



## **TOWPATH MOORING MANAGEMENT**

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### **PROJECT UPDATE – 31 March 2014**

#### **Introduction**

This is the third of our regular updates on the Towpath Mooring Management project, running from April 2013 to April 2016, focused on building constructive engagement with the boating community, creating better understanding of the rules, addressing specific local issues, reviewing visitor moorings and working with local stakeholders.

We hope you find this report interesting and informative. If you have any comments or would like future reports to cover any particular aspect in greater detail, please drop a line to [fran.read@canalrivertrust.org.uk](mailto:fran.read@canalrivertrust.org.uk).

#### **Project Objectives**

Our objectives for the project are to:

1. Build more constructive engagement with all segments of the boating community, developing communication strategies to build awareness of and wider respect for mooring rules to influence boater behaviour, thereby reducing dependence on legal enforcement sanctions.
2. Ensure that new 'Continuous Cruisers' are fully aware of and comply with requirements of the 1995 legislation.
3. Develop workable proposals for those Continuous Cruisers who have already established a lifestyle dependence which is not consistent with 'bona fide' navigation as a stop-gap measure to address specific local issues.
4. Review visitor mooring provision, signage, communications and monitoring procedures at relevant sites.
5. Engage local stakeholders in the development and implementation of the actions arising from the project to build consensus.

#### **Report on progress and plans**

##### ***Communications***

###### *Boater views and feedback*

Our effort to enhance two-way communications with boaters and boating organisations, in order to get their feedback on both national and local issues, has continued over the past two months:

- In February and March, chief executive Richard Parry hosted five open meetings for boaters, in Nottingham, Banbury (two meetings), Leeds and Gloucester to follow the initial January meeting in Birmingham. The meetings are proving popular with local boaters, who are taking the opportunity to ask Richard and the team questions about the Trust. Around 450 people have attended so far. Further meetings are planned across the country, with Anderton, London and Devizes booked in for April and May. Q&A from the meetings are published on

the Trust's website under the relevant meeting: [www.canalrivertrust.org.uk/meetings](http://www.canalrivertrust.org.uk/meetings) (key word search: 'open')

- We are aiming to publish a summary of the results of the bi-annual Boat Owners' Views survey, which was completed by 1,260 boaters, shortly..
- During 2014 we will be carrying out new, more frequent, shorter online surveys that will track boaters' views, starting in May. Invitations to take part will be sent to 1,000 boaters each time by independent research agency, BDRC Continental, who will be conducting the survey for us. There will be three surveys a year.
- At the end of last year, Roger Hanbury, our Head of Governance, carried out a review of our waterway user group meetings. This spring, we have begun holding the new format Local Waterway Forums, which are open to all waterway users to meet their local waterway team and discuss any issues they may have. We'll be continuing to talk to boaters at our various meetings this spring and over the summer to get their feedback and to see if we can make any further improvements.
- Throughout 2014 we are holding regular meetings with the national boating organisations to discuss our longer term priorities and plans. The first meeting took place on 3 February, and the main topic of discussion was about how the Trust planned its maintenance spend, with operations director Vince Moran explaining how the Trust cares for the core fabric of its waterways. A further meeting has been planned for 31 March 2014, where visitor moorings will be the main topic of discussion.

#### *Reaching new continuous cruisers and people in the planning stages of boat purchase*

We have continued our new process to contact every new boater taking out a licence without a home mooring for the first time, advising them of how we monitor movement and that we will offer them feedback regularly during the first year if we believe they are not moving enough to qualify as a continuous cruiser. The aim is to keep new boaters informed so they are able to meet their cruising requirements. Since January we have sent out just under 200 letters to customers newly registered as continuous and will shortly have the first set of data to show us if any of these boaters are running into difficulties.

