

## **Canal & River Trust**

### **Winter Parliamentary Newsletter**

#### **1. Welcome message from Chief Executive**

As the Canal & River Trust approaches the third anniversary of its creation, with responsibility for 2000 miles of canals and rivers in England and Wales, we can look back with some satisfaction at how far we have come in a short time, and also with a great deal of excitement about where we are going. Our 15 year contract with the Government means we have been able, for the first time, to put in place long-term strategies to maintain the historic canals and rivers in our care. It means we can deliver greater efficiencies through more predictable, longer term plans and contracts, build stronger, closer links to the communities we serve, grow wider public support and raise more income from a diverse range of new sources.

Our waterways generate immense public benefit for the nation, whether as habitats for wildlife, as oases of calm for people in our busy cities, or as the focal points for investment and renewal. I was delighted therefore to see so many Peers and Members of Parliament, from all parties, come along to visit us this Winter, whether on the towpath, at the many events and Open Days we have held, or in Westminster. A particular thanks to all those who signed up as Friends [<http://support.canalrivertrust.org.uk/donate-now/monthly>] to make a regular donation to our work.

More than 250 years ago Parliamentarians took the key decisions that brought our magnificent canals to life, and I am pleased to see the connection still going strong. I hope you find this newsletter informative; and please don't hesitate to get in touch with us if you want to find out more about our work.

#### **2. Winter Works Programme**

Each winter the Canal & River Trust carries out a programme of major repairs to its historic waterways, taking advantage of the quieter months to close short stretches of the network

and replace lock gates, reline and re-build channels, repair weirs and sluices, and grout bridges and lock walls.

In the last few years we have begun to open up some of these projects to the public, giving them a glimpse into what it takes to keep our waterways working. These open days allow people to see inside drained canals, walk through empty lock chambers, chat to our engineers and get a new perspective on these feats of engineering.

Our open days have proven immensely popular with the public and we were delighted to see so many parliamentarians visit one this winter. To find out more go to [www.canalrivertrust.org.uk/our-work/major-works/winter-works](http://www.canalrivertrust.org.uk/our-work/major-works/winter-works).

### **3. HS2 and the Waterways**

The current plans for HS2 will require the construction of some significant engineering structures over and beside our historic waterways which will change the waterway landscape forever. The Canal & River Trust firmly believes that HS2 must be designed and constructed so as to minimise its impact on the waterways for the communities, heritage and wildlife they support, and the millions of people who enjoy them.

Our campaign achieved an early victory on 1<sup>st</sup> October 2014, when the Secretary of State for Transport, Patrick McLoughlin MP, announced the Government would adopt Canal & River Trust and Inland Waterways Association proposals to re-align the route of HS2 in order to protect the popular and historic Fradley Junction area of the Trent & Mersey Canal. We are also pleased that early plans for the Curzon Street station in Birmingham put the canal at its heart and propose to open up and re-vitalise the city's eastside canal quarter.

While the change of route at Fradley junction is a major achievement, the Trust will maintain its efforts to reduce other negative impacts of HS2 along its route and maximise the opportunities it presents for regeneration. As well as continuing direct engagement with HS2 Ltd and other stakeholders, we have used the petition process to ask formally for the Bill to be amended and we look forward to appearing before the House of Commons High Speed Rail Committee.

### **4. Continuous cruising – upholding rights and taking responsibility**

The growth in the numbers of boats using our waterways over the last decade has been very positive, but it has also created new challenges and conflicts. This is especially true in London and the south of England where mooring space is limited and needs to be shared fairly and responsibly. Moorings and facilities in these areas designed for visiting vessels are experiencing increased congestion – principally due to the significant growth in boats without a home mooring remaining in a small local area in breach of their requirement to ‘continuously cruise.’

The right of boats to ‘continuously cruise’ was determined by Parliament (enshrined in the British Waterways Act, 1995), to support the choice of boaters who didn’t want to be tied down to a ‘home mooring’ and lead a life that saw them always on the move. Boaters who embrace this way of life, travelling across our extensive 2,000 mile network, through towns, cities and villages, bring colour and vibrancy to our canals and rivers.

