

THE INLAND WATERWAYS:

What Can They Do For Your
Constituency?



Dear Member of Parliament

THE INLAND WATERWAYS OF BRITAIN

Can you help your constituents to enjoy the proven benefits that are delivered by vibrant, clean, well maintained waterways?

Britain's Linear National Park

Britain has a wonderful asset in its inland waterways. Built over 250 years ago, by the middle of the last century the canals heyday as a transport mode for commerce was over. Business had turned first to rail and then roads for moving goods and materials. The network was fast becoming disused and falling into disrepair.

But the Inland Waterways Association had a vision for our canals and rivers. Our members, through their enthusiasm, hard work, and *sheer bloody mindedness*, have achieved a renaissance for the inland waterways. Their aim was a simple one - to prevent an important part of our heritage from disappearing. The vision has been successful. Today there are over 4,000 miles of waterways open to navigation and there are another 500 miles of derelict inland waterways which are the subject of restoration plans. But that aim, to keep waterways open for navigation, has developed into so much more.

Revitalised waterways in urban areas can lead to - regeneration, opportunities for commercial expansion, more inclusive communities, health benefits and of course the wide range of leisure opportunities. The following pages provide fuller information on the full range of benefits which tick the boxes of both private and public policy agendas.

However, with a bleak outlook for the public finances there is a real danger that all levels of government and public agencies will see the waterways as an asset which is *nice to have but which can be sacrificed for higher spending priorities*. **That would be a mistake.** It needs to be hammered home to these bodies that the waterways deliver far more than a playground for boaters. They have the potential to be Britain's 4000 mile 'linear' National Park, reaching deep into the heart of most of our urban communities.

The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs is currently leading a cross-departmental review of the government strategy for the waterways – *Waterways for Tomorrow*. Its successor, due to be published early in 2010, must not be a short term reaction to current tight public spending. It must include a framework for deliverable and sustainable finance to enshrine this public asset for future generations.

THE INLAND WATERWAYS ASSOCIATION

WHAT CAN YOU DO TO GET THE BEST FROM THE WATERWAYS FOR YOUR CONSTITUENTS?

Look at the benefits that your constituents should be receiving from the waterways.

- Are You Missing Out?

What components must be in place to ensure that the waterways fully deliver for your constituency

- Contact The People That Matter To Get Things Done.

Make sure that the successor to *Waterways for Tomorrow* is more than just rhetoric for your constituency.

- Make It Happen.

Contact the Waterways Minister.

- Ask The Minister What Plans There are To Ensure The Good Condition Of Waterways In Your Constituency.

Use all the Parliamentary devices at your disposal to support the waterways.

- Work With Colleagues To Gain Regional Improvements.

Check out the **Parliamentary Waterways Group** (contact barberp@parliament.uk).

- Can It Help You?

Contact your local IWA regional chairman, or IWA Head Office, to discover what waterways are in your constituency and how you can help (contact details on inside back cover).

- We Will Help You.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF GOOD WELL MAINTAINED WATERWAYS?

The benefits of the waterways are easily tapped into. With the exception of activities which justifiably require a charge (boating and angling), they are free at the point of use and over half the population live within about 10 minutes of a waterway. So they are readily accessible to everyone. The key benefits are outlined below.

Regeneration: restored, well maintained canals can transform deprived and run down areas as developers recognise the attractions of the environment and build highly marketable housing and office infrastructure.

Good examples include Birmingham, Manchester, Sheffield, Gloucester, and parts of London. There are many more examples around the country. They range from schemes as small as improved towpaths to significant developments which Regional Development Agencies fund due to the improved economic performance delivered by improved waterways.

Development planners increasingly place importance on boats using the waterscape as the means of bringing animation to city centre development, since they provide human scale and a focus for people – the converse to evidence that dead and lifeless waterways lead to neglected environments.

