



**Notes of Corridor Issues Meeting
Held at BW Offices, Hatton
Thursday 10 March 2005**

PRESENT:

User Groups

David Pearce	Association of Waterways Cruising Clubs
Adrian Stott	Barge Association, The
David Dunning	Boating Association, The
Henry Whittaker	British Horse Society
Tony Gallimore	Canal Boat Builders' Association
Richard Booth	Historic Narrow Boat Owners' Club
Sue Day	Horse Boating Association
Tony Hirst	Inland Waterways Amenity Advisory Council (Observer)
Roger Squires	Inland Waterways Association
Tony Haynes	National Association of Boat Owners
Stuart Sampson	National Association of Boat Owners
David Kent	National Federation of Anglers
Rebecca Dixon	Ramblers' Association
Ivor Caplan	Residential Boat Owners' Association
John Crisp	Royal Yachting Association
Cedric Rainer	Towpath Action Group
Hazel Rainer	Towpath Action Group

British Waterways:

Simon Salem	Marketing & Customer Services Director'
Eugene Baston	Customer Relations Manager
Peter Wade	Safety Advisor
Amanda Strang	Customer Relations Administrator

Apologies:

Alan Meegan	Amateur Rowing Association
Karen Capper	Anglers Conservation Association
Ann Davies	Association of Pleasure Craft Operators
Dr M A Perkin	Boat Museum
Kevin East	British Canoe Union
Howard Pridding	British Marine Federation
Barry Smith	Canal Boat Builders' Association
Charlotte Edward	Central Council for Physical Recreation
Andrew Burge	Commercial Boat Operators' Association
Dr Charles Trotman	Country Land & Business Owners' Association
David Harmon	Cyclists' Touring Club
John Hustwick	Electric Boat Association
Dr Stewart Clarke	English Nature
Audrey Smith	Inland Waterways Amenity Advisory Council (Observer)
Neil Edwards	Inland Waterways Association
Colin Palmer	International Mountain Bike Association
Vince Christie	Local Government Association
Terry Fell	National Federation of Anglers
Mike Thomas	Sustrans
Scott Deverall	Yacht Harbour Association, The

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 began the meeting by welcoming the group and explained his new title of 'Marketing & Customer Services Director' which reflects Robin Evans vision and drive of enhancing Customer Service.

1. REPORT ON ISSUES SINCE LAST MEETING

1.1 Vegetation Management Update

It was confirmed that after the last meeting, Paul Beckwith had circulated a note to Waterway Units about the treatment of trees to curb re-growth.

'Veg Pledge'

An update on progress was made. This is summarised below.

Waterway Unit	28.02.05 % Complete	Expected by 31.03.05	Waterway Unit	28.02.05 % Complete	Expected by 31.03.05
Scotland			Wales & Border Counties	100%	Remainder 10% to be completed by 30 April 2005
Caledonian Canal		Starting on 7 March 2005 and 100% due to be complete by 31 March 2005	West Midlands	100%	
Crinan Canal	100%		Central Shires	90%	to be complete by 31 March.
Lowland Canals	90%	The remainder 10% to be complete by 31	South East	98%	
London	80%	The remainder 20% to be complete by 31 March	South West		
North West	90%	completed by 30 April 2005	Kennet & Avon West	100%	
East Midlands	95%	The remainder 5% to be complete by 31 March. (depending on weather)	Kennet & Avon East	75%	The remainder 25% to be complete by 31 March.
Yorkshire		30% will be completed by 31 March 2005	Bridgwater & Taunton	75%	The remainder 25% to be complete by 31 March, subject to
Wales & Border Counties	100%	Remainder 10% to be completed by 30 April 2005	Gloucester & Sharpness	N/A	N/A

Simon Salem explained that good progress had been made in most areas. It was noted that there were a few exceptions where the 'Pledge' had not been met. It was further noted that areas subject to SSSI status or other restrictions were exempt from the 'Pledge'.

Simon explained to the group that waterways have been allocated more money in year 2005/06 for managing offside tree growth, in addition to the ongoing programme of vegetation management.

User groups provided generally positive feedback on actions taken to date. Specific areas where it was felt improvements were needed were highlighted and are shown below under 'Local Actions'.

