

WATERWAY USER & SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS

Notes of meeting. Wednesday 22 April 2009

- 1 Jonathan Bryant welcomed people to the meeting.

Apologies received from Alan Meegan of Amateur Rowing Association, Cedric Rainer of Towpath Action Group, Graham Reeves of Canal Boat builders Association, James Bryan of National Community Boats Association, John Hustwick of Electric Boat Association, Mike Turpin of Boat Museum Society, Sam Clarke of Canal Boat Builders' Association, Andy Soper and Edward Burrell both of The Barge Association and David Pearce of Association of Waterways Cruising Clubs.

List of attendees attached at appendix

- 2 **Notes of meeting held on 16 April 2008**

These notes of meeting were approved as a true record. The meeting felt that it would be helpful if a draft copy of the notes were circulated promptly for comment.

SY

- 4 **HM Treasury's Operational Efficiency Programme**

The Treasury had announced the conclusion of its OEP in advance of the budget. A press statement had been circulated to WUSIG members the previous evening. WUSIG members were very pleased with the outcome and that BW was to retain its property portfolio. A lot of work had gone on behind the scenes. BW thanked WUSIG member organisations for their part in this.

- 8 **Waterway Capital works as economy stimulation measures**

Adrian Stott had requested this item on the agenda. Simon Salem confirmed that BW has submitted proposals to DEFRA to create jobs and improve the infrastructure of the network. One proposal is for £50 million and one is for £250 million.

- 3 **Matters arising**

Adrian Stott asked for Dredging and Top Lock walkways to be added to the matters arising.

River Trent Lock Keeping Hours

Jonathan Bryant let the meeting know that Caroline Killeavy, General Manager for East Midlands, now has a full compliment of seasonal and permanent staff, the problems reported last year should not re-occur. When staffing levels are low priority will be given to the non self operated sites. Colin Tuck informed the meeting that he had attended and addressed the Lock Keepers induction meeting on the 6th April which he felt had a very positive outcome.

BW Byelaws

Nigel Johnson, Legal Director, had informed Jonathan Bryant that there was a process for revising the current Byelaws and some progress on this mater had been made with an internal group (including Sally Ash) having met initially to set

out this process more clearly. The paper brought forward by this internal group would then go to public consultation late 2009 / early 2010. Adrian Stott suggested that there be a third intermediary stage where the paper would be circulated to WUSIG for comment pre-consultation.

SS

K & A Canal Status

It was confirmed to the meeting that parts of the Kennet and Avon canal had cruising status and others had remainder status. BW treats the whole of the K&A as cruising as far as its operations and maintenance are concerned. BW had slackened off attempts to upgrade the Remainder sections in the run up to the Operational Efficiency Programme, however, after the news released today BW are in a position to push this forward again. Noted that DEFRA is responsible for the decision. BW to apply for Cruiseway status as soon as practically possible.

Towpath Tree Removal Programme

Vince Moran spoke about Fountains' background in forestry which will result in some significant improvements in this area. Adrian Stott reminded the meeting of Robin Evans' 'Veg Pledge' where commitment was made to remove all vegetation (inc. trees) from Waterway to Wall within 1 year. Although after speaking to General Managers he was informed that this process is being carried out over the next 5 years. Some clarity was requested as this was in direct conflict with Robin Evans' 'Veg Pledge'. Vince Moran offered to send the vegetation programme out by the end of May 2009. Examples where trees were left standing whilst other were removed and where coppicing was occurring after trees were cut but the stumps not poisoned were given to Vince Moran. Vince Moran felt that it would be helpful for the meeting to have copies of the specifications given to Fountains and he agreed to post these on the website. If there were faults in the specifications then these could be reviewed, otherwise where Fountains were not abiding by the specifications these instances should be brought to the attention of the local office. Will Chapman felt that in some areas the 'Veg pledge' had been adhered to incorrectly and mentioned in particular the removal of around a dozen trees between Cow Bridge and Wychnor Lock. These trees were on the towpath side but well separated from the canal and did not appear to have any detrimental effect on navigation or interfere with walking. They were also the site of a long term swan's nest. Will sought some clarity on this matter.

VM

VM

VM

Waterways Dimensions

Jonathan Bryant let the meeting know that since the last WUSIG meeting this project had been delayed. However, all the data has now been collected and the measurements would be translated into the most useful form for a final sign off by the CSSAP during the second quarter of 2009. These would be published as:

- Dimensions of the waterway structures
- Pinch Points
- Suggested Dimensions of Craft readily able to negotiate the waterway

Roger Squires felt that once the 'pinch points had been located engineers should be informed of where they exist so that when works are carried out these can be removed. Nigel Hamilton suggested that BW should actively seek third party funding to do this. Vince Moran suggested that a list would be published yearly of the pinch points that had been removed during that year. Adrian Stott felt that all the basic work had already been done on the Waterway Dimensions project and that it should be a simple process for BW to update this and publish it.

