



**Notes of Corridor Issues Meeting
Held at BW Offices, Hatton
Wednesday 29 March 2006**

PRESENT:

User Groups

David Pearce
Henry Whittaker
Sue Day

Tony Hirst

Roger Squires
Colin Palmer
John Williams

Michael Banyard
Rebecca Dixon
Beryl McDowall
John Crisp
Mike Bools
Cedric Rainer
Hazel Rainer

Association of Waterways Cruising Clubs
British Horse Society
Horse Boating Society & Historic Narrow Boat
Owners' Club
Inland Waterways Amenity Advisory Council
(observer)
Inland Waterways Association
International Mountain Bike Association
National Association of Fisheries & Angling
Consultatives
National Community Boat Association
Ramblers' Association
Residential Boat Owners' Association
Royal Yachting Association
The Boating Association
Towpath Action Group
Towpath Action Group

British Waterways:

Simon Salem
Eugene Baston
Peter Wade
Sue Lewis
Jim Langridge
Amanda Strang

Marketing & Customer Service Director
External Relations Manager
Safety Advisor
Service Manager, Wales & Border Counties
Senior Sustainability Advisor
External Relations Administrator

Apologies:

Alan Meegan
Mark Lloyd
Colin Hill
Nigel Hamilton
Edward Burrell
Mike Turpin
Kevin East
Howard Pridding
Barry Smith
Dr Charles Trotman
Richard George
Dr Stewart Clarke
Martin Jiggins
Richard Booth
Neil Edwards
Audrey Smith

Amateur Rowing Association
Anglers Conservation Association
Association of Pleasure Craft Operators
APCO Hotel Boat Section
Barge Association
Boat Museum
British Canoe Union
British Marine Federation
Canal Boat Builders' Association
Country Land & Business Owners' Association
Cyclist's Touring Club
English Nature
Historic Narrow Boat Owners' Club
Historic Narrow Boat Owners' Club
Inland Waterways Association
Inland Waterways Amenity Advisory Council
(Observer)
Local Government Association
National Association of Boat Owners
National Association of Boat Owners
National Federation of Anglers
National Federation of Anglers

Vince Christie
Stuart Sampson
Tony Haynes
David Kent
Terry Fell

David Dunning
Andy Wistow

The Boating Association
Sustrans

These notes are also circulated to British Waterways' Chief Executive, Executive Directors, Operating Directors, General Managers, Service Managers, Operational Managers & other key personnel.

WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS

Simon welcomed the group and introduced new faces.

1. REPORT ON ISSUES SINCE LAST MEETING

An update paper was provided prior to the meeting outlining the completed actions from October's meeting together with information of interest.

Meeting attendees welcomed the content of the update papers circulated prior to the meetings.

1.1 **Angling Strategy**

BW pre-circulated an update report on the status of the Angling Strategy and the positive actions being carried out by BW with the angling fraternity.

John Williams provided positive feedback about the angling initiatives which will result in a greater understanding between BW and other user groups.

The angling groups welcomed the establishment of a named angling liaison officer in each waterway unit and the proactive approach that these officers are taking.

Boating representatives welcomed the links made with the anglers and invited other groups to participate in an 'experience day'.

The angling demonstration at Saul Junction festival was a good example of groups having the opportunity to participate in angling activities.

Simon summarised the important progress being made with promoting angling and progression towards an Angling Strategy.

A debate took place about fishing from the offside bank, BW responded that this is often impractical since BW is not always the landowners.

1.2 **Vegetation Management**

ACTION: Sue Lewis will report back to Sue Day to confirm whether the section of canal at Bosley on the Macclesfield Canal is included in the 3-year programme to tackle vegetation management.

Sue Lewis
(Service
Manager –
WBC)

1.3 **Towpath Surfaces**

Simon Salem recognised the group's concerns over the various surface types used on towpaths. British Waterways design manual is available to waterways units which gives guidance on the use of suitable surface types according to activity.

Roger Squires provided an example where the use of rumble strips before bridge approaches could reduce the speed of cyclists approaching bridge holes, and avoid collisions. Rumble stripes do not hinder horse boating or disabled access.

ACTION: External Relations will circulate BW's guidance on towpath surface types as soon as it's available. The group to provide comments to Amanda Strang by **30 September 2006**.

Amanda
Strang

ACTION: External Relations will arrange for a representative from the National Support Unit to attend October's meeting to discuss Towpath Surfaces. (also see 11.3)

Amanda
Strang

2.0 MOTORCYCLES ON TOWPATHS: Managing the Problem

BW pre-circulated an update paper '*Motorcycles on Towpaths: Managing the Problem*'. Jim Langridge provided further background to the status of the document. (E.g. Illegal use of motorcycles and making the towpath accessible to all).

