



Newsletter

September 1998

Issue 323

IWA CONCERNED BY GOVERNMENT THREAT TO CANAL WATER SUPPLIES

The IWA today warned that new Government proposals to place stricter controls on water abstraction could have serious repercussions for the future health of Britain's canals.

The warnings came at the opening of the IWA National Festival and Inland Boat Show at Salford Quays, after IWA was consulted by the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions about the future of the water licensing system in England and Wales. The proposals, if accepted in their current form, could mean that historic rights of abstraction, many of which were enacted over 200 years ago to ensure water supplies for canals and safeguard busy trade routes, would be revoked. Owners of canals would have to apply to the Environment Agency for the right to take water from rivers and other sources to supply the canal and, if supplies were short, these consents could be refused.

IWA is concerned that the Environment Agency has tended to view canals as inferior to rivers in many of its Local Environment Agency Plans, which IWA provides submissions for, and that it may not appreciate canals' full value to the public. The Agency has minimal practical experience of the operation of canals and IWA is concerned that even a small drop in average water levels caused by the restriction of just a small number of supplies may result in a threat to navigation, damage to the foundations of historic structures and prove a threat to wildlife.

High season boating, which has suffered over past dry summers due to low water levels, faces being further restricted as canal water supplies face more stringent restrictions. This could mean fewer people taking boating holidays and a consequential drop in trade for those

businesses that rely on summer tourism. Further repercussions may be felt by restoration societies who may struggle to gain permission to obtain water supplies for newly restored stretches of waterway.

IWA national chairman, Mrs Audrey Smith said, "These proposals give us genuine cause for concern. IWA and other waterway interests have worked for decades to restore derelict waterways to navigation. People have been able to cruise an increasing number of historic waterways throughout the country, but now the lifeblood of these may no longer be guaranteed. And it's not just boaters who could suffer. Many old buildings associated with the industrial heritage of the waterways may be affected by subsidence should water levels fall even slightly."

Mrs Smith added, "Unfortunately, canals appear to have been highlighted as significant users of water. In reality they result in virtually no overall loss of water at all, unlike some other uses, many of which result in very high levels of evaporation. Canals are no great threat to water resources. In fact, quite the opposite. They help to retain water in river basins which otherwise would simply drain into the sea more quickly."

Many canals have, up until now, had water supplies legally guaranteed through 'licences of right' to abstract the required amount of water. Under the new proposals, navigation authorities would have to obtain a consent to transfer water from sources of supply. Consents would involve no actual charge for the water taken. However, they could be revoked or varied at any time should the Agency so decide.

IWA Press Release - 29 August 1998

IWA CONDEMNS GOVERNMENT INDIFFERENCE TO LICHFIELD & HATHERTON PLIGHT

At the opening of the 1998 IWA National Waterways Festival & Inland Boat Show at Salford Quays today, the IWA welcomed travelling heroes Chris Coburn and crew of narrowboat "Progress" back from their 1998 "Spirit of Adventure" cruise. Their adventurous "Cut to Caernarfon" voyage has been fund raising to support the Lichfield & Hatherton Canals Restoration Trust and WRG.

The "Progress" appeal has drawn attention to the complete lack of action by Secretary of State for the Environment, Transport and the Regions - the Rt Hon John Prescott MP - who has, so far, failed to re-examine his decision to ignore the findings of the Public Enquiry

Inspector and allow the proposed Birmingham Northern Relief Road (BNRR) to sever the route of the Lichfield and Hatherton Canals. The IWA, the Trust and other waterway interests have been campaigning hard for over a year to the Government to ensure the provision of the required crossings, but so far with little response.

The Enquiry recommended that the necessary aqueduct and navigable culverts should be provided by the road developers either during construction of the road or when restoration reached the point at which they were needed, so as to enable full restoration of the two canals and the

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SOUTHAMPTON CANAL SOCIETY

Established 1967

The objectives of the Society are to foster interest in canals and inland waterways, to assist in their preservation, restoration and development, and to give practical help on waterway projects.