VM

Dredging

Adrian Stott requested confirmation on how dredging was prioritised and if so what are the current methods for prioritising. Vince Moran confirmed that there is a methodology for doing this but he did not have the specific details to hand in the meeting he also offered to provide a statement of the prioritisation criteria to the Group.

VM

Top Gate Walkways

Adrian Stott made the observation that along the Lee & Stort top gate walkways were progressively being removed for repairs and never being replaced. Was this a standard? Or was there a standard for replacing them? He felt that it was important that the best did not prevent the good. Vince Moran undertook to investigate the situation concerning missing or removed top gate walkways in the Lea Valley and elsewhere. John Baylis also commented that BW's Risk assessments miss large aspects of the tasks they are assessing, such as crossing the locks. Nigel Hamilton felt that the fundamental critique of a risk assessment should be that they are on-going and reviewed. Nigel had tried to speak to Tony Stammers regarding this but was unsuccessful in contacting him. Jonathan Bryant will chase Tony Stammers to contact Nigel Hamilton.

VM

JaB

Consultation Guidance Note

Howard Anguish enquired about the draft guidance note on Consultations and whether it had been finalised. Jonathan undertook to finalise and circulate this.

JaB

5 Towpath

Cycling

The meeting discussed the paper that Colin Palmer had prepared for the WUSIG meeting. Colin agreed that there are some existing problems with cyclists but hoped that this paper would try to respond to these areas with workable suggestions. Beryl McDowall felt that this paper should not relate to lock wheelers from boats. Nigel Hamilton raised the point that some funding could be sought through Sustrans and local Governments to improve areas of towpath. However, after attending a recent Sustrans meeting Richard Fairhurst let everyone know that Sustrans did not have the resources to do this presently. Sue Day expressed her concern that this could involve more hard surfacing on towpaths and Colin Palmer agreed that cycling organisations understood that this was a very complex area of great importance. Richard Fairhurst mentioned that there used to be a reciprocal link between Waterscape and the Sustrans website. Simon Salem would review this with the Web team. After a lot of input it was decided that it would not be possible to take this paper forward within WUSIG. A smaller working group consisting of Sue Day, Richard Fairhurst, Adrian Stott, Will Chapman, David Kent, Roger Squires and Colin Palmer would meet to discuss. BW would be pleased to provide the secretarial input. It was suggested that Colin sought representation from some other cycling organisations including Sustrans, BW would provide the admin. There had already been some work on this in the past by BW which the group should review.

SS

CP

JaB

Horse Riding

According to the BW Byelaws Horse riding is currently not allowed on Towpaths except for where there are small areas of Bridleway. Horse boating is also disallowed on towpaths unless permission is granted by BW or they are legally entitled to do so, the driver must also be 'competent'. Sue Day wished for these

Byelaws to be reviewed and offered to make some comments to Jonathan Bryant for the review of the Byelaws. SD

Motorbike Barriers

Sue Day commented that these prevent horse boating as they restrict the access of horses to the towpaths. On her journeys Sue has encountered seized and changed locks, the meeting felt that all barriers should be identified and have the same padlocks and that they should be accessed regularly to prevent them seizing up. Vince Moran will ensure that all motorcycle barriers are accessed regularly by Length Inspectors and Boat Checkers. Adrian Stott also mentioned the appearance on towpaths of railings which are not flat with sloped ends to enable the ropes of a horse drawn boat to slip over. Vince Moran confirmed that there was no programme to install these and would look into the matter. VM

Angling Trust

David Kent informed the meeting that the Angling Trust was the new body whose main task is to co-ordinate other smaller Angling groups. There is a development board with Angling and club development as its brief. The legal team will stay as a periphery. Beryl McDowall sought clarification on whether moorings were installed after land was leased to Angling Clubs or whether land that was already leased to Angling Clubs was then turned into moorings. David Kent mentioned that in his experience it is normally written into a lease agreement that if there is the opportunity for BW to generate additional revenue from the area then they are able to do so, he also mentioned that it works very well when there is communication between the different interested parties. Pegging on lock landings was also brought up by Roger Squires, David Kent explained that there are totem poles to indicate which direction to peg from; they are set 25m clearance of any mechanical structures.

