

**ROBIN EVANS CUSTOMER MEETING  
London Canal Museum, Kings Cross, 18 July 2008**

**Lack of moorings in London**

- IWA is disappointed BW hasn't taken on their recommendations for increased moorings in London.
- BWML has been missing out on an opportunity for 40 extra moorings at Limehouse Basin for the past eight years.
- There are other opportunities in the docks themselves and across the London network.

**RE:** Limehouse Basin is part of BWML. BWML have been negotiating for some time to introduce new moorings in the basin. Updates on progress with this have died down over the past six months. BW will chase BWML up on this.

**SB:** BWL is also investigating opportunities for increased moorings in the corner of Limehouse Basin, at Prescott Lock, on City Mill River. Our National Marinas Unit (NMU) also has two submissions for new sites which, if they materialise, will provide a significant number of new moorings in the London region.

- What about online/linear moorings where there is lay-by space on the canals?
- BW's linear moorings policy needs to be more subtle to allow for wider and deeper sections of canal.
- Long established linear moorings have been closed for property development and not replaced; this seems unacceptable.

**RE:** This is all good to hear. Please do contact us with your views and ideas of where we have opportunities to develop new moorings (via email/telephone/in person).

- BWL could put in two new moorings in the mouth of the Brent Feeder.
- One boater has approached BW in the past about opportunities for mooring sites and has been turned away.
- There is a feeling that BWL doesn't encourage or like private mooring operators as BWL would rather control the moorings themselves.

**RE:** BW set up the New Marinas Unit to encourage the development of new private marinas across the UK. This initiative is doing very well, however London is seeing less of the benefit due to its high land values. BW has all the resources and capacity to run moorings itself efficiently and effectively in order to support new developments and other elements of the network. It makes sense that BW would rather operate moorings itself than pass off to private mooring operators.

**Business barges & planning applications**

- Many users have issues with the increased number of business barges in London.
- BWL is taking leisure and residential moorings offline and bringing business barges online in their place.
- The business barges at Tottenham Hale (Hale Wharf) are appropriate and acceptable, but the majority of others are not.

- BWL needs to establish a dialogue with its users as to where business barges are appropriate and inappropriate.

**RE:** business barges are subject to planning permission. This process should be enough in itself.

- Yes but the problem is that local councils are pushing the applications through as they want to receive the tax rates from the businesses. The councils do not really understand how the waterways work and the value they bring to people.

**RE:** We need to establish if this is a navigational issue or an issue of taking moorings from leisure users.

- The developer in Paddington Basin has approval for 17 business barges to be introduced in the Basin. When questioned about this at recent UGMs, BWL has stated that these barges are not their issue and it is in the hands of the developer. Is this entirely true?
- 1 million square feet of developments are being constructed in Paddington Basin

**SB:** At present there are 3 business barges in Paddington Basin and they are owned by Paddington Business Barges Limited. European Land & Property Limited (ELP), who are the developer for Merchant Square, have recently been granted planning permission for 'a harbourmaster's office, lifting bridge, provision of pontoons, mooring facilities and service connections for commercial barges' to be located in the main and inner basin (beyond the Helix bridge) based on a comprehensive waterspace strategy incorporating a range of mooring types and uses. BW discussed the relevant issues with ELP at an early stage last year and also commented on the planning application last August.

We will be raising a number of issues with ELP over the next month or two regarding the delivery of an appropriate mix of moorings to achieve the right balance and mix of moorings to reflect our long held aspirations for the use of the water space and to complement the surrounding high quality, mixed-use development.

**RE:** the concept of business barges was put forward in the London plan consultation – the documentation for this is on the London website. BW must speak directly with the council and represent its users.

- Councils are very reluctant to provide information on planning applications free of charge and boaters can't afford to purchase these.
- There is an argument that the planning process is not a public consultation.

**RE:** these pages from planning applications should be published on our website.

- Yes they often are but the site is very hard to use. It isn't 100% up-to-date and only lists the application pages for two weeks before they are taken off the site which doesn't give people enough time to access them.
- Often, planning applications made by BW in partnership with others, don't go up on the website and users don't know anything is happening until the building works have started.
- There is a feeling that BW uses the planning process as a substitute for dialogue with its users. There seems to be a conflict of interest where BW is seen as the 'gamekeeper' and 'poacher' – while BW must exploit commercial opportunities to make the books balance, it must also act as guardian of the waterways and its users.
- BW should consider investigating the public housing policy and applications process as they have similar conflicts of interest which are well managed.

