

Speech by John Dodwell, a Trustee of the Canal & River Trust, to the Milton Keynes Branch (Marsworth to Cosgrove) of The Inland Waterways Association on Monday February 23 2015 at the Milton Keynes Village Pavilion on the subject "Canal & River Trust in Operation".

I'm grateful to be speaking to this Branch tonight. One of your more prominent Members is James Griffin of the well known Wyvern Shipping hire cruiser firm, started by his father in the 1950s. I'm grateful because it allowed my elder brother Tim to lead a group hiring one of Wyvern's boats in about 1956. I think they went to Banbury and back. Facilities were different then and I rather suspect they buried the elsan contents in a deep hole in the undergrowth. He went on to become a prominent IWA member in the South East and to start what later became the Waterway Recovery Group. He got me interested and thus I got involved in the restorations of the 1960s and 70s – the Stourbridge, the Ashton and lower Peak Forest, the Kennet & Avon and others. I was also engaged in Parliamentary lobbying over the 1968 Transport Act – which enshrined the leisure use of waterways – and was IWA General Secretary in the early 1970s – when we stopped British Waterways being split up between the water authorities. So you can see I bring some political historical perspective to being a CRT Trustee. I also bring the perspective of being a boat owner – I'm not the only Trustee who does that – being the owner of HELEN, a 1942 iron tug built for use on the BCN. She's now 51ft long and draws 3 ft – so I know when the bottom gets too close to the top! 2012 saw us on the Huddersfield Narrow and the Rochdale canals. In 2013, down the Grand Union to Brentford, the River Wey, the Basingstoke Canal and then beyond Oxford to Lechlade. 2014 saw us celebrating 50 years since the southern Stratford on Avon Canal was re-opened and 40 years since the Upper Avon and Caldon Canals were re-opened. Indeed, here's HELEN on the start of the Uttoxeter Canal.



But our inland waterways are about far more than motor boating. I've canoed and fished and walked the towpaths and have enjoyed the industrial heritage and architecture and the town and village shops – and pubs. I've watched with amazement as the public's attitude to the waterways has changed. There's been a connection between the waterways and the arts world for many years which generated support from some high up people and I'm pleased to see the arts being used nowadays as a means of introducing more people to the waterways.

CRT and changes

In about 2009, BW produced a booklet about moving the waterways into the Third Sector. It said "the private sector built the waterways, the public sector rescued them, and the third sector can be their future" (and the use of the phrase "public sector" includes the pressure from the public – led by IWA – to bring about that rescue). With the full backing of the IWA, this became CRT. The booklet attributed these words to Mark Twain: "Twenty years from now, you will be more disappointed by the things you didn't do than by the ones you did do" and went on to encourage us to live our dreams. That particular dream about creating CRT came about more quickly than many expected. To bring us up to date about the attitude of

many about the waterways, let me give you the words on the business card of Terry Cavender, one of those determined that the Buckingham Canal will be restored. "The Answer is Yes. The Question is How". And I have seen myself how this enthusiasm - and the freedoms of being outside Whitehall's daily gaze - have led to CRT staff embracing the new world.

For it is a new world. Thank goodness the Trust is not part of Defra and so isn't facing grant cuts. Another of the big advantages of the Trust is that through the 15 year contract with Government, it can plan ahead in a way BW simply couldn't. CRT has 11 volunteer Trustees, accountable to the national Council. CRT has specialist advisory groups – some of you here are on some of them. They cover navigation (one on operations and another on moorings and licensing), heritage, angling, freight, arts, environment, volunteering and youth engagement. That's quite a wide spectrum. We also have our local partnerships. All these views are both welcomed by CRT staff and are respected. In place of an, at times, distant Minister in Westminster, we now have something like 150 people - with experience of canals and rivers - involved in making decisions about the waterways – and they do that because they love the waterways.

So what's the way forward? CRT has had a new Chief Executive is Richard Parry and there have or will soon be changes at senior executive level too. Some of you know Simon Salem, the Marketing and Fundraising Director, who's retiring this summer after over 25 years with BW/CRT. The legal director retired over a year ago and the finance director retires this summer. Close observers will have seen that CRT has good staff at the next level, some of whom may get promoted but those close observers will also see people being recruited from outside. So we get a blend of new ideas from outside whilst retaining core knowledge.

That this is an era of change should surprise no-one. Richard Parry came in to make the organisation more customer/user focused and less purely engineering driven. As he put it in the staff magazine last year

"Our future success requires us to change how we do things....to make customer service and community involvement central to how we operate...too often in the past we have found ourselves putting up barriers or not responding to others' ideas; in the future we have to find ways to get such things done, because that's the way we will build the support that we will need"

This is reflected in the changes at waterway area level where you are seeing waterway managers' tasks being to concentrate on customers and users and to generate further public support. Those vital engineering roles of keeping the waterways in good order are naturally not being neglected but they will be undertaken by staff who can concentrate on just that.

