

NOTE OF MEETING OF INTER-DEPARTMENTAL GROUP ON INLAND WATERWAYS HELD IN ROOM 613 MILLBANK ON MONDAY, 6 JULY 2009

Present:	Huw Irranca –Davies	Waterways Minister (items 1 to 3)
	Nicole Roberts	Private Secretary
	Robin Mortimer	Director, CALR, Defra
	Sarah Nason	Deputy Director, EAW, Defra
	David Foot	Inland Waterways Team, Defra
	Pam Griffin	Inland Waterways Team, Defra
	Kim Gunningham	National Parks policy and Sponsorship Team
	Duncan Buchanan	Freight and Logistics Division, Department of Transport
	Graham Catt	Tourism team, DCMS
	Keith Thomas	Welsh Assembly Government
	Kay Thomson	Department of Health
	Roger Wilshaw	Communities and Local Government
	Robin Evans	British Waterways
	John Packman	Broads Authority
	Stuart Taylor	Environment Agency
	John Edmonds	Inland Waterways Advisory Council
	John Manning	Inland Waterways Advisory Council

1. INTRODUCTIONS

1.1 The Minister welcomed Kim Gunningham from Defra's National Parks and Sponsorship team as the latest Defra member of the IDG.

2. MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING

2.1 The minutes were agreed. David Foot reported on the main matters arising.

Paragraph 3.4

It had been suggested that there should be a stakeholder event between the national parks and regional ministers mirroring one held between the national parks and RDAs 5 years ago. Defra's National Parks Sponsorship Team had advised that attempts had in the past been made to set up a similar event but because of competing priorities the Regional Ministers had been unable to engage. This was unlikely to change in the near future.

The IDG had agreed that Defra and the navigation authorities would attend a meeting with RDA Regeneration Directors. Defra and BW had subsequently met with RDA Regeneration Directors. We would

consider opportunities for further engagement including following up publication of the revised Waterways for Tomorrow (WFT).

The IDG had acknowledged that the Ministers for the regions could influence regional initiatives and Defra had said it would consider pursuing this with them. This might best be done in specific contexts, and/or perhaps as part of the consultation and awareness raising processes attached to the WFT re-write.

Paragraphs 4.2 and 7.1

British Waterways, Environment Agency and Broads Authority had agreed to do a presentation on their activities and the benefits waterways could provide to other government departments objectives. BW would be the first to present today as time did not allow for a joint presentation covering all 3 navigation authorities. There would be presentations from EA and the Broads at future meetings.

3. PRESENTATION BY THE INLAND WATERWAYS ADVISORY COUNCIL ON THE OUTCOME OF RESEARCH IN TO THE BENEFITS OF INLAND WATERWAYS

3.1 John Manning outlined the background to the project which was the first stage of a new Defra inland waterways research programme. The programme sought to (i) provide evidence of social, economic and environmental benefits, (ii) to inform policy for Government, RDAs, local authorities and funding bodies, and (iii) to improve investment decision making.

3.2 The programme would identify the wider benefits of investing in both existing and new inland waterways, identify waterway beneficiaries and provide confidence that Government investment is targeted and achieving value for money.

3.3 The programme had two stages. The first was a project to review and evaluate existing research literature; define the generic social, environmental and economic benefits of inland waterways and identify significant gaps in existing research. It had resulted in a 'benefits transfer based valuation framework' which calculated a value for each benefit – this could then be used on a stretch of inland waterway where these benefits occurred.

3.4 30 benefit categories had been identified and these had been grouped together on an ecosystem services basis:

- Provisioning/economic, e.g. regeneration/business creation, property premiums
- Regulating – environment, eg drainage, habitat provision and water quality (pollution dilution)
- Cultural – recreation, heritage, well being, eg walking and cycling, Pontcysyllite Aqueduct and community benefits

- Other – cross cutting, eg tourism

3.5 Values had been calculated for 21 benefits, e.g. £26.50/tonne CO₂ saved as a result of waterborne freight, £5 to £7 cyclist spend each trip, £4-4.50p informal visitor per day and £1.50 to £7.50 heritage ‘willingness to pay’ per household. These values were not cast in stone and no consideration has been given to net benefit, e.g. navigation vs water abstraction. The project had confirmed that it was very difficult to put a value on the whole network as benefits were not always 100% due to waterways and they varied by location. The second stage of the research programme had yet to be defined but it was anticipated that it would apply the benefits framework to a stretch of inland waterway and test the availability and applicability of the values in the framework.

