



ANNUAL MEETING 2011
Robin Evans, Chief Executive, British Waterways

I want to add to Tony's welcome and thank you all for making the effort to be here today. I also want to thank you for everything you have done over the past year to help us. I see only a fraction of the contribution you and your fellow boaters, anglers, enthusiasts make. But I do see its impact and I do know it makes a huge difference.

And that is what I want to talk about today. How we can build on what we have achieved so far and what we need to do together to achieve our common goals.

It is worth remembering that we launched our 2020 vision because we knew something had to change. We gave ourselves 10 years to achieve it- but somewhat amazingly - only two and a bit years later - we are on the verge of a seismic change in the way our waterways are managed.

We have achieved that together - because we share a common vision and we share a passion and enthusiasm for our waterways that transcends our differences. It is also because we have benefitted from quite extraordinary time commitments from people like Clive Henderson, Nigel Stevens and many others on the British Waterways Advisory Forum.

We have benefitted from the exceptional knowledge and expertise of Nigel Johnson, our Legal Director, and Jim Stirling, our Technical Director, as well as the other members of my team. And we have benefitted from the, support and enthusiasm of Robin Mortimer, John Kittmer, Penny Bramwell and their colleagues in Defra and other government departments. We have had tremendous backing from the Secretary of State, Caroline Spelman, the Waterways Minister from whom we heard earlier and my Board led so passionately by Tony. And of course from our 5 new Trustees who have brought a fresh and exciting new dimension to the waterways.

We have managed to successfully navigate through the tricky waters of planning a separation from Scotland - again this was only possible because of the good work and sense of everyone involved, - particularly the three Board members who formed the Disaggregation Oversight Committee.

Lastly and by no means least we have had a common understanding and common vision with The Waterways Trust from the very beginning. Thanks to Francis Done and Lawrence Newman in particular for their wise council. The Canal & River Trust will be much enriched by having The Waterways Trust's people and museums within it

The power of this combined effort and strength of conviction is evident in the progress we have made over the past year.

I am in a privileged position - I can see different people in different places making a difference through their considered views - their encouragement - and their support.

Let me give you some examples:

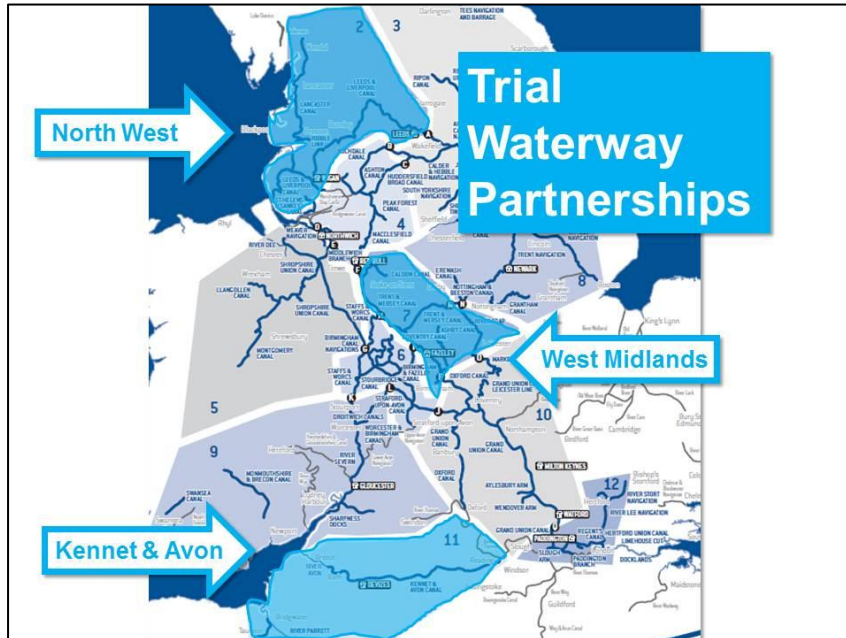
Proposed Council Representation			
Constituency	Initial Number of Council Members		
	Elected	Nominated	Total
1. Private Boating	4	1	5
2. Boating Business	2		2
3. Volunteers		(1)*	1
4. Other Supporters – walkers, anglers, cyclists, neighbours, donors, etc		(4)*	4
5. Employees	1		1
6. Historic Environment		2	2
7. Natural Environment		2	2
8. Local Government		2	2
9. Local Partnerships Chairs (including Museums and all Wales Partnerships)			13 <i>ex-officio</i>
10. Co-options		3	3
INITIAL TOTAL			35

This shows who will make up the first 35 members of Council.

The Trustees have been influenced by outside views on who should be represented and how they should be appointed. The consultation responses and many other comments encouraged us to be bolder and faster in respect of direct elections.

So now all boat licence holders will be able to elect their personal representative onto the Trust's Council to influence future policy and strategy. So too will boating businesses and gradually so will all our other users and supporters as we develop the data bases that will allow direct elections. And there is a commitment to achieve 50% elected members in due

course. We have already announced the timetable for these elections and the appointment of other members and plan the first full council meeting to be in March 2012. What a great event and step into the future that will be!



