

Upgrading of Remainder Waterways

A Report to the Secretary of State
for the Environment

August 1974

INLAND
WATERWAYS
AMENITY
ADVISORY
COUNCIL

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Chairman
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Secretary
MICHAEL RENDER

Your Ref

Our Ref

Telephone 01 387 7973

10th September, 1974

Dear Minister,

At the first meeting following our reconstitution, you asked us in our statutory capacity as the Advisory Council to the Secretary of State for the Environment to re-examine the position regarding the Remainder Waterways of the British Waterways Board, and to submit our recommendations on which Remainder Waterways now seem eligible to be upgraded to "Cruising Waterway" status.

In accordance with section 110 (3), the Board have been consulted on the representations made in this report, as to the nature of financial agreements between local authorities and the Board; and to ensure in other cases that their essential role of water supply and land drainage requires that they continue to be maintained for navigation to a higher standard than might be expected from 107 (a) of the Transport Act 1968.

In the case of the Caldon and Monmouthshire and Brecon Canals, the Board have confirmed that the financial arrangements between the local authorities and the Board ensure that the future maintenance for navigation to "Cruising Waterway" standard will be maintained. It is hoped that the arrangement for the Ashton & lower Peak Forest Canals will be concluded shortly.

In the case of the Erewash and the Slough Arm, the Board have confirmed that the nature of the agreement is such that the canal's maintenance is safeguarded for navigation to "Cruising Waterway" standards, but that the necessary works are, in the case of the Erewash Canal, still being undertaken and in the case of the Slough Arm have yet to commence. In these instances, the Council recommend that the Minister consider the early addition of these waterways as soon as circumstances permit.

In the case of the Welford Arm of the Grand Union Canal, the Birmingham Canal Navigations and the Kennet and Avon Canal, the Council have been informed that the canals are not subject to any maintenance agreement of the kind specified in the Council's submission, although the Welford Arm and the majority of the B.C.N. have to be maintained for navigation to permit maintenance for their essential roles of water supply and drainage. In the case of the Oldbury locks, the Titford Canal and the Portway branch, and the Dudley Canal, substantial contributions have been received from local authorities as to their restoration; and in the case of the restored section of the Kennet and Avon Canal submitted, financial assistance has been received from local authorities. In this section, however, there are as yet no binding agreements as to the future maintenance to Cruising Waterway standard.

As you will realise, the Board are unable to support the Council's recommendations for the upgrading of Remainder Waterways that are not the subject of continued maintenance agreements with local authorities, owing to their limited liability.

The Council have asked me to convey to you their concern that the continued existence of these waterways that now play an increasing role in the recreational development of the country's water resources should be so dependent on the goodwill and financial support of local authorities; and have asked that the position regarding the maintenance and improvement of these waterways should be urgently reviewed in the light of their undoubted value as a national heritage and recreational asset.



John Barratt

Chairman.

Mr. Denis Howell, M.P.
Minister of State,
Department of the Environment,
2 Marsham Street,
London SW1P 3EB.

INTRODUCTION

REMAINDER WATERWAYS

1. The Transport Act 1968 divided the waterways comprised in the undertaking of the British Waterways Board into:

300 miles of 'commercial' waterways

1100 miles of 'cruising' waterways

600 miles of 'remainder' waterways

2. The commercial waterways are principally available for the commercial carriage of freight.
3. The cruising waterways are principally available for cruising, fishing and other recreational purposes.
4. The 'remainder waterways' must be maintained by the Board in the most economical manner possible consistent with the requirements of public health and the preservation of amenity and safety. Local authorities and other bodies are empowered to enter into agreements for their restoration to cruising waterway standards and/or improvement as a public amenity.
5. Following the drive and energy of the British Waterways Board, the Local Authorities and the voluntary bodies, many miles of remainder waterways have been or are being restored to cruising waterway standards.
6. This report deals with 145 miles of Remainder Waterway, which the Inland Waterways Amenity Advisory Council now strongly recommend to the Secretary of State for the Environment be upgraded to cruising waterway status within the national inland waterway system.