Where does CRT want to be in, say 10 years' time? We have six goals relating to Waterways; People; Prosperity; Places, Resources; and Influence. You will have heard about the concept of "Living Waterways Transforming Places and Enriching Lives". Now, some of you may feel inclined to dismiss this as "corporate speak". To those, I'd say please remember that a lot of all this is not aimed at people like you and I who already appreciate the multiple joys which waterways can bring. It is aimed at those millions of others who haven't yet got the message. Like any other similar sized organisation (CRT has about 1,600 staff), we need to plan our long term future – and to have ways of measuring progress. So what we plan to do will be measured as to how it helps to deliver the long term plan.

The Money side

Let's take a look at the money side. In the financial year to 31 March 2014, gross income was about £163m. The largest sum was about £42m of investment income, largely rents etc from our £500m property endowment fund. The Government grant was £39m. Boat licences and moorings provided £32m – about 20% of the total. Charging cable companies for those cables in the towpaths, charges for drainage into the canals and water sales etc provided £25m. £14m came from local authorities etc for regular and also one off maintenance – e.g. towpath works. Of the balance, please note £1.2m from donations – something impossible in the BW days. It's only a small amount but it's indicative of the future.

On the spending side, it cost about £30m to produce the income I've mentioned and £7m went in pension fund payments.

This left about £124m and was spent on a mixture of things. Apart from the museums and £8m on one off works largely funded by local authorities, it all went on maintenance of one sort or another. £18m on major infrastructure works, £20m on lesser projects and basic maintenance. £13m on vegetation, waste and contract management – that includes trees and grass cutting, emptying the rubbish bins and keeping the sanitary stations clean and wholesome. £4m on dredging – and I'll be saying more about that.

Maintenance

I'd ask you to bear in mind that most of what we look after is at least 200 years old and it's a bit like looking after an old house. Can those windows last a bit longer before being replaced? What about the roof? And don't forget to cut the lawns and keep the garden tidy as that's what the visitors will see!

And yet we can't ignore what isn't so visible. Next year we expect to spend some £1.5m on Bosley Reservoir which supplies the Macclesfield, along the way improving the capacity to draw off more water. £850,000 was spent on remedial work at Slaithwaite Reservoir, near Huddersfield. We have about 70 reservoirs – largely hidden in the hills (those at Marsworth are unusually close to the canal). But out of sight meaning out of mind is not possible. No reservoirs means no water means no canals!

Culverts are another unseen. We have about 1,900 of them. For many years, little was done to monitor their condition and failures occurred requiring emergency work usually with lots of disruption for boaters. Now the Trust is close to completing a thorough inspection process which has been costly but has provided detailed knowledge of when and where repairs will be needed; so they can be done before failures occur - which is always the mostly expensive thing to deal with. Of course we still get caught out - we've just had a stoppage on the Droitwich to repair one made of wood – most likely an original one nearly 250 years old. Culverts are now regularly inspected – you may have seen the fences going up to show where they are. Next winter the plan – and plans can go awry! – is to spend about £1.3m on culverts, including one on the Calder & Hebble at Horbury. On the Leeds & Liverpool, a smallish repair to a culvert will be done as the risk of its collapse could lead to £millions in damage claims.

You could call dredging another unseen - until you go aground! I mentioned earlier £4m was spent in 2013-4 and it looks as if £6m will be spent in this year with £7m next year. This is part of a commitment CRT gave to spend £80m in its first 10 years, knowing there was a backlog to catch up. It's also a question of Value for Money. The engineers tell me that, generally speaking, it is 25 years before a rural canal needs dredging again and 40 years for an urban canal – as they have better banks. That doesn't take account of spot dredging – now planned at about £2m a year – where streams and rivers come in or well known dumping spots. I should add that every waterway is surveyed for depth every 8 years.

If you want to know where CRT plans to dredge over the next three years, there's a page on the website – go and look and see if your favourite is on the list. In the next period, works are planned on the Staffs & Worcs (innovatively, there's been a public consultation on where needs dredging), Huddersfield Narrow, Leeds & Liverpool, Mon & Brec, and various parts of the Leicester line/Soar. In 2014, dredgings around Chester were of good enough quality to put on the farmland. On the Caldon



they were used to backfill on the offside after neophrene sheeting had been installed.

Special dredging took place at Whittington on the Staffs & Worcs to deal with a drain which can caused a scour



Other places dredged included the Rugby Arm – this shows the dredgings being used to build up the nearby embankment



parts of the Droitwich have been dredged and a near £800k programme removing some 10,000 tonnes on the Slough Arm



– don't let anyone tell you that you can't get to the end – nor that there's nothing worth looking at! Try stopping at the village of Langley.

And parts of the northern BCN have been done – I took my boat there last summer and was surprised – and I shouldn't have been – at how rural how much of the area is as nature has reclaimed the old spoil tips etc – another place I recommend.

The more visible parts of major maintenance are, of course, new locks gates. We are putting in about 150 this winter. They last about 25 years and their life is increasing with improved design and regular planned maintenance. You may have seen that sometimes we keep the frames and only replank them – that may get another 5 years' life. You'll also know that stoppages are seldom just about replacing gates. Stoppages at a lock don't happen very often and so we try and deal with brickwork etc at the same time. Next winter there are two flights where about £500,000 of such works are planned.

