**press release**

**Issued: 20 November**

**Consultation launched to strengthen Canal & River Trust Council elections**

A consultation will begin this week to ask people for their views on strengthening the electoral process to the Canal & River Trust’s governing Council.

The Council was formed 18 months ago ahead of the launch of the Canal & River Trust and has an important role in helping to shape policy, raise and debate issues, provide guidance and perspective, and act as a sounding board for Trustees. The Council also has the responsibility of appointing and, if necessary, dismissing Trustees.

A review of the 2012 election – which was overseen by the Electoral Reform Services – is now underway to identify any changes that could strengthen the planning and running of the elections in 2014 and 2016. The consultation paper is available on the Trust’s website and seeks general feedback on the election process and 12 specific issues.

Among the suggestions the consultation is asking people to consider are:

* Eligibility to vote – should the current rules for eligibility change? For example, in the boater election, should the first two people named on the boat licence be eligible to vote for their boating representative (rather than one) and should votes be open to boaters holding three and six-month licences
* Online election – would it be beneficial to take the elections online to improve turnout and reduce costs?
* Sponsors – should the number of sponsors people require to put themselves forward for election be changed?
* Timescale – the first elections were conducted against a tight deadline. Could the length of the electoral process be increased to improve opportunities for people to take part?

Roger Hanbury, head of governance services at the Trust, said: “The Council brings together a wide range of people with interest and passion for the nation’s waterways, and it has a vital part to play in determining how they are looked after. We want to ensure that the democratic process for selecting elected Council members is widely understood and respected as we extend the number of elected places on Council in future years. The 2012 elections went very well and we want to do even better in future elections. We’ve listed a range of options in the consultation, we’re very much open-minded at this stage, so would encourage people to let us know their thoughts.”

The Appointments Committee, a joint committee of three Council Members and three Trustees are leading the electoral review process. The consultation will be available at <http://canalrivertrust.org.uk/about-us/governance/the-council> Comments can be made to [roger.hanbury@canalrivertrust.org.uk](mailto:roger.hanbury@canalrivertrust.org.uk) by 14 February 2014

The current Council is made up of 34 members from a variety of backgrounds. Fourteen members are nominated by stakeholder organisations. The Chairs of the Trust’s Waterway Partnerships, All Wales Partnership and Museums & Attractions Partnership, make up another 13 members. Two members are co-opted members and seven individuals were elected in 2012 to represent boaters, boating businesses and the Canal & River Trust’s staff.

The Trust aims to increase the number of elected council members. In 2014 the Trust will hold an election, amongst the Friends of the Trust, for one of the Friends to serve as a member of Council from September 2014. In 2016, when the members representing boaters, boating businesses and staff are up for election, there will also be an election for a member to represent volunteers.

**ENDS**

**Notes to editors**

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The Canal & River Trust is the guardian of 2,000 miles of historic waterways across England and Wales.  We are among the largest charities in the UK, maintaining the nation’s third largest collection of Listed structures, as well as museums, archives, navigations and hundreds of important wildlife sites. We believe that our canals and rivers are a national treasure and a local haven for people and wildlife. It is our job to care for this wonderful legacy – holding it in trust for the nation in perpetuity and giving people a greater role in the running of their local waterways

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