

# **Waterways for Everyone**

## **The Government's Strategy for the Inland Waterways of England and Wales**

*Martyn Webb*

*Inland Waterways Policy*

*Defra*

# How have we got to here?

1. Sept 2008 - Terms of reference for review agreed by IDG.
2. Late 2008/2009 - 2 public workshops with waterways stakeholders and numerous bilateral meetings with navigation authorities to establish priorities for the review.
3. Mid 2009 - Initial draft of revised strategy produced
4. Summer 2009 - principles for finalising draft agreed by IDG
5. Autumn 2009 - taken forward by Steering Group, text finalised and cleared with Ministers
6. 21 December 2009 Consultation Launched – closes 26 March 2010.

# Structure and Layout

1. Introduction – rationale, scope, vision
2. Our inland waterways today
3. Place making and shaping
4. Climate change
5. The natural environment
6. Cultural heritage
7. Health, well-being, recreation and sport
8. Sustainable transport
9. Tourism and business development
10. Fairer, stronger & more active communities
11. The way forward

# Government actions and consultation questions

## Proposed actions for Government

- Nine/Ten actions for Government included in the document.
- Subject to responses to consultation these actions will form the basis of the action plan for delivering this strategy – any new or revised actions for government emerging from the consultation will of course be considered for inclusion in the action plan.

## Consultation Questions

- Comments welcome on any aspects of the strategy.
- But we have included 23 questions as a guide to the issues we are particularly to have your views on.

# Fairer, stronger & more active communities



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Food and Rural Affairs

- Waterways can help to create and sustain stronger and more cohesive communities.
- Can be used: to expand the educational experience of young people, as a focus for volunteering; and to encourage community cohesion and combat social exclusion

## Education

- Provide insight into social and historical changes, natural sciences, climate change and environmental protection.
- Provide opportunities to demonstrate these in a real life setting
- Of value as outdoor classrooms - recognised as being increasingly important by Ofsted. Also some “floating classrooms” operated by 3<sup>rd</sup> sector bodies.

# Fairer, stronger & more active communities

- Education visits provide opportunity to educate about waterway safety .
- Working with schools and colleges brings advantages to waterway authorities. Evidence that contact with waterways at an early age engenders an interest that lasts through life.
- Educating young people to value the waterways helps to reduce vandalism.
- Visits may also open opportunities for encouraging young people to participate in more outdoor activities. Waterway authorities to work in partnership with sporting and recreational organisations to welcome young people
- Waterway authorities can act as facilitators

# Fairer, stronger & more active communities

## Volunteering and the social economy

- Volunteers have been essential to renaissance of waterways.
- Volunteers work to create new waterways, restore disused and underdeveloped waterways, and to enhance and improve waterway services and the experience of people using rivers and canals.
- Waterway authorities increasing opportunities for volunteering
- Others exist in angling, bailiffing and sports coaching; visitor services and engaging those with specialist and administrative skills
- Many opportunities for over 50s, need to widen the support base by attracting young people.
- supporting capacity building through training schemes and attainment of appropriate qualifications.

# Fairer, stronger & more active communities

- BW, EA and the Broads Authority developing and implementing a strategic approach to volunteering.
- LAs including Newport City Council, Torfaen County Borough Council and Derbyshire County Council, building on existing volunteer activity coordinated by the IWA and by the canal societies.
- AINA is preparing best practice guidelines and IWAC will examine lessons to be learnt from organisations outside waterway communities.
- BW debate on its *2020 Vision* proposals will create further opportunities for considering measures that need to be taken to expand volunteering.
- Issues include means of delivery, the nature of contracts between waterway authorities and volunteer organisations, training and capacity building, health and safety issues and the possibility of a “volunteer exchange” for volunteer recruitment

# Fairer, stronger & more active communities

- **Community cohesion and social exclusion**
- BW Surveys indicate public awareness of waterways and benefits they can deliver is still confined to small part of the population. Defra's research reinforces this.
- Local events to raise the profile of the waterway include community fairs and festivals, waterway adoption schemes and clean-ups. Help to demonstrate that waterways are not just for boaters
- Also use of rivers and canals to combat social exclusion encouraged – people helped include excluded school children, those with health problems, offenders and ex-offenders and elderly persons in care.