The revised guidance incorporates views expressed during the consultation period which include:

- additional mention for the needs of horse boaters;
- including references to both BW's and the Horse boating Society's guidance for horse boating;
- including references to the needs of canoeists
- strengthening references to legal powers and involving the police;
- further information on suppliers of suitable furniture; and
- the need to encourage legitimate users which will dissuade misuse of the waterway corridor

Roger Squires welcomed the document which addresses valuable comments from user group representatives.

Beryl provided an example in Leicester where River Rangers patrol the waterways by motorbike, which often leads to mixed message to other visitors. Simon commented that where BW employees patrol the waterways via motorbikes they should be clearly identifiable to other visitors.

ACTION: External Relations will circulate the final guidance on '*Motorcycles on Towpaths: Managing the Problem*' as soon as it is available. The guidance will be published on www.britishwaterways.co.uk/accountability under the Freedom of Information, Technical page and from the download page as a PDF document.

Amanda Strang

2.1 Access Points

Sue Day thanked BW for consulting on motorcycle barriers and asked if BW could liaise with the Horse Boating Society when a new barrier is erected.

Sue asked BW to consider the Horse Boating Society's alternative designs for motorcycle barriers.

Sue provided local examples where: access points had been removed, and where vegetation had been planted instead of barriers. Simon asked Sue to ensure that local issues are highlighted to the local waterway unit.

BW produces guidelines to enable employees to make informed decisions on the placement of signs and barriers. We are responsible for managing conflicting interests and inevitably not everyone will be happy.

Henry Whittaker informed the group that motorcycles on towpaths is a police issue and must be reported to the police and obtain a crime reference number.

BW would like to use successful prosecutions against motorcycles to create positive publicity to encourage visitors to report these issues.

3.0 TOWPATH HARMONY WORKING GROUP

Colin Palmer asked BW to provide further information about a sub-group that has formed within BW to discuss towpath issues.

Simon confirmed that a small working group in London was set up to look at specific problems in the London area.

A proposed paper on cycling was tabled at a recent directors meeting, however, further work will be carried out to ensure a greater involvement of user group representatives.

Colin Palmer explained the background to the Countryside Agency's document 'paths for shared uses' which covers various surface types according to activity and includes a section on towpaths (see page 16). BW participated in a working group to develop the guidance document.

ACTION: External Relations will write to the group by the **30 May 2006** outlining the conclusions of BW's directors on internal work for managing cycling activities on towpaths and conflict between users in general. It was agreed that we will seek the early involvement from user groups on any future work. Amanda Strang

ACTION: Hard copies of the Countryside Agency publication *Paths for Shared Uses* will be circulated to meeting attendees. Amanda Strang

4.0 SHARED USE OF FACILITIES

Following the Boating Issues meeting where 'shared use of facilities' was discussed BW invited comments from the Corridor Issues group.

Beryl believed BW to have a fully inclusive policy and the exclusion of activity groups would go against this. Simon responded that BW does not intend to exclude any groups from the availability of services.

A general discussion took place on the method of charging for facilities and the use of new technology to provide an improved service. (e.g. town discount card). A charge card would create greater flexibility for BW and its visitors.

Meeting attendees favoured BW's development of a universal service card for access and as a charging system for using some canalside facilities.

5.0 TOWPATH MOWING GUIDELINES UPDATE

BW pre-circulated an update report on the status of the Towpath Mowing Guidelines.

The group felt that there was a lull in the progress of the Towpath Mowing Guidelines since the report in October 2005.

British Waterways will be encouraging ecologists to work with operation managers to create agreements with contractors to identify area where individual cutting regimes are required. The contractors will also be asked to prove their accreditation.

ACTION: The current status of the Towpath Mowing Guidelines, an explanation of the relationship between the 'Veg Pledge', BW's guidance for dealing with woody vegetation and guidance for dealing with soft vegetation will be communicated to the group. Amanda Strang

6.0 VISITOR SAFETY

6.1 Visitor Incident Report Forms

Peter Wade reported that 386 Visitor Incident Report Forms (VIRF) had been received between October 2004 and February 2006.

Work at Wolverhampton demonstrates BW's ability to identify areas of anti-social behaviour through Visitor Incident Reporting and targets areas with the help of local police forces.

Peter informed the group that AINA will be using the same form as BW to encourage all navigation authorities to report visitor incidents in a consistent way.

Sue Lewis provided an example of a boatwatch scheme operating on the Weaver Navigation (WeaverWatch) created as a result of incidents reported to the police.

Rangers on the Leicester Section of the Grand Union have agreed to place VIRF in information boxes.