There's also the lesser noticed works – defect repairs, some of which can cause irritation to users. We have some 50,000 or more on our list. Most are non-urgent but we aim to do the high priority ones – some 4,000 to 5,000 - each year. Again, our plans have to be flexible because issues can arise that have to take higher priority from a safety or customer service perspective. Our engineers have to be able to make judgements and balance risks almost all the time. This is an area where I can see volunteers and adoption groups helping out together with getting more involved in helping the Trust do the all important regular planned maintenance which keeps the network in working order. If you want to know what's on the list of defects to be done in this area, go to the South East part of the Trust's website.

Now, you'll have gathered from all the above that – despite what some might say – an awful lot of work is done – and money spent – on keeping the navigations navigable. In fact, the total spent is way above the direct income generated from boats. I don't mind that as inland waterways are about far more than boats – and what is a navigation without boats? We have some 32,000 boats with an annual licence but we have millions of towpath visitors of all sorts who soak up the canal atmosphere.

Canoeing is one of the fastest growing activities with a 2014 survey showing nearly 1.5m adults went on a canoe once a year with about 60,000 canoeing once a week – AND it brings in younger people. As an example, the Devizes Canoe Club began in 2009 and now has 115 members. The anglers on CRT's waterways are getting together more and new championships are being organised – again, with an emphasis on the young. Towpath walkers are on the increase and the interest in our industrial heritage grows as does interest in wildlife and wild plants. Truly – as the IWA has been saying for years - "Waterways for All"!

However, I hope you accept that the importance we give to boats. As I mentioned, they produce about 20% of our income and we wish to protect that income. You'll remember that last year some extra income meant another £1m spending on boat related matters such as improving sanitary stations, providing better visitor moorings, tackling more offside vegetation and improving the ease of working locks on some of the Yorkshire waterways as well as £2m for dredging on the Erewash, and parts of each of the northern Stratford and Trent & Mersey. And this was done after consultation with the Navigation Advisory Group.

But I wouldn't want you to think I reckon everything is the garden is lovely – it's not. We can all see extra things that could be done. Some are inessential structurally but are visually important. Some are waiting their turn. An example is those Grand Union locks downhill from Cowroast with notices about leaving them empty after use. There's no serious risk of the lock walls failing and there's adequate water supply as the streams go in and out. But they do not present the Trust well and they are an irritant to lock users. Lock 47 at Dudswell has been done by putting grout in the offending wall and Lock 56 where the water leaks into the lock cottage if the lock is left full is on the list. At Stoke Hammond Lock 23 the bottom gates have been relined and repaired and so the pound above no longer drops off as much as it did when the bottom gates leaked badly. And no doubt you each have you own favourite repair you'd love to see done.

Maintenance efficiency

I was asked to speak about maintenance efficiency. So, what are we doing to try and improve it? You may have heard about annualised hours for staff which were introduced a couple of years or so ago. This means that whilst working the same number of hours a year, the pattern of work changes. For example, longer hours in the summer for customer services staff when people want them. The construction staff may do 10 days on and then 4 days off. So if a stoppage can be done in 10 days, not 14, then the plant hire bill is less. We're bringing in mobile working – that means each of the bank staff have a mobile device. Instead of filling in timesheets back at the office at the end of the week, they can record their time immediately. They can also move onto the next planned job. The split between construction and customer services staff means construction staff can get on with a planned work programme without being dragged away because someone's got a problem at a lock. There used to be 11 construction teams, one for each waterway area. As from the start of this year there are four teams. So rather artificial barriers like Hawkesbury or Radford being the end of the patch disappear and if you want to concentrate lots of staff on a project, you can.

You may have read that £1m was saved when the Fountains vegetation and Biffa waste contracts were renewed recently. I gather some people would prefer to see more Trust employees undertaking those tasks on the ground but those days have gone and now it's all about getting the right balance between directly employed staff, contractors and volunteers. Contractors engaged through toughly negotiated national contracts now contribute the equivalent of 500 full time workers operating flexibly on clearly specified contracts. Incidentally, about £1m a year was saved when the Watford office moved to Milton Keynes and the London office moved to Little Venice. The long term agreement with Government has meant a long term contract with the dredging contractors, encouraging them to bring in new equipment. It's resulting in a joint deal about a site near Coventry where the owners have laid down concrete slabs. Instead of taking dredgings to tips, they can now be taken here and left to dry out. In due course, the metals etc can be sold for scrap and the rest may become topsoil which can also be sold. It's reckoned we can save 10% on dredging costs.

Planned Preventative Maintenance such as greasing paddle gear is something which can be shared with volunteers – e.g. where we have an Adoption Group. And we have seen the local boat club offering to do towpath waterway wall repairs on the eastern end of the Rochdale. The Macclesfield Canal and its supporters have been cutting saplings in towpath walls and offside growth – next month they start their third planned area, working with CRT who provide boats and shredders.