BW invited Users to send examples to Amanda Strang of where they felt the Veg Pledge had not been met after the 31 March deadline.

All Users /
Amanda
Strang

National Actions

David Dunning queried access arrangements to river bank navigations in the East Midlands. He believed that some landowners refused BW the necessary permission to access private land so to manage vegetation. East Midlands Waterway Unit would be asked to confirm such difficulties and national legal advice would be sought as appropriate.

Nigel Sheppard (SM) / Nigel Johnson

Further concern was expressed at BW's ability to keep navigational signs free from vegetation where they were placed on 3rd party land. An assessment of these difficulties would be undertaken.

Peter Wade

Local Actions

Adrian Stott questioned vegetation management on the Rivers Lee & Stort. The Operations Manager would provide a summary of practices undertaken on these navigations.

Amanda Dunk (Marketing Manager)

Sue Day raised concern about Vegetation Management on the Peak Forest Canal. BW to check plans for cutting on Lower and Upper Peak Forest Canal and inform Sue of them.

Debbie Lumb (SM)

It was suggested that a lack of chainsaw licenses in the West Midlands may have prevented work being carried out for the Veg Pledge. The Operations Manager for West Midlands would provide a report back on chainsaw licences.

Sam Morris (SM)

It was reported a tree 200 yards west of Grove Lane maintenance yard on the Huddersfield Narrow Canal needed cutting back. The Operations Manager for North West Waterways to arrange any necessary work s and report back.

Debbie Lumb (SM)

Towpath 'Cutting' Guidelines

A total of 23 responses had been received from interested parties and individuals. Attendees were thanked for their various contributions.

Eugene explained that the 'White Paper' for towpath cutting would be published on 15 April. A feedback period of six weeks for any new and/or significant objections to be raised on the final proposals would be given. BW would then confirm the guidance governing cutting regimes on the network.

1.2 British Waterways Advisory Forum (BWAf)

Eugene updated the group on work towards establishing the BWAf as part of BW's commitment to improve *Openness & Accountability*. Four of the eight people involved in drafting the constitution were present at this meeting. A general consensus had been reached on a draft constitution. All User Groups will receive the draft constitution and MoU shortly.

David Pearce endorsed the progress made and encouraged all groups to positively contribute to the formation of the BWAf. He was convinced that the BWAf will improve dialogue between the Users, Senior Managers of BW and the Board.

User Groups who were invited to the last BW Chairman's meeting would automatically be invited to join the BWAf. Those User Groups that are not currently on the National User Group list will be invited to join BWAf according to the membership criteria, agreed for BWAf.

The first full meeting of the BWAf will be on 11 May 2005 at a Central London venue and will be Chaired by Professor Jeffrey Jowell QC. Part of the meeting's business will be to elect a chair and vice-chair to take over from Professor Jowell once the meeting is concluded.

1.3 Towpath Tidy 2005

Noted: Dates 18-25 March. It was hoped that this year's activities would provide a baseline opportunities for more numerous future events.

1.4 Customer Insight Programme (CIP)

Simon explained to the group that the previous set of Waterway Standards were being revised taking advantage of a new Customer Insight Programme. A first draft of the CIP's conclusions is expected by July 2005. A pilot project will then take place in South East Waterways Unit with user feedback invited.

1.5 British Waterways Chairman

No appointment had yet been made: It was hoped this would be complete before any cessation of Parliament caused by a General Election.

2.0 Matters arising and not covered above

2.1 Installation (design, placement and obstruction)

There was an overall discussion of how insensitive installation could damage waterway heritage and compromise safety. Particular discussion centred on signage and the inappropriateness of some installation.

Tony Hirst welcomed a joint initiative developed by BW's heritage manager to involve volunteers in the recording of heritage assets and overall preservation of heritage aspects of the network. The meeting requested that this initiative also monitor the installation of signs and railings and report instances where these were felt to be inappropriate to heritage values.

Tony Hirst /
Nigel Crowe

National Actions

Peter Wade would send the AINA consultation on navigation safety signs to all user groups.

Peter Wade

Tony Hirst understood that Adrian Sains was issuing a statement to all his staff instructing that no signage can be erected without prior approval. He suggested this be adopted as best practice.

BW

BW's guidance on railing installation would be re-issued to Service and Operations Teams.