In London, we're planning a communications campaign aimed at home seekers tempted by the idea of living afloat, particularly if they expect to stay in one area, to explain that they must have a home mooring and/or agree to comply with our Guidance for continuously cruising. We aim to explain that it may be more difficult than people imagine to comply with the movement rules, and the consequences of not moving. We are also planning to work with local boaters on a welcome pack for new boaters, that will explain the rules and etiquette of boating, tips from old hands, as well as useful information about facilities, contact numbers and more.

#### *Helping boaters meet the requirements of their licence*

We often hear from boaters that they would like clearer guidance about what constitutes a different place or neighbourhood, to aid with them planning their cruising patterns. We have been working on a series of maps to show our interpretation of waterway 'neighbourhoods', and are currently sense-checking these with our local people prior to sharing with boaters.

#### *Improving communicating information to boaters*

In January, we began to recruit boater volunteers to pilot more local boater-led communications, including more regular, timely updating of noticeboards with relevant information and any other communication methods that suit the local area. The initiative is being trialled in London, South East and Central Shires waterways.

#### *Legal update*

In February, Nick Brown, the legal officer of the National Bargee Travellers Association, abandoned his claim for judicial review of our 'Guidance for Boaters without a Home Mooring'. Mr Brown had been questioning whether the Guidance accurately reflected the requirements of the British Waterways Act 1995. Our legal team has always viewed this claim as misconceived and we confirm that the Guidance remains valid and applicable for boaters without a home mooring.

### **Mooring permits**

#### *Winter mooring permits*

As March draws to a close, we have taken the opportunity to survey boaters to find out their opinions on the new system of winter mooring permits, including general towpath permits. We will use the information to guide our plans for next winter's scheme. Anecdotally the feedback has been positive, although concerns have been raised about overstaying in some popular areas. Sales have continued successfully and reports show some 30% uplift on 2012 sales. There has been lower demand for the selected visitor mooring sites that were offered as winter moorings - the sites where we invested most time in organising volunteer and boatyard sightings. These have seen roughly 50% demand and we are considering lessons for the future from this.

#### *Permits sold to 26/03/14*

	Permits sold
General towpath permit (£5/metre/month (5 months))	520
London towpath permit (£10/metre/month (5 months))	75
Selected visitor moorings	94
Total	689

#### *Roving mooring permits*

In March we came to the disappointing conclusion that there could be difficulties in restricting the issue of roving mooring permits to the groups that they were designed to help. The permits, which were due to go live in April, were intended to address a long-standing issue with boaters who had established lifestyles that meant it was very difficult to fulfil their licence requirements.

Many people were involved in developing and exploring the proposals and we continue to be extremely grateful for their support – those involved in the process had been assured previously that the proposal was deliverable, and bear no responsibility for this late change. We will continue to work with local boaters to improve understanding of the Trust's guidance for boaters without a home mooring and to develop ways to help people to comply.

### **Local initiatives**

#### *Kennet & Avon Canal, west of Devizes*

In March we published our response to the consultation on the towpath mooring plan, proposed by our Kennet & Avon Waterway Partnership, to encourage fair use of the busy stretch of the Kennet & Avon Canal between Devizes and Bath. We are very grateful for the work that the Partnership has done and the contributions made by the many people who responded to the Consultation. With some modifications, discussed with the Partnership, we will implement the bulk of the proposed plan from 1 May.

Boaters without a home mooring on the western end of the canal between Bath and Foxhangers at the bottom of the Caen Hill flight, who adopt the range of movement and mooring described in our

response, will not face enforcement action by the Trust for a 12 month interim period. We will work with the Partnership to monitor the impact of this plan. We are now developing communications materials for boaters, adjusting monitoring systems and updating signage.

To read our full response, please visit: <http://canalrivertrust.org.uk/about-us/consultations/completed-consultations>

We are also working on finalising a 'Good Behaviour Guide' primarily targeted at hire boat users.