The Society reckon their work is worth £40,000 at contractors rates – now that's not a saving which can be spent elsewhere but extra work which wasn't getting done. The towpath in Leamington Spa has just been renewed by large group of volunteers from the ever active IWA Warwickshire Branch, students from Warwick University, members of Sustrans (the cycling group) and local residents.

The Building Bridges Project is a joint initiative with IWA's Waterway Recovery Group, aimed at enabling local groups to carry out bridge repairs. WRG has produced a guide, building on its experience. One of it's more testing projects was on the north Oxford Canal

Oxford Bridge repair WRG



Becoming more efficient is not a job that stops – it's a constant job as new methods come along and it's one in which the Trustees show a lot of interest.

Donations

The £1.2m donations last year came from a mixture of monthly donations from the Friends of CRT and one off grants. I've got some forms here for those of you who would like to become Friends. We had a good 2014 and now have a little under 10,000 regular donors, after allowing for those falling out. The average sum is, you'll be pleased to hear, about £5 a month. Many of the new Friends come from outside the boating fraternity and so it is good to see that sector contributing.

Larger donations are going well. We began in 2012 with a promise from the People's Postcode Lottery to donate £100,000 a year for 10 years. They've been so pleased with how we spend their money that they've given us £250,000 for this year. So.....for those who like playing the lottery, why not try the People's Postcode Lottery?

Earlier this year we announced our largest – so – far private donation. This is £1.3m from the Desmond Foundation for a canoe trail right over the Pennines, following the Leeds & Liverpool and Aire & Calder. To me, one of the great things – apart from the amount of the money itself – is that the trail won't be designed by some Suits in London but will reflect the views of local children on what they think is needed.

Other Foundations are coming in. The influential Esme Fairbairn Trust has given £250,000. The Wolfson Foundation has given £50,000 towards the cost of restoring MOSSDALE, the wooden Mersey Flat at the Ellesmere Port Museum.

Marks & Spencers gave £50,000 when thousands of their staff did their Bid Beach and Waterway Clean Up last April and we are seeing more large companies wanting to work on the canals as part of their corporate activities – as some of your guys here know very well from the support being given to the Buckingham Canal.

I see this voluntary giving increasing. One of the skills we have to master is getting general income – not just grants linked to special projects. As one of our Trustees has put it, raising money for culverts and dredging isn't the ideal subject on which to pin an appeal so we need as many general donations as possible. And that's where the donations from the Friends matter.

IWA and CRT

I was asked about the relationship between IWA and CRT. The questioner said "Are we competing for members? Should IWA remain (confusingly as one charity monitoring another as a "critical friend"? Are CRT's Friends as much "critical friends" as IWA? Should the two aim for an eventual merger? "

I don't see things as the questioner presumably fears. CRT is not a membership organisation, it doesn't have Branches, it doesn't provide for those who want to know a lot more. Indeed, if a CRT Friend asked me how he could learn more about the waterways, I personally would say join the local IWA Branch or local canal society and enjoy the camaradie those groups offer. CRT doesn't generally try and organise canal festivals and rallies – and why should it when the existing volunteers do that so well, bringing thousands of the public to the waterways and giving them a chance to learn about them? Whilst a CRT Friend can express a "critical friend" point of view, there is no mechanism for a collective voice – such as CRT hears from IWA and other waterways groups. It's healthy to have another point of view being expressed and CRT staff are good at accepting that. In the years ahead, CRT will have to renegotiate the Government contract. Public support for a successful outcome will be crucial and IWA – with its Parliamentary support independent of CRT- will be able to play a crucial part in that. As to any possible merger, time will tell but I can't see any pressure from CRT on this. Rather, I look at how the National Trust works with the Campaign to Protect Rural England and with the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings.

Local Waterway Partnerships

A few words about the local waterway partnerships. What are they for and what have they achieved so far? You need to think back to the wish to get involved with the local communities. That's one reason why almost all of them have as chair a person who's got good local connections and why some of the members don't necessarily come from backgrounds you might expect. The chairs are also members of our national Council and so provide a useful link to the regions. The partnerships began by drawing up a long term plan for what they'd like to see in their areas and all these went out to consultation. At the same time, Richard Parry was drawing up a 10 year plan and so we had to make sure all these plans were on the same hymn sheet. That's now been done. There's been some talk about how much the partnerships cost, so let me put that straight. The members are all volunteers – so nobody's paid. At one stage, each partnership was allowed to spend up to £25,000 a year – out of the waterway manager's budget, NOT extra money from central funds. Now, as that meant having to decide what to cut from the local budget, it's not perhaps surprising that not all the partnerships used that money! Generally, we look to the partnerships to bring in money for local projects they wish to support. Some examples may interest you – and I hope there will be more to come