- Waterway users have concerns about BW's waterspace strategies as they don't seem to go through an official planning process or approach users for feedback.

### **Facilities for users**

- Facilities available for waterway users seem impoverished and lacking. There are minimal provisions between Little Venice and Old Ford Lock.

**RE:** BW received £49.1m in third party contributions last year from organisations such as local councils and regional development agencies. This income tends to be provided on a project specific basis for schemes such as waterway restorations and towpath improvements and primarily recognises the value that these funding bodies attach to the waterways for local communities and businesses.

It is very difficult to persuade developers to put water points on their land as they generally don't want it to become a public facility.

- The tap at the water point just below City Road Lock is coming out of the wall and is useless in its current state.

**SB:** This is not a water point which is promoted for general use as it belongs to the tenant who occupies the building at City Road Lock. The nearest water point is at St. Pancras Cruising Club, King's Cross, where there is also an elsan disposal point and pump-out.

### **Slough Arm**

- Can BW keep the Friends of Slough Canal informed of what is going to happen after the lease expires in 2010?
- The waterway in the Slough Arm is deteriorating.

**RE:** BW is keen to redevelop the Slough Basin to make it more of a destination. There is a problem with power lines here, and with the current economic climate the development of the basin is going to require some time, but it will be addressed before 2010. Restoration projects in general are difficult for BW as we are struggling to fund maintenance of the existing network, let alone develop new sites.

- If Friends of Slough Canal provide the initiative they will expect BW to support their proposals – users in Swindon are using this model and it is working.

### **Canoeing issues**

- Stewart Fisher of Paddlers International raised concerns for canoeists at tunnels and with freight on the waterways with BW's head of engineering and safety for South East waterways last year. They promised to follow up with them but nothing ever came out of it.

### **Water pollution in the River Lee**

- (Leslie Fitton) The rowers at the Lea Rowing Club are very concerned by the level of water pollution in the River Lee. This has led to increased weed & pennywort making it virtually impossible to row through. BW's weed machine has only cleared one thin route through the weed which is no use to the Rowing Club as they need to row side by side. Can BW ensure the river is fully cleared in time for the Regatta event on 31<sup>st</sup> July?

**SB:** Our customer operations manager for this area will ensure that the Rowing Club's requirements are met for the Regatta event on the 31<sup>st</sup> July. Going forward, the weeds in this

area will be cut on a weekly basis. However, BWL does not have the resource to provide the absolute rate of clearance the Rowing Club would like to see. However, we will endeavour to meet their requirements as best we can with the resources we have available.

BWL is making progress with the new committee that has been set up to address the pollution problems in this area (includes representatives from the Environment Agency) and are getting nearer to putting in a 'hard' river bed in the River Lee to resolve the problem of polluted sediments. We are also looking at the issue of sewage overflow from Deephams Sewage Works.

- BW also needs to consider the effects of the discharge from Deephams Sewage Works on the Olympic site. The E.A admitted a few years back that to address the problems at Deephams would exceed their annual budget for the Thames and therefore could not consider fixing it! The IWA put their bid in to the ODA in 2004 about this problem.
- Thames Water are exacerbating the problem as they are extracting too much water further up the Lee (illegally) and BW need to clamp down on this.

**SB:** BW is currently investigating Thames Water on the above problem.

### **BW targets for maintenance projects**

- Users have heard that BW is currently behind by £10m with maintenance projects. How are you addressing this?

**RE:** BW is looking at how to maintain current levels of maintenance by streamlining operations. We must be 4% more efficient by the end of 2008 to meet our business plan targets. There are some large scale works programmes we have to commit to but it is a difficult situation as we simply don't have the necessary funding in the bank. We have to gamble on selling property in order to go ahead with the programmes. This is a risky business in the current economic climate. We are looking for ways to become more flexible. BW is developing a strategy for 2020 which is looking at gaining increased support from local authorities.