Commerce: in 2008 the British Marine Federation reported that the UK leisure and small commercial marine industry was worth over £2.952bn to UK Plc. Whilst inland marinas and boat hire account for over £142m. Many hundreds of associated businesses also make a living and maintain a practical skills base - for example, boatyards and parts suppliers. And that doesn't include all the public houses, restaurants and canal side shops which benefit commercially from the estimated 500 million visits made to the waterways each year.

Community: the Government fully recognises the social benefits that the waterways can deliver for local communities. These include:

Social inclusion and cohesion: especially in relation to ethnic minorities; the elderly; the disabled; those with learning difficulties; ex-offenders and the development of young people as responsible citizens.



Research is still being conducted on the quantification of public benefit but it is safe to say that, depending on the circumstances, every £1 of taxpayer money pumped into waterways delivers a return of between £6 and £15 in public benefit.



There are a variety of schemes being pursued around the country in furtherance of these aims by local authorities and voluntary bodies. These enlightened organisations can serve as models for what can be achieved elsewhere.

Health: towpaths are ideal for use by people with health issues to enjoy the environment at their own pace and without the pressure, self-consciousness, and cost of the local gym. This is suitable for individuals suffering with conditions like stress or obesity, exercising to improve their general health and wellbeing; and those requiring rehabilitation on flat or gradual inclines after surgery and illnesses such as heart attacks and stroke. An ideal choice of venue for local health practitioner Simply Walk schemes.

The towpaths are increasingly used by cyclists as terrain that they enjoy and a number are publicised as attractive routes for leisure cycling.



On the water: well over 70,000 boats are registered with the principal navigation authorities (British Waterways, the Environment Agency and the Broads Authority) providing recreational opportunities for their owners.

The waterways also provide many opportunities for unpowered craft; rowing, canoeing and sailing, are for many, first time and low budget sports; either as family or club experiences. These often lead to a lifetime interest in the waterways for younger people, moving on to powered craft as they get older. The popularity of such sports is demonstrated by the campaign by canoeists to achieve open access in England and Wales, as already exists in Scotland.

Angling: angling is Britain's largest mass participation sport. There are 1.3 million anglers in Britain and the estimated value of freshwater angling to the economy is £1bn.

The natural and the built environment: our waterways are now green corridors running through urban and rural landscapes, bringing a haven of peace and tranquillity, which in turn attracts a huge diversity of wildlife, preserving and encouraging biodiversity. Well maintained, regularly dredged canals and rivers can enhance

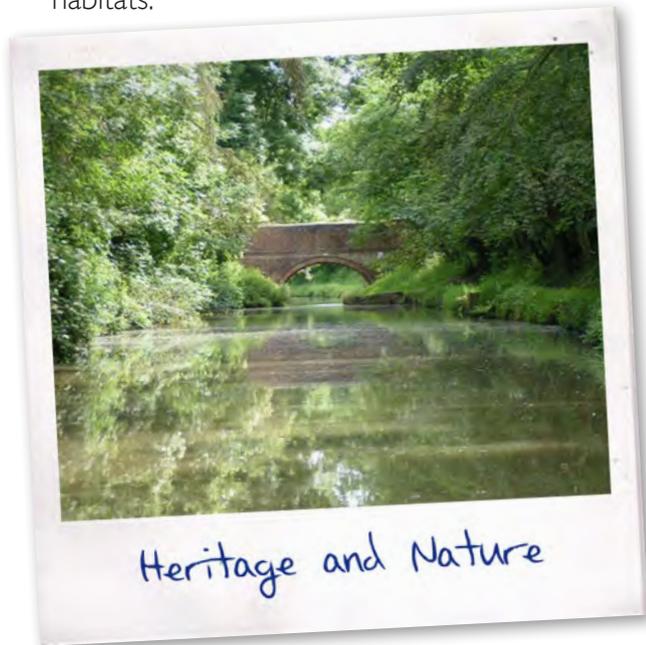


Better health through use of inland waterways can contribute to a saving for the nation in the £85bn per year cost of treatment for ailments caused by physical inactivity and mental health issues.