### *London*

We have been improving our communication channels with boaters through a regular emailed [Boating Bulletin for London](#) and via posts on the London Boaters Facebook page by our mooring ranger and caretaker boaters. Two part-time community communications volunteers have also been recruited and inducted via the London Waterways team.

Our mooring rangers have started making contact with land-based residents at mooring trouble spots to build relationships and appropriate management responses. They have completed assessment work on two more potential casual mooring sites on the Regent's Canal, developed partnership work with councils and homelessness agencies and successfully secured accommodation for two rough sleepers on the Regent's Canal.

Over the next few months we will be collating an action plan of priorities developed by the Better Relationships Group – which is formed of around 20 people with a commitment to working together to improve conditions on London's waterways – and proposing a programme and terms for future meetings. We will be discussing the consultation programme on access arrangements for boating in the Olympic Park and rolling out new signage for lock landings and water points, to encourage fair use of the facilities.

We will be attending a re-scheduled meeting with Lee Valley Regional Park Authority to talk to them about moorings and towpath management.

### ***Visitor moorings management***

We know that there is work to be done around visitor moorings on a nationwide scale. At the moment the system lacks clarity and does not necessarily manage demand in the most effective way. We need to think about where time limits are really needed, what the criteria is for a visitor mooring and where we need to do monitoring. We are developing ideas with the help of our Navigation Advisory Group, groups of boaters in the SE and London and with the representatives of national boating organisations. Some areas, such as London and the South East, have specific pressures on visitor moorings, and further initiatives are happening in these areas.

In the South East volunteers have been helping with regular boat checks at a number of locations and this is providing the solid data we need to inform critical decisions about visitor mooring site management. As a result of feedback from boaters, we have reviewed and agreed to some small changes to the visitor moorings at Foxton, Thrupp and Stoke Bruerne, that will come into effect on 1 April.

In London, signage has been installed at Islington and we have produced our second monthly report on Islington visitor moorings management. We have been working with Islington Council to improve relations between boaters and residents, and the Council has recruited an apprentice who is developing guidance on good environmental practice relating to wood-burning stoves and diesel engines. Volunteer caretaker boaters have been appointed, who switch between popular mooring spots (Islington and Victoria Park) offering help and advice to other boaters. We are working on extending the caretaker boater initiative to cover more visitor mooring sites across London.

We have carried out a consultation for proposals to change visitor mooring arrangements temporarily at Little Venice pool and Paddington Basin visitor moorings and will be reviewing the feedback. The

proposals aim to provide more room and facilities for boats visiting this popular area, and to test the demand for new trade moorings in front of Paddington Station.

Visitor moorings in London can suffer from vandalism, theft and other crime, so we are working with the police to address security issues. This includes looking into installing CCTV. Our mooring rangers are also reviewing visitor information boards and preparing new material that will provide the information boaters want to see.

### ***Support for vulnerable boaters***

We are continuing our support and cooperation with the Waterways Chaplaincy and exploring the potential for extending the service outside of the South East.

### ***Long term residential moorings***

Over the last 18 months, we have been researching locations for the possible development of new mooring sites in London. Three small developments, with a total of 19 berths, are scheduled to be completed during 2014 at Acton's Lock on the Regents Canal, Atlip Road on the Grand Union Paddington branch at Alperton, and Matchmakers Wharf, Homerton, on the lower Lee. During the course of this work, we have identified some 30 possible sites along the offside which are not large enough to be commercially viable but which, subject to further research, might be of interest to a social enterprise.

We have produced a draft 'How to Guide' and are waiting for internal sign off before sharing with the Better Relationships Group, the RBOA and the IWA for their feedback.

More enquiries have been received about proposed community-led schemes, demonstrating interest and the need for support. A wider proposal has been received from a boater as part of his practical/University project, that provides an assessment of a range of sites. We will provide clearer on these site proposals when our guidance is ready.

We will shortly be publishing our response to the Greater London Authority's [report on moorings on London](#).

Sally Ash, Head of Boating  
31 March 2014