ASHTON CANAL

(Ducie Street, Manchester to Dukinfield Junction)

1. The six and a quarter mile Ashton Canal runs from the junction with the Rochdale Canal at Ducie Street in the heart of Manchester up eighteen locks to Dukinfield Junction, where it joins the Peak Forest Canal. It was authorised in 1792 by Parliament to serve the coal producing belt east of Manchester. The commercial value of the canal declined steadily following the railway age, and by the early 1960s years of maintenance arrears and vandalism had meant the canal was no longer navigable.
2. Recognition of the canal's amenity potential initially centred upon its key role in the "Cheshire Canal Ring" a 100 mile circuit of waterways comprising the Ashton Canal, the lower Peak Forest Canal, the Macclesfield Canal and Trent and Mersey Canal, along with the privately-owned Rochdale and Bridgewater Canals.
3. The Peak Forest Canal Society led voluntary effort to secure the restoration of this canal, and early voluntary work was highlighted by "Operation Ashton" in 1968, a major clearance operation organised jointly by the Society and the Inland Waterways Association.
4. In 1968 the Chairman of the British Waterways Board, Sir Frank Price, met representatives of local authorities to discuss the canal's future; and in 1969 a joint working party was set up between the British Waterways Board and the Local Authorities along the Ashton Canal to examine the future treatment of the waterway.
5. In February of 1969, the Inland Waterways Amenity Advisory Council inspected the canal and recommended to the then Secretary of State for the Environment that the Ashton Canal be restored and, upon its restoration, be promoted to cruising waterway status.
6. In December 1971, the authorities accepted the recommendations of the Working Party that the Canal be restored to cruising waterway standard, and undertook to conclude an agreement with the Board to contribute towards the restoration and future maintenance costs.
7. The major dredging and engineering works were put in hand by the British Waterways Board. Continued voluntary assistance was highlighted by the famous "Operation Ashtac" in 1972.
8. The culmination of the scheme was the re-opening on the 13th May 1974 by the Minister of State, Mr. Denis Howell, M.P.

RECOMMENDATIONS

With the Canal now opened to navigation, the Council submit to the Secretary of State for the Environment that the Ashton Canal should be added to the schedule of cruising waterways in accordance with the procedure laid down in the Transport Act 1968.

BIRMINGHAM CANAL NAVIGATIONS

1. The Birmingham Canal Navigations is an interlocking network of about a hundred miles of waterways in the Birmingham, West Bromwich, Dudley, Warley, Walsall and Wolverhampton areas. They developed as an integral part of the industrial prosperity of the Midlands, serving innumerable basins and wharves with coal from the Cannock Chase coalfield and other essential materials for the West Midlands industrial belt.
2. Many of the canals continued to carry some commercial trade as late as the mid-60s, and although some lengths have been eliminated, much of the system is still navigable and is now playing an increasing role in national and local recreation cruising.
3. The Transport Act of 1968 established the principle of cruising waterways and, in the case of the B.C.N., the so-called "main-line" of the Birmingham Canal was added to the cruising waterways schedule along with the Netherton Tunnel branch, the Birmingham and Fazeley Canal and the Digbeth branch, making some 25 miles in all. The remaining 80 miles of alternative routes, coupled with adjoining arms and loops are remainder waterways.
4. The Inland Waterways Amenity Advisory Council in 1968 received representations in connection with the Dudley Tunnel section of the B.C.N., and inspections of the B.C.N. system took place in 1969. The Council raised the question of the pollution of water, which acted as a deterrent to boating on many side arms and made angling impossible throughout much of the system. Nevertheless, they considered that a high priority be given to promotion to cruising waterways of those waterways in the Birmingham Canal Navigations system that were considered to have key potential for amenity development.
5. In July 1969 the British Waterways Board's Chairman, Sir Frank Price, set up a joint working party to examine the future of 'remainder' canals within the B.C.N. network. The working party was composed of experts in all the various fields of interest, management and future planning connected with the B.C.N. system.
6. In December 1970 the findings of the working party were published. They recommended some 60 miles of remainder waterways in the B.C.N. system receive early consideration for inclusion in the national cruising waterway network. They divided the network into four priorities, drawn up on the basis of the waterways' popularity and potential for recreation and amenity purposes, and the 60 miles to be given priority attention were already considered to be in a good navigable condition.
7. Subsequently Dudley Corporation have contributed substantially to the restoration of the Dudley Tunnel branch, which was re-opened to navigation in 1973.
8. In 1973 it was announced that the Department of the Environment had accepted the principle that, under operation "Bridgeguard", some 23 bridges over remainder waterways in the B.C.N. system should have sufficient clearance for navigation to enable maintenance of the waterway for the Board's statutory functions.
9. The year 1974 saw the re-opening of the Titford Canal, resored with the generous financial contribution from Warley Borough Council.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Secretary of State for the Environment adds to the shedule of cruising waterways the following remainder waterways, which, it is considered by the Joint Working Party and by the recommendations of this Council in 1969, have key potential in the amenity and recreational development of the B.C.N. system.

