

April 2007

RBOA's comments on BW's Paper: "Directly Managed Moorings"

For consideration at the national boating issue meeting, 3 April 2007

The RBOA Committee expressed considerable concern at certain statements in the above paper, and felt it might be helpful for us to present these in written form prior to the meeting.

It is not made clear whether the auction applies to all BW moorings, both leisure and residential. Our comments apply equally to both types of mooring. The main areas of concern (taken in the order they appear in BW's paper) are:

1) Difficulties in accessing the internet and understanding on-line auctions:

- It was felt, as we have said before, that allocating vacant moorings via an internet auction would be discriminatory, and would not allow inclusive access to all of BW's customers and potential customers. Particularly in the case of those living on their boat, whose access to the auction would be via a mobile phone, there are still many areas (Braunston being a prime example) where a mobile phone signal is virtually non-existent.
- The comparison in percentages of private and hire boaters having access to the internet must surely be irrelevant. Whilst it is appreciated that many private owners started as hirers, how many hire boaters will be seeking a mooring, whether by auction or otherwise?
- Suggesting that people "could ask for assistance from friends, relatives, libraries etc for a mooring auction" is not respecting the privacy of individuals, who should be able to make bids without making others aware of their bids. It is also not a practical suggestion for those on the move.

2) Resulting price increases for other moorers:

- "During the trial our waiting list process would be suspended. This will be unpopular with a few people who have been on waiting lists for many years."
- This makes it sound as though there is a small number of people on BW waiting lists for moorings, when the reality is that some Regional Offices have quite lengthy waiting lists.
- "Furthermore, it opens up access for many more people to have an opportunity to secure a mooring, beyond those on waiting lists." - This would effectively be allowing people the opportunity to queue - jump, rather than put their name on a waiting list.

Draft Questions and Answers:

- Will it run on the internet?
- What will be the cost to BW of getting website tenderers to "make the process very simple and easy to navigate".

- Registering bids by post and phone. - Whilst there could be a possible problem in expecting BW staff to accept phone bids, would it not be possible for them to accept sealed tenders? If BW insist on doing away with the present system, tendering could make the process far more inclusive than an auction.
- "Bidders will ... need to register credit card details..." Many people do not have a Credit Card, and of those who do, many people would not wish to give out Credit Card information over the phone/ internet,
- What are people bidding for?: Bidding for a one-year permit is a very short time. RBOA would recommend a five-year period, thus giving greater security of tenure.
- What happens after one year?: "They may renew their mooring permit and will pay the price that BW has set for the site." - Why does BW not set the price in the first place? Non-BW owned businesses are able to do this.
- P.3, para 2: "Most importantly, it opens up access for many more people to have an opportunity to secure a mooring, beyond those on the waiting lists." The implication of this statement is that more people will be able to obtain a mooring. The only way that a greater number of people will be able to obtain a mooring is by providing a greater number of moorings.

Summary of RBOA views

We believe that the auctioning of moorings will act against the principle of making waterways inclusive and accessible to all. As well as the difficulties explained above, new entrants to boating, particularly those who are less well off, will be deterred by the complexity of the process. It is The RBOA's view that BW Managers should be in a position to set a market rate for moorings in their area, based on local knowledge and waiting lists, as happens in the majority of public services without the need to resort to an auction.