

**Waterways for Everyone**  
**The Government's strategy for the inland waterways**  
**of England and Wales**

**Canoe England's Response March 2010**



**CanoeEngland**  
**Something for Everyone**

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## Introduction

### Executive summary

Canoe England welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Waterways for Everyone (WfE) consultation and supports the range and principles of the Public Policy Objectives.

Canoe England also welcomes the establishment of the Inter-Departmental Group for Inland Waterways in recognition of the importance of the inland waterways; and looks forward to supporting developments and assisting in tourism, sporting activities, the economy, and the health agenda through water recreation. Canoeing has a role to play as it has grown to be the most popular watersport. The most recent Sport England and Ipsos Mori's Active People Survey (4) continues to show considerably increase in adult participation in 30 minutes of moderate intensity canoeing at least once a week. This is a fantastic increase of 45% since last year's Active People survey.

We note that Waterways for Everyone is a strategy document, and are hopeful that the aspirations come into being.

Canoe England has real concerns that by failing to embrace the wider unregulated waterways network that Waterways for Everyone will struggle to meet its objectives and will become an opportunity wasted. We know that our inland waters are a resource that has been used since prehistoric times and form part of our natural and built heritage, because of this we should not forget that they are as important to the population now as they were then.

Properly funded and managed these waters can deliver a wide range of benefits from the natural environment to health and well being, cultural heritage, climate change and local economies to name but a few. To achieve this waterways management needs to be encouraged to seek alternative and imaginative funding mechanisms, as well as embracing alternative management solutions.

Our waterways are a resource for the entire population and should not be seen as the preserve of a few, to help this process waterways management should develop a robust volunteer network, volunteers who can take ownership of the resource and assist in preserving it for future generations.

Inland waterways are of great value to local economies, providing jobs as well as direct revenue; market research suggests that there is an increasing tendency for people to "holiday at home"; our waterways need to ensure that they are in a position to capitalise on this trend and to make sure that when the economy improves that visitors continue to use them.

As a National Governing Body, Canoe England is very aware of the 2012 London Olympics, we believe that inland waterways truly have the ability to provide a legacy to this event for all. Public money that is put to the betterment of the waterways should therefore mean that waterways are open to the public. eg leaving Lea Valley (along with other waterways) as a true legacy from 2012. However, this is dependent on the waterways having the sustainable funding, management and the vision to deliver this in order to survive for the benefit of "Everyone".

## Chapter 1

### Commentary

a. It is interesting to note that DEFRA also recognises that the rivers and waterways have been used for at least 2000 years.

Canoe England is aware of the research from Rev'd D Caffyn\* and the fact that boats have been found on the waterways which are several thousand years old would suggest that in fact the waterways have been utilised since Roman times.

b. Waterways for Everyone states *"Across Britain we can now see examples of just how our rivers and canals can improve the quality of our lives. But in many places the potential is still unrecognised. This policy statement aims to build on the success of Waterways for Tomorrow by demonstrating how millions more can enjoy the benefits of our rivers and canals."*

The document then goes on to state

*"Our aim is to widen interest and participation in the traditional water based activities as well as developing new opportunities and new benefits. "*

c. Canoe England notes that the Environment Agency whilst tasked with increasing recreation has a policy which hinders the promotion of recreational activities on the waterways. The Environment Agency Sustainable Access Policy is in fact a "non access" policy as far as canoeing and indeed other existing and potentially new watersports are concerned.

**EA Policy Statement:** *The Environment Agency will promote sustainable increased access where it will not adversely impact on existing uses and users, or the economic and conservation value of the site, and associated area, now or in the future. Subject to resources, we will encourage access where managed solutions can be found to remove adverse impacts.*

The EA Policy is not inclusive insofar as implying existing users and uses can take precedent over new recreation uses and users. The policy pays little or no regard to patterns of usage that can change as new sports emerge or traditional ones evolve. Access must be dynamic and adapt to these changes.

In any revision of Agency policy, a fresh start could be with the opening statement to strip out the caveats and simply state - *The Environment Agency will promote sustainable increased access.*

c. Referring to para's 1.1 and 1.12 (WfE) most if not all rivers have or have had historic public use as navigations, Acts still apply although dormant "once a navigation always a navigation". This has come from the law courts.

Linear access to natural rivers is imperative for canoeing. The Scottish experience is that development of canoe access on such rivers such as the Tay, Spey, Dee and Tweed (all

superior salmon rivers), has provided significant local social and economic benefits. There is no reason why all activities cannot co-exist.

\* The Right of Navigation on Non-Tidal Rivers and the Common Law – Rev'd D. Caffyn

***Q1. Do you agree that the range of benefits of inland waterways identified above and expanded upon in the following chapters are correct? Are there any benefits that we have missed or overstated?***

Within WfE there is a heavy emphasis on canal restoration and improvement. However canoeists are particularly interested in maintaining our rivers as part of the enjoyment of canoeing is to be on a natural waterway and in addition canoeing requires very little infrastructure and investment.

The Public Policy Objectives are laudable and canoeists would agree with them all. It is the interpretation of the phraseology and the implementation of these, which as a body Canoe England may have concerns with.

The Scope as set out in 1.11 (WfE) is restrictive and in fact disappointing especially as many of the rivers have contested rights of navigation. Canoeists use smaller unregulated rivers as described in para 1.12 (WfE) as well as larger navigable rivers not all of which are regulated by locks and weirs for much of their course.

Canoe England notes - The Government commissioned report "Water-Based Sport and Recreation – the facts" published in December 2001 established:

- There are 68,310 kilometres (42,445 miles) of rivers in England and Wales
- 2179 kilometres (1375 miles) of these rivers have navigation rights
- There are over 66,000 kilometres (41,000 miles) of rivers with NO ACCESS
- Less than 4% of the linear river resource in England and Wales has any public access or right of navigation

This therefore means that over 96% of our inland waterways are outside the remit of WfE.

Note: Canoes and other small craft can use narrower waters and in fact the smaller streams often offer the most interesting and challenging water so the true figure for navigable rivers is substantially greater and the percentage available substantially less.