# Fairer, stronger & more active communities

## Access

- Improved quality of access to waterways and towpaths.
- Opportunities for good quality outdoor access for all close to where people live.
- Waterside paths - flat and level, and provide a more readily accessible resource than other outdoor recreation opportunities.
- More remains to be done - need for more and better quality information to raise awareness and allow informed choices. BW “yours to enjoy”
- Equal Shares for all project based in Cardiff
- More needs to be done to increase diversity of those who visit and use waterways

# Fairer, stronger & more active communities - Questions

- Q17. Do you agree that there is scope for increasing waterway related volunteering activity? How can this be achieved?
- Q18. How can schools and colleges be encouraged to make greater use of the waterways for educational purposes?
- Q19. What can be done to help NCBA to increase the use of waterways to improve social inclusion?
- Q20. What can be done to overcome barriers to achieving greater diversity among boaters and anglers using the waterways?

## **Encouraging use of the water itself for water based sport and recreation**

- Already used for a wide range of sporting and recreational activities. Wide range of bodies in place to continue to encourage use.
- Ability to expand boating limited because of initial financial outlay but hire boats can make boating available to more of the population. Community Boat Associations are also performing a valuable service by opening boating to groups who suffer particular disadvantage.
- Canoeing - lower initial cost, significant health benefits. Local canoe clubs have a good record in widening participation . Canoe hire businesses provide opportunity for novices to try the activity.
- Also dinghy sailing and yachting, water skiing and power boating in some areas
- Angling – huge participation sport

# Health, Well-being, Recreation and Sport



- Sport England and the Sports Council for Wales have programmes to encourage greater participation in waterways activities. National Governing bodies for each sport also have promotional policies.
- Government also supports EA in preparing regional strategies for development of all forms of water recreation in a sustainable way across England and Wales.
- The first strategy was launched in Wales in 2008. Subsequently the Welsh Assembly Government supported a funding programme (SPLASH) to help take the strategy forward.
- SPLASH supports projects securing new or improved public access to Wales' rivers, lakes, canals, reservoirs and coastal waters for recreational and educational activities. Further water recreation strategies are being developed by the EA .

## Facilitating use of waterside paths/ towpaths for sport and recreation

- Riverside paths and canal towpaths are well used for recreation by walkers, cyclists, joggers and sightseers, as well as providing attractive off-road routes for activities such as commuting and dog walking.
- Scope for increasing participation and widen use.
- Many schemes exist for encouraging greater use – e.g. DfT *Cycling City and Cycling Towns* schemes and the Sustrans-administered *Safe Routes to Schools* and *Connect 2* programmes.
- Schemes to promote active lifestyles – e.g Natural England’s *Walking for Health* programme, *Let’s Walk Cymru*, in Wales, *DoH Change4Life*,
- These provide important opportunities for waterway authorities to gain support and even some funding.

## Walking and Cycling

- Keen to promote more walking and cycling – health, climate change etc.
- Waterside paths offer significant potential but increased use means need to maintain in good condition **but** no public authority is required or funded to maintain many riverside paths and towpaths
- Also notes potential for conflict between users

**Q10. Do you agree that inland waterways, including their paths and surrounding environments provide an important resource for outdoor recreation, sport and improving public well being? What more can be done to protect and improve these important resources?**

**Q11. What needs to be done to make waterside paths more accessible and better appreciated by local communities?**

# The Natural Environment

- Recognises the role waterways play in supporting biodiversity and enhancing the quality of the landscape.
- Notes that the Water Framework Directive is introducing new requirements on waterway authorities and recognises the good work already being carried out by them.
- Identifies fish passes, dredging and alien invasive species as being among challenges but also notes good progress made in these areas.
- Notes challenges we face on water management

# Ch 6 - Cultural heritage

- Summarises the scale and wide range of heritage asset types found in and around the waterways and the variety of roles these can play
- e.g. focus for tourism, provide historic associations; as educational resource; as a focus for volunteering and enhance; and as focus for regeneration
- Sets out details of the wide range of authoritative advice available to waterway authorities in this area

- Q7. Do you agree that the unique cultural heritage associated with inland waterways provides a key benefit to those who use and visit waterways? How can these resources be used to further enhance and encourage use of the waterways?*
- Q8. Do you consider the protection of the natural and built heritage to be one of the Waterway Authorities primary tasks?*
- Q9. What area of waterway heritage do you consider most under threat?*

# What Next ?

- Formal comments in writing to Defra by 26 March
- Defra aim to publish summary of comments received to these in early May – subject to wishes of ministers
- Aim to publish final strategy summer / autumn subject to view of (new) ministers



**defra**  
Department for Environment  
Food and Rural Affairs

E-mail: [martyn.webb@defra.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:martyn.webb@defra.gsi.gov.uk)

Tel: 0207 238 4628