- £20,000 from Warwickshire County Council to encourage boaters to shop in Atherstone. This has led to opening a Welcome Station
- £23,000 raised to restore a 2nd hand work boat to be used by volunteers on maintaining the Worcester & Birmingham Canal. This included £16,500 from the People's Postcode Lottery
- The attempt to get HLF funding for Carpenters Road Lock – the last one to complete the East London waterways - was stymied until the London Partnership chair gathered further support, including from the London Legacy Development Corporation (which is dealing with what happens next to the Olympics site). As a result, we have now got past phase 1 – and this usually ends up with getting the HLF money requested.
- A London Partnership member chaired a group from Transport for London and Sustrans to look at alternatives to cyclists rushing along the Regents' towpath and so TFL will be investing in cycle grids running close to the Canal – but not on the towpath
- The North West area now has 16 Adoption Schemes, including some by companies connected with partnership members
- The West Midlands Partnership both publicly and behind the scenes lobbied to save the Lapal Canal from being ignored by a large redevelopment
- In many areas – e.g. Wales – partnership members have used their connections to bring others to the table, such as those in charge of health budgets
- Through connections made with Leeds University, there are plans for a mini-regatta in Leeds, all helping to get Leeds to stop turning its back on its waterways

Better Communications

We've been trying to improve communications in many areas. Not always easy as what is the target audience? So don't be put off if you read a CRT Press Notice and think "But I know that!" The odds are it's aimed at the millions of people who don't know it and whose interest and support we need to gain. One way we do this is by the Open Days at stoppages. We're getting decent crowds and they're putting money in the tin and some are signing up as Friends. For example, at Wigan last weekend, despite indifferent weather, about 300 visited, 5 new Friends new signed and £200 was put in the collecting box – helped by the sale of cakes (a sure sign that CRT is a charity). For those already keen, we have the fortnightly "Boaters Update" and the regular "Anglers Update". Anyone can sign up to get these by looking on the website. We are also publicising fish rescues which take place when there's a pollution incident or the canal is drained for repairs



Keen observers of the Navigation Notices will, I hope, have observed they are much more informative nowadays. One of the ladies who prepares them tells me quite bluntly that if what she gets from the engineers doesn't make sense to her, she asks them to re-write it in English!

Towpaths

CRT has also been looking at what some might call some "old chestnuts". One is towpaths. What rules should there be? How on earth could they be enforced – without diverting money from more important matters? Earlier this month, we issued a new towpath user policy. This makes it clear that priority should generally be given to the slowest and to those using the waterway. Over 2,000 people responded to our Spring 2014 consultation. We are keen on better towpath services – and you've seen how we've managed to bring in money from others - £15m over the last two years. We are keen on better signs. We are keen, too, on better behaviour. The "Share the Space, Drop your Pace" campaign in London is to be extended to other parts of the system. The new policy is based on three elements "Share the Space, Drop you Pace and It's a Special Place". I'm pleased to say the new approach has support from a mass of organisations, including IWA, APCO, AWCC, NABO, the Angling Trust, Sustrans, British Cycling, the Ramblers, British Canoeing and the British Horse Society.

Boats without a home mooring

Another "old chestnut" has been boaters without a home mooring who say they will continuously cruise and then don't. The policy announced earlier this month had comments from NABO, the Association of Continuous Cruisers, RBOA, IWA and AWCC. Basically, it means the rules are going to be applied, starting with those who have moved the least. Since January 2014, all those applying for a new continuous cruising licence have been told about the need to move in accordance with the rules. NABO's Mike Rodd has said "for those living on their boats as a lifestyle choice, the requirements to continuously cruise will not present any problem." Parts of the London area have non or inadequate movers and warnings are being given – e.g. by text. Some 3,000 boats were seen in London and 639 were – last month – the subject of enforcement proceedings. 225 for not paying the licence and 291 for not continuously cruising when they said they would. In 2013-4 over the whole country 69 boats were seized. So far in 2014-5 this has happened to another 66 boats.

Now, I don't see anything wrong in continuous cruising. Richard Parry has made it clear that CRT welcomes this way of boating and that many such boaters make a fantastic contribution to the waterways. I see them as part of the eyes and ears of the waterways (if they wish to do so). I also see the vibrancy brought to towns and cities by the floating traders.

Where possible, the Trust is creating new residential moorings. On the Paddington Arm, Regents and Lee, 19 are being put in. Not many, I grant you, but space is at a premium and its better than none. British Waterways Marinas is increasing its residential berths.

Visitor Moorings

Getting visitor moorings right is another "old chestnut". CRT is working with the national organisations to come up with a consistent approach across the whole country. In the meantime, more moorings rings are going in in London (National Grid is paying for some, as they dislike people hammering spikes near their cables). Indeed, locally, I gather James Griffin's staff will be putting in some rings supplied by CRT. I see this type of work as being well suited for volunteers – look at what's been happening on the Shropshire Union for years. On the Chesterfield last autumn, Trust staff were installing some.