The experience we have gained from the 3 trial partnerships has been immense. And feedback from stakeholders has changed what we call them, how many members they have and where the people are drawn from.

We are very grateful to the 3 chairs of the trial partnerships - Mike Rodd, Peter Mathews and Steven Broomhead. They were brave to take on the role, innovative and pioneering in recruiting their members and supportive and collaborative as we worked out how best to operate in this brave new world. We have learnt from them and I think they will say they have learnt from us too.

Again we have announced the timetable for the appointment of all the new Partnership chairs and they and their members should all be in place by the end of March 2012. Particular thanks are due to Roger Hanbury whose experience and knowledge have been invaluable in setting up the partnerships and getting them underway.



Volunteering has been a massive catalyst for change within BW. Volunteering on the waterways is not a new phenomenon – you’ve been doing it for years, but now we’re working so much more closely and getting so much more out of it. We are spreading the net much wider and that has to be a good thing but we still benefit from quite extraordinary contributions every day of the year from our traditional canal societies and supporters. Please don’t think your efforts and your contribution has been forgotten. We hope and plan for your contribution to continue and grow as we get better and better at welcoming and managing all those who are prepared to give us their time. Tony mentioned just a few of the great people and the great contributions they are already making.

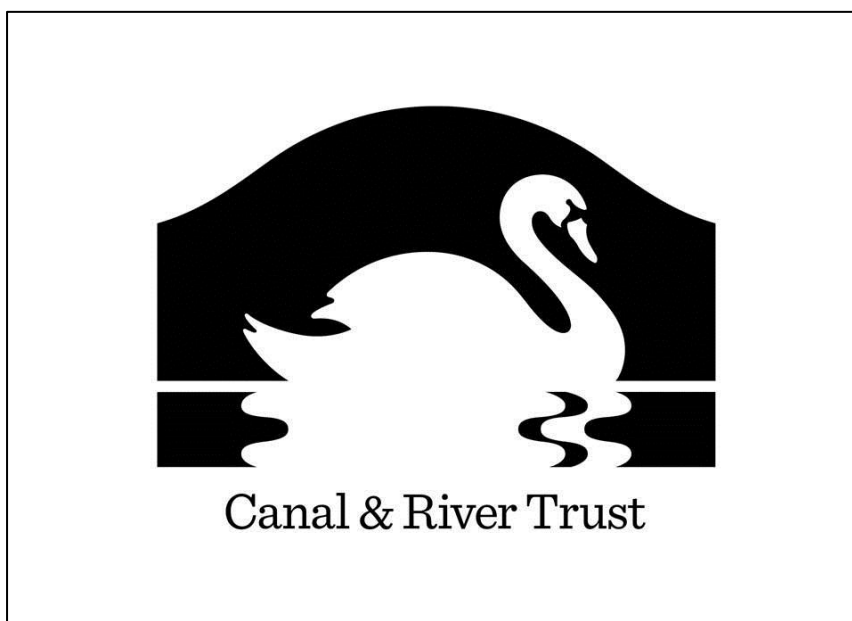
I was impressed with the joint working of BW and the Shropshire Union Canal Society when I visited the Hack Green Locks project for this year’s Excellence Awards. Both Paul Mills and Terry O’Brien are tremendous advocates and ambassadors for a strong working partnership between canal societies and BW and I very much hope their success can be replicated across the whole network in the future. I am also very excited at the prospect of having the Waterway Recovery Group work on the Oxford bridges next year – thank you Mike Palmer for facilitating that. Of course it has not been all plain sailing. Passionate people are forthright in their opinions. We can’t airbrush out decades of disrespect. We can’t agree with everyone all the time. And we can’t eliminate the understandable fear and anxiety that comes with change of this scale. But what we can do is understand, listen, engage and work together to find the right solutions.

And in this respect I am pleased to announce two important conferences that we are planning for early next year. Firstly to recognise the importance of The Waterway Trust's Museums and our wish to develop an even greater co-operative working relationship with other waterway museums around the country. We are planning a conference in the first part of next year that will bring together all these museums and search for new ways of common working and sharing for mutual advantage.

Secondly we are acutely aware that the arrival of the Canal & River Trust might be seen as a threat to the many excellent existing canal and river societies around the network. We are desperate for the new Trust to add and complement the work and success of these societies not threaten it. So together with the IWA we are planning a conference for early next year where we can share concerns and aspirations and develop a really constructive and powerful working relationship that will bring even more benefit to the waterways. So from my perspective, we're engaging and working together pretty well.

And by 'we' I mean everyone engaged with this change programme - including everyone here today and those they represent. The BW executive, trustees and board, Defra ministers and officials, and the many other supporters and interested parties we deal with.

Defra's consultation, *A New Era for the Waterways*, was not just a paper exercise. We found the responses invaluable in shaping the arrangements for the Trust and I hope you can see that in what is now proposed. I know many of you spent a good deal of time responding, e.g. IWAC, IWA, AWCC, and we are grateful to you for that.



