

# Kennet and Avon Canal

User Group Meeting, 19<sup>th</sup> November 2009

Devizes Wharf, Devizes, Wiltshire

The following notes are intended to capture key issues and action points that were raised during the course of the Kennet and Avon Canal User Group Meeting that was held on Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> November 2009.

## **BW Staff PRESENT:**

Mark Stephens (Waterway Manager, Kennet and Avon Waterways) [MJS]  
Sally Ash (Head of Boating Business) [SA], Wouter Nijland (Senior Moorings Manager), Russell Bennett (Enforcement Supervisor), Damian Kemp (Project Officer, Boating Business), Maria Nash (Moorings Manager)

The meeting was well attended by customers, stakeholders and others with an interest in the canal; around 60 people attended the meeting.

## **GENERAL**

- It was agreed by majority consensus that minutes will be taken at future User Group Meetings. MJS proposed that future minutes of the meeting would primarily record action points. This was however rejected; the Kennet and Avon Canal Trust have kindly offered to assist in taking minutes of future meetings.
- Future meetings will continue to be held at approximately four month intervals. Meetings will be held in Devizes.
- The attendance register that is passed around at the meeting will be used by British Waterways to distribute notes of the meeting and notify users of forthcoming meetings.
- MJS is keen that future User Group Meetings are primarily a means for British Waterways to report on canal related issues. Similarly, the User Group Meeting will also allow specific issues to be discussed from a range of perspectives, taking advantage of the wide range of skills and experience that is in attendance at the meeting.
- MJS is keen to resolve local issues as and when they appear and urged all those present to raise any concerns they have direct with the Waterway, rather than waiting for the next User Group Meeting where it can be difficult to focus on very specific issues in sufficient detail

## **BRITISH WATERWAYS, UPDATE**

MJS described the recent reorganisation of British Waterways that came into effect on 1 November 2009. Key elements as follow:

- The reorganisation has resulted in the network being divided into eleven operational waterway areas; the Kennet and Avon Waterways comprise the Kennet and Avon Canal and the Bridgwater and Taunton Canal
- Devizes will be the operational base for the Kennet and Avon Canal. The Waterway Team will be based in the BW Devizes yard. The team comprises a Waterway Manager, Finance Manager, Contracts Manager, Waterway Engineer, Works Planner, Works Supervisors and Administrative Support. Around 35 operatives work on the canal bank, undertaking daily maintenance and operation tasks
- Specialist support to the waterway (ecologists, heritage specialists, construction engineers, project managers etc) is provided by central departments that operate nationally, across the whole waterway network
- Around 100 office based staff were lost during the reorganisation

## **MOORING CONSULTATION UPDATE**

Sally Ash presented an update on the mooring strategy consultation, summarised as follows:

*In recent years there has been exceptional growth in boating on BW's waterways. As custodians of the waterways, we warmly welcome this growth in boating activity. However, growth on the scale that we have seen over the past ten years does not come without challenges. How we best manage the limited space along the line of the canals to protect the qualities that make them so special, not only to boaters but to the public at large, is the subject of two consultations:*

1. *The Mooring Policies consultation looks at:*

- *Where, and for how long, boats should be permitted to moor in areas of particularly high usage*
- *Encouragement of long term mooring off the main line of the waterway*
- *Moorings for residential boats*

2. *The consultation on Developing Local Mooring Strategies looks at:*

- *Local mooring strategy steering group: purpose, membership and chairing*
- *Steering group tasks*

*BW invites feedback on the new policy proposals presented in the consultations, which we have developed with help from national boating organisations. Both consultations close on the 31<sup>st</sup> of January 2010. The western end of the K&A is proposed as the first pilot area for a local mooring strategy.*

## **FORTHCOMING STOPPAGE WORKS:**

The following Lock Stoppage works were reported as started or forthcoming:

November 2009: Garston Lock (turf-sided lock); replacement of lock gates

November to December 2009: Widmead Lock; replacement of lock gates and replacement of approx. 75% of brick lock chamber facing.

January to March 2010: Caen Hill Locks (8 pairs of bottom gates replaced between locks 28 and 43)

## **ACTION POINTS**

Following brief presentations of British Waterways' reorganisation and the Mooring Strategy, MJS invited issues to be raised from the floor, to assist understanding waterway priorities for next year. The following were recorded:

- a. Water Levels; invariably too low, specifically (but not exclusively) Bath to Bradford on Avon and Bradford on Avon to Semington
- b. Weed and Reed Growth, particularly on the Long Pound where reed encroachment is a significant obstruction to navigation
- c. Mechanical and Electrical Issues, particularly with respect to Bradford on Avon Lock and Pumping Station (this relates to (a), Water Levels).
- d. Bramble and hedge growth, limiting use of towpath (and the towpath not being cleared following hedge strimming)
- e. Visitor Moorings, allocations as winter moorings. Both the period (currently commencing October) and total length were queried
- f. Affordable boat facilities (and specifically future facilities at Bradford on Avon under new management)
- g. Tree and vegetation management, particularly on river sections at the east end of the canal
- h. The River Avon; not receiving appropriate attention from BW and not served well by existing User Group Meeting format.
- i. Mooring Issues, Lower Avon. Rapid growth in number of moorings on the River Avon.

MJS undertook to action or report on all of the above at the next User Group Meeting. Given the context of a limited budget, works will be prioritised and inevitably not all issues will be dealt with as quickly as would be hoped. Where this is the case, a decision not to address an issue at this point in time would be justified.