Chairman:

Brian Evans, 19 Lansdowne Gardens, Romsey, Hampshire, SO51 8FN. Tel: 01794 517115

Secretary:

Eric Lewis, 51 Friars Croft, Calmore, Hampshire, SO40 2SS. Tel: 01703 860384

Treasurer & Membership:

Laura Sturrock, 27 Northlands Road, Romsey, Hampshire, SO51 5RU. Tel 01794 517614

Committee:

Martin Cripps
Paul Herbert
Peter Oates
David Townley-Jones

Newsletter Editor:

Peter Oates, 27 Northlands Road, Romsey, Hampshire, SO51 5RU. Tel: 01794 517614

MEETINGS

1st Thursday each month at 7.45pm
St John's Ambulance Hall,
King's Park Road, Southampton

FORTHCOMING SOCIETY EVENTS

- 3rd Sept** "An Evening with our Chairman"
- 1st Oct** "Black Country Waterways" with Ron Cousens
- 5th Nov** "A Small Boat on Local Waterways" by Peter Glover
- 4th Dec** Annual Inter-Society Quiz and American Supper

The Waterways Ombudsman

Your Chairman has received a copy of the Ombudsman's annual report for the year to 31 March 1998. If you would like to see this, contact Brian Evans.

Distributed by:

Hunt & Co, Chartered Accountants,
123/124 High Street, Southampton,
SO14 2AA. Tel: 01703 225255

August Meeting

Despite advertising in this Newsletter and reminders to the membership at previous meetings, the attendance at the Members' Slide Evening on 6 August was somewhat disappointing. Whilst appreciating that August is a popular month for holidays with many members (your Editor among them), only ten members were present - which must be about a record low figure.

Ray Brooks had kindly offered to organise the projection of the slides but, in the event, only Michael Pomeroy and absent Secretary, Eric Lewis, had provided slides. Fortunately, Paul Herbert had brought along a copy of David Blagrove's video "The Canal Carrier", so those present had a fairly full and enjoyable evening - albeit shorter than is normal.

July Meeting

The Society's Annual General Meeting was held in July and produced no surprises. Your Editor has no details / minutes of the meeting to hand but will provide a report these are available.

August Newsletter

Just in case you think you might have missed your copy of the August Newsletter, I can confirm that it was not published as a result of a distinct lack of time. Again this month I am having keep things down to 4 pages (one evening's work) and to hold over a few snippets of interest. Hopefully, next month will see me with time on my hands (??).

Subscriptions

This is just a further reminder to members that subscriptions to the Society for the year 1998-9 became due back at the AGM in July. Please also note that the rates were not increased at that meeting remaining as: Single £6.00 and £9.00 for the Family rate. By any reckoning still a bargain for 12 meetings, newsletters etc!

Consortium produced 'deficient' bid to win £400m toll-road deal

The £400m contract to build Britain's first private toll road was awarded to a private consortium which produced a "seriously deficient" and "unacceptably crude" bid, according to leaked government documents seen by *The Independent*. The independent report for the Department of Transport questions the traffic forecasts of Midland Expressway Ltd, which won the right to build the 27-mile Birmingham Northern Relief Road - linking the M6 and M42 across the north of Birmingham.

The Independent 3 July 1998

See also the press release on page 1. Is this the reason why John Prescott has declined to change his mind about the crossings by the Lichfield & Hatherton Canals?



It's a giveaway - a special offer has been made to all members - all old issues of waterways magazines on the sales stand are available FREE and gratis. You don't often get something for nothing in this world but the Society is able to make this irresistible offer to YOU. Get in quick!!

Events and Meetings in 1998

The following is a list of waterway oriented events happening around our area. This list proves there is plenty of waterway interest within a moderate distance of Southampton. Something on this list must interest you! Phone numbers of contacts are given at the end of the list.

3rd September (Thu) - *Southampton CS meeting - An Evening with our Chairman.* Details Eric Lewis.

11th - 20th September (all week) - **Southampton International Boat Show.** The well known event is here again. Open from 10.00am to 7.00pm (6.00pm on 20th). Admission: Adults £8.00 (£12.00 on 11th), accompanied children free.

12th - 13th September (Sat & Sun) - **Godalming Working Boat Rally.** Please note that this event will not now be taking place.

17th September (Thu) - **Canalside Camera** by Jon Sims. Salisbury Rugby Club, Castle Road, Salisbury at 7.30pm. Details from Tony Fry.

