

Notes

Meeting title	Boat Dwellers Task & Finish Group meeting with Canal & Rivers Trust (CRT)
Date	Wednesday 20 March 2013
Present	Richard Rutter, Sally Ash and Tom Deards (CRT), Cllr Eleanor Jackson (chair), Cllr Brian Simmons, Cllr Gerry Cullen, Mark Minkley, Samantha Jones, Ann Robins (notes)
Apologies	Cllr Dave Laming

ACTION

1.	Welcome, introductions and apologies:- Cllr Jackson gave a brief overview of the purpose of the T&F Group and the timetable for completion.	
2.	Update on the Canal & Rivers Trust Tom Deards updated the group on the legal status of the CRT since its transfer to charitable status in 2012. The main points were: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governance structures have changed as CRT is no longer a public body • Despite there being no duty to have consideration of equalities, CRT considers itself to be covered by the Equalities Act. • Waterways Partnerships have been established to ensure balance for local communities. The partnership covering the Kennet and Avon has been tasked with producing a moorings strategy. The first draft of the document is expected in the Summer. Tamsin Phipps is the interim chair. • A number of advisory groups have been set up – Angling, Navigation, Conservation and Freight. • As part of its asset management plan, CRT will risk assess all maintenance needs. 	
3.	Discussion of the Use of the Canal Cllr Simmons asked if CRT welcomed residential boaters. Sally Ash stated they did. She also advised that recent years have seen a significant increase in the number of people wishing to live on the canals and waterways. CRT does not wish to see 'ribbon development' and some new marinas have been built in the Midlands, but not enough to accommodate demand. Sally also explained that any boat that isn't navigating in line with CRT guidance should either be moored in a marina or taken off the water completely. Richard Rutter asked councillors if they wanted to see more moorings established in Bath & North East Somerset. As New Homes Bonus is payable on newly-developed moorings, this could be a realistic option, given Planning approval. Samantha Jones explained that the T&F Group was aiming to brief the Housing & Major Projects Policy Development & Scrutiny Panel on the issues identified and to make recommendations on areas for further work, not to identify potential solutions. Cllr Curran raised the issue of families living on the waterways who had a range of social and healthcare needs, but do not tend to come forward to access them. Also, he would like to see a range of tenures in place to allow for the widest possible choice. Cllr Jackson advised that the T&F Group wanted to gather information on best practice.	

	<p>There was a discussion of the broad issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are a number of households living on the waterways that have a range of social care and support needs. • Best practice needs to be examined for options • The most densely populated waterways are London and Bath. • CRT have links with the Salvation Army with regards to vulnerable adults • CRT are concerned that the balance of users is not right in Bath and that leisure users are being forced out. The Moorings Strategy aims to address this. • CRT are hoping to differentiate long-standing boat-dwellers from new arrivals, issuing Flexible Mooring Permits to allow longer stays. Costing roughly £1,000 on top of the license (typically £750 pa). • CRT is also aiming to define 'navigation' for the Bath valley area. It is likely to state that a journey of less than 10 miles in one journey is not sufficient to be regarded as navigation. There is also be a requirement to move at least every 14 days. • Off-line (or marina) development is difficult in Bath & North East Somerset due to the Green Belt and high cost of land. CRT is keen to find a way through this and would want the moorings to be affordable. This would take some of the pressure off the towpaths. • CRT is struggling to manage demand on refuse and other services attached to their moorings. • Some 150 boats without home moorings are regularly sighted along the towpath in the Bath area. • CRT has various channels of communication with boaters. Some are keen to establish a link and influence strategy whilst others are hostile to any approach that would limit their occupation of the waterways. • Facilitated discussions with boaters and bargee travellers are needed to enable better relationships. Cllr Simmons suggested Avon Mediation Service. • The overcrowding on the canal impacts on tourism and therefore the local economy. • CRT carries out regular audits along the canal using license numbers. Its latest estimate is that there are nearly 2,000 boats along the whole length of the canal at any time. • The T&F Group aims to establish numbers of people living on the water, the reasons they are there (lifestyle choice or lack of options in bricks & mortar?), whether they wish to cruise or moor and examination of best practice. A report will go to the Panel and then to Cabinet. • CRT asked that the Group consider endorsing the Moorings Strategy. Cllr Jackson advised that the Group would look at the draft strategy, but needed to consult with neighbouring authorities. Richard Rutter offered to facilitate a joint meeting. • The Placemaking Plan could include a plan for new marinas. Mark Minkley can offer advice on incorporating the Moorings Strategy into the Placemaking Plan. 	
4.	Memo of Understanding for Boat Dwellers: Update:-	
5.		
6.	Any Other Business:-	
7.	Date of next meeting:	