3.6 The presentation would be circulated to IDG members. The Minister noted the positive benefits for recreation, regeneration and health. In discussion it was noted that more information would be needed before the overall value of the waterways could be determined – ‘scaling up’ would be challenging for the economists. The findings of the research project would be of value to local authorities and regional development agencies as they could readily see the benefits produced by the waterways and thus assess whether a proposal was a worthwhile investment. Economists would be tasked to come up with some meaningful overall values, perhaps on a regional basis. Care would be needed in the calculation of the return on investment in terms of health and regeneration.

3.7 The programme was still at an early stage, but the benefits framework should aid local decision making on what benefits could be achieved on a particular project. It was noted that there were plenty of linkages to the health agenda – the Department of Health were working with DfT on an Active Travel Transport Strategy and had information on values from walking and cycling. It would find the information from the research project helpful.

4. DISCUSSION ON REVISED WATERWAYS FOR TOMORROW

4.1 The Minister said that good progress was being made on the revision of WFT. The Steering Group had endorsed a proposal that the revised strategy should be set out in themes which would be future-proofed and reflecting, rather than being locked into, current Public Service Agreements. A successful stakeholder workshop had been held on 10 June at which delegates had largely endorsed the themes and provided valuable input on both the role of the waterways and future key actions to enhance the benefits they provide. A similar workshop in Wales would be planned in the next few months.

4.2 At the workshop on 10 June, John Edmonds, the Chair of IWAC had proposed, on behalf of IWAC, that the revised policy document be known as *Waterways for Everyone* in recognition of the wish to see access to the inland waterways being widened to all, not just being improved for existing users, i.e. ‘wider not deeper’. Delegates had welcomed the proposal that policy should

reflect the multi-functional nature of inland waterways without losing the key role they had in facilitating navigation/boating, the major draw for visitors.

4.3 Sarah Nason introduced the themes which set out the roles, potential and future actions. She said that whilst the navigation authorities had a key role to play, the onus should not always be placed on them. Other partners should look for opportunities to further their own objectives through the waterways. The policy document was cross-cutting and reflected the roles of partners, e.g. Primary Care Trusts who could encourage and promote the use of towpaths for healthy exercise. Policy statements and key actions would be incorporated in the text.

Themes

- **Place making and shaping** required engagement of RDAs and input from CLG given the importance of planning to development and use of the waterways. The proposed strategy should include deliverable outcomes and not just be aspirational so ideally it should include new commitments from Government Departments. CLG acknowledged the need to work with local government to promote the waterways, but reminded the group that any new burdens must be funded to ensure there was no upward pressure on council tax. On planning there was a good deal of existing guidance in respect of waterways and CLG had little direct control over Section 106 agreements. The overall policy framework to streamline guidance meant that any requests for additional planning guidance which related directly to inland waterways would probably be resisted. There was a need for Defra to continue to engage bilaterally with CLG planning officials.

The group acknowledged CLG's position but concluded that the message was much more positive for local authorities. The waterways were a resource to deliver cross-departmental and local objectives and enhance public benefit through partnership working. There was no intention of placing new burdens on local authorities as a result of this partnership working. It was about recognising opportunities and using existing resources more effectively. It was noted that towns seeking to improve their sense of place and identity by promoting waterway development did not see the waterways as a burden, but rather as an opportunity. It was acknowledged that much could be achieved through the Local Development Framework process and this should be used more effectively. The building blocks were there and the new strategy should be about what the waterways could deliver for people, rather than a list of things that needed to be done. The best approach was to focus on a number of key things where waterways could make a difference. This would be supported by case studies and the developing benefits framework. The waterways should be seen as an asset and resource for local communities – such recognition would make local authorities more inclined to develop their potential and contribute to their upkeep.