Restoration

I think you'd expect me to talk about restoration. Mike Annan and others from the Buckingham Canal Society showed me and Jason Leach, CRT's Head of Restoration, around that Canal last month and I've walked the length of the Wendover Arm. It was great news that the Heritage Lottery Fund has approved a c £800k grant towards the cost of restoring another 2 locks at the eastern end of the Grantham. We are hopeful of an HLF grant for the Pocklington and for a £4m HLF grant towards a £6m project on the Montgomery. But much of what's happening on the restoration scene nowadays is not on CRT waterways. CRT has to guard its pennies for its own waterways but is able – and does – provide technical and other support to various restoration groups. One of the features of the year is the annual IEA/CRT restoration conference. Last year saw the launch of research about the economic and other benefits of restoration published by the University of Northampton, along with a well received video "How Water Adds Value" (if you've not seen it, go the website). This year's planned subjects range from the value of getting a formal partnership around you to show and get as much support as possible (grant makers notice these things) to debating the best ways of relining or re-watering a dry canal

And before I leave HLF grants, I must just mention two we've got for the museums at Ellesmere Port and at Gloucester. This part of our heritage sometimes gets overlooked but it shouldn't be. Those of a certain age will remember when Jo and Rose Skinner lived on their FRIENDSHIP at Hawkesbury and it's great that this wooden boat is now in good care.

Volunteers

I want to conclude by talking about the massive role for volunteers. You in this Branch know all about the twice yearly rubbish haul you organise and other work – e.g. at Fenny Stratford and Leighton Lock . Nearby the Northampton Branch is working its way up the Northampton Arm removing litter, painting lockgates and generally making the Flight look tidy. The second picture shows "before" and "after" scenes



Over the whole CRT network, we had over 350,000 hours given by volunteers in 2013-4 and we are on target to beat this this year. They range from the 150 or so Explorer volunteers who take the waterways message into schools – so important to prepare the next generations of waterway supporters – and they spoke to not far off 30,000 children. Then there's the volunteer lock keepers. 97% have said they plan to come back this year – so they must be enjoying it. In 2015 we aim to add another 29 sites to the existing 52. The Adoption scheme took off very well and we now have over 80 groups. One of my favourites is that run by Amy Irwin, a teenage Liverpuddlian who set up her own group and is now in charge of ten regular

volunteers with numbers swelling to 25 in the summer; their passion to improve their stretch is infectious. Down on the K&A, a volunteer project manager leads a team of well over 25, working to a programme in the Bradford on Avon area agreed with the local manager.

About 12 months ago, a dozen volunteers cut out defective brickwork at the top of Wilmcote Locks on the Stratford and put in new bricks. What did they do with the rubble? Put it in a hopper, steered a tug pulling the hopper up to Lapworth and then down most of Hatton where they used the rubble to help build up the towpath. You couldn't have afforded to that with paid labour.

And as our experience with volunteers grows and as they become more ambitious, I hope we'll see more of the more important work being done. I mentioned earlier the towpath washwall repaired by volunteers on the Rochdale and the tree cutting on the Macclesfield. You've probably also heard about the drained section of the Regents where volunteers collected rubbish. Volunteers should never be backward about coming forward and offering to do more. I look forward to the time when if a lock is drained for repairs, the volunteers clear out the rubbish not just in the lock but in the adjacent pound too. After all, it's easier to see what's what when the water is out!

May I take this opportunity of publicly thanking IWA's Alison Smedley and Stephanie Preston for all they do organising IWA volunteers? In some cases, it seems to be that they have brought a renewed purpose to some IWA Branches – and I am also pleased to hear when they and the Trust jointly bring in new faces.

It's not just physical labour. We have an increasing number of Welcome stations, all manned by volunteers, to spread the good news to passers by. We have people working in the offices. Right now, there is a volunteer civil engineer working out the best way of coping with a Montgomery bridge that got filled in in the bad days. Lots of you here are volunteers – those who work on the various IWA and society committees and organise events.

I hope I've given you an insight into what's happening in the waterways scene at present – and apologies if you had heard rather too much before. In my view, the creation of CRT (urged on the Government by the IWA) has led to an unleashing of enthusiasm and goodwill both within and outside CRT. We need more volunteers in all their different arrays and we need more Friends. I have my collecting tin here – let's see if we can beat the £50 I got recently and here are some Friends joining leaflets. May I conclude with the words from a canal restoration magazine. "Perhaps you have said to yourself 'Why don't they do that?' Now is the time to make it 'why don't I do that?'"

Questions had been supplied to Mr Dodwell beforehand and are given below, together with the answers he gave.

1. I would like to ask a question about the policy on towpath surfaces. For example we have a superb new towpath from the Galleon bridge to the Cosgrove aqueduct done by Alan Holmes and from the aqueduct to the lock a dust bowl done by James Clifton of CRT. The same thing has happened in Berkhamsted. A muddy dusty surface costing a lot of money but not sprayed and chipped and no good for the disabled.