Birmingham Canal Navigations as follows:

- a) Wyrley and Essington Canal
- b) Daw End Branch
- c) Rushall Canal
- d) Tame Valley Canal
- e) Wednesbury Old Canal (Riders Green Junction to Pudding Green Junction)
- f) Anglesey Branch
- g) Cannock Extension
- h) Bumble Hole Turn
- i) Walsall Canal and Arm (Birchills Junction to Riders Green Junction)
- j) Old Loop Main Line
- k) Oldbury Locks, Titford Canal and Portway Branch
- l) Dudley Tunnel Branch

THE CALDON CANAL

(Etruria to Froghall)

1. The Caldon branch of the Trent and Mersey Canal was opened in 1779 and runs seventeen and a half miles from Etruria in the heart of the potteries to Froghall at the fringes of the Peak District National Park.
2. In its commercial heyday, the chief commodity carried on the canal was limestone, and by the beginning of the 20th century it suffered the inevitable competition of the railways. Its condition gradually deteriorated until, in the 1960s, it was un-navigable.
3. The Caldon Canal Society led the voluntary drive to have the canal reopened for canal cruising and recreation. The Chairman of the British Waterways Board, Sir Frank Price, met members of Stoke-on-Trent City Council and Staffordshire County Council with a view to achieving the restoration of the canal for amenity. In 1972, agreement was reached between the City Council, the County Council and the British Waterways Board to secure the restoration of the Canal to cruising waterway standard. Staffordshire County Council have incorporated a large part of the canal in their Churnet Valley Recreation Area which is also intended to achieve a wide tourist attraction.
4. The canal was inspected by the Council in July 1968, who recommended that the Caldon branch and Leek arm of the Trent and Mersey Canal be restored and promoted to a Cruising Waterway.
5. Restoration to navigation of the Caldon Branch by the Board has been completed and volunteers have carried out work in connection with a linear park scheme. The provisions of the 21 year Agreement between the local authorities and the Board provides for the future maintenance to cruising waterway standard.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Now that the Canal has been restored, the Council recommend to the Secretary of State for the Environment that the Caldon Canal be added to the schedule of Cruising Waterways.

THE EREWASH CANAL

(Tamworth Road Bridge, Long Eaton to the tail of Langley Mill Lock)

1. The Erewash Canal was constructed to serve the Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire coalfields and was opened in 1779. The canal runs from the River Trent for 11¾ miles to Langley Mill, where it once joined the Cromford and Nottingham Canals at Great Northern Basin. The canal was never under railway ownership and was amalgamated into the Grand Union network in 1932.
2. The section from Gallows Inn, Ilkeston to Langley Mill was formally closed to navigational obligations in 1962, but was maintained as a water supply channel.
3. The length of the Canal north of Long Eaton was omitted from the schedule of Cruising Waterway in the Transport Act, 1968. The Erewash Canal Preservation and Development Association emphasised the canals potential within the cruising system, and negotiations between the Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire County Councils and the Board began in 1969 for its development for cruising purposes.
4. The Inland Waterways Amenity Advisory Council were consulted in August 1968 by the Erewash Canal Preservation and Development Association.

The Council recommended to the Secretary of State that the Erewash Canal from Tamworth roadbridge, Long Eaton to Langley Mill, be restored to cruising waterway standard.

5. In 1972, the local authorities and the Board announced that financial support would be received from the County Councils to enable the restoration to cruising waterway standard of the 11 mile length between Long Eaton and Langley Mill. The Board is now undertaking the required work and a 21 year Agreement has been concluded between the Councils and the Board including provisions for contributions by the Councils towards future maintenance costs.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Council have now received an assurance from the British Waterways Board that they have the necessary Agreement in force between the County Councils and the Board for its improvement to cruising waterway standard and maintenance thereafter; and the Council now submit to the Secretary of State for the Environment that the Erewash Canal from Long Eaton to Langley Mill be considered for addition to the schedule of cruising waterways, in accordance with the procedure of the 1968 Transport Act.

