

## EAST MIDLANDS USER FORUM – NORTH REGION

Meeting notes for the East Midlands Autumn Waterway User Forum 2021 – NORTH held on Teams 15th November 2021 at 17:30 to 19:30

### ATTENDANCE

Matthew Symonds	CRT – National Boating Manager
Phil Mulligan	CRT - Regional Director
Jo Grummett	CRT - Boating and Customer Service Manager
Dan Whyment	CRT - Regional Operations Manager
Robert Braithwaite	CRT – Area Operations Manager - North
Nick Baggaley	CRT - Fisheries Officer
Richard Bennett	CRT - Heritage & Environment Manager
Diana Vogtel	CRT – Community Engagement Manager
Emmanuel Ushie	CRT – Environmental Scientist
Kay Gugliotta	CRT – Customer Support Administrator

David Kent  
David Pullen  
Sue Jones  
Nick Roberts  
Boston Gateway Marina  
Rachel Hayward

### APOLOGIES

Ruth Noon

### ACTIONS summary for this meeting

**ACTION** – ALL - Short film and National Update from Richard Parry. <https://youtu.be/f-FdKffDmY0>  
All are welcome to share it with others.

**ACTION** – ALL – Link to annual boater reports <https://canalrivertrust.org.uk/boaterreports>

### WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS (Jo Grummett)

Everyone introduced. Jo provided an overview of the agenda and house-keeping.

## Organisational and Regional Priorities (Phil Mulligan)

Phil Mulligan presented and delivered an update on Organisational and Regional Priorities, to include:

**Richard Parry Short Film\*** - Recruitment challenges, Breaches, Investment in high-risk assets - £20 million per year required, Government Grant Review – worth £50 million per year.

**ACTION** – **ALL** - Short film and National Update from Richard Parry. <https://youtu.be/f-FdKffDmY0>

All are welcome to share it with others.

*\*No sound on film. Attendees encouraged to view the video in own time. Phil Mulligan provided a brief overview of the contents.*

### ORGANISATIONAL AND REGIONAL PRIORITIES

- Operational Issues - Maintenance, repairs, VEG clearance, waste, reservoirs, summer weed, pollution incidents, visitor safety.
- Beauty On The Doorstep – Green Flags, Nottingham Canal Improvement Partnership, Kickstarters.
- Wellbeing – Green Social Prescribing, Isolation to Inclusion, Community Roots, Summer Events Programme.
- Attractions – Stoke Bruerne, Foxton.
- Volunteering – Good progress on diversification.  
NCIP – to be replicated in Leicester, then Loughborough, £1 million funding.

## The Trusts Financial Focuses (Matthew Symonds)

Matthew Symonds presented and delivered an insight into how the Trust applies its finances to benefit boaters.

- Boater Report 2021 now published.
- Income Sources - Licences and fees, mooring fees, government grants, investments, utilities.
- Outgoings – Dredging, waterways operations, maintenance and repairs.

**ACTION** – **ALL** – Link to annual boater reports <https://canalrivertrust.org.uk/boaterreports>

## OPEN DISCUSSION – Dredging Plans and Vegetation Management (Environment & Heritage Team)

Emmanuel presented and provided an insight into the Trust Dredging Programme.

- Recent and Upcoming Dredging Campaigns – Ratcliffe Lock Tail, Stoke and Cromwell locks, Lime Kiln lock, Erewash Eastwood to Trent lock, River Trent lock approaches, Trent & Mersey – Barrow Bridge to Aston lock to River Trent junction, Foxton ponds desilting.
- Dredging Under Consideration – Grand Union Canal lock 13 to Lover's Lane bridge, Market Harborough Arm to include all reedbeds.

Richard Bennett presented and provided an insight into the Trust Vegetation Management.

- Invasive and Problem Weeds – Floating Pennywort, Azolla, Duckweed
- Biodiversity Enhancements

## OPEN DISCUSSION – Health, Wellbeing and Accessibility (National Customer Service Team)

Matthew Symonds led the open discussion and encouraged everyone to find time to look at Richard Parry's video.

**ACTION** – ALL - Short film and National Update from Richard Parry. <https://youtu.be/f-FdKffDmY0>

All are welcome to share it with others.

- David Pullen – Expressed concern about the impact of increased and diverse use of the network. The balance needs to be right.
- Nick Roberts – Cyclists on the tow paths causing safety issues to walkers, dogs and children.
- Matthew Symonds – New app being trialed to record to different interactions on the tow path.
- David Pullen – Concerned the Trust are not doing enough to attract people onto the water, some conflict with angling.
- Dan Whyment – The Trust do not always own the banks, often owned by EA and local authorities.
- Diana Vogtel – Investigating how the Trust can work more with rowing and paddling clubs. Should the Trust cross promote events? Cyclists – the Trust are aware of potential tow path conflict and are undertaking increased engagement and communication.
- David Kent – Could pontoons be used for launching kayaks instead of the banks? Is there potential for rough track cycling events to be held along the River Trent?
- Matthew Symonds – Cycling UK promoting more off-road cycling events
- David Pullen – Kayaks and paddle boards impact on angling.
- Nick Roberts – Support for waterways usage on the Trent encouraging.
- Phil Mulligan – Thanked the attendees for their contributions. No individual user group using the waterways contributes enough to provide provision for their related activity. The Trust needs wider public support and needs to deliver to the masses or risks losing £50 million government funding support. Cycling whilst it causes problems, triggers significant investment that all user groups benefit from.
- Matthew – Thanked everyone for their input.

#### **OPEN DISCUSSION – Waterways Maintenance and Upkeep** *(East Midlands Regional Operations Team)*

Dan Whyment opened the discussion.

- Nick Roberts – Restrictions last year on tidal locks at Cromwell and Torksey requiring 48 hours' notice, sent the wrong message to visiting boaters and inconvenienced local boaters. Cromwell lock is often unmanned. What is the plan for tidal lock management next year?
- Dan Whyment – Reduction in tidal lock use by boaters means employees time is not being used efficiently, if the locks are manned full time. Passage is always facilitated with 48 hours' notice. Penning totals not significantly changed by the decision. If no boats are passing that day can put staff to work elsewhere on vital maintenance work that is required, rather than sat at the lock doing nothing.
- Rob Braithwaite – Boats still arriving without booking on occasion, experienced boaters usually plan journeys. 48 hours' notice requirement is trying to formalise passage, as boater demand was not there to man the locks for 14 hour daylight period during the main season. Cromwell and Torksey will always be manned.
- Dan Whyment – Expectations need to be set and communicated.
- Nick Roberts – During summer months could we revert to 24 hours' notice join up with the Yorkshire and North East region? Could volunteers man the tidal locks instead of Trust employees?
- David Pullen – Reduction in number of boats is a consequence of the reputation of the river as risky, through grounding, due to lax maintenance.
- Jo Grummett – Website is being improved to provide guidance on using the River Trent.
- Matthew Symonds – The Trust fully committed to working with interested parties to attract more people onto the Trent.

#### **OPEN Q & A and Submitted Questions** *(led by Jo Grummett)*

- Jo Grummett - Invited further comments or questions.

- David Kent – Uncertain as to how efficient the event registration system within the Trust is? Could the process be investigated?
- Jo Grummett – Offered to explore the process further, together with Diana Vogel.
- David Pullen – Welcomed the opportunity to ask questions and engage in dialogue. Asked the Trust not to confuse passion with aggression.
- Jo Grummett – Noted and thanked everyone for their contributions and attendance.

**END**