The difficult and potentially dangerous process of choosing a new name and logo has also been achieved by pooling our views and gathering feedback from around the country. Of course we were incredibly fortunate to have the services (for free!) of the legendary John Rushforth to guide and inspire us,

But your comments, your reactions, your instincts very much helped us achieve a perfect solution – one that I know will become a proud and public feature around our waterways in the years to come.

Meanwhile we are working very hard to change BW. Many of you have said for a long time we need to change and we are. But here probably more than anywhere else we have to navigate through a complex mixture of emotions where concerns about job security, income, professionalism, autonomy, have to be understood, whilst at the same time building the excitement of a new trust - with new opportunities and new ideas and influences. Sometimes I don't think everyone realises just how much BW has been changing in recent years.

In 2003/4 we had 2214 Full Time Employees - last year that was down to 1694, a reduction of over 500 or nearly 25% in 7 years. And before you say it, no, these weren't all from the bank. In fact the vast majority came from office based staff as we centralised and out sourced much of our back office functions. The saving in payroll alone is just under £20m per annum. We've also - as Tony mentioned - closed our pension scheme to new employees and reduced the benefits to existing employees. We've closed offices, moved people to new locations - and continue to do so with the planned closure of our existing London, Watford and Milton Keynes offices and relocating most people in Milton Keynes in September next year, saving £1m a year.

We've also been rationalising and renegotiating national contracts bringing efficiency, cost savings and better service as evidenced by, for example, the Fountains vegetation contract. Combining around 100 local contracts has created huge benefits. For example right now we are talking to Fountains about a major increase in off side tree work this winter because we can afford to spend more than was in the original work plan. One conversation with one supplier on contracted rates to identify the priority areas and set down agreed performance measures is a totally different and more efficient way of delivering services than having 100 individual negotiations around the country. All these changes have been necessary to reduce our cost base and maximise what we can spend on the waterways.

But they come at a price – BW people feel battered and bruised and understandably worry about the future. And they've yet to feel the benefits of Trust status. I am in no doubt that those benefits are considerable but our people will not see them immediately – so now is a difficult time within BW. I also understand the fears and concerns of the passionate enthusiast, canal society member, boat owner and commercial operator. You too have experienced difficult economic times, rising costs and this summer for some, severe water shortages. You worry about maintenance standards. Is navigation going to remain the priority of the Trust? How committed are we to local engagement and local influence?

And of course Defra have their own concerns about affordability, delivery of statutory obligations and public benefits. Ministers are concerned about public reaction, party policy. Treasury, HMRC, BIS, Ministry of Justice, Department of Transport, all have their own fears and concerns and agendas. We the executive, board and trustees are no different. We worry about getting through the mountain of process – legal, statutory, EU, charitable, in time for April. We worry about getting good people to put themselves forward for the multitude of new positions in our governance structure. We worry (constantly) about funding. We worry about the few vociferous and alarmingly negative armchair commentators who seek to undermine all we are doing.

All these fears and concerns are understandable. But we can't all get everything we want, we won't all have our fears and concerns allayed. What we can do though is continue to engage, listen, debate and find ways to work together for the mutual benefit of the waterways.

It has become something of a cliché that everyone who joins BW at a senior or non-executive capacity comments after a few months that the organisation is 'a lot more complex than I ever thought'. To achieve success in its current form BW has had to develop a unique blend of social, commercial, political, environmental skills and behaviour. It is not yet clear to me how far we need to mould these to our new world.

Many of you will have strong views, but I urge you to go slowly so we can feel our way into our new status and not look back with regret. Our priority has to be to get the Trust up and running by April – and that is a huge task in itself. Let's concentrate on getting this right and then move on in our new structure to talk about reshaping, redirecting, reappraising what we do and how we do it.

Here is an outline of what lies ahead as we approach April 2012:

Key dates over the next 8 months

Oct - Dec	Defra Funding negotiations
Late Nov	Public Bodies Bill
Dec	Transfer Order
Feb / March	Transfer Scheme
March	State Aid clearance
Nov / Dec	Charity registration

Key dates over the next 8 months

Dec - March	Appointments to Council
Sept - March	Appointments to Waterway Partnerships
Jan - March	Appointment of 3 new trustees
April	Launch
Ongoing	Fundraising strategy
Ongoing	Rebranding
Ongoing	Staff engagement
Ongoing	Running the waterways!!!

So how does it all look and feel from where I am. Inevitably there is a real mix of emotions. I am concerned at the mountain of process and negotiations we have to complete before April, Worried at the complexity and the potential for things like State Aid, Pensions, Environmental Legislation, to create barriers or even blockages to the proposal, Challenged

by the funding negotiations that are beginning with Defra and Treasury. At the same time I am proud of where we have got to, delighted with the help and support we have received from all quarters, excited by what we are building together, confident for the future.

Thank you again for coming today. Thank you again for your contribution in achieving everything we have over the past year. Thank you in advance for all that I know you will be contributing in the coming year. What we are doing together is the envy of many in the public sector. We are being watched with great interest across Whitehall, and amongst many strategic thinkers and commentators. They believe we are on the brink of creating a model for how many other public services and organisations can be run. Let's not disappoint them. Let's build on what we've achieved to date and demonstrate that not only are our waterways special, but so are the people who care so passionately about them.