Walking, jogging and cycling: towpaths are a popular means of commuting to work or the local shops, and are a safe and convenient means of taking exercise. Some will want to walk, whether that is a short-cut to work, walking the dog or longer distance walking by enthusiasts. Others will jog for health and training for events.

these attributes.

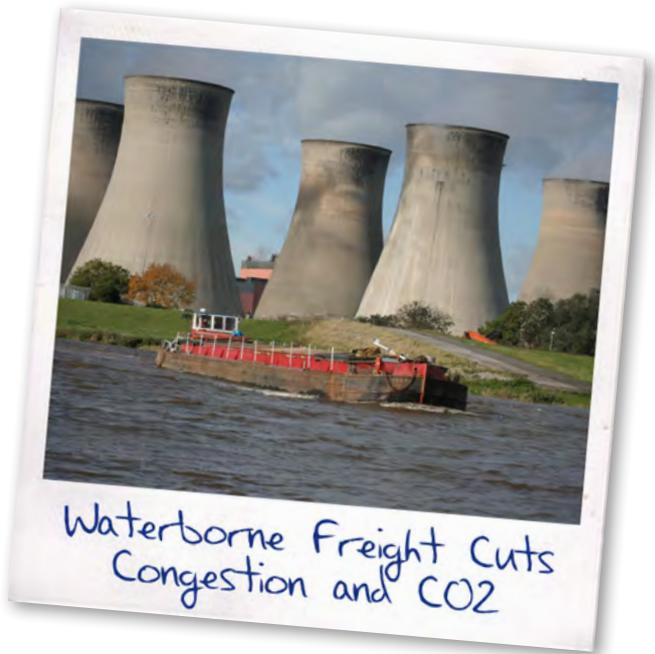
This environment offers much to wildlife enthusiasts, such as ornithologists. Otters are known to be returning to many of our waterways due to cleaner water and farmers allowing a waterway buffer strip for wildlife habitats.



Built originally to transport goods to the centres of our cities waterways now offer immediate access to valuable green space in many urban communities.

British Waterways alone has over 2000 listed buildings, historic and scheduled structures, making the inland waterways the third largest repository of listed buildings in the country, after the Church of England and the National Trust. Maintaining 200 year old structures and buildings is a costly but worthwhile part of our heritage, and something many people specifically come to the UK or go on holiday or make visits to see.

Climate change: freight carried by water has a lower carbon footprint than road or rail freight. It affords opportunities to reduce congestion on our busy roads, by providing a viable alternative for abnormally large loads to be transported, or for the low cost transportation of bulk non perishable goods such as aggregates and building materials, and waste materials.



Less than 1% of domestic freight in England and Wales is transported via the waterways network, yet coastal and inland shipping emits 80% less carbon dioxide tonnes per kilometre than road haulage. So a move from road freight to water freight has the potential to save three quarters of the carbon involved in the transportation of the same tonnage by road. A transfer of freight to the waterways could contribute significantly to the Government's commitments to reduce carbon emissions. The initial findings of a feasibility study exploring the potential for increasing the use of the River Trent as a more sustainable means of moving freight concluded that in the short term, freight volumes on the River Trent could be more than doubled, with potentially an extra million tonnes of freight being transported every year. Government's own studies point to greater potential for waterborne freight. But Government is still not grasping the opportunity. There are initiatives like the Olympic Delivery Authority's target to deliver 50% of materials to the Olympic site by sustainable means, including water, and the Department for Transport operates freight grant schemes, but these initiatives are isolated. **Government needs to get real** and come up with serious incentives, taking a leadership role in transforming the tonnage of freight by water to make a substantial contribution to combating climate change.

WHAT ARE THE COMPONENTS OF SUCCESSFUL WATERWAYS?

Funding for Navigation

Government needs to fund navigation authorities so that they have sufficient resources to maintain the publicly owned waterways to a good standard, make necessary improvements, and have enough contingency to deal with in-year unforeseen expenditure without it seriously jeopardising their pre-planned spending programmes.