The proposed approach would be to:

- Deliver a realistic and clear policy document, setting out the opportunities
- Identify any new cross government commitments needed to help the potential to be realised
- Produce a positive statement of intent and to emphasise that partnership working is not about creating new burdens

4.4 The current economic environment was difficult, but some thought the policy needed to bring out more how the government would help RDAs and navigation bodies to work together to promote the waterways. It was noted that this was a matter for RDAs who set their own investment priorities, but it was acknowledged that there might be a case for government to encourage RDAs to recognise the potential benefits from inland waterways. This proposal would be further explored within BIS. (Defra has also subsequently pursued this through the lead RDA for Defra EEDA)

4.5 **Climate change and the natural environment:** Defra was providing most of the input on these two themes – BW and EA would be required to produce adaptation plans in accordance with the reporting requirements of the new Climate Change Act. It was noted that IWAC had produced a scoping study on climate change and the waterways. Commitments would be considered on ensuring the waterways were properly taken into account in the implementation of environmental legislation.

4.6 **Cultural heritage:** It was acknowledged that the waterways were a tremendous heritage resource and Defra had to ensure the revised strategy took full account of DCMS's vision for the historic environment. The vision in turn needed to reflect the importance of inland waterways as a living heritage asset. [meeting with DCMS project manager took place on 23 July]. The waterways were a cross-cutting cultural resource in terms of heritage, the arts, business and tourism.

4.7 **Health, well-being and sport:** The waterways could play a key role in the government's Change4Life policy which sought to encourage healthy living and exercise. The right levers were needed if the Primary Care Trusts (PCTs) were to commit to exploiting the benefits of inland waterways. It was noted that spending choices were made locally, but national indicators could provide the evidence to encourage PCTs to take the necessary decisions and realise the potential of their local waterways in health campaigns. PCTs had capital resources which could contribute to the maintenance of towpaths. It was agreed that there had to be clarity on the extent to which DoH could commit to encouraging use of the waterways to deliver health policy, clarity on what capital funds were available and a commitment from DoH to ensure PCTs had the evidence to help them make the necessary decisions. These suggestions would be explored by DoH.

4.8 **Sustainable transport:** This would be further explored on a bi-lateral basis with DfT. There was considerable scope for improved low carbon

commuting and recreation alongside the waterways if the towpaths could be improved.

4.9 Tourism and business development: It was suggested that more needed to be done to help promote business and tourism. For example, planning restrictions sometimes inhibited or delayed establishment of marinas. Defra would seek to identify the specific problems and take them up with BIS and CLG.

4.10 In discussion, it was acknowledged that it was necessary to be clearer on the audience being targeted in the revised policy document. The current approach suggested to some the need for more explicit partnership commitments to be developed between Defra and each government department. The Public Service Agreements drove this to some extent, but it was hoped that the policy would promote partnerships/commitment at all levels, encourage dialogue and identify additional funding possibilities.

4.11 The Steering Group was meeting again on 30 July to go through a full draft of the revised strategy. It was agreed that the Steering Group should address the audience and potential key commitments needed by Government Departments prior to collective Ministerial agreement of the consultation document. The timetable for public consultation (currently planned for September) would also be addressed.

5. PRESENTATION BY BRITISH WATERWAYS ON ITS ACTIVITIES AND ITS STRATEGIC PLAN '2020'

5.1 Time did not enable British Waterways to give their presentation. A hard copy of this presentation would be circulated to attendees with a view to a presentation at a future meeting.

6. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

6.1 There was no other business.

7. DATE ON NEXT MEETING

7.1 This was likely to be held in September to enable the IDG to consider the consultation document or, if this is cleared by correspondence, the next meeting might be in December/early January to consider the results of the consultation and a final draft along with launch and communication plans.