KENNET AND AVON CANAL

1. As its name implies, the Kennet & Avon Canal was constructed to link two river navigations, which were themselves mammoth tasks of engineering, completed in 1723 and 1727 respectively. The canal section from Newbury to Bath was completed in 1810, making the total length from Reading to Hanham Lock 86 miles.
2. The canal suffered from the inevitable competition with the railways. It was eventually purchased by the Great Western Railway Company, and by the 1950s it had ceased to be a through-navigation. Shortly after the war, a fight for its restoration began, and the earlier Kennet & Avon Canal Association in 1962 became a trust, registered for the purpose of restoration of the canal. By fund-raising and voluntary restoration work, the Trust, working in close partnership with the British Waterways Board, have enabled works to be undertaken by the Board over and above their statutory duty, and have increased navigation beyond the limits of the statutory cruising lengths. These are as follows: High Bridge, Reading to the tail of Tyle Mill Lock, and from the head of Bull's Lock to the tail of Hamstead Lock, and from the tail of Hanham Lock to the tail of the bottom lock at Bath.
3. The remainder lengths of waterway were referred for consideration by the Trust to the Inland Waterways Amenity Advisory Council in 1968; and the Council, after an inspection, recommended to the Secretary of State for the Environment in their report "Remainder Waterways" that, upon completion of the restoration works, remainder lengths of the Kennet & Avon Canal be promoted to cruising waterway status.
4. Since the Council's recommendations, work has progressed on extending the isolated inner sections and the canal is now fully navigable beyond Hamstead Marshall Lock 5½ miles as far as Hungerford Lock, extending this section for cruising to some 11 miles. Further restoration work is progressing on the western end, under the present arrangements, and the major restoration work is currently being undertaken in a series of long-term projects, with the aim of the canal's eventual re-opening to through navigation in the 1980s.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Following the restoration of the sections mentioned above, the Council recommend that the Secretary of State for the Environment consider adding to the schedule of cruising waterways the navigable length west of the present limits of the cruising waterway at Hamstead Marshall as far as to the tail of Hungerford Lock, in accordance with the procedure of the Transport Act 1968.

THE MONMOUTHSHIRE & BRECON CANAL

(Jockey Bridge, Pontypool to Brecon)

1. Formed in 1865, the canal is an amalgamation of the Monmouthshire Canal and the Brecknock and Abergavenny Canal. Opened in 1796 the present 33 mile navigable section from Pontypool to Brecon is a legacy of the last named Canal. The canals linked with a series of tramways which served the iron-ore, limestone and coal mines of the area.
2. The eventual decline owing to the railways left large stretches disused. By 1962 many key sections at the end of the canal system had been abandoned and filled in.
3. The remaining portion of the canal secured a new key role for national recreation within the concept of the Brecon Beacons National Park. Discussions began in the early 1960s between the British Waterways Board, the former National Parks Commission, the Welsh Office and the Breconshire and Monmouthshire County Councils as to the restoration for amenity and recreation of the waterway from Pontypool to Brecon. In 1968 an Agreement was concluded with the County Councils as to the payment for restoration and the future maintenance costs.
4. The tasks of restoration of the canal was undertaken by the British Waterways Board and considerable engineering difficulties were encountered owing to the canals decayed state and the difficulties of terrain.
5. In 1970 restoration work on the canal was completed by the Board and the canal was opened by the then Secretary of State for Wales, and since that time the canal has played a key part in the recreational development of the 519 square mile National Park, offering a scenic panorama over the Usk Valley.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This Council recommend to the Secretary of State for the Environment that the Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal from Jockey Bridge, Pontypool to its terminal at Brecon, now playing a key role in the concept of the National Parks System having been fully restored as a cruising waterway and, being the subject of a binding agreement between the County Councils and the Board as to the future maintenance costs, should be added to the schedule of cruising waterways in accordance with the procedure laid down in the Transport Act, 1968.

PEAK FOREST CANAL

(From Dukinfield Junction to Marple Top Lock)