Canoeing, is primarily a linear sport, for which the pleasure is to canoe the length of or stretches of rivers. To enable canoeists to do this requires very little (if any) infrastructure. The report completely underestimates the number of canoeists and potential canoeists, and appears not to understand the varying disciplines of canoeing or indeed other non powered watersports, either recreationally or competitively.

This fact makes Waterways for Everyone's scope very limited and therefore the potential for developing the full benefits limited.

## Chapter 2

### Our inland waterways today

#### Commentary

a. WfE does not cover all inland waterways even ones which are in current use. Paragraph 1.12 (WfE) makes it very clear that there is no intention for this consultation to take into account many of the small unregulated rivers that canoeists and other sports use. This will severely limit the scope and the potential of this document for reaping the benefits from the use of all our inland waterways both economically and socially.

There is too much emphasis on canals and British Waterways when in fact the vast majority of our inland waters are natural rivers.

***Q2. Do you consider that waterways are in a better condition now than they were 10 years ago? What have been the main achievements over this time and what could have been done better?***

In general the waterways are in better condition now however, this cannot possibly be sustained or even improved upon unless long term planning and funding is guaranteed.

The EA navigations have attracted funding for maintenance and capital works to upgrade “their” system. So therefore by and large there has been a measurable improvement.

BW has reduced its maintenance backlog to move towards what is termed a “steady state” Funding cuts now threaten this progress to allow maintenance backlog to again develop.

Note. An example for how a waterway has deteriorated where a lack of funding is undoing the expenditure of a restoration scheme is demonstrated by the Basingstoke Canal.

To enable canoeing to take place on our inland waterways requires very little maintenance and infrastructure.

More attention should have been given to facilitate the use of portable and unpowered craft by the provision of portages, combined fish and canoe passes, and slipways.

Changes to planning guidance would have assisted to:

- to create more watersides with public access to the water
- allow marinas and other water related activity premises in a flood plain
- protect wharves and moorings.

## Chapter 3

### Place making and Shaping

#### Commentary

a. The opportunity to for the waterways and the possible uses of it must not be underestimated in terms of how they make a place and certainly shape the community. The opening up of a watersports centre, museum or even waterside shop/cafe can bring significant benefits to any community. The waterways can provide the glue in communities and with careful planning can reinvigorate a community to not only get involved in keeping the waterways clean through volunteering but as a wonderful and healthy place for recreation and sport.

b. In any development be it a new or redevelopment next to a waterway consideration must be given to the possibilities for recreation including watersports. Clubs or centres in new development can become a real hive of activity and the mainstay within the community. A good example of what can be done is

eg Leaside <http://www.leaside.co.uk/>  
Guildford Waterside Centre <http://www.guildford-waterside.org.uk/>



c. The waterways through improved access, use and maintenance can really help to support rural communities through tourism, recreational visits, employment, sustaining local shops etc.

d. Clear planning guidelines need to be established to ensure access points, slipways and wharves are retained and gained, rather than lost when the waterside is being redeveloped.

e. The opportunities for canoe trails, waterbased activities, nature trails, and a wide range of educational and fun activities for all can be incorporated in to both new and old waterside based communities.

f. **CASE STUDY;** The upper Tay valley in Scotland now supports many jobs in both rafting and canoeing, apparently about 8 times those in angling. Aberfeldy has half a dozen watersports companies, a low-level canoe slalom site, and a very healthy canoe club now providing many of the current top competitive paddlers. Just downstream at Grandtully, the SCA owns and runs an important off-water campsite, and runs the white water site on the rapids used for top-level slalom competitions.

The economic impact on the whole area is vast, with all year round tourism, not just in summer months.

***Q3. Do you agree that it is important for regional development bodies and local authorities to work closely with those responsible for managing the inland waterways to ensure that the potential benefits in respect of place making and shaping are maximised? Do you have any ideas as to how this can be achieved?***

Our inland waterways are a tremendous asset and should be more widely recognised for what they do and can bring to communities. This needs to be reflected through collaborative working and partnerships with RDA/ LA and interested stakeholders including PCTs and health and education authorities. An example of this is the developing River Weaver Canoe



Trail. It is only through partnership working that potential benefits in respect of place making and shaping are maximised.

Para 3.21 is noted. Planning applications for waterside developments should always be examined for opportunities under Section 106 of the local authority planning Act for economic, community and public amenity gains - provision for facilities both around and to the waterway for time immemorial.

***Q4. What more can navigation authorities do to encourage local authorities to consider using waterways to improve the quality of life of their local communities?***

Navigation authorities can engage with their local communities, by increasing awareness of the tremendous resource in terms of the waterways and their surroundings available as well as providing easy and safe access to them. In addition to engage with local communities the navigation authorities, local authorities and the police service to improve the perception of crime and isolation that prevails for many watercourses, especially those in urban environments. In this instance local involvement and gaining pride and commitment for the local area often becomes self managing and as the area develops it becomes a place where people are keen to go.

The work of the Environment Agency and the formation of the River Thames Alliance is an example of collaboration between these waterway interests. The Lincolnshire Waterway Partnership is another where the Agency, British Waterways, and County Council and East Midlands RDA are working jointly.

***Q5. What do you think the barriers are to local authorities taking more interest in waterways in respect of place making?***

Lack of finance will be the main barrier to preventing local authorities taking an interest in waterways; another barrier linked to this will be the inability for inland waterways to assist local authorities in meeting their statutory targets.

Waterways for Everyone needs to persuade local authorities that waterways provide a cost effective means of meeting their statutory obligations.

PPS and PPGs specific to waterways should be drafted.



## Chapter 4

### Climate change

#### Commentary

a. As canoeists, we practise our sport on natural and manmade environments. All waterway users need to be aware of, and to protect, the special features of the environment we use, whether it is on a natural river, lake, the sea or on a manmade canal/course.

b. However, in WfE only canals are really singled out for special environmental treatment. Natural rivers also require to be protected from agricultural and forestry activities at times. People value walking and the great outdoors even more when using natural and unspoilt river valleys

c. Whilst hydro power (4.4 WfE) may potentially be able to provide some green energy the possible effects on the waterways could be devastating. There are safety and amenity concerns for those in unpowered craft and indeed swimmers with hydro power schemes on any water.

d. A hydro power scheme could significantly affect angling (including kayak fishing) by the sheer displacement of fish and therefore the opportunities to fish. This could then lead to a reduction in tourism etc in that local area.

