

River Task Group

- Reporting to the Strategic River Group (Bath & North East Somerset Council)

DRAFT -Summary Notes & Actions

Tuesday 3rd March 2015, 10.30am-12pm, Lewis House (Room 3.2), Bath

Name	Position	Organisation
Simon Martin (SM)	Operations Manager	B&NES
Mark Minkley (MM)	Environment Team Leader	B&NES
Samantha Jones (SJ)	Corporate Policy Manager- Equalities	B&NES
Simon De Beer (SDB)	Group Manager- Policy & Environment	B&NES
Graham Sabourn (GS)	Head of Housing	B&NES
Zoe Hancock (ZH)	River Coordinator	B&NES
Helen Edwards (HE)	Strategic Planning Manager	Canal & Rivers Trust
Sean Williams (SW)	Boating Welfare Manager	Canal & Rivers Trust
Nick Worthington (NW)	Waterways Manager (Kennet & Avon)	Canal & Rivers Trust
Matthew Symonds (MS)	Boating Liaison Manager- South	Canal & River Trust
Tom Deards (TD)	Solicitor	Canal & Rivers Trust

Apologies:

Ann Robins	Team Manager- Housing Strategy & Performance	B&NES
Tim Hewitt	Regeneration Team Manager	B&NES
Richard Rutter	Head of Enterprise	Canal & River Trust
Brian Casey	Head of Estates	Canal & River Trust

1. Welcome and introductions

ZH welcomed the Group and introductions were made.

2. Update/context setting- Strategic River Group (B&NES)

ZH provided a brief introduction to the Strategic River Group (SRG) and discussed how the River Strategy is currently developing.

The Strategic River Group proposed that this River Task Group should form to address and identify how to resolve the following issues:

- Boat Dwellers/River Travellers needs and requirements
- Navigational Issues- especially around Pulteney Weir
- Partnership Agreement between CRT and B&NES
- Appropriate moorings in the planning system
- Align and support safety requirements of the river
- Realise the economic, social and environmental potential of stretches of the river corridor- future development and management

Presentation attached.

NW- How does the SRG and River Strategy align and fit in with the overall vision for Bath & North East Somerset Council (B&NES)?

- River Strategy currently working to align key issues and outcomes with relevant B&NES documents, including the Core Strategy, Placemaking Plan, Enterprise Area Masterplan, Health and Transport, Flood Management Plans, etc

3. Define and prioritise key issues that this group needs to address:

a. River Travellers/Boat Dwellers

ZH- Referenced the Report that was commissioned in 2013 by B&NES- Housing and Major Projects Overview and Scrutiny Panel. The Report outlines 4 key recommendations that this Group needs to work collaboratively to address.

CRT also provided a brief overview of their current position and highlighted some of the key issues that are being addressed:

- Two types of legislation with regards to licenses of boats:
 - Home mooring
 - Continuous cruiser
- Long standing issue in the Bath area:
 - Increased number of boat dwellers on the canal/river network
 - Not all people living on the river are obtaining a home mooring, therefore fall into the continuous cruiser status and some of these are remaining stationary for long periods of time. CRT noting an increasing number of continuous cruisers who are not moving in recent times.
 - CRT estimate that there are approx. 250 boats who are not complying with the Continuous Cruiser guidelines
 - CRT do not currently have information about the demographic of those 250 boats/why they are not moving, suggested that general perception that living on the river viewed as a low cost option for a home (especially in the South West with increasing house prices).
 - Increase in congestion of boat traffic with boat dwellers, trade boats and recreational/tourist boats- needs managing by CRT in most appropriate way
 - No current statutory definition defining the requirements around a 'Continuous cruiser'- CRT caught between the vague legal definitions and managing the local networks appropriately and supporting local boat users
 - CRT are not a landlord, they are a charitable organisation who have a statutory function to manage and maintain the water networks, aiming to achieve this by working with local partners where possible
- What CRT is proposing:
 - After nearly 2 years of consultation, CRT introducing new 'Local Mooring Plan' from 1st May 2015. If boat dwellers who do not have a home mooring are not moving they will be issued with a 3 month license (then followed up by a 6 month license) to prove to CRT that they are complying with continuous cruiser licence. CRT have statutory powers to ultimately (after following 9 month licensing process) remove boats from the network that are not complying with the Local Mooring Plan- however, this is not the intention/ sole focus of CRT
 - CRT have employed a Welfare Officer to work with more vulnerable boaters who can't meet these requirements, try to avoid ending up resolving this via the legal system in court
 - Future challenge: when boat licenses come up for renewal, boaters need to demonstrate that they can comply

How to move forward with this issue:

- Improve evidence base with regards to boat dwellers- commission a study to understand why we have so many boaters in a small area on the river/canal network, what percentage of boaters cannot afford housing, where would boaters want to live (canal, river, marina?) etc
 - Also need to factor in and understand how many residential/temporary moorings there are, distance to facilities, potential to provide more facilities?
 - CRT and B&NES to work collaboratively to improve evidence base on boat dwellers.
- Need to understand, if there is a shortage of moorings, how this can be captured in the B&NES planning system? (Good opportunity to feed into the Placemaking Plan). Currently no acceptable methodology for understanding need and demand, needs to be addressed.
- Need to understand if the removal of a license will mean the boater's insurance becomes invalid
- Potential to address and improve the education/awareness about the function/roles/responsibilities of CRT, B&NES etc with regards river maintenance, management and moorings with wider boating communities, riparian owners and local residents?

