



**ROBIN EVANS CUSTOMER MEETING
Chasewater, Staffordshire, 24 July 2008**

Funding	In response to challenge, Robin explained money spent on tagging fish on River Tees was undertaken to comply with an injunction served on British Waterways
Mooring Tendering	<p>There was a general discussion over the value of the tendering process, with some concern expressed that utilisation of sites was undermined by not having the waiting lists.</p> <p>SS advised the cost of the tender trial across the country was approximately £40k but that it was a more reliable and open way to establish a market rate for a mooring. The processes associated with the trial also helped identified a number of empty moorings.</p>
Customer Service Standards	<p>A number of minimum safety standard measures were being seen as unnecessary and a waste of time and money, when resources were already limited. (Temporary bridge signage; cill markings; 3 bollards on locks. RE confirmed all measures were being introduced on the basis of an assessment of the risk, with an increasing number of incidents supporting the decisions now being taken.</p> <p>It was acknowledged there could have been more advance consultation, but the prevailing assessments supported the new standards.</p>
Towpath conditions	<p>A concern was raised by an angling club about the condition of a section of towpath popular with club members. Outside of the meeting, review of the location and photographs provided identified the issue was quite localised.</p> <p>RE acknowledged there were many sections that would benefit from upgrade across the network and that this can only be undertaken on the basis of local prioritisation. The introduction of new standards allows conditions to be measurable and reported on with much more openness and accountability.</p>
Vegetation management	Work on overhanging trees and general vegetation management was noted as having improved in recent years.
BW Funding	<p>RE explained all avenues were to be investigated to bridge the funding deficit. Staff numbers have been reduced 250 in recent years and expenditure is less. The property side has made greater contribution but this is likely to slow in the next few years.</p> <p>One area to encourage contribution is from Local Authorities in providing more support for what should be recognised as a great community asset. It is clear the HM Treasury needs to understand the 'monetised' value of the benefits provided by British Waterways assets.</p>
Involvement of local communities	<p>A parish councillor highlighted the value of involving the widest volunteer groups when considering volunteers and community engagement – beyond the core boater user groups.</p> <p>RE advised a concerted effort was being considered to engage organised groups. Reference was made to the great initiative under Caroline Killeavy and Ed Moss to develop more consistent and valuable volunteer interaction.</p>

National Waterways Festival	<p>Concern that information being distributed ahead of the National Festival was incorrect and out of date. (e.g. no water point at Lock 15, Wolverhampton; no shower at Sneyd Wharf; no general access to facilities at Tipton)</p> <p>Any errors were unfortunate and apologised for.</p>
Wayleaves and income	<p>Concern was raised about wayleaves agreement that might have been allowed to lapse regarding the M5 development.</p> <p>Subsequent investigation can confirm, despite the time involved, that there is still a legal case in process to secure much valued income regarding this case.</p> <p>An example of British Waterway's assertiveness in this area was given in the case of Thames Water extraction from the River Lee. Payments had stopped so BW served notice under statutory powers.</p>
BW views on restoration	<p>RE acknowledged the great achievement, particularly of canal societies to have secured circa 200 more miles of canal by the turn of the millennium.</p> <p>Under current financial circumstances the British Waterways priority for existing funds must be maintaining the status quo, rather than creating new liabilities.</p> <p>British Waterways will consider any new opportunities (e.g. Helix project in Falkirk), but only when any risk is shared. Withdrawal from the Cotswold project was due to unacceptable risk being placed on BW.</p>
Canal utilisation and standards	<p>There was a general debate generated by the forum about the choice of maintaining all existing canals to a certain standard, or closing less well used sections to allow standards to be raised for more 'popular' areas.</p> <p>RE stated his preference not to consider closures of any sort, as this would be a retrospective move – one very hard to reverse, should circumstances ever allow. Better to lobby partners and potential funders to contribute commensurate with the benefit they gain from a quality network.</p>
Olympics	<p>Interest expressed in boats travelling to London for the Olympics in 2012</p> <p>It was noted certain sections of waterway will be sealed off during the Olympics for security reasons. However, British Waterways was currently investigating the opportunities of creating temporary facilities in the Docklands area and publicity around this would be issued as soon as more information was available.</p>
Comment Cards	<p>RE clarified that comment cards are logged, assigned to appropriate teams through notifications and investigated accordingly with work being prioritised partly through this process.</p> <p>It was also confirmed that every canal length was inspected monthly.</p>
Marina capacity and the contribution to congestion	<p>RE confirmed the first question on receipt of an 'expression of interest' is about sufficient water supply to the area. It was clarified that partly due to the results from boater research that congestion was not a key factor.</p> <p>The data is being updated, but indications are that not more than 10% of marina boats tend to be out at any one time.</p>
Water levels on the BCN	<p>There was not thought to be any issue with water supply, despite concerns that levels were down.</p> <p>The monitoring of such matters was more sophisticated than ever with the use of the electronic SCADA system.</p>