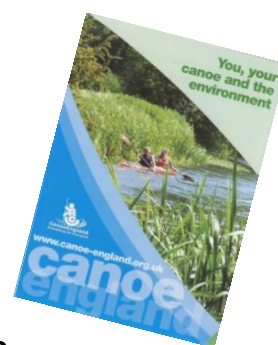
e. Hydro power schemes have the added potential of effecting water supplies both above and below the installation. This can lead to a significant reduction in water levels for recreational activities both on and off the water. One of the enjoyments of a natural river is just that, it is natural and any hydro installations must ensure that it stays that way.

f. The British Canoe Union (BCU) through the Scottish Canoe Association (SCA) now has considerable experience with recent new hydro proposals in Scotland, mainly run-of-river schemes. The essential issue is to prevent the diminution of flow to the point where passage down rivers becomes impossible for paddlers, and this can be achieved by discussion and minimal mitigation. Such low flows would also be harmful to the whole riverine environment, affecting riparian life, other fauna and flora. Benefits have been recognised. The SCA has in the past four years only objected to three schemes out of over 100 proposed projects.

Involvement in the process, however, means that the release of SEPA River Flow and Freshet information has greatly aided canoeing, directing paddlers often to high flow waters, and away from low flows. This also aids angling, canoeists avoiding rivers at low flows.

g. Canoe England has actively encouraged canoeists to take reasonable measures to safeguard the environment for both the present and future generations. To this end Canoe England have produced **You, Your Canoe and the Environment** (see Appendix 1)

**Q6. Do you agree that Inland Waterways offer an opportunity to help the UK mitigate and adapt to the effects of climate change? Are there any areas you consider that should be explored further in this context, including how the waterways themselves will need to adapt?**



Certainly the waterways have an important part to play in addressing climate change. Funding/grants for investments in schemes and their cost effectiveness together with their overall impact will require close scrutiny. The concern is that the promotion of renewable energy could override care for the environment and for legal requirements to dis-apply. The proliferation of proposed hydro-power schemes falls into this category.

Canoe England would seek recreational gains for water recreation from schemes designed to mitigate and adapt a waterway for climate change.

Unpowered and renewable energy powered craft for recreational boating is to be encouraged.

## Chapter 5

### The natural environment

#### Commentary

a. Canoe England welcomes the fact that there is a whole chapter devoted to the natural environment, and from 1.6 of WfE there is “a growing focus on evidence based policy.” It is not just those involved in water recreation, most people enjoy being on or near the waterways.

b. This chapter does not mention canoeing once, although the canoe is a traditional craft used throughout the world for exploring wilderness areas and quietly observing wildlife and flora. It causes no erosion, noise or pollution, and leaves no trace of its passing not even ripples. Canoeing at appropriate water levels is an environmentally benign activity and causes no damage to fish stocks. As substantiated by the Environment Agency Technical Report W266 - Effects of Canoeing on Fish Stocks and Angling

The same findings were given in evidence to the Welsh Assembly enquiry in to access to inland waterways both by the Environment Agency and Countryside Council for Wales –

[http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-committees/bus-committees-scrutiny-committees/bus-committees-third-sc-home/inquiries\\_sd/sc\\_3\\_-access\\_to\\_inland\\_water\\_-\\_main.htm](http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-committees/bus-committees-scrutiny-committees/bus-committees-third-sc-home/inquiries_sd/sc_3_-access_to_inland_water_-_main.htm)

Natural England has similarly stated they have no evidence that kayaking per-se causes damage or disturbance to river wildlife.



c) Canoe England believes canoeing has no lasting environmental impact and wishes to see all user sectors take reasonable measures to safeguard the environment for both the present and future generations. As ‘eyes and ears’ Canoeists are one of the main bodies who can contribute, to the monitoring of Non-Native Invasive Species.

To this end Canoe England have produced You, Your Canoe and the Environment - <http://www.canoe-england.org.uk/access-and-environment/environment/you-your-canoe-and-the-environment/> that includes advice on measures to mitigate the transfer of fish diseases on equipment.

Also see <http://www.canoe-england.org.uk/access-and-environment/environment/salmon-under-threat-g-salaris/>

and

<http://www.canoe-england.org.uk/about/environmental-policy/>

d. Canoe England supports the aspirations set out in 5.11 in WfE. However, the opportunity to combine fish passes with canoe shoots and elver passes to benefit of fish, eels and recreational users alike has not been mentioned. There are many excellent case studies as to where this has been undertaken the principle of combining the two should happen as a matter of course. Canoe England wishes to be a registered consultee in the design of these structures and arrangements to leave the water and portage around obstructions.

Examples of good practice where combination fish passes have been installed are:-

River Medway in Kent at 3 locations, Haverford West with 3 more planned with two on the Upper Thames and another on the River Aire at Armley in Leeds.

e. Natural river environments are very much supported by the canoeing fraternity. Canoeists wish for natural rivers in their state as found, not special facilities, or 'manicured banks'. Canoe England believes from points as discussed previously in point (b), that canoeing activity will not compromise Water Framework Directive (WFD) in achieving Good Ecological Status and Good Ecological Potential.

f. It is also important that over enthusiastic or over precautionary measures are not taken against recreational activities especially without justification. Opportunities should not be lost when decisions are not evidence based.

g. To enable the waterways for be fully utilised and protected Canoe England suggest that a "Waterways User Environmental Code" be developed for all users and owners. A good example of such a code is the Scottish Outdoor Access code which supports the Scottish Land Reform Act 2003.

**h. CASE STUDY;**

The Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park Authority have been carrying out research during the summers of 2008 and 2009 into the impact of high-density day tourism in the park, and standards of camping, and of the impact of anti-social behaviour.