ACTION- ZH to circulate initial draft outline for improving evidence base to CRT, help identify the information that is required and understand what information we already have

ACTION- GS to meet with MS, SW and SJ to discuss how CRT and B&NES can support each other more specifically when dealing with vulnerable boaters/potential housing requirements

b. [Navigational issues surrounding Pulteney Weir](#)

SM provided a brief overview of the challenges facing B&NES regarding this issue:

- Section of the River Avon from Pulteney Weir to Thimble Mill (start of Kennet & Avon Canal)- not currently part of a Navigational Authority system
- The riparian owner is B&NES
- Currently the moorings have been closed, EA have confirmed not safe to moor in these stretches due to impacts of flooding, boats cannot safely moor to existing railings in flood event
- B&NES under increasing pressure from Trade Associations to open up moorings to support local business along the river- B&NES keen to support local business would like to see this resolved sooner rather than later
- Also increasing number of boaters moorings illegally in this stretch, B&NES ending up in court (financially very costly for B&NES) addressing this issue
- Also need to factor in the following:
 - Radial Gate under review by EA- structure will be upgraded/changed depending on Appraisal Study
 - Bath Rugby- potential re-development of the site
 - River Safety recommendations from ROSPA- e.g. need to upgrade height of railings
- B&NES keen to work in partnership with CRT, and other relevant stakeholders, to understand how to best manage this section:
 - Who is best placed to be the Navigational Authority? (B&NES/CRT/ nobody- not navigable?)
 - How can moorings be managed? Who is best placed to do this?
 - Who is responsible for infrastructure? Can CRT be Navigational Authority without taking on the liabilities for the infrastructure?
 - What is the best short term, interim solution?
 - What is the best long term solution?
 - Understand what the potential economic benefits are for CRT, B&NES?
 - Who funds capital infrastructure and maintains it?

- MS suggested that another solution to the issue could be implementing a Public Space Protection Order, new legislation being adopted by Oxford Council. Could be used to help manage the section of the river in question?

ACTION- MS to send SM a reference/copy of Oxford's Public Space Protection Order

ACTION- SM to draft a formal principle document for how this section could be managed and send to CRT for comment

ACTION- SM to follow this up with a meeting with CRT (Tom Deards) to discuss in more detail outline brief and also Memorandum of Understanding

c. Cooperation Agreement between CRT & B&NES

ZH reminded the Group that is has been raised and suggested at various meetings in the past that developing a Cooperation Agreement/MoU between B&NES and CRT could be beneficial. Welcomed comments from the Group:

- NW- In general MoU (not legally binding) often helps to support partnership working, useful to have a set of principles clearly outlining the roles of each organisation around a specific area/matter- also helps with continuity of projects when staff leave/change roles.
- Potential to have a MoU to capture the boat dwellers requirements? Ensure equalities of the boaters are considered.
- General support to develop a MoU to provide clarity for how we move forwards with addressing these issues

ACTION- SM to draft an initial MoU outlining what B&NES would aim to work collaboratively with CRT on with regards to river and management and send to CRT for comment

4. Next steps- River Task Group

The River Task Group will meet once the following meetings have taken place:

MEETING TO BE ARRANGED- (March/April 2015): Graham Sabourne, Samantha Jones, Matthew Symonds and Sean Williams have met to discuss how we can work together to support vulnerable boaters/potential housing requirements

MEETING TO BE ARRANGED- (March/April 2015): Simon Martin and Tom Deards/CRT- define principles around Navigational issues, in particular regarding Pulteney stretch of river

ZH will be in contact with the Group to confirm dates and circulate relevant information.

Items to be carried over to the next meeting:

- Incorporating boat/mooring related proposals within the planning system/new developments
- Water Space Plan/Strategy for River Corridor
- Review structure/communications of the River Task Group
 - Who needs to be involved?- Wiltshire/Bristol contacts?
 - How will this be resourced?

5. A.O.B

NW- A new Waterways Manager is currently being recruited by CRT- will hopefully be in post in coming months. Also CRT have employed a Development and Engagement Adviser (Caroline Robson)