Amanda
Strang

Local Actions

Sue Day believed that some notice boards were causing obstruction to towing lines, particularly in the North West. Specific examples would be addressed by the Service Team.

Debbie Lumb
(SM)

Users suggested that BW should consult on all significant installations of waterway furniture prior to implementation. The matter would be raised with the Service Manager team and reported back on.

Simon Salem

Eugene asked Users to send examples of insensitive or poorly placed signage to Amanda Strang.

All Users

2.2 Visitor Incident Reporting

Thirty report forms involving vandalism and near misses had been received since the scheme was launched. The report form is being enclosed in the next *Waterfront* Magazine, circulated to 25,000 licence holders; BW had also provided sufficient copies for each NABO member.

It was suggested that it would be helpful to distribute the Visitor Incident Reporting form at local user group meetings to improve awareness amongst all users. BW Service Teams

Also see 3.0 (Towpath Awareness / Location Identification)

2.3 Local Consultation

User groups positively noted the improvements made to the Local User Group consultation process as a result of *Openness & Accountability*.

National Actions

BW to advise on BWML procedure for local consultation. BWML / Eugene Baston

There was concern that local waterway units were not inviting the full range of attendees to meetings. National groups were invited to inform Amanda Strang of local contacts; these would be passed to relevant waterway units. All Users

Eugene would publish a calendar showing all user group meetings taking place in 2005 and the relationship that exists between them. Eugene Baston

Local Actions

It was noted that some waterway units held strategic or regional consultation meetings in addition to the agreed local and national meetings.

Where local users felt additional consultation / update meetings were necessary, e.g. meetings for business partners or larger pan-waterway unit meetings, they should approach the relevant General Manager. All Users

2.4 BW Support Horse Boating

Simon presented to the group the Horse Boating Operating Instruction that had been agreed internally. Sue Day expressed her gratitude to BW in taking an active role in supporting Horse Boating.

Progress would now be made in line with the Operating Instruction.

A local (North West) matter relating to horse boating and the agreement of the local unit to meet with an operator was raised by Sue Day. This to be progressed via Debbie Lumb. Sue Day/Debbie Lumb (SM)

2.5 Angling Strategy

Individual meetings with angling groups had been held; a joint meeting was planned for April. It was hoped that this would lead to consensus on the Standard Angling Agreement document as the basis for partnership initiatives with angling bodies to encourage future participation in angling.

Roger Squires commended the use of bailiff arrangements for angling matches, and asked that future advice to angling clubs include the provision of bailiffs. NFA/NAFAC

David Dunning asked to see a copy of the draft Angling Strategy when prepared. Eugene Baston

2.6 Notification of closures of towpaths and delays in re-opening access routes

Noted: Service Teams had been alerted to the need for adequate information to be issued to affected parties and displayed at appropriate locations where towpath closures were necessary.

2.7 Angling / Cyclist Identification

Simon reported that this issue is not a priority to BW and it will not be progressed any further.

It was noted that cycling groups had generally failed to attend these and other meetings, and that their absence made progress on issues involving cycling difficult. Direct approaches to the groups would be made; a meeting between BW and the Minister for Cycling (Charlotte Atkins MP) had been requested. Simon Salem

3.0 Towpath Awareness / Location Identification

It was agreed that this topic related to anti-social behaviour and that both BW and user groups were keen to develop partnership initiatives to tackle such issues. Tony Haynes reported a successful meeting with BW where it had been agreed that NABO's *Cut Crime* campaign and BW's Visitor Incident Reporting System would complement each other. Data from each scheme was being collated to present a fuller picture of the problems occasionally found on the canal network.

It was noted that BW would hold its own internal meeting during April where current initiatives and opportunities would be reviewed. Notes of this meeting would be made available, and a further report on progress would be made at the next Corridor Issues meeting. Peter Wade

David Dunning noted that re-marking of kilometres posts on the River Trent was currently underway, and sought an assurance that local emergency services and other parties would be informed of the new numbering system. Peter Wade would work with East Midlands waterway to ensure necessary communication of these changes to third parties. Peter Wade/
Nigel Sheppard (SM)

4.0 Communication & Education of Issues Arising from Meetings

Sue Day asked what arrangements were in place for the adequate communication of issues arising from national User Group meetings. It was confirmed that notes of meetings were circulated promptly to relevant individuals and teams within BW; they were also used as agenda items in individual BW meetings.