There has been shown to be a very marked difference between IRC behaviour (Irresponsible Roadside Camping), and the behaviour of those travelling by other means i.e. walking, cycling and canoeing. Once away from roads (further than 200m), camping standards are mainly excellent, with no litter left, and no sign of campsites. The facts illustrate the usual responsibility felt by those using the countryside seriously. Mitigation measures re. The irresponsible minority are being developed, and include more visible policing, and the presence of Park Rangers.

i. Where public money is used for the maintenance of a watercourse, (Paragraph 5.14 WfE) then there should be a public gain, increased access and more use of the areas surrounding the watercourses is an obvious way of achieving this.

j. Paragraph 5.3 and 5.4 (WfE), Canoe England notes that WfE states in paragraph 1.6 1<sup>st</sup> bullet point "a growing focus on evidence based policy". Canoe England considers that where it is considered that particular care is required to protect either the environment or the ecology of a watercourse then this should be supported by robust scientific evidence.

## Chapter 6

### Cultural heritage

#### Commentary

a. Canoeing has made a significant contribution to waterways heritage and the restoration movement. The use of canoes on semi-derelict canals has helped demonstrate these waterways still exist, and ignited interest in re-opening them fully as navigations. The Devizes – Westminster canoe race has played its part as publicity for the restoration of the Kennet & Avon Canal, and many canoeists joined in the physical work of the task. Canoeing also contributes to visitor numbers including visits to historical sites.

b. Whilst Canoe England supports some of the aspirations and comments the document again fails to recognise the contribution of canoeing to visitor numbers, and the interest in smaller river features, e.g. watermills. In Scotland there is strong evidence to show the value canoeing brings to historic sites e.g. Stanley Mills, which is owned by Historic Scotland on the lower River Tay, near Perth, a restored very large textile mill, draws 25% of its visitors from the water – canoeists!

***Q7. Do you agree that the unique cultural heritage associated with inland waterways provides a key benefit to those who use and visit waterways? How can these resources be used to further enhance and encourage use of the waterways?***

Canoe England agrees that the heritage of inland waterways provides an invaluable benefit to the use of waterways; a key benefit has to be their place in the historic landscape and their close association with the development of the world as we know it today.

These can be enhanced by canoe trails, heritage trails linking trails together for those who want to walk/canoe/cycle etc. Most people today are not just interested in one activity. A broad range of activities can be linked with more visitor days and greater participation and activity rates.

The opportunity to encourage and influence a huge number of youngsters through different awards and challenges and in the case of uniformed organisations challenge badges (e.g. Scouts/Guides) is in place, but needs to be more expansive and dedicated than the current WOW system. <http://www.wow4water.net/> Through this link volunteers and the supporters of the future will potentially be developed.

Guided tours via canoe to and from historic sites would add another dynamic dimension to a visit to a heritage site and indeed there are organisations which run guided tours so this would just be another opportunity for them. Para 9.6 (WfE) refers to diverse tourism packages, this should wherever possible be incorporated into heritage sites as a means of providing additional funding as well as enabling the public to understand the importance of the sites.

***Q8. Do you consider the protection of the natural and built heritage to be one of the Waterway Authorities primary tasks?***

It is a task intrinsically linked with the waterways heritage and experience. It should be considered as part of the national heritage and a responsibility that should not rest entirely with the navigation authority.

Planning departments have a role to protect lines of route from encroachments and water sides from inappropriate developments.

***Q9. What area of waterway heritage do you consider most under threat?***

The ability to use waterways for navigation as the purpose intended.

Some canals have been restored by large scale funding and volunteer resource and then designated as a protected area with restrictions on use, severe in some cases.

The fabric and character of buildings and structures around basins and wharves should be and can be protected by planners allowing for sensitive restoration and imaginative new uses.

## Chapter 7

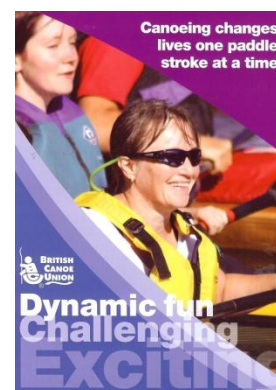
### Health, well-being, recreation and sport

#### Commentary

a. Research has proved that regular contact with the natural environment results in many benefits including:

- Reduction in Stress
- Increased Physical Activity

And whether able bodied or disabled using the waterways can be just what the Doctor ordered as there is something for everyone from quiet enjoyment to demanding physical activity. The Blue Gym initiative has been launched <http://www.bluegym.org.uk/> to encourage activities and usage of the coastline and inland waterways, canoeing certainly fits the principles of this initiative. However, to really get the benefits of the Blue Gym and indeed the Outdoor Health Forum then access to and along the waterways needs to be provided. Currently the members of the public would be extremely confused when in their enthusiasm head out to enjoy our inland waterways and then discover that they may not be “allowed” to be there. Public access would provide many more opportunities for a huge number of people (eg outdoor swimmers, recreational rowers, canoeists, and kayak fishermen) to get active and much healthier in an outdoor setting.



- **Appendix 1 – Canoeing Changes Lives**

b. **Need to exercise, but can't stand the thought of going to the gym?** Enjoy training outdoors, but running has taken its toll on your joints. Want to get fitter, but can't imagine yourself in Lycra? Want to take part in a low impact activity? Then canoeing could be the sport for you.

c. The beauty of canoe sport is that there is something for everyone – you can push yourself as hard as you want. It can be competitive or recreational. It can be a team game or an individual test of speed and ability. It can be a sociable hobby or a way of escaping the crowds. Whatever the objective, whether it is to; make new friends, get fit, lose a few pounds, push yourself to the limit or learn a new skill, canoeing is ideal. Contrary to the belief that your legs do not appear to be doing much, if you have good technique, paddling is a good all-body workout.