Trustees deal with strategy and policy and not day-to-day affairs. Some matters are better dealt with – and more quickly – by talking to the waterway manager and this is probably one of those questions. Nationally, we do have a guide to towpath surfaces – e.g. we don't wish to see tarmac in rural areas. Not every towpath will necessarily be suitable for disabled people. I have asked about this and have

been told as follows. The section south of the Aqueduct was done by the local council quite some years ago with a concrete edge, not timber edge boards. I wonder if they'd nowadays have the money to do it to that standard. Turning to the north side, as you know, the Aqueduct was repainted in 2013. There was no money for the towpath. The County Council was persuaded – even in those austere times - to pay for some improvements, getting rid of some large puddles. The parish council liked the improvement. I suspect the questioner will ask whether further improvements can be made. I'd make two points. I suspect the questioner would not be happy if we diverted money from other more pressing works. Secondly, as I mentioned earlier with the Leamington Spa towpath, this kind of work is very suitable for volunteers.....so please form an orderly queue behind me.

At Berkhamsted, the work was funded externally. Funds were limited so that meant the work was too. The funders – largely a consortium of Herts County Council and Berkhamsted Town Council - have offered to pay for a further section to be done, costing £200k of works, enabling a better quality job to be done. I ought to point out that generally we don't spend shedloads of CRT money on towpath surfaces. Sometimes we have to decide between accepting funding for a modest improvement or none at all – not a desirable place to be. The two photos show before and after the 2013 work.





2. Does CRT support the idea of a fair licensing system for boats and charging by length and breadth as does the EA? Why should narrow boats subsidise wide beam boats as under the present CRT system?

Yes, I've heard this view before. It's one that's being looked at by the Navigation Advisory Committee dealing with moorings and licensing. Let's see what they conclude – no point in my pre-judging the issue.

3. Does CRT support the idea that for a sustainable waterway, more designated visitor moorings need to be made available for cruising boats to overcome the blockages on popular/facilities places by live aboard boats that do not cruise?

I think it's more complex than the questioner supposes. There are two issues. One is boats overstaying at places marked as being for less than 14 days. Such boats can be liveaboards; they can be boats away from their home mooring, maybe week-ending. This can be dealt with by proper enforcement. The other question is whether there are enough visitor moorings – whether they are of 48 hours or 7 days' duration. To answer this, you have to decide where visitor moorings should be. Then you have to try and work out if there are enough. I've heard conflicting reports about sufficiency at some places e.g. Stoke Bruerne and Foxton. Some of this depends on the time of year. Personally, I've arrived about 7pm in September at Thrupp on the south Oxford and found no space. I've arrived at Stoke Bruerne Top in early June and found only one space. In both places, it isn't a question of expanding the moorings – there isn't the room. Getting visitor moorings right is important as we need to welcome visiting boats, whether they be hirers or owners. I mentioned earlier the work being undertaken to get a national approach. In the meantime, if you think somewhere should be designated as a visitor mooring, let the waterway manager know – and preferably, as they do on the Shroppie, offer to help put in the bollards or rings

4. What is CRT doing to cut the costs of canal maintenance? £800k to rebuild one lock wall on the Aylesbury Arm last year does not seem good value.

I'm not sure the questioner really wants us to spend less on maintenance but in my speech, I gave examples of greater efficiencies and we are all in favour of better value for money. As to that Aylesbury Arm Lock, it is an unfortunate fact of canal life that we too often have to negotiate with land owners to get access to a problem. Not all farmers yet appreciate we are a charity! In some cases, paying to gain access and build a metal road can be a large part of the total cost. It frustrates me to see such a proportion not being spent actually on the canal – but I can't do much about it. The same happened with the Dutton breach a couple of years ago at the top end of the Trent & Mersey. We do try and learn from experience. Around the same time as the Aylesbury problem, a wall on the

Wolverhampton flight gave way. We found – and I think this was the case at Aylesbury as well - that some repairs of about 100 years ago hadn't been tied into the wall and so there was a course of bricks just sticking up by themselves. So now we are spending time looking more closely at lock walls as it's obviously cheaper to repair them before they fall down

5. We are told that the Government is still committed to transfer of the Environment Agency waterways to CRT.

- What is CRT doing towards achieving this transfer?

- Does CRT regard the prospect of the transfer as an opportunity or as a burden?

- Do you think the Government is still committed to it, or would they shelve it if allowed to?

- If/when the transfer takes place, where will the necessary extra funding come from?

The Government says it is still committed to the transfer. For that to happen, the EA need to provide information about the state of their various structures. CRT sees the possible transfer as an opportunity but it will not take on a burden. We have first to look after the existing navigable network we manage. When the National Trust is offered a property, it usually requires an endowment fund to go with it. I don't see why CRT should be different. At the moment, it is said the EA navigations cost the Government about £20m a year. If the EA navigations come to CRT, then it's reasonable to expect that money to come to CRT. However, as we know, at present, the Government has the ability to vary what it pays the EA. Such variation wouldn't really work for CRT. Nothing's going to happen before the General Election so let's see what Government we have after that.

6. CRT has recently appointed a housing professional as Welfare Officer to assist “vulnerable boaters”.

- Does this mean that CRT accepts that it is a *de-facto* housing authority?

- Should CRT be seeking dedicated Government funding for this welfare work?

