



Canal &
River Trust

Keeping people, nature & history connected

Central Regent's Canal Action Plan

Notes of Stakeholder Meeting - 1 December 2014

Canal Museum, New Wharf Road, London N1

1. INTRODUCTION

Sorwar Ahmed, boater liaison manager at the Canal & River Trust, welcomed the meeting and introduced the external facilitator, Jonny Zander from Kaizen Partnership.

Sorwar explained that this stakeholder meeting aimed to engage local councils, boater representatives, residents and other stakeholders in initial discussions about developing an action plan for the central Regent's Canal running through Islington and Hackney.

The meeting had emerged from a long history of discussions between the Trust, local residents and boaters about how to improve the way the Regent's Canal is managed. The meeting was intended to be the first step in considering how to work together with the two local authorities, local partners, boaters, residents and stakeholders to make the Regent's Canal a better place for everyone.

Richard Parry, the Trust's chief executive, explained that the Trust looks after 2000 miles of canals and rivers and just doesn't have the resources to do everything that is needed. There is pressure on the canals from their growing popularity, so mutual understanding is needed between all users. The canals have changed dramatically over the years, and this section of the Regent's Canal will always be busy. The Trust will look and listen, but recognises that there is a wide range of needs so we will need to find common ground.

These notes are based on the flipchart records and verbatim notes taken at the meeting.

2. INTRODUCTIONS & PERSPECTIVES

Jonny Zander explained that the reason he was here as an independent facilitator was to ensure that this valuable time could be used most effectively, and so the community could share their views on an equal footing without the Trust being seen as leading the discussion. The community should include everyone who lives, works or visits the area.

He asked participants to explain who they were and their perspective at the meeting (e.g. boater, local authority, local resident, etc.). A full list of participants is attached at Appendix 1..

The group had some strong views, and residents expressed frustration at what they saw as a lack of action in dealing with some of the issues that were being experienced on and around the canal.

Jonny asked the group to share what they wanted from the meeting:

- Change myths / judgements
- Understand CRT's position – roles and responsibilities, legal, charitable objectives, budget
- Understand role and responsibility of each partner (grid for accountability) – where does the buck stop?



- Certainty re: critical problems – noise, smoke & enforcement thereof
- A second meeting (implying that some progress made) with actions and process
- Responsive to needs and meetings
- Distinguishing between myths and judgements – recognising difference between ‘boats are a problem’ and ‘certain boaters are problematic’
- Using the term ‘boaters’ is not helpful, as many different types of boater
- Not patronised
- Awareness from CRT
- Who is CRT responsible to?
- Who is responsible / in charge of the canal? (accountability)
- Islington and Hackney are here, where is Camden?
- Clearer understanding from CRT of need to protect environment
- Development beyond the canal should include green spaces for leisure
- Action
- Timely action
- Enforce strategy
- Certainty that problems will be fixed
- Understand the scale of increase in boats – is there a deliberate policy to promote growth?
- More targeted consultation with residents
- What can we do practically?
- Who is looking at the future? What is the vision? Whose space is it?

Jonny then outlined the intended aims for the meeting:

- To have all stakeholders feel listened to
- Appreciation of perspectives of other stakeholders
- CRT to share ideas and explain constraints that impact on the situation
- To start the process of constructive engagement in order to develop and action plan

The workshop would be in two parts: the first addressing the issues, and the second dealing with concrete ideas.

3. ISSUES, FEARS & CONCERNS

Participants were asked to describe the issues they were concerned about, and the fears and concerns they had about them.

- Growth of boats is a big change, leading to increased pollution
- Concentration of boats leads to increased noise and smoke
- Noise pollution
- ‘Noise’ could actually be boater conversation!
- Smoke
- How people use the canal has changed, e.g. cyclists, boaters – no control, sometimes lawless
- Increased use of towpath due to development
- Lack of order – drug dealing etc.
- Lack of action
- Graffiti



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- Congestion
- Towpath / mooring management
- Lack of winter moorings
- Triple mooring
- Anti-social behaviour
- Urine
- Environment
- Cyclists
- Pedestrians
- Lack of moorings / visitor moorings
- Lack of appreciation from residents
- Minority of residents who are anti-social
- Minority of boaters
- Facilities
- Impact on Community Boats (clubs) of increased use of canal
- Charitable objects include supporting Community Boats
- More information about boating to non-boaters

4. VALUES THAT WILL HELP US FIND SHARED SOLUTIONS

Jonny then asked the group to consider the values that should be demonstrated throughout this process in order to help us find shared solutions:

- Looking for consensus
- Law
- Leadership
- Responsibility
- Clear communication
- Respect for perspectives of others

5. WHAT APPROACH IS NEEDED?

The group was asked to consider the approach needed to find a solution. There was some consensus around the following:

- More places to moor
- More facilities
- Control over 'bridge-hopping' (non-moving boaters who don't care about others)
- Reduce the three lines of mooring

Other suggestions included introducing similar rules to those at the Islington Visitor Mooring, where wood burning is prohibited and only smokeless fuel is permitted.