It is also a fantastic way to meet people, socialise and learn new skills all at the same time. So you can keep healthy and have fun!

d. **Canoeing provides great opportunities..** Not all of us are going to be, or even want to be, an Olympic gold medallist ... but by taking part in canoeing for someone may be the new corner stone to their future development. The opportunity for them to take part may change their lives. Participants may go on to be an international athlete or have a career working in watersports or may purely use watersports for low level competition or for recreational purposes with their friends and families.

- **Appendix 1 – Case Study - Paddler Pathways**

e. After the basic skills have been mastered, a whole world of possibilities opens up. Canoeing is a skill that can give holidays an extra dimension. One might want to see



dolphins or whales out at sea, or take the family on a canoe and camping trip into the wilderness, or hunt out foamy rapids together for some adrenalin thrills. The permutations are almost endless.

**f. Disabled? Able bodied? Special needs?** - Canoeing can be a hobby, passion, sport, even a job, for all. The sport is so varied that there is literally something for everyone. Canoeing allows family and friends to experience exercise and challenge that is therapeutic for both mind and body. More importantly, canoeing is pleasurable and fun! Together, able bodied and disabled can share all aspects of the sport. *(in the photograph the young lad in the front of the kayak is disabled... they came 2<sup>nd</sup> in this race! They competed alongside competitors who were all able bodied.)*



- **Appendix 1 Case Study – Special Olympics**

**g.** Participation in the sport of canoeing is dramatically increasing. The new types of canoes and kayaks have really helped develop the sport recreationally and increase participation. Over 2 million people go canoeing each year and another 600,000 under 18 years old take part too!

**h.** The most recent Sport England and Ipsos Mori's Active People Survey (4) continues to show considerably increase in adult participation in 30 minutes of moderate intensity canoeing at least once a week. This is a fantastic increase of 45% since last year's Active People survey.



Canoeing is one of four sports out of a total of thirty three (with targets) which has seen a dramatic increase in participation; the other sports are athletics, tennis and cycling.

Canoeing is also one of six sports already meeting growth targets for year one, just six months into the funding period.

**i..** Other positive findings include:

- An increase in participation for those aged 16 to 19 and 20 to 24 years. More generally, there was a statistically significant increase for those aged 16 to 34 years
- An increase in the number of women canoeing
- An increase in the numbers canoeing from a white ethnic background
- An increase in participation for both those with a non limiting illness or disability and those without.
- The South East region has the greatest number of participants, but the East Midlands and Yorkshire regions have the highest participation rates.

<http://bcu.org.uk/about/case-studies/>

**j.** A recent independent survey (published March 2010) of adult participation has revealed that canoeing is the most popular and fastest growing watersport for the seventh year running. The survey which is carried out annually and first conducted in 2002, was commissioned on behalf of; the Royal Yachting Association, the British Marine Federation, the Maritime and Coastguard Association and the Royal National Lifeboat Institute.

Of the twelve boating activities measured, canoeing has seen the biggest increase in participation with the survey demonstrating that 1,262,478 people over the age of 16 years participate at least once a week in canoe and kayaking.

k. Canoeing, along with other water recreations, can and does help all sectors of society from those with ASBOs to people with health problems and special needs to retired members of our society. Canoeing is and can be used across the country to provide opportunities for people of any age, (often with social problems who are or have the potential to be on the wrong side of the law).

One of the many examples is 'Street Paddler' which is aimed at:

- Young people at risk of offending
- Young people from disadvantaged backgrounds
- Young people known to the police for ASB (anti-social behaviour)
- Other interested young people.



l. **Revitalising communities** - Canoeing in both urban and rural areas leads to opportunities for employment, more inclusive communities, a wider range of leisure opportunities and a valuable range of health benefits.

m. **Women and Girls Participation** - Again the beauty of canoeing is that there is something for everyone and women and girls have always been very much part of the sport. The BCU has for the last 10 years promoted a range of initiatives to encourage female participation in canoeing. This has included their Girl-Power strategy, a positive approach to female images in the sport throughout their publications. With some many people living in easy access of the inland waterways the BCU has set up sessions which meet the needs of women and young families to enable their participation in an enjoyable recreational activity.

- **Appendix 1 Case Study - Cuckmere Valley Canoe Club**  
**Case Study – Women and Girls Development**

n. The results at our recent World Championships reflect the support the BCU has given to women in the sport who want to be involved in the competitive disciplines. This is just over the month September 2009!

- Women's Canoe Polo Team – Gold
- Women's Kayak Slalom Team – World Slalom Championships Gold
- Lani Belcher – Marathon Canoeing World Championships – Silver
- Lizzie Neave Kayak (K1) Slalom World Championship - Bronze
- Olympic Sprint racing 4 Olympic sprint finalists

More information is available at <http://www.canoe-england.org.uk/our-sport/women-and-girls/>

o. **KAYAK FISHING –**

Kayak fishing is a relatively new but developing activity. It is hugely popular as the sales of kayaks for canoeing



proves! Kayak fishing takes place on all inland waters and the sea. The BCU are producing a Kayak Fishing Safety document which covers not only safety advice but also environmental considerations.

p. The lack of clarity and certainty of access to the inland waterways for canoeists and others severely limits the opportunities for the actions/benefits highlighted in this chapter of WfE.

q. In section 7.7 of WfE canoeing is mentioned very briefly but the whole concept of canoeing and the benefits does not give the fuller picture. Canoeing is in fact for all and is as popular with the older generation as it is with the young. The benefits are also underestimated, and canoeing is a far easier activity to get involved in due to its relatively low costs, the ready availability of canoe clubs and centres where one can learn to canoe.

r. The Devizes to Westminster Canoe Race is just one of the many events held on waterways. Competitive canoeing is another aspect of the sport which is increasing in popularity but lack of access to inland waterways of a variety of types suitable for the different disciplines within canoeing is again limiting this side of the development of the sport.



s. Recreational canoeing is what the majority of canoeists undertake. To increase participation in this canoe trails along with access to the waterways near to their homes would significantly enable more people to enjoy their natural aquatic heritage

t. **CASE STUDY;**

The Scottish Government, even in now difficult economic times, is fully supporting, through SNH, the development of Long-Distance Routes, whether on land or water. Research has shown that the 'Escalator Factor' involved in aiding people to use routes over three or four days instead of by a daily visit, is a highly important economic factor. It is also crucial in encouraging the population in Scotland itself to spend more time in the countryside. Benefits include more use of hotels and B. and B.s, and diversion on to other activities e.g. walkers to mountain-bike, canoeists to walk etc. This latter issue is aided by more 'joined-up thinking' also between various Access Authorities, viewing land and water as co-terminous.

