

WATERWAY USER & SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS

Notes of meeting. Wednesday 12 November 2008

- 1 Jonathan Bryant welcomed people to the meeting.

Apologies received from Alan Meegan of Amateur Rowing Association, Cedric Rainer of Towpath Action Group, Chris Cattrall of Canals and Rivers, David Kent of National Federation of Anglers, Graham Reeves of Canal Boat builders Association, Graham Myatt of AWCC Midland Chair Region, John Baylis of Inland Waterways Association, John Williams of NAFAC, Sam Clarke of Canal Boat Builders' Association, Stuart Sampson of National Association of Boat Owners, John Hustwick of Electric Boat Association.

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.

- 3 **Matters arising**

User operated structures

Roger Squires noted that it was knack rather than strength that was significant when using locks.

Sue Cawson felt that at Foxton and Watford locks it isn't identified that the red paddles need to be raised before the white ones, perhaps they could be numbered rather than more signs being put up.

Colin Tuck commented that the River Trent lock keeping hours had been agreed as 9am-6pm 7 days a week but due to sickness and holidays these hours had not been kept. These hours need to be adhered to.

VM

Phil Prettyman felt that risk assessments should be conducted by people who are sufficiently familiar with the operations. WUSIG members would be happy to assist with future risk assessments.

Simon Salem agreed that input from boaters is essential but the final decision has to lie with BW. Vince Moran added that Peter Wade (Safety Advisor) is a very experienced boater but he is happy that risk assessments are looked at and commented on. The minimum safety standards must still be a priority and planned maintenance works will continue by the schedules already in place.

BW Byelaws

MB noticed that there was a reference to the byelaws on the website which advises that the byelaws are available as a hard copy and a charge will apply. MB also supplied a print out of the website from 30 Sep 08 to demonstrate this.

The Boating Association requested that the byelaws were available in pdf. format for downloading with links to the website so that the current version is always available.

NOTE- The website has been checked and it does have the links to the byelaws in pdf. format at <http://www.britishwaterways.co.uk/downloads/freedom-of-information-act/legal> .

Adrian Stott wondered how easily the byelaws could be amended. This might be a good way to get more effective enforcement action.

SS

Dredging

The dredging files had been retrieved from inadvertent archiving. It was confirmed that BW aims to dredge to original depth and although original profile is significant it is not always clear what the original profile was and what adverse ecological effects dredging may have.

Simon Salem advised that dredging will be put to the Customer Service Standards Advisory Panel. The policy would be turned into standards and then passed onto WUSIG for comment.

Adrian Stott would welcome benchmark standards and noted that the Customer Service Standards Advisory Panel would be assisting BW on their development.

Consultation

Jonathan Bryant brought the group's attention to the new Code of Practice on Consultation produced by the Government. This new code of practice is useful; it makes reference to the 'burden of consultation' and gives much more practical guidance. This document can be found at www.berr.gov.uk/bre/consultation-guidance/page44420.html

4 Rising to the Challenge

Roger Squires commented that the AINA conference yesterday (11 November) had a very good discussion on this subject. Largely that the Waterways were not just for boaters but that the public at large also benefits from them. Roger recommended looking at the AINA website for the papers.

The need of broader public engagement was discussed by members and the involvement of volunteers considered. Comparisons were made with The National Trust's volunteer base. The involvement of volunteers in all aspects of BW in a similar way to the National Trust was thought to be a positive way to move forward.

The role of The Waterways Trust was discussed by WUSIG and the history behind the progress which was deemed to be a reflection on the execution of the process rather than any reflection on the willingness of volunteers.

Education within schools of the waterways was also discussed as an important factor in the future of the waterways. Sue Cawson commented that this is happening very well in Shropshire.

5 Boating Matters

Boat Licence Fees

Simon Salem informed WUSIG that a paper was about to go to the board on 20 November. All comments from boaters had been listened to carefully. Beryl McDowall made the point that it was not a good idea to channel all responses through organisations and discourage people from responding individually. Simon acknowledged this point and assured that at least 80 of the responses to the consultation were from individuals and not boating organisations.

Enforcement

Simon Salem reported that good progress was being made, the new Q1 hand held terminals were very beneficial to the process and enforcement reports to the directors were being made every month. The national boat check was underway at the time of the meeting. It is felt that a couple more years of sustained pressure would make a rock solid impact on evasion figures and to date several vessels had been seized for non payment.

Roger Squires commented on the online boat checker, it was helpful to members and advises them to use this. Although Beryl commented that more pressure needed to be put on unidentified boats as the licence checker falls down on these vessels. A SORN type document is being produced for boats which are off waters to stop them from being subject to enforcement.

A target of 3% evasion across BW was the aim for end of March 2010. Some felt that this was thought to be too high and that zero tolerance would be better. The cost effectiveness of zero tolerance had been weighed up and 3% was thought a realistic target at the present time. Suggestions were put forward for fees being added to the next licence renewal or renewals not being processed until arrears had been cleared.

Discussion regarding the involvement of police on the towpaths and with enforcement issues. In the Thames valley and Surrey police had been involved with the EA to help reduce crime. Also in West and South Yorkshire, although the police wished for this to be a quiet operation and not publicised.

6 Towpath Matters Discussion

Cycling

It was agreed that a cycling strategy should be developed throughout the entire network rather than just London. There were several stages needed before BW would be ready to produce a cycling strategy. Colin Palmer asked for representatives of organisations to send their own cycling policies to him. Simon Salem committed to produce a plan after policies had been received. It was thought that having a sub group of interested parties would be necessary once this stage had been reached.