20th September (Sun) - **Beaulieu River Small Boat Cruise.** This will be upstream to the top of the navigation from Bucklers Hard. A launching fee of £6.00 is payable but the river is extremely attractive. A gentle cruise and picnic followed by a cream tea in the village. Details from Peter Boyce.

1st October (Thu) - *Southampton CS meeting - Black Country Waterways* with Ron Cousens. Details from Eric Lewis.

5th November (Thu) - *Southampton CS meeting - A Small Boat on Local Waterways* by Peter Glover. Details from Eric Lewis.

19th November (Thu) - **Canalware Painting** by Bocraft. Salisbury Rugby Club, Castle Road, Salisbury at 7.30pm. Details from Tony Fry.

28th November - 24th December - **Father Christmas Trips** daily on the Chichester Canal. Details from John Cooper.

4th December (Thu) - *Southampton CS meeting - Annual Inter-Society Quiz and American Supper.* Details Eric Lewis.

First Wednesday in most months - **IWA Dorchester Group** meets. Information Graham Pugh 01305 262305.

Throughout the year - **Wey & Arun Canal Trust** run cruises on n/b *Zachariah Keppel* on the restored canal. Information from John Lisk.

Throughout the year - **Chichester Canal Society** run cruises on n/b *Egremont* on the canal from Chichester. Information from John Cooper.

Telephone numbers of contacts are:

Peter Boyce (IWA Solent & Arun Branch) 01705 269642
John Cooper (Chichester Canal Society) 01243 671051
Tony Fry (IWA Salisbury Group) 01722 710192
Eric Lewis (Southampton Canal Society) 01703 860384
John Lisk (Wey & Arun Canal Trust) 01493 752403
Alan White (IWA Solent & Arun Branch) 01243 573765

CANAL SOCIETY SALES STAND

GEOProjects Maps

Inland Waterways of Britain NEW!	£4.75
Basingstoke Canal	£3.00
Birmingham Canal Navigations.....	£3.75
The Broads	£3.75
Caledonian Canal & the Great Glen NEW!	£3.75
Coventry & Ashby Canals COMING SOON!	£3.75
Grand Union Canal (each).....	£3.75
Map 1 Birmingham - Fenny Stratford	
Map 2 Braunston - Kings Langley	
Map 3 Fenny Stratford - Thames	
Map 4 Leicester Line - Soar - Erewash	
Kennet & Avon Canal	£3.75
Llangollen and Montgomery Canals.....	£3.75
London - City and Docklands Atlas	£3.75
Oxford Canal	£3.75
Shropshire Union Canal.....	£3.75
The Thames Map	£3.75
Trent & Mersey Canal COMING SOON!	£3.75

Ball Point Pens – Embossed 50p

Burgees – Navy Blue - screen printed Society logo on each side £8.00

Decorated Mugs £2.25

Notelets – with drawings of canal and Romsey scenes £1.00
(by Brian Evans)

Painted Canalware – Range of items from dippers to plant containers
to spoons – Painted by Linda Pearce **NEW!** Various

Shopper Bags – Cotton with screen-printed Society logo each side .. £2.25

Society Members Badges – Enamel 75p

Sweat Shirts – 30th Anniversary in Light Grey £16.00
with multi-coloured embroidered Society logo on breast

Sweat Shirts – Standard in Navy or Royal Blue £15.00
with Society logo embroidered on breast

Tea Towels – Various colourful designs £2.50 & £3.25

Tee Shirts – Screen printed with Society logo across chest £6.50
in Navy Blue - medium, large & extra large
in Red - medium

Visit the Sales Stand at Society meetings and place your orders with Paul Herbert or Ray Brooks.

IWA CALLS ON NEW MINISTER TO HELP SAVE THE WATERWAYS

The IWA today made an impassioned plea to new Waterways Minister, Alan Meale, to help stave off the looming spectre of waterway franchising.

IWA broke the franchising story to the public in May when it emerged that the Treasury was promoting the option of franchising those parts of the inland waterway network which are currently managed by British Waterways. This sparked fierce debate amongst the national and waterway press and the public as to the repercussions of such an action. But the Government has so far remained tight-lipped on the subject and the Association is concerned that decisions are being taken without any form of open consultation on plans for the future which will impact users directly.