The first part of a river (the upper Spey) has also recently been designated a 'Core Path' within Scottish legislation, due to its crucial importance in journeying through the Cairngorms National Park – again helping tourism development.

***Q10. Do you agree that inland waterways, including their paths and surrounding environments provide an important resource for outdoor recreation, sport and improving public well being? What more can be done to protect and improve these important resources?***

Without doubt the waterways are a valuable recreational asset.

Protection of these areas can come through greater use and furthered by creating nature trails to encourage responsible access. There is a lot of anecdotal evidence to show that as waterways are used the "stakeholders" of that particular watercourse look after it by collecting rubbish, reporting pollution incidents and injured wildlife and encouraging others to do the same.

However, this particular chapter in WfE underestimates the value to the public of long-distance routes for canoe touring/camping (recreational tourism), and their health and economic benefits. It does not even mention the usefulness of e.g. the Wye and Severn, or lots of other beautiful rivers all over England and Wales.

***Q11. What needs to be done to make waterside paths more accessible and better appreciated by local communities?***

Highways Authorities should be encouraged to incorporate waterside paths in their Rights of Way Improvement Plans (ROWIPs), ROWIP's now form part of Local Authority Local Transport Plan's (LTP's) which opens up additional funding streams as it links directly to sustainable transport which is discussed in chapter 8 of WfE. DEFRA guidance suggests that ROWIP's should be imaginative and include routes that take people where they want to go as well as providing a joined up path network and providing for future needs. Incorporation of waterside paths into ROWIP's and LTP's would provide a mechanism for funding their maintenance and helping to ensure their future.

## Chapter 8

### Sustainable transport

#### Commentary

a. The waterways stakeholders should be promoting inland waterways to local, transport and health authorities as a means of attracting tourism, decreasing carbon footprints, reducing road congestion and improving the health of local communities. The waterways are the additional links to make a community whole.

b. Sustainable green transport should not just be considered for commuters as in fact there are many journeys which are for recreational or clearly defined purposes such as shopping/attending classes/educational visits etc. which could easily be undertaken on the waterway path or indeed the waterways themselves.

***Q12. Do you agree that waterside paths offer considerable potential for increasing green commuting, both for pedestrians and cyclists? What more can be done to encourage this further?***

Yes, and why not take this a stage further and consider the waterways could provide the opportunity for people to canoe and row to work. There may well be individuals who may have the opportunity to cycle from home to a waterside and then decide to canoe/row the rest of the way to work/shops etc. To encourage this provision of signage would assist but also the opportunity to do so needs clear advertising and encouragement. It may even mean employers providing places to securely store boats/bicycles

***Q13. What can be done to reverse the decline in freight on the inland waterways in recent years? Which elements of the commercial waterways have the greatest potential for freight use? How should the planning process ensure the protection of freight interests in those areas with greatest freight potential?***

Wharves and docks should be retained and not lost to developments.

Developments close to wharves and docks should not compromise road transport access to these places. Occupants of new developments close to wharves and docks should accept and not object to any waterway activity. It could be conditional for planning consent.

## Chapter 9

### Tourism and business development

#### Commentary

- a. It is good to see that the input from the waterways for economic and employment benefits in terms of on and off the water businesses is recognised and the desire to facilitate “the opening up of new recreation access opportunities” (9.2 WfE) is stated. However, there is far too much concentration on powered boating, marinas and chandlery etc. The whole area of canoe hire, guiding services, employment via activity centres etc. has not been even mentioned in WfE. This sector is rapidly expanding as can be seen from the number of canoe hire companies across the country. The amount of printed material with advice on canoe trails and where to canoe, along with websites offering canoeing advice and equipment has blossomed.
- b. Where activity centres and canoe clubs exist visitors are attracted to them. e.g. National White Water Centre, Tryweryn. <http://www.ukrafting.co.uk/index.htm> which receives considerable numbers of visitors from all over the country and even further afield.
- c. Centres which offer a variety of services including canoeing again attract huge numbers of visitors. Plas y Brenin - The National Mountain Centre <http://www.pyb.co.uk/>
- d. The National Watersport Centre in Nottingham <http://www.nwscnotts.com/> is yet another example of a successful multi-discipline centre. In 2009 the centre in conjunction with the British Canoe Union hosted an extremely successful European Canoe Slalom competition.
- e. It is safe to say that the majority of active people have interest in several areas so are not just walkers/canoeists/cyclists/narrow boaters but like the opportunity to take part in a wide variety of activities and may in addition be eco-tourists.
- f. In addition to activity centres the provision of long-distance canoe routes brings enormous advantages to an area. eg The Great Glen Canoe Trail, Scotland

**Case Study;** The Great Glen Canoe trail, now under development with its own full-time Project Officer employed by British Waterways, is a partnership between BW, SNH, Forestry Commission Scotland (a major landowner), Highland Council, and the Scottish Canoe Association, to complement the existing Great Glen Walking Trail and Cycle Trail. The route, on the Caledonian Canal and three lochs, already draws in paddlers from around the world, and is a three to four day trip across Scotland. 3,000 paddlers made the trip during 2007, with the number increasing at the rate of 25% extra each year.

Research illustrated an income to the area of about £1 million a year already, room for further expansion, but strain on existing infrastructure such as campsites.

£650,000 has been invested by the partners over three years, to provide canoe-level pontoons at the locks, signage, and four new campsites, all only accessible from the water.

