

Appendix G

London Boaters Request for Asset Transfer Support from Locality

1. About London Boaters

[London Boaters](#) is a community-based organisation initially founded in 2008 to connect boaters. The boating community is diverse and vibrant with a vast range of unique skills and knowledge. Recognising this potential London Boaters initially arranged social events and boat based training and skill sharing sessions to harness this knowledge and unite the community.

The London Boaters community has been strengthened by a new British Waterways mooring proposal that threatens the community's existence. London Boaters has grown in terms of numbers, dedication and community collaboration since the announcement of the proposal. The group have agreed the following mission statement and membership.

“London Boaters act collectively to protect the homes and way of life of the people who live on London’s waterways. We reach out to all those committed to a sustainable future for our canals and rivers.”

Membership is open to boaters who live on London’s waterways who wish to have a collective voice in support of the aims set out in our mission statement.

2. Current Context

British Waterways are currently consulting a new mooring strategy for the Rivers Lee and Stort in East London. The proposals, if agreed, would also be extended to the Hertford Union and Regent’s Canals.

In the proposals (published in February 2011) British Waterways state that an increase in boat numbers in the area over recent years of approximately 40% has resulted increasing costs to the organisation for services such as the provision of water and the disposal of waste and sewerage. No evidence is provided of the current costs or recent increases associated with increased use.

A number of water and waste disposal points are provided throughout the inland waterways. These vary from single taps for freshwater to small buildings equipped with sewerage disposal (Elsan) points, and in some cases laundry and shower facilities.

The facilities are currently undermanaged, have no recycling facilities and suffer frequent overflows of rubbish, blocked drains, out of order washing machines etc. Boats tend moor close to facility sites

which are often next to locks and popular visiting mooring sites increasing actual and perceived congestion.

Both London Boaters and UL&SBA believe that there are more facilities and better siting of water points etc would help to relieve some of the issues of congestion and overcrowding of popular mooring sites identified by British Waterways in their proposals.

Concurrently to these local developments Defra are consulting on the transfer of the waterways to a new charitable body. These proposals are aimed at delivering *'the Government's commitment to ensuring waterways users, and the communities that live alongside them, are given greater involvement in how waterways are managed. It aims to empower and encourage more people to bring their expertise and passion to the organisation'*.¹

3. Proposals for Community Ownership / Management of Facilities

The facilities identified are currently managed by British Waterways purely as liabilities with no income earning potential or integration to other services.

London Boaters believe that under community ownership or management the facilities could be managed to both reduce costs and deliver income. This could be achieved in the short term through:

- Providing sites for the installation of PV solar panels - and potentially in some locations small wind turbines. The small scale of these installations is likely to fall within the criteria for the earning of income via renewable energy feed in tariffs (FITs)
- Proper management making the use of laundry / shower facilities, which are currently expensive and frequently out of order, more attractive.
- Initiation of recycling / reuse in order to drive down waste disposal costs

In the longer term there is a potential to develop partnerships with organisations seeking to pilot and deliver innovative approaches to the management of waste and generation of energy e.g. [Loowatt](#) a project seeking communities to trial facilities to produce renewable energy based on the anaerobic digestion of human waste. A large proportion of liveaboard boaters are committed to low impact living and are used to manually disposing of their own toilet waste. They are therefore an ideal community to pilot such new technologies at a domestic scale.

The income earning potential for such an approach is below the level which British Waterways consider as a *de minimus* when considering enterprise opportunities. However with access to grant and loan finance and the potential cost efficiencies provided by community led initiatives communities are often able to deliver financial returns on such small scale renewable generation facilities.

The proposals outlined above also provide the potential for delivering paid employment both in the management of the facilities and in the provision of subsidiary on-water services such as the collection of waste, collection and delivery of laundry etc.

¹ A New Era For The Waterways', Defra (2011)

4. Support Required

London Boaters is currently an informal association but has a wide skill set to draw upon as demonstrated by its rapid response to the current British Waterways proposals including the development of research, strategy, media, legal and website sub groups.

The community have been galvanised by the proposals and have an interest in exploring the potential to self manage aspects of the local waterways.

Support is required to

- audit the facilities which may be suitable for community ownership or management
- identify the current costs of service provision
- quantify the investment required to develop asset based income earning potential
- quantify potential income generation
- identify permission requirements, risks and opportunities
- identify the most suitable legal structures to enable effective community management