

ROBIN EVANS CUSTOMER MEETING

Nottingham Sailing Club, Nottingham, 9 July 08

- Comment on communication of timing of this meeting. Nancy Johnson unable to make this as she felt it was unclear. Some felt that timing of meeting was fine and general support for principle of meeting was good.
- Q: What are uses of Canals – are they commercial, leisure, recreation? *Huge variety of uses – bridleway, cyclists, walkers, freight – all those things. New marketing campaign captures this. Versatility and adaptability make them fantastic.*
- Q: Marketing campaign – how much did it cost? Timing – wasn't aimed at boaters. *Campaign was aimed at wider audience and therefore the promotion was trying to capture more of a wider audience. Need to move away from thinking marketing should not just be about boaters – links with vision of doubling visitor numbers. A lot of boaters were "miffed" that material was not aimed at them. General support of waterways needed across the country to assist us with funding, political influence and demonstrating wider value of waterways. Need to widen appeal of waterways.*
- Q: No feet on the towpath – no/little security – boaters will only go out in convoy. *800 direct labour has been consistent for many years. Greater regeneration of towpaths brings greater number of people – more secure.*
- Q: River Police – no presence now. No visitor moorings – great focus on long term moorings. Real problem now for boaters to stop. Anglers – feel that difficult to find locations. Landowners and funders' support difficult. *Beeston – long term moorings – both sides of lock. Policy reduction of on-line mooring strategy. Can't implement quickly. Can moor anywhere on canals. Might be a problem with honeypot sites.*
- Q: Moorings. Charging for visitor moorings – will this be extended from Llangothlen to the rest of the country? *Where it is sensible we will do that in other places – huge demand at honeypot sites. One of the ways in which we can control we will charge – this will assist us to manage the situation.*
- Q: Grantham Canal – support required. Condoning volunteer workers – needs to happen. *Volunteering is one area that BW could do better. Health and safety push may have affected our attitude to volunteers. Minor accidents with our staff – slips, trips and falls. All subject to some rules and regulations. Volunteering Conference – WRG commented that communication needed to change. Will be no relaxation in the standard that needs to be done. Way forward is certification for volunteer bodies. Government to break down the barriers. Ed Moss – full time Volunteer Manager.*
- Q: Support organisation (BW) supervision and support at weekends. Still not around at weekends when our users are around. We have to make those facilities available. *Unions very concerned about volunteering – all additional work. BW has safety rules which cannot change for volunteers.*
- Q: Safety. Skipper, Nottingham Crusader. Lock keeper changes. Difficult experiences. *30m solid steel bar – experienced. Training. GMs judgement on safety. No part of the canal is unsafe. Stoke Lock is unsafe – shut down. GM to investigate ASAP.*

- Q: There are a lot of boaters – service on one person. People don't ring back – doesn't seem to be as efficient as it should be. Office customer service provision (Pam Pickett). *Mystery shoppers, market research, independent research agency, first reports coming through in the next few months.*
- Q: Erewash. Nothing but cooperation from local BW office – thanks given (Howard Smith).
- Q: Signage. New type of signage. Cill marking going over the top. Dramatic increase in boats getting hung up on cills. *A lot more happening than we thought – well researched, well thought out reaction to problems. A number of incidents have involved experienced boaters. Too many? People get accustomed to signs and fail to take precautionary action themselves.*
- Trent & Mersey – 6.43km sign
- Self supervised status of Grantham Canal Society – need to progress.
- Q: Current position on un-restored remainder waterways – what is current position? What part does restoration of additional waterways play in achieving vision? *Droitwich, Bow Back Rivers, Manchester, Bolton and Bury. 200 miles canal...5 years...2003.... Restoration. Funding regime has changed. We like restoration and we believe in more canals. We have nothing against new canals. Experience shows that restoration using money was available. Sustainable – needs to be proper restoration not just work to the money available. Created liability in the past. Can't allocate money from existing network to fund more. Policy is that we don't put money into restoration.*
- Q: Woolsthorpe Top Lock. Cotgrave – 5000 houses – eco town. Route of new Grantham Canal. *Community Infrastructure Levy. At the moment all for new schools, infrastructure etc. BW lobbying. Existing infrastructure should benefit from new levy. Battling to turn this around to its' own advantage.*
- Q: BW will be consulted on developments adjacent to waterways. Planning Committees/Section 106 status. *Alignment of view – coordination of responses needed for BW and volunteer groups.*
- Q: Keadby Canal - £30k offered to speed things up with checking. *Laurence Morgan. Telephones. Dredging, litter, restricted access, contaminated. Action – CK*
- Q: Canal lines are protected? *BW will not sell canals for building.*
- Q: 2025 Grantham Canal priorities – 2007 Business Plan. Local developments – because Grantham Canal has not reacted strongly to opportunities at this present time. Block progress. All opportunities to be taken. *Three Year Plan. Fact that it may not be in the local Business Plan does not mean no commitment to further restoration.*
- Q: Mooring consultation. Has anyone been restrained from applying for a new mooring? *Not knowingly. DSS – who's mooring? Are they allowed to apply? We would not know anything about that. Could put an inflated price in and local authorities would pay it. DSS only pay for residential boats.*
- Q: Dredging. *Complicated this year by economic conditions, dredging an area where we can mobilise quite quickly.*
- Q: Signs and Safety. Bridges up through Nottingham. Which arch to use? Signs are down – why? Near misses. No Entry signs needed. *Forum for communications – River Trent User Meeting. Twice a year. No engagement outside of this. Letter writing. Action – GM.*

- Q: Mooring. Soar flood mooring Zouch. Posts for people in moor. Horizontal beam. *Lot of boaters don't need to get off.*
- Q: Young people. *Positive, proactive groups. NHS patient involvement. WOW campaign – focussed at junior school level.*
- Q: Children. Education. Health and Safety. Risk assessments putting off school visits. Form intimidating. How we talk to volunteers. "Save the waterways". *Centred membership on casual users and influence other people. Pitch. Posters/forms.*

Comment that meeting should be longer

- Robin requested opinions of how we should communicate – set out current structure but invited opinions on this. Forum – communities/users/residential – four meetings a year? Boaters dominating currently.
- Commercial use – freight traffic. Regional development agency. Strong positive view on freight.
- Tony Wilkinson thanked RE and SS for their time.