6 Boating

Progress on Enforcement

Simon Salem informed the meeting that there had been significant improvements made in the evasion rates. They had fallen from 10.4% to 6.7% in November 2007 and 4.7% at the end of 2008/2009 financial year. Tough targets for licence income of just over £15 million had been set and exceeded. Simon confirmed that the enforcement process had been cost effective and was represented in the final income figures. Beryl McDowall mentioned that previously it had been agreed that there would be stickers for genuine overstayers to display. Sally Ash will look into this. SA

Online mooring policy

Sally Ash had distributed a copy of the pre-consultation working draft of BW's Online mooring policy. Sally was seeking the meeting's initial view on the paper. In general the meeting was pleased that BW was at a suitable stage to be able to discuss this topic. It was agreed that WUSIG members would have until 31 May 2009 to submit their comments. David Kent felt that this topic would require ongoing communication between all parties to avoid problems being created and that RBOA wished to have a significant input into what happens on the towpath. Will Chapman raised the point that this review cannot happen in isolation and careful consideration needs to be given to the impact that this will have on local communities and businesses. Sally confirmed that a lot of research is being undertaken in this area and that BW understood the importance. Howard

Anguish felt that there were still grey areas in the Continuous Cruising policy. Sally Ash asked Howard to let her know which specific areas these were. Geoff Ashton commented on the statement that renewal of commercial leases could be declined to reduce the number of online moorings and that acceptable density needed to be confirmed in an area before declining a licence. Madge Bailey let Geoff know that this was not the intention in the first instance but that the wording may be too strong and need reviewing. Roger Squires felt that it should be made clearer that in certain areas, such as London, the opposite of this paper was happening and would still be happening. A discussion was had on overstaying on moorings, Colin Tuck felt that introducing a chargeable permit/permission to stay, went against 'Suggested Principles, Item 4 (Waterways are primarily for navigation. We must have sufficient places for people to tie up during a cruise and plenty of breathing space between groups of moored boats'. Colin also felt that there should be an overstay charge (Parking Fine), which would not be a further permission to stay; this was agreed by a majority at the meeting. The meeting felt that the drafting of the table should be clearer and that the balance of long term and 24/48 hour moorings needed to be more even. BW visitor moorings and changes to time limits was discussed by the meeting, it was agreed that BW should consult with local User Groups where possible.

Adrian Stott summarised the paper he had distributed. He felt that the discussion of policy on residential moorings should be dealt with separately, to avoid clouding the online mooring issue. He advocated that the "continuous cruising" approach was never likely to be effective, and should be abandoned. The aims should be to reduce the density of mooring to the standard level chosen for the waterway length concerned, and to ensure there is always vacant space available for the use of visiting boats. He recommended that regulation of on-line mooring (as opposed to "moorings") should be by per-day pricing, which can achieve these aims, and no longer by length of stay, which cannot. Payments for online mooring could be reliably, efficiently, and profitably (to BW) collected through debit of an account associated with the boat concerned.

Stoppage plans

Sally Ash sought the meeting's views on not printing out and posting the Stoppage Programmes this year. The view of the meeting was that if the up to date information was readily available on-line and a printed copy would be sent upon request by the customer to the Customer Contact Centre then this would be acceptable. BW would consider whether the date of the Stoppage Programme customer meeting should be postponed to allow the business units some more time to finalise their stoppage programmes. Users felt that the extra time should be used by BW to ensure that the quality of initial plans presented by local teams to user groups for consideration is improved on recent years. There was agreement that the programme need not be published until the end of September. Adrian Stott suggested that a notification e-mail should be sent to registered customers when the programme is finalised or when changes are made. Sally Ash also provided the meeting with a graph showing monthly usage of 'Canalphone' and its decline to less than 20 calls per month since the introduction of the on-line stoppage programme. The meeting felt that phasing out of this service would be appropriate and that customers who did not have access to the internet would be able to call customer contact centre for information as necessary.

Security locks on BW operational structures

Roger Squires commented that there was a difference in the type of lock used between the north and the south of the country. John Baylis let the meeting know that approximately 80% of BW locks are the 'T' key type with only about 50 locks being operated with the Yale key, mostly electro-hydraulic structures in the North. The reason for this is that the 'T' locks are less susceptible to vandalism. Nigel Hamilton noted that the spring loaded "t bar" operated system of security locks, were far easier/ quicker to use, more popular with boaters and less prone to vandalism he also suggested that these should become the standard method for fitting security locks to BW structures; Vince Moran agreed to look into this. Adrian Stott noted that there are better approaches than padlocks or handcuffs, and requested that no standardisation be adopted until the most suitable one had been agreed. Bernard Hales also spoke to the meeting about the sale of BW keys on Ebay. Sally Ash confirmed that we were aware of this and BW has spent a lot of time investigating the legal powers that we have to remove the sale of these keys on Ebay and BW is unable to prevent the sale of these keys on Ebay.