1. The eight mile length of the lower Peak Forest Canal was constructed concurrently with the Ashton Canal and, for much of their history, their development and decline have been paralleled.
2. By the 1960s many of the structures had become unsafe for navigation. In 1968, Sir Frank Price, Chairman of the British Waterways Board, met representatives of local authorities along its length to discuss the future of the canal and subsequently a working party was initiated to examine the future treatment of the lower Peak Forest Canal.
3. The drive by the Peak Forest Canal Society for the retention and eventual restoration of the "Cheshire Ring" led to representations similar to those for the Ashton Canal being received by the Inland Waterways Amenity Advisory Council who, after an inspection, recommended that the remainder length of this waterway be restored and then promoted to Cruising Waterway status.
4. In 1970, the working party on the lower Peak Forest Canal strongly recommended to the Local Authorities along its length that the canal be restored to cruising standards. In 1971, the recommendations of the working party were agreed to by the Local Authorities, and they have contributed towards the restoration. The major engineering tasks involved were undertaken by the British Waterways Board. These included the re-opening of the Marple Flight of 16 locks. It is the intention to conclude an agreement between the Board and the Local Authorities providing for financial contributions towards the maintenance to cruising waterway standard.
5. The canal was re-opened on the same day as the Ashton Canal by the Minister of State, Mr. Denis Howell, M.P., on 15th May 1974.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Council recommend that Ashton and lower Peak Forest Canals cannot be taken in isolation, with their vital interlinked role in the "Cheshire Ring"; and now that restoration has been completed, the lower Peak Forest Canal be added to the schedule of Cruising Waterways in accordance with the procedure of the Transport Act, 1968.

GRAND UNION CANAL – SLOUGH ARM

1. Constructed as late as 1883, the Slough arm of the Grand Union Canal runs 5 miles in a lock-free pound from Cowley Peachey Junction to Slough basin. The arm connected neighbouring brickfields and ballast pits with the main line of the Grand Union Canal.
2. The Arm supported little traffic immediately prior to the Transport Act of 1968, and was omitted from the schedule of cruising waterways in the Transport Act, 1968.
3. In 1969 the Slough canal study group published a report "Slough's Canal's Future" which recommended the amenity development of the canal as a linear park similar to the Colne Valley Regional Park, the reports of which in 1967 recommended the canal's retention and development for amenity purposes.
4. The Inland Waterways Amenity Advisory Council inspected the canal in June, 1968 and reported that, although there was some backlog of maintenance, the potential of the canal for recreational cruising was such that it should be developed for promotion to cruising waterway status.
5. In 1969 Sir Frank Price, Chairman of the British Waterways Board held a discussion with representatives of local authorities about the future of the Slough Arm and its development as a local amenity.
6. In 1974 the Board concluded agreements with the local authorities along the length of the Arm for the canal's improvement to "cruising waterway standard"; and for its continued maintenance at that standard. The Board will undertake all the required works.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Council recommend to the Secretary of State for the Environment that the Slough Arm of the Grand Union Canal, the full potential of which for navigational and recreational purposes has been acknowledged in an Agreement for its improvement to "cruising waterway" standard, should be considered for addition to schedule 12 of the Transport Act, 1968.

GRAND UNION CANAL – WELFORD ARM

1. The Welford Arm of the Grand Union Canal runs for some 1½ miles from North Kilworth to Welford Wharf, Leicestershire. Constructed in 1814, the Arm acts as the navigable end of the feeder from the Welford, Sulby and Naseby reservoirs to the Foxton summit of the Grand Union Canal.
2. The Arm had become unnavigable, partly through vandalism, but, owing to its essential role as a water channel, extensive dredging works were necessary. To make this possible, the one lock was restored and, after dredging, the arm was re-opened to navigation by Sir Frank Price in 1969, thereby making Welford Wharf available for an amenity development.
3. The Arm has since served a useful role by providing an additional boating centre off the main line of the canal.
4. The Inland Waterways Amenity Advisory Council inspected this Arm in 1970. Recommendations on the development of the arm within the cruising network were made to the British Waterways Board.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Inland Waterways Amenity Advisory Council recommend that the Secretary of State add to Schedule 12 of the Transport Act of 1968 the Welford Arm of the Grand Union Canal, on the grounds that it is fully navigable and has to be maintained in good order for water supply purposes to the Foxton summit of the Grand Union Canal.

INLAND WATERWAYS AMENITY ADVISORY COUNCIL

Membership – August 1974

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	J. A. L. Atkinson
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	J. Wells, M.P.
	G. W. Woodman
	W. K. Woodthorpe

The Advisory Council is a statutory body established under Section 110 of the Transport Act 1968, whose members are appointed by the Secretary of State for the Environment from all fields of waterway amenity and recreational interest. The Council advise the British Waterways Board and the Secretary of State for the Environment on matters affecting the use of development for amenity and recreational purposes of the cruising waterways, or with respect to the provision for those purposes of services or facilities in connection with those waterways or the commercial waterways.

Secretary	Michael Render
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Assistant	Nicola Green
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