

Q1. What top 3 strategic priorities do you think the Partnership should focus on over the next 5-10 years?

Q3. What question(s) would you like to have answered by the Partnership?

Q2. What do you want from the Trust going forward?

## Feedback received

### **Q1. What top 3 strategic priorities do you think the Partnership should focus on over the next 5-10 years?**

Adequate maintenance of the canal network in the S.E. Region, for appropriate vessels.

Improvements to the visitor experience, particularly at key destinations e.g. sufficient visitor moorings, basic facilities such as moorings whilst waiting turns at lock flights and ensure availability funds to enable this.

Ensure fishing areas are available to fish! i.e. boat mooring

Identify the real threats to angling: otters, cormorants, fish theft and address properly

Provide a comprehensive fish management strategy for restocking

Maintain the present upkeep of canals and towpaths

Encourage suitable usage of the facilities for living, working and tourism

Support wildlife conservation, encouraging Wild Life to return, e.g. water voles

Maintenance and improvement of the canal structures for all users, whilst promoting biodiversity and wildlife conservation.

Developing lines of communication with all forms of boat user, at the grass roots level.

Increasing freight use in appropriate places.

Continue with the excellent maintenance of towpaths

Protect Waterways from Environmental and adverse visual impacts

Improve the basic infrastructure of the canal system. This would involve a **SERIOUS** dredging regime. Not allowing a few moored boats prevent dredging operations as happens currently. Actively contact all boaters and urge them to provide a "hotspot" list of areas that require urgent dredging attention. Each individual canal will have enough dedicated users to allow a comprehensive bank of information. Do NOT make use of groups with axes to grind. Do NOT consult with the likes of the IWA, RBOA and hire companies. The views of these groups are ALWAYS self-centered and biased. This would also involve long term engineering appraisal of defective locks. Each waterway has a number of locks that suffer from original faults in construction and balancing. These "original" faults should be rectified not ignored. Most canals have areas where water outfalls cause problems for even the most experienced boater. Baffles introduced at critical points in the outfall would prevent a large number of mishaps. If an old building becomes a danger it should be removed/demolished not just left to become a hazard to boaters/walkers/fishermen/cyclists.

Aim towards creating a national set of rules that would apply to all waterways under the CRT banner. Aim at the same time to create a system that works to deal with those boaters who are not prepared to comply with the national rules.

Create a number of "social" moorings on each waterway. These to be made available to boaters who are in genuine need of assistance. The moorings need to be in areas with easy access to facilities. Each canal should have an officer to work in conjunction with social service departments, CRT enforcement teams and care/welfare groups to oversee the allocation of berths on the social moorings.

What do I want from the Trust? Boats on the canals throughout the country for my grandchildren to enjoy. People living on the canal and them in turn caring for the canals and the environment in general. An awareness of the role the canals play in creating a healthy environment. If the canals through London fell into disuse the capital of our country would suffer hugely. The canals provide natural habitats for wildlife and produce huge amounts of oxygen, they are literally, together with our rivers, the "lungs" of the country. If movement stops those lungs will fail. An example of this would be the condition of the canal and the surrounding area adjacent to Blisworth tunnel when the collapse happened a number of years ago. The flight up to the tunnel was closed and became stagnant in a matter of weeks as did miles of the canal below the flight.

Maintenance of the system to ensure its primary function – Navigation.

Enforcement of the General Terms and Conditions for Boat Licences, to ensure everyone 'plays by the rules' and eradicate those that don't and try to 'free load'.

To support restoration schemes using CRT's expertise.

Maintaining adequate navigation standards throughout the area concerned

Attending to health & safety issues such as tree management and vegetation cutting.

Ensuring staff remuneration is in line with market rates and not deviate by more than a small percentage.

## **Q2. What do you want from the Trust going forward?**

Improved means of contact at local level for canal-based businesses

An acknowledgement by C&RT that without the presence of boats the canals would be less attractive overall to the general public as a place to visit

Support for canal-based businesses through enforcement of by-laws against those operating outside the regulations, such as unregulated boat holiday hire

An undertaking to allow more time for clubs to respond to communications

Firm commitment to prosecute for fish theft

Visibility on waters- i.e. more signs/bailiffs

A little more ease of access for cyclists

Sensible restrictions to discourage speeding

Possibly a code of conduct for both cyclists and pedestrians to create awareness of each other.

Well maintained locks, bridges, by washes, banks, towpaths that are good for boaters, walkers, other users and the wildlife.

Advanced warning of matters that are going to affect me as a boater, and the Charity that I work for. Meaningful consultation where appropriate.

A canal system that is not clogged up with long-term over stayers along the towpath and on-line moorings, so that we can take our groups on trips at more than tick-over.