At the opening ceremony of the 1998 IWA National Waterways Festival and Inland Boat Show at Salford Quays, IWA National Chairman, Mrs Audrey Smith, said, "Waterway users are being kept in the dark on an issue which will have significant repercussions on their future use of the waterways should the Treasury's plans come to fruition. We desperately need the new Minister to give waterway users support in government and help us to fight for a secure future of this most precious national asset."

Mrs Smith continued, "We find the Government's silence on the matter the most worrying and frustrating aspect of this issue. The present Government has, by and large, embraced the concept of openness and public participation in the decision making process wholeheartedly. Its obvious failure to operate with transparency in this case is resulting in an atmosphere of increasing speculation and suspicion which is, quite simply, not constructive in any way. Boaters and other users are questioning why the Government is unwilling to divulge its position and with no official information being provided they are quite naturally forming their own conclusions. Canals are being increasingly appreciated for their diverse range of values - from their popularity for recreation to their historical, conservation and amenity values. A franchising option could do untold damage to these values and we hope that this is recognised by Mr Meale. We hope that the Minister will help us to persuade the Government that if it has nothing to hide, it should make its plans public so that all concerned can prepare for the future. If the Government sees the future as franchised waterways, we need Mr Meale's help to fight this."

IWA is concerned that a franchising option for the waterways will result in a decline in the state of repair of waterways as entrepreneurs seek to maximise profits at the expense of heritage, conservation and amenity value. The Association fears that developers will seek quick profits from property development rather than preserving and enhancing the waterways in line with their historic past. IWA also fears the complete loss of more peripheral waterways which would not be an attractive option for commercial interests, and so would fall back into dereliction, reversing decades of work by restoration societies.

IWA Press Release - 29 August 1998

LICHFIELD & HATHERTON PLIGHT

(Continued from page 1)

opening up of the northern Birmingham Canal Navigations (BCN). The Secretary of State's acquiescence with the road developers now means that only foundations for the aqueduct will be provided. The tunnels required for the Hatherton Canal to cross the BNRR near Cannock will not now be provided and the Enquiry found that construction of these latter would be impracticably difficult for the Trust.

Audrey Smith said, "We are appalled by the Government's total lack of support for the restoration of the Lichfield & Hatherton Canals. The Government has made much of its supposedly radical and forward thinking policies on transport, but there is no evidence of that in this case. The Secretary of State's decision, rather than being radical, is backward and obstructionist. It will have a detrimental effect on the heritage, leisure and tourism value of an area which would be greatly enhanced by this restoration.

"The cost of the required structures, when compared to that of the BNRR, is minimal and would not be borne by the public purse as the road is to be funded privately. The decision appears totally illogical. It does not concur with the Government's supposedly tough stance on road building and the environment or the concept of sustainable development. We strongly urge the Deputy Prime Minister to overturn his earlier decision and thereby ensure future generations can continue to enjoy the waterways. IWA calls on Mr Prescott to make realistic provisions so as to allow the progression of *both* the Lichfield & Hatherton restoration and the BNRR."

The "Progress" appeal 1998 set out to raise awareness of the threat to all canal restorations nationally which would be established if the BNRR is allowed to sever the Lichfield & Hatherton Canals and effectively preclude their full restoration.

The Public Enquiry, held in 1994-95, gave support to almost all requests by the Lichfield & Hatherton Canals Restoration Trust that the structures required to permit the restored canals to cross the route of the BNRR should be provided by the developers. The Enquiry Inspector advised that substantial weight should be attached to the Local Plan policies supporting the restoration and that non-provision of the required structures "*would substantially prejudice the canal restoration*". The Inspector recognised that the benefits of full restoration of the canals would be substantial and the costs "*would not be disproportionately high in relation to the cost of the BNRR*". The Secretary of State disagrees, however, stating that the additional expenditure would be "*inappropriate*", but he has given little justification for this decision.

IWA Press Release - 29 August 1998

Audrey Smith also appealed to everyone to write again (or for the first time) to John Prescott about this matter at the following address: The Rt. Hon. John Prescott M.P., Secretary of State for the Environment, Transport and the Regions, The House of Commons, London, SW1A 0AA.