That isn't happening. The three principal navigation authorities in England and Wales are British Waterways, the Environment Agency and the Broads Authority. About three quarters of the waterways in England and Wales are controlled by British Waterways (mostly canals) and the Environment Agency (navigable rivers). All receive government grant-in-aid, however the Broads Authority does not receive funding for navigation.



The government grant is inadequate. A KPMG review has estimated that British Waterways is underfunded by about £30m per annum just to keep its waterways in good condition and it currently has a backlog of some £200m in maintenance requirements. It is making economies to help address funding and expects to be able to devote about an extra £10m to maintenance following restructuring. It is having a public debate about turning itself into a third sector organisation in the longer

term. But however British Waterways might be constituted in the future, the Government needs to act now. Far from increasing funding so that the canals can be brought into proper repair, the trend is for grant levels to decrease. The situation is getting worse. In 2010/11 British Waterways is to be given nearly 17% less grant than this year (a reduction from £57.4m this year to £47.8m next year). **Even in times of austerity giving British Waterways less than the level of cash that already wasn't enough to maintain the waterways fabric makes no economic sense.**

The Environment Agency estimates that its maintenance backlog is about £30m. Its funding gap is worse per kilometre than British Waterways (£12k/km compared to £8.2k/km - 2007) and stands at £9.6m. The expectation is that it too will receive reduced government grant, **exacerbating its financial shortfall.**

The Government must fund the publicly owned inland waterways so that they can be improved and well maintained.

Regional Development Agencies

Some Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) are enlightened enough to realise how much revitalised waterways can contribute to economic prosperity. The East Midlands Development Agency (emda) is an example of an RDA helping to deliver a vision for waterways in its area. It has a Waterways Regeneration Fund which aims to improve the environment by bringing forward previously vacant and underused sites, as well as supporting projects that will boost employment and stimulate commercial and residential markets.

23 projects have been contracted. One scheme already starting to benefit the local environment is Trent River Park, which in addition to Waterway Regeneration Fund investment is receiving £900,000 from emda's Green Infrastructure Fund to transform a part of the River Trent area. The Trent River Park area also includes a 10 mile cycle and walking route as

well as access and landscape improvements at the Trent Gateway from the Erewash Canal.

The North West Regional Development Agency is also active. It has worked in partnership with British Waterways and others to deliver the £22m Liverpool Canal Link and a phase of the restoration of the Manchester, Bolton and Bury Canal.



These are just some examples of how RDAs can seize on how waterways can transform areas and make a contribution. We do not believe that all RDAs are yet to fully grasp the opportunities that waterways offer to improve the environment and economic prosperity.

RDAs must recognise the return to be gained locally by investing in better waterways.

Local Authorities

Far sighted local authorities recognise the benefits that the waterways offer. They enter into partnership arrangements with navigation authorities to ensure that the waterways corridor is put to best use in providing accessible, well maintained, open space for the local community. This promotes community use and suitable, sympathetic canal side development, facing the waterways so that the landscape is attractive and valued by all users (rear facing developments seal off waterways from the public, encouraging fly tipping and other antisocial behaviour).

They also form partnerships to publicise the waterways. The waterways, and what they have to offer, must be known to local communities if they are to be used. A straw poll in many areas would reveal that large numbers don't even know how to access nearby waterways.

There are authorities that do not recognise the contribution of waterways, failing to include them in Local Development Plan Frameworks, depriving their community of the benefits and unwittingly hindering their own ability to meet the local public policy agenda.

Waterways must feature in local authority Local Development Plan Frameworks and parks and recreation strategies, embedding waterways in local policies at a strategic level and ensuring that funding is not neglected.

Community Initiatives

The integration of local community representatives to the development and management of waterways is essential to maximise the local benefits that can be realised. Schemes can be pursued with the best and most efficient return through consultation, ensuring that user needs and preferences are best satisfied. Whilst sustainable maintenance, such as litter collection and vegetation control, can be community led with light touch supervision by navigation and local authorities.

