



CANAL & RIVER TRUST COUNCIL GOVERNANCE & WATERWAY PARTNERSHIP REVIEWS

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Introduction

The celebration of the Trust's 5th birthday, and the fact that we are now just 5 years away from starting to renegotiate our government grant means that 2017 is the perfect time to pause and reflect on some of the key building blocks in our management arrangements. There's no doubt that they have served us well so far - and that makes it all the more worthwhile to look back at what we have learnt over the last 5 years to make sure the way we operate will help us be just as successful going forward.

To help this, the Board has commissioned two independent reviews, one of the Waterway Partnerships and one of its own operation - and would like to propose a third review, namely of the Council, if members of the Council agree. This paper gives an outline of all three reviews, with more information about each being presented at the meeting.

Waterway Partnership Review

In January 2017, the Board commissioned an independent consultant to complete a review of Waterway Partnerships which reported to the July Board.

The headline findings from the review are that the Trust needs to:

- decide how Partnerships (Chairs and Members) can uniquely act to help achieve the Trust's Vision and strategy;
- establish clarity on what 'good' looks like in terms of Partnership contributions;
- align roles and scope across the Trust and set expectation for new ways of working;
- use the Business Planning process to support collaboration and clearly focus resources on achieving priorities;
- improve support arrangements, including communication;
- develop a proportionate and appropriate performance review mechanism including two-way feedback.

Developing an implementation plan for these findings is a big job as it needs not only to focus on the Partnerships themselves, but also on how the rest of the Trust supports the Partnerships as they deliver a more focused role.

Further work on this is continuing and we can share progress so far at the Council meeting.

Review of the Board

The same independent consultant is currently conducting an independent review of the operation of the Board, and is on track for completion and reporting to the November Board.

Good governance practice would expect any Board of Directors to review its own performance periodically and indeed the new Charity Corporate Governance Code which includes the following as proposed requirements:

“The board evaluates its own performance and that of individual trustees including the chair. For larger and more complex charities this is will be every year, with an external evaluation every three years. Such evaluation typically considers the board’s balance of skills, experience and knowledge, its diversity in the widest sense, how the board works together and other factors relevant to its effectiveness.”

As the external review is still work in progress, we don’t have any results yet to share with Council members but our presentation to the September meeting will briefly explain what sorts of things the review includes. We will update Council members further at the March 2018 Council meeting.

Review of Council

The Board would also like to suggest that we carry out a review of Council, between November 2017 and May 2018. The timing would be such that we could:

- share interim findings, and get Council member feedback at March 2018 Council;
- report the final results to the September 2018 Council meeting
- have the final results in plenty of time to implement them before, say, the next round of elections which are due to be held during 2019.

The Articles state that “The Council shall have an advisory capacity to act as the long term guardian of the values of the Trust. Although the Council shall not determine policy or strategy, nor may it fetter the discretion of the Trustees to exercise their powers ... the Council shall assist the Trustees in the formulation of policy and strategy by

- debating important points of principle to provide guidance and perspective from different beneficiary and stakeholder groups to the Trustees
- suggesting issues of concern for the Trustees to pursue
- acting as a sounding board for the Trustees in relation to the development of proposals and policies.”

At the September Council meeting, we will invite members to discuss the potential coverage and conduct of the review in an interactive session.

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