- Will the existence of a Welfare Officer encourage people to seek to live on the waterways knowing that a sort of safety-net is in place?

No, CRT does not accept it is any kind of housing authority. I don't see any point in asking the Government to pay for a single person's salary. Until recently, various people – mainly in the enforcement section – were getting involved here and there. Appointing a welfare officer means there is one guy with all the knowledge – and he will work with the waterways chaplains. Sometimes it's a question of explaining to local authorities the various benefits apply to people on water as well as on land. Sometimes it's a question of explaining to a boater what they are entitled to. This welfare appointment recognises that people live on boats – which is quite legal – and that sometimes they get old and need help.

7. Now that CRT is a charity, the IWA has more trouble than ever dispelling confusion between us among the public. We are also competing for members.

- Should we remain (confusingly) as one charity monitoring the work of another as a “critical friend”?

- In your experience, are CRT's own subscribing Friends as “critical” as the IWA is?

- Rather than remaining separate, should we be aiming for an eventual merger, with the IWA machinery serving as the membership arm of CRT?

I covered this in my speech

8. Why did it take so long to take the remedial action required to stop the flooding the pub at Three Locks Soulbury for which the tenant is paying CRT a heavy rental?

This is another question better taken up with the waterway manager but let me pass on what I've been told. I imagine you are referring to flooding on Christmas day. Basically, the problem related to the old side pond and the culverts leading from and to the lock. After investigations including using CCTV cameras, a plastic bag was found in the culvert leading back into the lock, thus stopping the side pond from emptying. There are, as the questioner will know, other problems as the pubside wall is at risk of subsiding as water washes away the support under the coping stones. Being a heritage area means having to come up with a considered solution. A temporary solution should be in place before the end of March with a permanent solution being part of a larger job next winter. This is quite a good example of having to decide on priorities and I personally put this above that Cosgrove towpath we discussed a little while ago.

9. Where there is armco piling to tie to, more casual moorings could be made available by local dredging to ensure sufficient depth. Also if a

marking, such as a green line, could be painted on armcos to indicate depth is suitable for mooring, this would avoid trying to moor where the depth is insufficient and thus reduce churning up silt (and frustration) which finishes up in the channel. In one's local area one gets to know where you can and cannot moor casually, but not on unfamiliar waters. If the marking is applied on one of the recessed parts of the horizontal tie/cap it would be protected and have a reasonably long life.

Well, that's an intriguing idea! Painting green lines is maybe something which IWA branches could take up in their areas and discuss with the waterway managers. I wonder what other users would think. Be careful not to dredge too deep or else the piling support may be affected. Of course, we have to remember that some canals were not built so you could moor anywhere. On the Macclesfield, for example, Telford built straight edges where there were wharves but saw no point in doing so out in the country where there were no wharves.

10. Will C&RT bring in a code of practice for good house keeping i.e. No loose bags of rubbish on roofs of boats (waiting to get blown into the canal when it gets windy), not to use hedge rows and towing paths to store items, old batteries (which are a hazard) not to be left on boats (or towing paths), dinghy/canoes to be securely tied and not allowed to drift into the channel each time a boat passes. - these are just some examples.

Licence terms and conditions – you've all read them avidly, haven't you? – do cover not obstructing the towpath nor causing damage or nuisance. But it's very subjective, isn't it? One of our staff I asked said who would decide what's tidy or untidy – and went on to say that his wife's got different views to him.

11. Boats are required to have their registration number on display, so if a boat is covered with tarpaulins it's registered number should be painted on the tarpaulin.

The terms and conditions specify the boat's name, index number and licence should be displayed on each side of the boat so they are also visible to staff. So, yes, if a boat is covered by a tarpaulin, that information should be on the tarpaulin

12. I see some boats on the canal, which are (now) licensed, but I find it hard to believe that they have a BSS certificate, is there a black market in these, because how else could they get a certificate or are C&RT just glad of the licence money and are not checking out the BSS certificate?

A BSS certificate is needed to get or renew a licence and the staff check the BSS database before issuing a licence. As you know, BSS certificates are required every four years. I wonder what items you have in mind in considering if the boat is BSS compliant.

13. Are C&RT confident that they can manage the EA waterways (EAW) when and if they are transferred to C&RT and that EAW will not detract from the maintenance of the canal system, will there be two separate accounts so that one does suffer at the expense of the other? Will the government underwrite repairs to damage caused by major flooding such as occurred in 2013/14?

I have earlier said that we need details from the EA of their structures. For example, who would take on Denver Sluice without checking it? Bear in mind that the same EA staff who look after their navigations would almost certainly be transferred too. Bear in mind too that CRT manages quite a number of river navigations – not just the Trent, Severn and Weaver but also the Stort, Lee, Kennet, Calder, Bristol Avon etc. If a transfer happened, then I personally don't see a need for separate accounts; we don't account separately for say the Grand Union and the Huddersfield

Narrow. As to flood control, that would remain with the EA – it's only the navigation works etc which would pass over, not the whole lot