ALL

SS

7 Customer Service Standards Advisory Panel

The remit and of this panel is to make recommendations to BW. It was thought that this panel and the Customer Service Standards Advisory Panel had lacked publicity and were not well known about. Richard Fairhurst commented that this was hard to publicise as it was more abstract and regarding policies than a concrete story and suggested that maybe BW could forward some good news stories about the standards for publication.

SS

Reporting of defects was discussed and the 'single contact number' concept was thought to be helpful in these situations. Notice boards being kept up to date with contact numbers would also be very helpful. One contact for defect reporting was thought to be the most sensible way although the point was raised that some people may wish to telephone whilst others may wish to call a telephone number, text, e-mail or fill out a report card. The logistics of the members of groups to report defects was discussed by Howard Anguish.

The new Lo Call 0845 telephone number for Customer Services was discussed as non geographic numbers are not included within Mobile phone operator's allowances. The new codes starting '03' were suggested by Adrian Stott as being recognised by phone companies as geographic.

JB

8 **Waterway dimension information and pinch Points**

Laurence Morgan tabled a paper outlining progress with this project. It's purpose was to give customers clear information about the limiting dimensions of each waterway and the location of pinch points.

The information would be published with illustrative graphics. The meeting felt that guidance regarding the size of craft that could navigate each waterway should also be given.

LM

9 **Residential Property Project**

Jonathan Bryant had reported some time ago on the BW residential property portfolio review. A firm was appointed to review and document the portfolio. King Sturge is the company which has taken on this project, at present they are in the region of 420 properties.

10 **AOCB**

The status of the K&A as a cruiseway was questioned. Simon Salem will discuss this with Nigel Johnson and comment back to WUSIG.

SS

The note to boaters which encouraged the use of phosphate free products and the change in the T&Cs brought up a lack of communication with boaters and missed the larger links between phosphates in the sewage.

SS

Roger Squires felt that certain conservation areas seemed to not be maintained suitably. Simon Salem was concerned if this was the case and requested specific details so that these matters could be addressed with the local Business unit.

RS

Top gate hand rails were felt, by members, to be disappearing from locks and it was brought up that they should always be painted white for better visibility in the dark or for people with poor vision. This is Customer Service Standard no. 2d9 and Vince Moran will confirm this as Customer Service Standard no. 2d9.

Vegetation on towpath policy was discussed and Vince Moran informed WUSIG that removal of all trees between towpath and the navigation is a more significant issue on river navigations than on canals and will take much longer to achieve. Adrian Stott noted that in some areas there seems to be a lot of growth on the edge of the towpath. A timetabled programme for the progress of works was requested.

VM

Date of Next Meeting

Wednesday 22 April 2009

APPENDIX Those present at WUSIG meeting 12 November 2008 marked *

Adrian Stott	*		Jonathan Bryant	*	<i>British Waterways</i>
Alan Meegan		<i>Amateur Rowing Association (ARA)</i>	Kevin Blick		<i>Canal Boat</i>
Andy Soper		<i>DBA</i>	Kevin East	*	<i>British Canoe Union</i>
Andy Wistrow		<i>Sustrans</i>	Liz Horne		<i>British Waterways</i>
Barry Smith		<i>CBA</i>	Martin Key		<i>Ramblers Association</i>
Bernard Hales	*	<i>Heritage Afloat</i>	Mike Bools	*	<i>The Boating Association</i>
Beryl McDowall	*	<i>RBOA</i>	Mike Turpin		<i>Boat Museum Society</i>
Cathy Cooke		<i>IWAC</i>	Nigel Hamilton	*	<i>APCO (Hotel Section)</i>
Cedric Rainer		<i>Towpath Action Group</i>	Paul Bryan		<i>National Community Boats Association</i>
Chris Cattrall		<i>Canals & Rivers</i>	Phil Prettyman	*	<i>HNBOC</i>
Chris Leah		<i>Wooden Canal Boat Society</i>	Richard George		<i>Cyclist's Touring Club</i>
Colin Palmer	*	<i>International Mountain Bike Association</i>	Richard Fairhurst	*	<i>Waterways World</i>
Colin Tuck	*	<i>The Boating Association</i>	Roger Squires	*	<i>IWA</i>
David Kent		<i>National Federation of Anglers</i>	Sally Ash		<i>British Waterways</i>
David Pearce	*	<i>AWCC</i>	Sarina Young	*	<i>British Waterways</i>
David Lowe	*	<i>CBOA</i>	Sam Bourne		<i>YHA</i>
Duncan Carter		<i>The Central Council of Physical Recreation</i>	Sam Clarke		<i>BMF & CBA</i>
Edward Burrell		<i>DBA</i>	Simon Salem	*	<i>British Waterways</i>
Hazel Rainer		<i>Towpath Action Group</i>	Stuart Sampson		<i>NABO</i>
Henry Whittaker		<i>British Horse Society</i>	Sue Day		<i>Horse Boating Society</i>
Howard Anguish	*	<i>NABO</i>			
James Bryan	*	<i>National Community Boats Association</i>	Terry Fell		<i>National Federation of Anglers</i>
John Baylis		<i>IWA</i>	Laurence Morgan	*	<i>British Waterways</i>
John Hustwick		<i>Electric Boat Association</i>	Vince Moran	*	<i>British Waterways</i>
John Williams		<i>NAFAC</i>	Sue Cawson	*	<i>HNBOC/Saturn Project</i>
Chris Daniels		<i>Waterways World</i>			
Howard Smith		<i>AWCC</i>			