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| ACTIONS: | External Relations to circulate the VIRF presentation showing current statistics and trends. | Amanda Strang |
| ACTION: | BW appealed to representative groups, especially walkers, cyclists and anglers to assist in the promotion and distribution of the reporting forms. External Relations encourages groups to make contact and progress. | All Users |
| ACTION: | The good work being carried out by Sue Ashurst, Waterway Community Safety Officer for North West Waterways was welcomed by the group. We will provide the group with an update on how the project at Lock 68 on the Rochdale Canal has progressed by the 30 May 2006 . | Amanda Strang |

6.2 Location Identification

The group felt that grid-references should be used to identify locations since they are internationally recognised.

BW's GIS teams are providing layers of the waterway system to emergency services to enable them to identify locations a little easier.

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| ACTION: | Peter Wade will attend a meeting with Emergency Services regarding the use of grid references to identify locations. External Relations will circulate the outcomes of the meeting with the Emergency Services by 30 May 2006 . | Amanda Strang |
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6.3 CanalWatch Schemes

BW pre-circulated a paper by Tony Haynes on Safety, Anti-social behaviour & Canal Watch Schemes.

Roger Squires informed the group of schemes operating in London (Thames21 – operating from Camden to Slough and the Waterways Citizens run by Lee Rivers Trust – operating from Limehouse to River Lea along Hertford Union). Sponsorship and a dedicated person to operate these schemes helped the schemes to survive.

7.0 AVIAN INFLUENZA

The Towpath Action Group explained the effects of wide spread closure of the network to its members.

Simon explained the planning that has gone into ensuring the BW has the best advice possible. We urge visitors not to panic and follow the advice laid out in BW's guidance.

There is no hidden danger to users only the movement of poultry that would be restricted not humans.

8.0 HORSE BOATING GUIDANCE DOCUMENT

Simon explained to meeting attendees the background to the Horse Boating Guidance document and invited comments in writing to Sue Day.

Roger Squires provided positive comments about the Horse Boating Document and the problems that maybe encountered.

Sue thanked user group representatives for their comments to-date. At last year's Horse Boating Society's AGM George Greener was presented with an award for his support to

Horse Boating. This year Robin Evans and Jim Taylor have been presented this award.

A few meeting attendees felt that the tone of the document needs to have a softer approach.

ACTION: The group were asked to provide comments directly to Sue Day, Chair of the Horse Boating Society either in writing (12 Oakview Road, Lower Beestow, Mossley, Ashton-under-Lyne, OL5 9QL) or email (sueday_horse@yahoo.co.uk) All Users

9.0 **DOG MESS UPDATE (Deposits on Towpath)**

David Pearce commented that members have asked about the 'state-of-play' of the 'responsible dog ownership campaign'. David provided examples where visitors would clean up after their dogs in local authority areas but not on the towpath.

Roger explained that in some areas where bins are installed they overflow with other rubbish in addition to dog mess.

Sue Lewis commented where they have bins and contracts in place this is working very successfully.

ACTION: BW is currently undertaking a review of Responsible Dog Ownership on the waterways. A meeting to discuss the way forward with Responsible Dog Ownership will be held on 13 April, following this meeting, External Relations will provide the outcomes to the group by **30 May 2006**. Amanda Strang

10. **Timely Consultation**

The group felt that local waterways should be pro-active in consulting the groups on issues that affect them.

An example of where BW had not carried out sufficient consultation was provided (e.g. changes to mooring charges at Moorhen Marina, changing from per metre to per berth)

The group commented on inconsistent messages produced by waterways on national guidelines.

Roger welcomed the good consultation London undertook about water freight and the effective dialogue.

Mike Bools highlighted a lack of meeting notes in a written format. Eugene asked Mike to provide exact details where this was happening and explained that actions arising from user group meetings are recorded as notes and not minutes for legal reasons.

ACTION: BW will emphasize the need to consult with local user groups on issues that affect them or they have an interest in to waterway units. External Relations

10.1 **Charging for events on BW property**

Meeting attendees expressed concern about BW implementing an administration charge for processing an application to hold a 3rd party event. It was felt that this move goes against BW's vision to increase visitor numbers.

ACTION: BW understood concerns expressed at the meeting and will provide a formal response by **30 May 2006**. External Relations

11.0 **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

11.1 **Frequency and purpose of meetings**

Simon invited comment from the group on the purpose and frequency of user group meetings.

The meeting attendees felt that Hatton was the most suitable location for the national meetings and that they should remain before (e.g. March) and after (e.g. October) the cruising season.

ACTION: External Relations will provide paperwork for meetings at least one week in advance of the meeting date. Amanda Strang

11.2 Heritage Recording Project

ACTION: Nigel Crowe, Head of Heritage, would be asked to attend October's Corridor Issues meeting. Nigel's presentation on Waterways Heritage will be circulated by **30 May 2006**. Amanda Strang

11.3 Items for next agenda

- Heritage Recording and Heritage Listing principles
- Towpath Harmony Working Group

SUMMARY

Simon closed the meeting and thanked everyone for attending.

Date of next meeting 26 October 2006