Simon's summing up of discussions at the end of each agenda item was welcomed. This would form the basis of a short summary document issued immediately after the meeting confirming main discussion points. This would not replace the main notes of the meeting. Amanda Strang

It was further noted that a Service Manager would be invited to attend future Boating & Corridor Issues meetings to increase the awareness of issues discussed at these meetings amongst other Service Teams. BW / individual Service Managers

Changes to the Marketing & Communications department would also improve the delivery of services in line with waterway visitors' expectations. Sally Ash had taken up the role of Head of Boating Development, allowing her to focus solely on facilitating the delivery of a quality boating experience. The team had been further strengthened with the appointment of Jonathan Bryant as Head of Customer Services. Jonathan's role would be to develop standards of customer service in line with BW's vision.

5.0 Towpath Surfaces

It was accepted that through third party works a significant proportion of the towpath network had been improved over recent years. This had encouraged greater use of the canal system. Rebecca Dixon welcomed BW's involvement (through Roger Butler) in a Countryside Agency-led Steering Group considering 'surface standards'.

General concerns were expressed about the types of material used to dress towpaths where third party upgrade works had been completed. Materials such as crushed stone or brick caused problems for other users such as paintwork chipping, soiling of interior boat furnishings, etc. It was further noted that in some instances towpaths had been upgraded using materials that encouraged cyclists to travel too fast alongside waterways.

BW would provide details on the factors governing towpath upgrades. This would include the role BW has in specifying materials used when a third party commits to works and what provision was made to 'seal' such surfaces. It was further noted that a greater involvement by cycling groups in such meetings would aid understanding of all issues associated with towpath upgrades (see point 2.7).

Roger
Butler/Eugene
Baston

Adrian Stott raised concerns about the installation of a towpath surface in Hertford & Ware. This had caused numerous difficulties once completed and had not been as successful as might have been expected. He asked that his concerns be addressed by the local team.

Amanda Dunk
(Marketing
Manager)

User needs and expectations were recognised as being key to the successful delivery of BW's vision. Issues involving towpath surfaces would feature in the revised Waterway Standards and also formed an important element of the Customer Insight Programme getting underway.

6.0 Traditional Canalside environment 'v' new housing development

A general discussion considered the competing pressures on BW to maintain and protect adequate facilities to support boating while ensuring that appropriate developments were undertaken to support BW's need for a largely self sufficient future. It was recognised by all that each instance was different and had to be carefully considered on its merits against the availability of other boating services and/or the impact on local communities.

Because of the broad strategic nature of this subject it was felt suitable for referral for consideration by the BWAf.

Eugene
Baston

David Dunning outlined *On Trent*, an initiative involving local authorities, the Environment Agency and other interested parties concerned with the development of land and water based activities around the River Trent. David expressed concern that BW appeared to be excluded from the initiative. East Midlands waterway to provide an update to David about any role it has within the initiative.

Nigel
Sheppard (SM)

7.0 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

7.1 BW Staff Involvement in Waterways Trusts & Societies

Sue Day suggested that BW encourage staff involvement and/or membership in waterways trusts and societies. It was noted that many staff already engage in waterway interests, either through membership or contributory activities, and this was fully endorsed by BW's management.

7.2 www.waterscape.com Links

David Dunning asked if www.waterscape.com could add links to user group websites. The editorial board of Waterscape.com would be asked to look at this.

Richard
Fairhurst/
Waterscape.com

The availability of such links through www.britishwaterways.co.uk/accountability would also be considered.

Eugene
Baston

Angling Championships

David Kent informed the group of when the National Angling Championships were taking place:

- 16 July, Grand Union Canal, Milton Keynes
- 23 July, Ladies Championship in Worksop, Chesterfield
- 24 September, Individual National Championships, River Soar, Leicestershire

User groups were asked to share this information with their members so that necessary arrangements could be made to avoid these areas on match days.

All User
Groups

The details would also be provided to Waterscape.com for publication.

Waterscape.
com

SUMMARY

Simon closed the meeting and thanked everyone for attending.

Date of next meeting Thursday 6 October 2005

All