Volunteering has much to offer navigation authorities. Over 500 miles of waterways have been restored to use, and a further 500 miles are currently under active restoration. Every weekend there are groups of volunteers around the country working to restore more of our historic waterways network. IWA's volunteer arm - Waterway Recovery Group (WRG) - is actively engaged. This helps young people to develop new skills and allows older people to continue to make a contribution to society using their skills and energy on activities that they enjoy and maintaining their health and wellbeing.

Both British Waterways and the Environment Agency welcome volunteering in principle but

this is proving more problematic on the ground as volunteers want to make a real difference. Litter tidying has its place but the navigation authorities must react positively to the desire of volunteers to contribute on a wide range of projects.



These navigation authorities need to work with volunteer organisations, including local canal societies and trusts, with a flexible and open stance, so that any apparent barriers to volunteer contribution, such as health and safety procedures, are overcome to the satisfaction of all parties.

The navigation authorities must recognise the contribution that the community can make to the waterways and must pro-actively facilitate public engagement.

Water Quality

The best waterways include human activity and enjoyment whilst also supporting an environment which ensures that wildlife and ecological biodiversity can thrive. These are not mutually exclusive. Sensibly and sympathetically managed waterways ensure a good balance of interests, recognising that navigation and wildlife can co-exist.

It is also important that water abstraction is managed and controlled sensibly so that its scale does not limit navigation or have adverse effects for wildlife; and that measures are taken

to prevent degradation and contamination of water quality – typical examples are water run-off from farmland and highways (which can include harmful chemicals and oil residues); and the failure of treatment equipment or unsatisfactory overcapacity arrangements involving untreated discharge into waterways from sewage works.

All of these can be remedied voluntarily or by the control authorities taking appropriate action.

The control authorities must remain vigilant in maintaining satisfactory water levels and quality, recognising that navigation and wildlife can co-exist.

Policing

Use of waterways is predominantly a safe enjoyable experience. However, there can be isolated trouble spots where waterways suffer from unsociable activities and low level crime. Local partnerships should identify such areas informing the police so that they can address these issues. Police constable or PCSO patrols can be enough to deter such behaviour.



The police must be informed quickly about isolated trouble spots, nipping them in the bud so that they are not allowed to develop into a regular activity deterring use of the waterways.

THE INLAND WATERWAYS ASSOCIATION

About IWA

The Inland Waterways Association (IWA) is a registered charity, founded in 1946, which advocates the conservation, use, maintenance, restoration and development of the inland waterways for public benefit.

IWA has about 18,000 members whose interests include boating, towing path walking, industrial archaeology, nature conservation and many other activities associated with the inland waterways. Information provided by half of IWA's corporate members with their own membership structures has revealed that they, in themselves, have a combined membership of over 60,000 in support of IWA's voice.

IWA works closely with navigation authorities, other waterway bodies, a wide range of national and local authorities, voluntary, private and public sector organisations. We campaign and lobby for support and encourage public participation in the inland waterways.

IWA actively supports waterway restoration, and through its waterways restoration volunteering organisation, Waterway Recovery Group, organises and subsidises over 20 week-long waterway restoration holiday schemes for volunteers around the country each year, as well as conducting multiple work parties around the country on most weekends. These schemes allow young people to participate in the preservation and restoration of our heritage, and in doing so learn restoration and heritage skills.

More than 500 miles of canals and navigable rivers have been re-opened to public use since the Association was founded in 1946. Currently another 500 miles of derelict inland waterways are the subject of restoration plans.

IWA is organised into 35 local branches covering geographical areas of the country, through which volunteers coordinate activities as diverse as policing planning applications likely to be detrimental to the waterway corridor, providing engineering expertise to local waterway societies and schemes, raising money for restoration schemes, and educating the public on the value and benefits of their local waterways.

For more information about IWA and its Waterway Recovery Group go to www.waterways.org.uk

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Inland Waterways Association

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Navigation Authorities

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The Broads Authority	01603 610734