Specific Policies regarding conservation.

More transparency on the expenditure on fund raising and returns from such expenditure e.g. cost of 'chuggers'.

Continued support to volunteer organisations.

Ensure boaters/boats who are the life and soul of the waterways system are not priced off them by above inflation increases and squeezing their pockets until they break. A waterway without boats has very little attraction – except to anglers maybe.

As a pensioner ensuring my pension is safeguarded and uplifted in line with RPI.

The estate is kept in a safe and pleasant state as an amenity for the community.

### **Q3. What question(s) would you like to have answered by the Partnership?**

What investment has the partnership committed to for restocking canals?

1. Restocking budget is currently focused on 'remedial' situations e.g. post pollution incidents. The modest budget that exists is only likely to go into reservoirs other than this.

Identify the real threats to angling: Otters, Cormorants, fish theft and address properly

2. John Ellis (National Fisheries Manager) is well aware of the strong feeling in this area. Otters - a native species, protected and a sign of a good eco system. Cormorants - there's a Defra (Government) review underway currently regarding licensed control. We will be bound by the output from this review.

Improve safety information for boaters/anglers with regards to violence/pollution/theft

3. Safety of customers is a key topic within the national advisory group agenda. Work being undertaken throughout this year will be available, for example, through:-
  - Inserts into annual licensing letters
  - Revised boaters handbook
  - Standardised strong stream warnings (working with EA directly)

What steps will the trust take to mitigate and protest against the visual and environmental impacts of both HS2 and the Proposed Wind Farm at Stoneton.

4. HS2 is a major project. We have our own project group – which includes customer representations (e.g. IWA) – this group is working directly with HS2 regarding the construction methodology (of crossings) and visual impact on the canal environment.

A detailed breakdown of the costs involved in the trial 'Locklines' project, the answer to this question asked at the last user group meeting was far too vague, has the trial been evaluated and is it intended to pursue this 'art' form considering the wide ranging opposition to 'art' on any working waterway structures.

5. Locklines was one of 6 art projects undertaken in our launch year. As a new charity we have to build support and bring in new people and new money – Art is a way of reaching people who might not have thought about canals before.

We're working in partnership with Arts Council England and the Poetry Society to create meaningful and high quality artworks.

Furthermore, we now have a major arts project on the Leeds & Liverpool canal (Blackburn/Burnley) which has secured over £2m to progress – this would not have occurred had the Trust not been ambitious enough to seek out new audiences through art.

Is the trust still confident that it will achieve the donations envisaged from the public?

6. Yes. The first year was always going to be a huge learning curve and we are all the better for the experiences encountered. More focused campaigns are now underway, but it should be noted that reliance on external (personal giving) is very low in the overall scheme of things.

Are there any contingency plans to close waterways should expected funds not be attained and the Trust runs at a loss (i.e. such as Huddersfield narrow, which is under used due to its poor state) - if so which are they or will the maintenance expenditure on all waterways be reduced to compensate any short fall.

7. There aren't any plans, frankly within the 'contract' period currently in place with Government we are as confident as we can be that maintaining the status quo should be achievable. Also having financial resilience to cope with a major breach (or several more minor failures) is a more realistic scenario – and we have that resilience, just!

What is a visitor mooring? I know of a few on the Grand Union that are designated moorings. Both Batchworth and Fenny Stratford limit a boat to 14 days in any one year. I assume that hire boats that are logged on those moorings are included in the limitation. Therefore if a visitor mooring is an ideal mooring spot for hirers straight out of their hire base, the boat will only be allowed to moor there for fourteen nights in the year. A bit rough of the holidaymakers hiring on week fifteen! If there is an allowance for hire boats why is there not for others?

8. These '14 days in a year' sites will disappear. We expect our learning's from the implementation of the initial 8 visitor mooring sites to pave the way for much 'sorting out' of these 'funnies' in 2014.

Will a record of this meeting be supplied to all interested parties and be published appropriately?

9. Yes, see 'South East' website for slides, Questions & Answers and 'pop up' detail.

Finally..... In brief response to the observations on wildlife protection and enhancement of habitat etc...

Canal & River Trust has a general environmental duty under Section 22 of the BW Act 1995, reinforced by the duty in Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006.

The Government requires all departmental bodies and executive agencies to have an Environmental Management System (EMS) meeting the international standard ISO 14001 for their estate.

Canal & River Trust has chosen to implement an EMS matching and in alignment with ISO 14001, but not yet accredited at this time.

This code applies to everything that we do. Accordingly, all Trust staff, Contractors and (where appropriate) volunteers, are aware of environmental obligations and the needs to protect and enhance care of wildlife and their habitats.