issues, along with a generic financial model for marina development and a likely growth pattern over a five year period.

Sally Ash explained that a dedicated Marinas Development Team – the 'New Marina Unit' had been established to handle enquiries and advise as marinas were developed and clearly outlined its difference between BWML.

The new team will be launched at the London Boat Show in January 2006.

### **Development of Billinge Green Flash into a marina**

Roger Squires expressed concerns about the impact of a marina development at Billinge Green Flash on the northern Trent & Mersey. It was felt this was unsuitable in an area of environmental beauty.

It was confirmed that BW could object to developments on private land alongside its waterways, but that these objections would not necessarily have to be taken into account in the planning process.

BW is unable to deny building access and any grounds for refusing permission is limited to grounds surrounding engineering.

## **Visitor / temporary moorings**

A discussion document by Stuart Sampson had been circulated prior to the meeting. It made suggestions regarding the range of visitor moorings provided on the network and gave an alternative view of how these may be provided.

A debate took place about visitor mooring regulations and provision. Meeting attendees expressed a strong view that towpath moorings should remain free “ancillary to cruising” and any visitor mooring proposals need to be able to be enforced.

A further offer by user group representatives to carry out a gap analysis of provision of visitor moorings was welcomed in order for BW to get the correct balance. BW would provide a brief for this work to commence.

Sally Ash

## **BW's policy for charging for short-term towpath moorings**

Tony Hirst asked for clarity on BW's approach to charging for short-term moorings, as evidenced at the basin at Llangollen.

It was explained that BW had received numerous positive comments from boaters on the arrangements in place at Llangollen to tackle congestion of this popular 'dead end' site. It was further noted that a portion of the towpath moorings away from the basin remained free of charge for usage.

Simon assured the group that charging was not intended to become wide spread but noted Robin Evans' comments made at the recent BWA meeting that had called on users to accept that as congestion became more of an issue, there was an increasing need to find effective solutions.

## **7.0 Boaters Guide Update**

Eugene explained the rationale behind the Boaters' Guides for those who had not attended the recent Corridor Issues meeting. It was noted that, because of the Guides' web presence, they could be updated immediately following comments received on the accuracy of information currently shown.

User Group representatives were urged to promote the availability of the Guides to their members. It was explained that there were two types of feedback invited – accuracy of current information shown and suggestions for future development of the Guides. Feedback could be submitted directly online by emailing [boatersguide@britishwaterways.co.uk](mailto:boatersguide@britishwaterways.co.uk).

Accuracy matters would be verified with the local waterway unit before either being accepted or rejected. Development suggestions would be considered on a longer term basis, and implemented according to available resources.

All Users

As a result of discussions, it was agreed that BW would investigate plotting grid references on key structures to aid emergency services access.

Waterscape.com

The Guides were warmly praised by many meeting attendees as an excellent means of developing information about services and facilities on the network.

BW also confirmed that dimensions are included in the Boaters' Guide and any omissions should be emailed to [feedback@waterscape.com](mailto:feedback@waterscape.com)

## **8.0 Feedback on Horse Boating Document**

Sue Day made a brief presentation concerning the content of the document and its current status. She referred to the decline in horse boating and her hopes for a brighter future for this part of the waterways traditions. She expressed particular concern about the proliferation of barriers to prevent motor cycles from accessing the towpath, and how this

presented obstacles for horses on the towpath.

Meeting attendees were asked to provide comments directly to Sue on the content of the document. It was further noted that BW had arranged to meet with Sue Day and other representatives from the Horse Boating Society to discuss the finer elements of the document.

## 11. **Visitor Safety**

### **AINA signs update**

The AINA sign guidance has now been completed, the final stage was to ensure the design of the signs meets current design requirements.

British Waterways has agreed to adopt the content of the standard and design criteria for the signs.

Further information will be circulated by AINA via the waterways press when the document is released.

### **Dry docks guidance terms & conditions**

The application form and associated terms & conditions for use of BW dry docks have been revised & simplified.

The new document will be released to Business Units in early 2006 to allow them to be trailed by dry dock hirers prior to the next maintenance season.

If you would like further information about hiring a BW dry dock contact you local waterway office or Customer Service Centre either in writing (Willow Grange, Church Road, Watford, Herts, WD17 4QA), by telephone (01923 201120) or email (enquiries.hq@britishwaterways.co.uk)

### **Anti-social behaviour**

Peter Wade provided an update on Visitor Incident Report Forms and the data collected during the first year of operation. In the period 1 October 2004 to 5 April 2005 BW had received 57 completed forms and from 6 April to 30 September the number had risen to 315 in total.

Peter Wade explained that the Visitor Incident Report Form does not replace reporting issues to police but acts as a tool to gain police support and track trends.

BW will provide Visitor Incident Report Forms to Angling Representative to include in newsletters and other publications. It was felt that anglers could actively help report anti-social behaviour because of their presence on the waterways. BW invited all user groups to help distribute and promote the forms and reminded everyone that the forms could also be completed on line at:

[http://www.britishwaterways.co.uk/images/visitor\\_incident\\_report\\_form\\_6-10-04\\_tcm6-97491.pdf](http://www.britishwaterways.co.uk/images/visitor_incident_report_form_6-10-04_tcm6-97491.pdf)

Hannah James

### **Lifejackets**

Concern has been raised about the revised BW procedure for wearing life jackets at lock edges.

Whilst locks are not considered "high risk" sites we are required by law to do everything reasonably practicable to reduce the risk of drowning of our employees. Consequently the updated BW procedure "Working on or next to water" clarifies areas where it is mandatory for employees to wear life jackets.

The wearing of a life jacket at lock edges has been made mandatory for our lock keepers and other employees/contractors (unless there are suitable measures to prevent falls into the water) because we would expect them to be in a position to respond in an urgent/emergency situation which may put them at increased risk of entering the water.

This decision has no impact on private boaters but good practice suggests the wearing of life jackets whilst afloat.

### **Weils Disease**

Tony Hirst outlined concerns that arose from a recent local user group meeting where advice had been given on guarding against contracting Weil's disease. He asked how much risk there actually was since he had felt the presentation received by attendees had been overblown.

Peter Wade explained that there is no evidence that the risk of contracting the disease is any higher now than it was previously. However BW was taking a responsible approach to reminding visitors of the risks, based on a recent high profile death of a boater from the disease.

## **12. ANY OTHER BUSINEES**

Audrey questioned when BW would hold another National User Group meeting. BW confirmed that the BWAF has now replaced the old National User Group meetings.

Simon thanked users for their constructive comments during meeting which proved to have covered quite a few important topics.

### **DATE OF NEXT MEETINGS**

8 March 2006, BW Offices Hatton  
4 October 2006, BW Offices Hatton