

Disabled boater forum 15.12.21

Trust attendees: Matthew Symonds, Rachel Hayward, Dick Vincent

Disabled badge: Annie needed a bit more clarity on the purpose of the badge. It was agreed it needs to be a badge that's visible to others. Dick Vincent will liaise with Annie, as he has expertise in this area. Once the design has been agreed it will not take long to produce it.

Managing the Towpaths for different users. Dick Vincent presented with a video and slides. He explained the use of speed information displays, and emphasised the need for more volunteers to help monitor the devices and engage with towpath users. The Trust will be relaunching their 'Slow down, stay kind' campaign in April. There followed a discussion on E-scooters. At present they are illegal on public roads and paths, and we do not allow them on our towpaths. It is likely the law will change next year. Towpaths are permissive paths and the Trust has the right to ban them. However, the resources to monitor that are limited.

One suggestion was a slow down sign near accessible moorings. Dick agreed that was possible, and also near residential moorings.

The notion of charging cyclists was raised. However, under our agreement with the government, we have to keep our towpaths open for all users.

'Welcome to the Slowpaths' was suggested and received great support by the group.

Updates: Rachel reported that Rebecca Mason, area operations manager from the NW region, who attended the last meeting, has recently been in touch with an organisation called Disability Positive who are based in Northwich but who work over the whole of Cheshire West and Chester area. They are going to come out onto a towpath near Northwich, where the Trust has recently done some improvement works, and advise on access points for people with disability and mobility issues. This is at Hartford, near Northwich, going from Hunts Lock through to the Northwich Bypass bridge (around 2 km) on the Weaver Navigation.

It would be good if we could start to develop this kind of relationship for all our towpath and access projects. We will invite our boating and customer service managers to our next meeting; this could be one of the ideas we put to them.

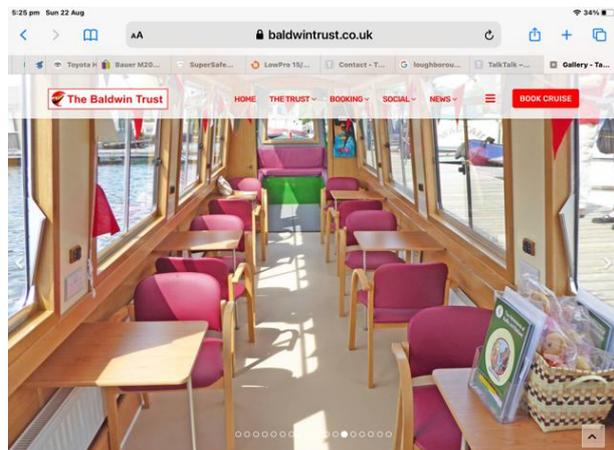
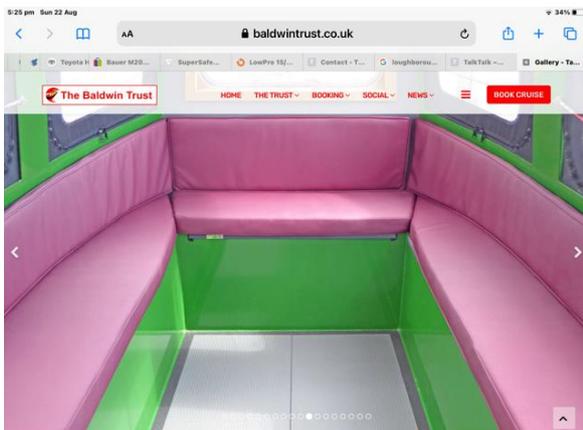
Gates at Litherland: the main gate is locked, but the smaller gate can be accessed with a BW key. However, there are steps up to the accessible gate and no handrail. The NW team are now looking to see whether they can reposition the smaller gate on level ground, giving better access to the moorings there.

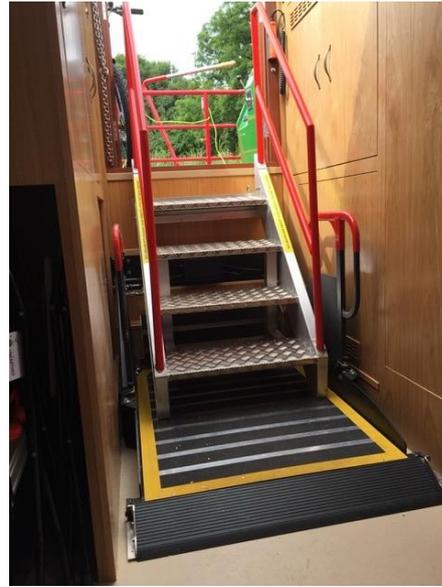
Again, it was mentioned that the website is very difficult to negotiate, and the accessibility map very hidden. The website is being redesigned; Matthew suggested that a couple of members of this group might have some input to that. MS will take that forward.

Accessible moorings: Some of our moorings are known by different names in local areas. Two examples of this are Chester Wharf and Lancaster Services. It was suggested we add the correct name to the colloquial name on Canalplan for better boater information. It was noted there are very few accessible mooring sites included on the Leicester line. We would welcome any input from this group - just send landscape photos of any mooring that you deem accessible, with information about the towpath surface, access points to the hinterland, car parking in the area,

and toilets, as well as points of interest, such as cafes, shops. Please send this info to Rachel.hayward@canalrivertrust.org.uk and it will go up on the website. Feelings were expressed that we did need to identify some moorings as priority moorings for disabled boaters. We will bring this back to our meeting in February. Another idea was to make winter moorings accessibility information available.

Making boats more accessible as we get older: K&A Trust <https://bruceboats.katrust.org.uk/> show features of their boats that cater for disabled boaters, so ideas could be gleaned from that website. Tracey has offered to advise on boating with visual impairment. Richard Jayes, from Baldwin Trust <https://www.baldwintrust.co.uk> sent a couple of pictures after the meeting, below. Their newest boat is Halseyon Days, moored at Leicester Marina. Richard has kindly offered to show disabled boaters the boat should they wish to visit, once the Covid situation has improved.





This shows our wheelchair lift which is fitted with front and rear automatic plates which prevent the chair rolling off the lift platform.