VM

Boat Masters Licence

Jonathan Bryant spoke to the meeting about the MCA revised guidelines which will go out to public consultation on the week of 28 April 09.

7 Customer service and telephone assistance

The meeting discussed the current opening hours of the customer service contact centre. It was generally felt that the current opening hours were adequate with an emergency line available for out of hour emergencies. Howard Anguish felt that to cater for the many leisure customers it might be helpful to have opening hours all weekend, there was agreement with this.

9 Update on BWA Heritage Sub-Groups

This item was not discussed

10 Director customer meetings

The meeting had a list of dates and venues circulated prior to the meeting and Jonathan Bryant confirmed that there would be an additional date for a meeting in Gloucester and this would be circulated to members. This year Simon Salem or Vince Moran would be conducting the meetings accompanied by either Sally Ash or Jonathan Bryant. Roger Squires mentioned that there were no notes from the customer meetings published on the website; Jonathan Bryant will look into this.

JaB

11 AOCB

The Water Framework directive was raised with Jonathan Bryant by David Pearce who was unable to attend the meeting. BW has submitted comments on this paper and a copy will be circulated to the meeting.

JaB

Sue Cawson mentioned that all of the waterways should be walked at least twice a month from an operational point of view to check lock structures and paddles. She mentioned that on the Northampton 21 lock the ladders have silted up and need cleaning. She also mentioned, along with Phil Prettyman, that cill protection seemed to be disappearing. They wished to stress the importance of this for protecting the longevity of the sills and for the protection of the passing boats. David Kent let the meeting know of some dates: 25 July 2009- New Junction Canal, fishing competition 12-4pm. 08 August 2009- Staffordshire and

Worcestershire and Trent and Mersey, fishing competition 12-4pm

Date of Next Meeting

Wednesday 07 October 2009

APPENDIX Those present at WUSIG meeting 22 April 2009 marked *

Adrian Stott	*		Martin Key	<i>Ramblers Association</i>
Alan Meegan		<i>Amateur Rowing Association</i>	Mike Turpin	<i>Boat Museum Society</i>
Andy Soper		<i>DBA</i>	Mike Bools	* <i>The Boating Association</i>
Andy Wistrow		<i>Sustrans</i>	Neil Northmore	<i>Royal Yachting Association</i>
Bernard Hales		<i>Heritage Afloat</i>	Nigel Hamilton	* <i>Association of Pleasure Craft Operators</i>
Beryl McDowall	*	<i>RBOA</i>	Phil Prettyman	* <i>Historic Narrow Boat Owners Club</i>
Cathy Cooke		<i>IWAC</i>	Richard Fairhurst	* <i>Waterways World</i>
Cedric Rainer		<i>Towpath Action Group</i>	Richard George	<i>Cyclists' Touring Club</i>
Chris Cattrall		<i>Canals & Rivers</i>	Roger Squires	* <i>IWA</i>
Chris Leah		<i>Wooden Canal Boat Society</i>	Sally Ash	* <i>British Waterways</i>
Colin Palmer	*	<i>International Mountain Bike Association</i>	Sam Clarke	<i>Canal Boat Builders' Association</i>
Colin Tuck		<i>The Boating Association</i>	Sam Bourne	<i>The Yacht Harbour Association</i>
David Pearce		<i>AWCC</i>	Sarina Young	* <i>British Waterways</i>
David Kent	*	<i>Angling Trust</i>	Simon Salem	* <i>British Waterways</i>
David Lowe	*	<i>CBOA</i>	Stuart Sampson	<i>NABO</i>
Duncan Carter		<i>The Central Council of Physical Recreation</i>	Sue Cawson	* <i>HNBOC/Saturn Project</i>
Edward Burrell		<i>DBA (The Barge Association)</i>	Sue Day	* <i>Horse Boating Society</i>
Hazel Rainer		<i>Towpath Action Group</i>	Vince Moran	* <i>British Waterways</i>
Henry Whittaker		<i>The British Horse Society</i>		
Howard Anguish	*	<i>NABO</i>	Will Chapman	* <i>Save our Waterways</i>
James Bryan		<i>National Community Boats Association</i>	Madge Bailey	* <i>British Waterways</i>
John Hustwick		<i>Electric Boat Association</i>	Geoff Ashton	* <i>AWCC</i>
John Williams		<i>NAFAC</i>		
John Bayliss	*	<i>IWA</i>		
Jonathan Bryant	*	<i>British Waterways</i>		
Kevin East		<i>British Canoe Union</i>		
Kevin Blick		<i>Canal Boat</i>		