

IWA Policy Statement - Restrictions on Waterways Use

One of the Association's principal aims, as set out in its Memorandum of Association, is:

For the public benefit to advocate the conservation, use, maintenance and development of the inland waterways...to advocate and promote the restoration and maintenance in good condition of such waterways...and advocate and promote their fullest use for appropriate commercial and recreational purposes.

On most rivers and on canals which were not nationalised in 1948, navigation authorities have a duty to uphold the public right of navigation, and on the BWB/CRT commercial and cruising waterways there is an obligation to keep them generally available for public navigational use. The Association is concerned that, contrary to this aim, on a number of waterways the authorities are applying restrictions to their use for boating or other purposes. The restrictions are often for nature conservation or other management reasons and relate both to fully navigable waterways and to partially derelict waterways in the course of restoration. The Association has therefore adopted the following policies; it will:

- (a) continue to advocate the fullest sustainable use of all waterways whether or not restrictions are applied by the navigation authority or owner. Any temporary restrictions to navigation or towpath access should only be made for justifiable and essential reasons, be for as short a period as possible, and be publicised widely giving the reason for the restriction.
- (b) continue to advocate the restoration of waterways, even in cases where restrictions on future use are threatened, and to offer support to all credible restoration groups that request it.
- (c) urge restoration groups, before major expenditure is undertaken, to agree future management plans for use of waterways with the owners or navigation authorities, in liaison with local authorities, amenity societies, statutory nature conservation organisations, wildlife trusts and other local interests.
- (d) promote and commission research into areas where better information is required and advocate the wider use of scientific research as the foundation for decision making on waterway usage and management.
- (e) advocate that broadly based economic assessments should be made of the benefits and disbenefits of waterway use to community, commercial and conservation interests.
- (f) take account of whether navigation or towpath access is to be unreasonably restricted when allocating resources to restoration projects.

Version History

Original policy dated May 2016

Previous version dated September 2019

This version:

- *Approved by Navigation Committee at virtual meeting on 8 September 2021 subject to one change, which was made on 6 October 2021*
- *Discussed by Trustees at virtual Board meeting on 9 October 2021 and approved by email on 8 November 2021*
- *Additional minor changes in response to comments from Board meeting approved by Navigation Committee by email on 22 November 2021*