The development is seen as a major and useful investment in an area dependent on tourism, but also one that has minimal negative impact. It is hoped to use this project as an example of good practice throughout Scotland of an environmentally-friendly travel route.



g. 9.2 and 9.4 WfE, the clustering of activities whilst having many benefits, ignores the wider benefit that the waterways can have, this document needs to recognise the appeal of extended trips and diverse leisure opportunities, an example of this is seen in Natural England's National Trails network, trails such as the North Downs Way, which runs through Surrey and Kent, not only enables the clustering of activities found at sites such as Newlands Corner and Boxhill, but also enables this benefit to be spread along the entire route. The National Trails network also allows local routes and facilities to be developed from this core trail, enabling communities away from the clusters to benefit from the resource. For many being able to travel a short distance to where they want to exercise/enjoy the environment/visit the waterways etc provides the incentive needed to make them more active. Creating activity hubs would also mean that for people to be active would require greater use of cars so therefore increase a person's carbon footprint when in fact they could exercise nearer home should the opportunity be open to them.

h. With the London Olympics in 2012 and the potential increase of visitors, many of whom may wish to stay and visit additional areas in the country; clear advertising of opportunities for all watersports and inland waterways activities should be given. Many of these visitors will in fact be active people so may well wish to pursue their chosen sport(s) or pastimes whilst they are over here.

k. Within the watersport industry there is considerable opportunity for skills development and volunteering. In fact in many of the structured watersports, such as canoeing and rowing, it is the volunteers who are the mainstay of many waterside activities in that they are the ones coaching, running trips and the clubs which enable people to obtain skills and qualifications in addition to being able to go out on the water.

***Q14. How can we best encourage a common purpose between different users of the waterways? What can be done to better manage potential conflicts?***

Many navigation authorities support and facilitate user groups to bring together the various interests at local, regional and national levels. This all helps to promote understandings between parties, and contributes to how the waterways are used and managed. User groups can also help in reconciling potential conflicts.

If England and Wales were to adopt the principles of the Scottish Outdoor Code that prescribes rights and responsibilities and the legislation it supports; most if not all disputes between users of the land and water in the natural environment could be better managed and resolved.

***Q15. What do you believe should be done to maintain and increase the number of boat registrations on our inland waterways?***

- Simplify the means to register
- Have a rolling year for registrations.
- Provide moorings and marinas

***Q16. How can the waterways increase their share of the holiday market?***

This can be done through the realising of all potential and actual opportunities on and around the inland waterways. One of the areas of potential opportunities that is being under used is that of access to all the inland waterways. The holiday market is not just about powered boaters or indeed anglers but there are many, many people for whom a natural



waterway or indeed a canal can be attractive for walking/cycling/canoeing/camping etc. The rise of eco-tourism should be encouraged and widely promoted.

## Chapter 10

### Fairer, stronger and more active communities

#### Commentary

a. Canoe England supports the aspirations within this particular chapter in WfE but is concerned that missing from here are many obviously accessible and healthy hobbies. Canoeing is an obviously accessible and healthy activity, which many who have started when young go on to continue or take it up again in adult life. Canoeing is often the entry point for many into water based activities and many go on to sail; own boats including narrowboats so canoeing has led them to form a lifelong love and support for the waterways.

#### Education and Young People

b. Education is much more than the learning achieved within the national curriculum or in an academic environment even if it is outdoors eg learning outside the classroom. On and around the inland waterways opportunities exist for learning in a huge variety of situations. These can range from a canoeing trip to sitting in a hide watching wildlife, assisting in a river clear up to going to a youth group to talk about the waterways environment. Many of the uniformed organisations such as the Scouts and Guides have used, and continue to, the inland waterways for personal and skills development.

c. To develop fairer, stronger and more active communities it is essential to work with young people. It is important that to introduce them to the sport at school/youth group or a local club at an early age for the following reasons:

- Positive early experiences encourage life-long participation
- To ensure quality coaching and support at the right time to enable talent to flourish and every child to reach their potential
- To develop new friends and social groups – to support retention through changes in school/college and into work



- **Appendix 1 – Case Study - New Club formed by school links**  
**Case Study – Richmond Canoe Club**

d. Over the next four years Canoe England aims ensure that canoeing can be available to almost 50% of School Sport Partnership by 2013. Their aim is to reach all School Sport Partnerships by 2020. It is important for to introduce young people to the sport and a local club at an early age – not only so that they develop good technique in a supportive framework but also so that they establish new friends and social groups. This helps to retain them in the club when they change schools – or move to college/university helping to retain them in the sport and prevent drop out at these critical stages. Active participation also endears them to the value of the waterways and maybe a life time involvement with them.

- **Appendix 1 - Case Study - Indoor Kayaking – Newham Ergo Challenge**

e. In addition, non-traditional sports such as canoeing offer great potential. Young People who are not attracted to main stream sports (particularly ball games) often develop into canoeists – therefore by offering opportunities to participate in canoeing there is the potential to engage youths who otherwise might disengage from sport completely. It also means that these youngsters will grow up having an understanding of the inland waterways and may well go on to have a volunteering role or involvement in the inland waterways as well as continuing with some water based sport. However, other watersports could as easily be developed to support the development of young people as well.

f. Canoe England has been working with a number of water sport NGB's to develop generic aquatic skills cards for children. These aim to develop basic (Fundamental) skills to support their future development in water sports.

g. Youth volunteering is dependent upon delivery of a strong volunteer strategy within sports to ensure that young people's experiences are positive and that they are supported and encouraged to continue. Volunteering is much needed not only to run sports but to also help maintain the waterways as well as to encourage others to get involved.

h. Watersports are not just for the young in fact increasingly people are coming back to watersports or even taking up for the first time later in life. The numbers of canoeists aged 60 plus is increasing quite rapidly. Fundamentally most take it up as a recreational activity but more and more are getting involved in the competitive side of the sport especially as "Masters" events are being organised nationally and internationally.



i. Canoe Camping is another area which is growing rapidly. Here again there has been an increase in the older generation taking part but it is an ideal way of going out canoeing with all generations being involved.

j. The waterways have been proved to be wonderful places which can really help all ages develop and learn new skills. There are many really good examples where the waterways have been the catalyst in healthier communities as well as helping with social inclusion.

k. Diversity - Watersports are not the sole right of any group or age of people so in fact the waterways can benefit all in our society. From experience Canoe England has seen the numbers of ethnic groups taking part in canoeing growing and has actively involved a wide variety of groups.