Jonny summarised the group's views on an approach as:

- Look at the existing rules
- How to police the people who don't comply
- Clear leadership
- Identify responsibilities
- Landowners have a responsibility to work with agencies to resolve



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- A missing representative is the Police
- Some people feel patronised
- Need better clearer communications from everybody

The following comments were made in the discussion:

- We don't want single line moorings
- Should investigate the chance of penalty charges
- Free access to the towpath is an issue – why can't it be locked?
- Single line mooring at Islington VM has made problems at Hoxton – there are also seasonal issues with canal winter works
- Two lines of respectful boaters may be better than one line of inconsiderate boaters
- Some would like to see a Quiet Zone in Kings Cross too
- The success of the Islington VM plan reflects the efforts and goodwill of the volunteer Caretaker Boaters
- There is a canyon effect in Kings Cross so the area needs to be a Quiet Zone
- How can demand for boating be limited?
- What action can be taken now?
- The scale of growth means the regime must change
- We need to develop a sense of a vision for London
- We (LB Islington) are working with the Trust on a Draft Action Plan and are working on a set of actions – there is a commitment to this action plan, and to sharing the plan
- An offer was made by boaters to meet with residents in the area
- A question was raised as to whether the Boat Safety Scheme could cover pollution from engines? – it was clarified that this wasn't within the scope of the Scheme.
- Licence fees should be increased to dampen demand
- The legislation should be changed as demand is going to increase
- There was a suggestion that signage should be increased

Participants were keen to hear the Trust's position. Richard Parry explained a number of issues:

- The Canal & River Trust is a navigation authority which is responsible for licencing boats
- The legislation does not allow us to restrict licences if people meet the criteria
- Changing the legislation is just not on the table, as there is very little prospect of primary legislation
- The definition of 'continuous cruising' is not defined in the legislation, so we have to interpret its meaning and enforce accordingly
- London is popular for many reasons, and boats are attracted to London as a result
- Enforcement is not an effective remedy for the issues of concerns here, as we cannot act swiftly when a few people are not respecting the rules
- We have to look to the more effective powers that local Councils have
- We acknowledge the success of the Islington Visitor Mooring plan and will investigate the lessons for other moorings to the west of the Islington Tunnel
- Visitor mooring rules have varied history and have evolved over time in different places
- We are looking at clear guidance nationally, but shortening the stay times in this area may compound the problem



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6. ACTIONS / NEXT STEPS

The time to discuss concrete ideas was limited due to the level of debate. Jonny focussed the group on the next steps, and the following actions were agreed:

1. Richard Parry explained that the Trust has committed to developing an Action Plan, so we will work with partners to bring proposals back to the group.
2. It was agreed that there would be another meeting in January.
3. An update was requested for the January meeting on partnership funding. The Trust will compile some information on this.



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APPENDIX 1: Attendance List

| Name | Organisation / Interest |
|--------------------------|---|
| Roger Gajadhar Rutkowski | Canal Building |
| Sarah Sessions | Boater |
| Jim Bryden | Boater |
| John Raffles | Crystal Wharf |
| Eric Neumayer | Crystal Wharf |
| Mark Griffin | Head of Environmental Strategy, LB Hackney |
| Hilary Norris | Resident |
| Beverley Dean | Angel Association / Resident |
| Steve Bats | Resident |
| Sukky Choongh-Campbell | Air Quality Officer, LB Islington |
| Jan Hart | Director of Public Protection, LB Islington |
| Jennet Eyre | Angel Association/ Angel Narrowboat / resident |
| Jon Hood | Boater |
| Dohne Arnold | Noel Road resident |
| Phil Wain | Resident |
| Lisa Tang | Resident |
| Gordon McArthur | Arlington Association |
| Jill Clarke | Resident |
| J Faye | Resident |
| Eric Sorensen | Angel Association |
| Frances Williams | Treaty Street resident |
| J Checkley | Angel Community Canal Boat Trust |
| M Lopez | Boater |
| M Starczewski | Boater |
| C Oxley | Boater (residential) |
| Cllr Paul Convery | LB Islington |
| Lee Wilshire | Boater / London Waterways Projects |
| Anna Hayden | Resident – Canal Cottages |
| Greg Cowan | Battlebridge Moorings, Kings Cross |
| Cllr Martin Klute | LB Islington |
| Giles Eyre | Angel Community Canal Boat Trust |
| Gabriela Duglosz | LB Hackney – Community Safety Team |
| Andrew Phasey | St.Pancras Cruising Club |
| Paul Strudwick | Inland Waterways Association |
| Robyn Litchfield | |
| Ian Shacklock | Friends of Regent's Canal |
| Richard Parry | Chief Executive, Canal & River Trust |
| Jon Guest | London Waterway Manager, Canal & River Trust |
| Sorwar Ahmed | Boater Liaison Manager, Canal & River Trust |
| Mikaela Khan-Parrack | London Mooring Ranger, Canal & River Trust |
| Simon Cadek | London Enforcement Supervisor, Canal & River Trust |
| Tony Smith | Boater Liaison Manager, Canal & River Trust |
| Jonny Zander | Facilitator – Kaizen Partnership |
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| Apologies: | |
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| Harsha Patel | Headteacher, Copenhagen School (due to staff sickness and having to cover two other meetings tonight) |
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