Continuous cruisers don’t have to pay for a home mooring but they do have to navigate ‘in good faith’ over the term of their licence, which means moving at least every 14 days to a different place and undertaking a progressive journey. This helps make sure that boats keep on the move. As the operators of the canal system, we want to give the maximum number of boaters the opportunity to explore and enjoy the canal network, and it wouldn’t be fair if all the popular spots were taken up by the same boats constantly.

Last November The Guardian [<http://www.theguardian.com/society/2014/nov/11/canal-boat-affordable-city-centre-living>] reported on how the increase in house prices in some areas was leading to more people living on boats. Most of these new boaters are “continuous cruisers”, and we’re concerned that they may not fully understand the requirements of their licence. We’re trying to communicate the rules as clearly as possible and keep boaters informed if they’re not observing them.

Continuous cruising can be a rewarding lifestyle and for many continuous cruisers, boating isn’t a hobby, it’s their life and their passion. However, we have to make sure that all boaters comply with the rules, and ultimately it is the responsibility of individuals to ensure that they understand them, and the possible consequences if they don’t respect them.

So from May this year, we will be embarking on a major communication programme to the significant number of people who hold ‘continuous cruiser’ licences but who, according to our

data, hardly move any distance during a year. We will be explaining to them what they need to do and we will try to help them meet their responsibilities under the Act (we have appointed a welfare officer to organise help for those who are vulnerable and have significant problems). In those, hopefully rare, cases where there is a persistent failure to comply, we will have to withdraw their licence and therefore they will no longer be able to keep their boat on the waterways, or risk having it impounded. We always want to handle individual cases sensitively and if you have constituents with specific concerns then you can put them in touch with [Give Sean Williams details](#)

## **5. Restoration Campaign**

Sir Tony Robinson has got behind the Trust's campaign to restore the nation's lost waterways. England and Wales are criss-crossed by hundreds of miles of derelict canals but, thanks to the tireless efforts of restoration trusts and societies, around 200 miles of canals have been restored since the turn of the millennium. We want more people to appreciate the importance of these historic canals and play their part in supporting and championing the heroic efforts of local canal restoration groups.

Sir Tony Robinson said of the campaign: "The waterway network is part of the fabric of our nation but it's easy to forget that not so very long ago some of our most popular canals were almost lost forever.

"The fact that we can still enjoy them now is thanks largely to the vision, dedication and sheer hard work of volunteers in the 60s and 70s. These inspiring men and women just wouldn't take no for an answer and worked on the basis that nothing was impossible. We need to recapture that same spirit within our communities to support today's volunteers in bringing more of these once proud waterways back to life."

## **6. Reducing our carbon footprint**

The Canal & River Trust has been awarded the Carbon Trust Standard, a certification that recognises our achievements to reduce our carbon footprint. The award recognises that we cut emissions by 13.5 per cent between 2012 and 2014, which is equivalent to an annual reduction of around 3,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide.

In total we have achieved a 26 per cent reduction in emissions since 2010, exceeding our Carbon Management Plan target of 25 per cent, one year ahead of schedule.

## **7. Lottery boost for National Waterways Museum**

The National Waterways Museum in Cheshire's Ellesmere Port, is celebrating after receiving a grant of £790,300 from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF), plus invaluable match funding of over £50,000 from the Wolfson Foundation. The support will allow the Canal & River Trust, which cares for the museums, to secure the future of two of its most important historic vessels, Mossdale and George, and the creation of new exhibitions and interactive displays.

Mossdale, the last remaining all-wooden 'Mersey flat', will be preserved and put on show at the museum while George, a rare-surviving horse-drawn 'short boat,' will be fully restored back to working order. Rather than carrying cargoes, the vessel will go on summer tours along the Leeds & Liverpool Canal as part of a community outreach and education project. This great news follows the recent announcements of HLF support for the Trust's Gloucester Waterways Museum (£994,000) and the restoration of locks on the Grantham Canal (£830,500).

For a relatively new charity, the additional support from the Wolfson Foundation – a significant funder of museums and galleries in the UK – is also a major vote of confidence for the Trust.

The Canal & River Trust cares for the national waterways collection and archives, a major resource containing historic artefacts and records covering more 250 years of waterway history.