I. The opportunity to promote all the benefits that the inland waterways can bring to communities is significantly limited by the lack of public access to inland waterways.



**Q17. Do you agree that there is scope for increasing waterway related volunteering activity? How can this be achieved?**

The involvement of young people in a volunteering role is extremely important. However, volunteering is a very broad church and this fact necessitates looking at all ways in which volunteers can be encouraged. Volunteering ranges from coaching in sports clubs, running trips, nature walks and talks to restoration and running museums and shops etc.

Volunteering is not just for the young and can and should be encouraged for all ages and sectors of society.

- **Appendix 1 – Case Study – Being a Step in to Sport Young Volunteer**

**Q18. How can schools and colleges be encouraged to make greater use of the waterways for educational purposes?**

For many in administration and teaching in academic establishments the waterways have never really featured in their lives. So a top down and bottom up approach to develop an understanding and love for the waterways as well as looking at its huge potential within education and personal development is needed.

Top Down through providing the opportunity for staff to go and experience the waterways in a wide variety of ways museum visits, trips on the waterways, sports and activities along and in the area surrounding them. Extending potential examples of how the waterways can be linked into the National Curriculum through lesson plans and other printed and media based material will assist in many other opportunities being implemented via teachers. It just takes a nudge in the right direction!

Bottom up by offering the pupils the opportunity to visit the waterways in wide variety of contexts. These can range from

- Sporting
- Environmental - caring for the environment
  - climate change
  - wildlife activities
  - pollution
- Working environment – visit people who work on and around the waterways
- Historic – museums... canals etc
- Engineering – how they work locks etc
- Geographic – human in terms of why they were developed and settlement distributions/services etc as well physical in terms of their features etc meanders etc
- And so on!

**Q19. What can be done to help NCBA to increase the use of waterways to improve social inclusion?**

The waterways are an ideal medium for really assisting disadvantaged people of all ages to develop confidence and new skills. The whole waterway setting from its peacefulness

through to one's ability to be away from the troubles of life lend it to be an ideal venue for so many different activities and opportunities for all.



In terms of increasing the use of NCBA opportunities exist in many areas. Social exclusion or even social inclusion can be taken in the broadest of senses. Many people do not have the opportunity to enjoy the pleasure of being aboard a narrowboat. There are huge numbers of groups such as Scouts/Guides (Brownies as in the pictures above)/Youth Groups etc who would really benefit from an onboard experience but due to the lack of knowledge about narrow boating opportunities the link up does not happen in the majority of cases.

For families of returning military personnel from arrears of active service a boating experience away from the home setting could be an ideal way of reintegrating the member of the family who has been away. This could be extended slightly further as there are many NCBA boats which are able to take people with special needs so these too could be used with injured service personnel (with or without their families).

- **Appendix 1 – Case Study- Battling Back**

An advertising campaign with perhaps the opportunities for Youth workers and leaders to experience a narrowboat trip would certainly assist in getting more people involved. There is also a need to increase the number of qualified skippers so a review of the training in terms of time and cost may well encourage more to take up that role which then has a knock on affect of more people being able to take the boats out.

## **Q20. What can be done to overcome barriers to achieving greater diversity among boaters and anglers using the waterways?**

One way is to encourage different types of boating which reflect different cultures. There could also be an extension of the increasingly popular kayak fishing.

There is a Bangladeshi Boat Club, in Oxford which has been set up by one of the BCU members.

The Oxford Bangladeshi Boat Club (OBBC) is working hard to encourage Asian young people to use the River Thames. Through grants the club has purchased two Nowka Basi canoe, a traditional Asian estuary fishing boat which has been refined for recreational racing.



With a high bow and stern, the colourful boats create a sensation when seen out on the water. However, the OBBC is about more than just the boat; club members see the use of these special canoes as a unique way of encouraging the Asian community, young and old, to visit the river and experience all that it has to offer.



## Chapter 11

### The Way Forward

#### Commentary

- a) Canoe England agrees with the views expressed for the benefits of partnership and looks forward to their further development.
- b) The closer working relationship between AINA as expressed in para 11.10 WfE is welcomed. Canoe England has not formed a view on forming a unified navigation authority.

**Q21. In view of the pressure on public finances, how can waterway authorities make the most of their resources over the next few years? Would mutual or Third Sector status for British Waterways be beneficial in this respect?**

There must be a recognition that navigation authorities will never have enough income and yet will always be asked undertake activities essential to the fabric of the country and the well being of our public. It is inevitable that if the use of waterways and their infrastructure is to increase and reach its full potential that there will be a need for increased maintenance. If Government wishes to see the waterways reach their full potential, then authorities with responsibilities for the waterways must be allowed to adopt new and different means of attracting funding. Adopting mutual or third sector status is a possible option. Whatever solution is decided upon will need to ensure that the waterways retain their legacy as a public resource for the benefit of all.

**Q22. What scope is there for enhanced partnership working to improve the resources available to protect and enhance the benefits delivered by inland waterways?**

Developing the theme expressed in para 11.8 WfE will assist in identifying new opportunities to bring benefits to the waterways and those who use them

There is also the voluntary sector with able volunteers who can undertake unskilled and semi skilled work providing they are adequately and appropriately trained AND above all inspirationally and competently directed.

**Q23. What activity should be undertaken to monitor the benefits delivered by the inland waterways over the coming years?**

Waterways managers should measure user group numbers and their economic impact and other benefits to society such as health and well being should be measured by IPSOS/MORI survey techniques.

## **Appendix 1**

- **You, Your Canoe and the Environment**
- **Canoeing Changes Lives ...**

### **Case Studies**

- **Paddler Pathways**
- **Special Olympics**
- **Cuckmore Valley**
- **Women and Girls Development**
- **New Club formed by school links**
- **Richmond Canoe Club**
- **Newham Indoor Paddling Ergo Challenge**
- **Being a Step in to Sport Young Volunteer**
- **Battling Back**