

Stop the live aboard boaters being taken off the water

The London Boaters Group are extremely concerned that British Waterways transition to the 'New Waterways Charity' would give them a huge amount of new power and make them less accountable than they are as a public body.

This combined with their already hostile stance towards continuous cruisers and the report put out by DEFRA (Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs) in 2010 which outlines their vision of the future of the waterways, and which very explicitly **does not mention live aboard boaters** as part of that future. These combined convinces us that we should reply to make our voices heard.

The DEFRA consultation finishes on 30th June!

Here are some points you might like to raise in your response if you haven't done so already. It is crucial that as many people respond as possible.

At the moment we do not think that British Waterways should become a charity unless it can make some changes to its proposed outline:

- 1) We think that live-aboard boaters (both permanent moorers and continuous cruisers) should be made a part of the charities mission statement.** All charities have a mission statement that they have to adhere to and which guides all their actions. At the moment we are **not mentioned at all** in this and we think that this could be one of the most important steps towards safeguarding our lives on the water.
- 2) Reject British Waterways proposed powers of legislation.** British Waterways are currently trying to take steps towards being able to make their own legislation without having to go through parliament. We think this would make them **completely unaccountable**.
- 3) There should be more emphasis on accountability to the locals in that area, and them being allowed to run the waterways how they think best.** The New Waterways Charity is designed to be one of the Governments 'Big Society' flagship projects. It is meant to be about encouraging locals to take pride in their waterways and help in the running of it. However, we think the proposed structure is still too geared towards centralised power.
- 4) The charity will be guided by a board of trustees who will make sure that the charity is being run in accordance with the charities mission statement.** In the proposed structure it is also likely that these trustees will be on the boards of CIC companies (profit making companies that feed their profits back into the charity). This will lead to a conflict of interest between doing what is best for the waterways and what is the best way to make a profit out of the waterways (the directors will be paid commercial salaries). **We would suggest that these two roles should be separated to encourage accountability.**
- 5) Throughout British Waterways history they have always had a legal obligation to make sure that the waterways are navigable for freight.** As part of the move to charity they would like to get rid of this obligation as they claim it is too expensive. **We think that this is an important part of the living heritage of the canals and they should remain navigable for all.**

YOU CAN RESPOND TO THE CONSULTATION THROUGH THE LONDON BOATERS WEBSITE www.londonboaters.org/respond

We believe these proposed changes are fundamental towards ensuring all boaters can continue our peaceful and low impact way of lives in the future.

Thank you for taking the time to respond.