

BRIEFING NOTE: PROVISION OF BOATERS' FACILITIES

Introduction

This briefing note sets out The Inland Waterways Association's views on the provision of boaters' facilities along the waterways. Such facilities usually include rubbish and sewage disposal and water supply, but can also include toilets, showers, and laundry and recycling facilities.

Boaters staying on board their boats, whether at a mooring or navigating the system, need regular access to several facilities including water, and refuse and sewage disposal, as well as occasional access to other services such as showers, laundry, electricity, fuel, and places where maintenance can be carried out. Such facilities should be accessible on a suitably frequent basis, in working order, reliable and any costs should reflect the current market rate.

Navigation authorities are generally responsible for the provision of facilities. Canal & River Trust states that it provides facilities at frequent intervals with thousands of water points and hundreds of water-side waste disposal facilities for rubbish (although only some have recycling facilities). IWA recommends that maintenance and renewal of boaters' facilities should be considered as part of navigation authorities' asset management strategy. Currently, many are old and unreliable resulting in poor service for boaters and high maintenance and emergency callout costs for navigation authorities. Demands have changed, and the drainage to facilities often cannot take the quantity, particularly when utilised for self-operated pump-outs.

In some locations the provision of facilities does not meet demand. One example is in London. The [London Assembly's paper *Moor or less Moorings*](#) on London's waterways (Greater London Authority 2013) noted that in Central London facilities were spaced far apart and totalled five water taps, four rubbish and sewage disposal points and three pump-out facilities. The lack of facilities to cater for the demand is a problem in itself but also causes moorings close to the limited facilities to become congested. Many who contributed to the paper, including IWA, called for an increase in the number of facilities on Central London's waterways and the Assembly certainly felt that the provision of facilities had not increased in line with the increase in boaters on London's waterways, or in line with the opportunities provided to introduce new facilities by developments.

The paper noted that the provision of more facilities would require investment, and that it was not favourable if this resulted in an increase in fees. It was suggested instead that navigation authorities took a more strategic approach to the problem looking for opportunities to work with others and to find alternative funding. Additionally, it noted that increasing the accessibility of existing facilities should be investigated. For example, it should be made clear that facilities close to permanent moorings are for general use and ways to deal with vandalism and long response times to breakdowns should be explored.

Minimum Standards

Canal & River Trust identified in its [2016 survey of London boaters](#) that there were insufficient facilities for the number of boaters. The survey identified a 57% increase in people living on boats in the capital since 2012, with only seven public water points, five sewage and five refuse disposal facilities to serve all of Central London's resident and visiting boaters. IWA asked CRT for action given that facilities for boaters in London are hopelessly inadequate to meet spiralling demand from both prospective residents and visitors.

Generally, there needs to be a national perspective on the provision of facilities, between one waterway area and another and even between navigation authorities, such as the well-used route from the Trent & Mersey Canal via the Bridgewater Canal (owned by Peel Holdings) onto the Leeds Liverpool Canal.

IWA believes that there should be minimum standards for the provision of boaters' facilities across the waterways network regardless of the navigation authority or landowner. The minimum standards recommended by IWA can be found in our [Policy on Boaters' Facilities](#).

Third Party Provision

Facilities provided by navigation authorities and landowners can be supplemented by those available at boatyards and marinas. IWA considers it desirable that all existing and new marinas that cater for visiting boats should provide the following facilities for such boaters:

- Small sites should provide rubbish disposal and a freshwater tap, along with portable chemical toilet waste disposal facilities and mains electricity where practicable.
- Medium sites should provide rubbish disposal and a freshwater tap (with a reasonable flow of water), mains electricity, toilets, portable chemical toilet waste disposal and pump-out, along with laundry where practicable.
- Large sites should provide, in addition to the above, disposal facilities for oily waste, fuel sales, dry dock, wet dock, maintenance services and a chandlery.

Navigation authorities and landowners should not, however, rely on these facilities to meet the desired frequency of facilities outlined above as they are not all accessible out of hours. Where navigation authorities do rely on marina or other private facilities to meet their obligations, IWA expects the following criteria to be met:

- Water, portable chemical toilet waste disposal, rubbish and recycling should be provided at no charge and should be always accessible.
- These facilities should be easily accessible ideally outside the marina.
- Signage should be provided to make it clear that the facilities are available to all customers of the navigation authority.

IWA supports the provision of services such as pump-outs by mobile providers using appropriate equipment on board suitable boats. This is often an additional service offered by several fuel boats who also sell solid fuels, gas and diesel, and IWA recognises the important service that such providers bring to the waterway community.

Where waterside developments, including marinas and housing, are proposed, the inclusion of boaters' facilities should be encouraged. Inclusion of facilities in development plans is an alternative way to produce more facilities at potentially reduced costs. Canal & River Trust already encourages, or sometimes requires, developers to provide boaters' facilities as part of plans to develop Trust sites. Examples include Loughborough Wharf, where a former British Waterways yard was developed into student accommodation, and included boaters' facilities, and Marsworth Junction where a new facilities building has been provided as part of a residential development. Such opportunities should be explored wherever appropriate.

IWA encourages boatyards to retain or install equipment to allow the sale of petrol in addition to diesel, to encourage the use of the waterways by smaller boats with petrol outboard engines.

IWA encourages boatyards and marinas to maintain existing slipways and ensure that they are always accessible for use by trailable boats. New boatyards and marinas should incorporate slipways into their development plans. Information on [slipway design is available here](#).

Future developments

There is a need to think strategically when considering how to meet the need for more facilities so that they can be funded in ways that do not necessarily require fee increases. Encouraging waterside developers to include boaters' facilities in their projects is one way of doing this. Existing facilities should also be looked at to see how they could be improved to be more efficient. It may be that the introduction of new facilities to a site such as recycling or pump-out points would provide a more-rounded service that is in demand; or that the introduction of measures to reduce vandalism and decrease breakdown response times would increase the reliability and decrease the downtime of existing facilities so that demand is better met.

Navigation authorities should consider providing composting toilet collection facilities, as well as installing more charging points for electrically propelled boats.

Further Information

For further information on IWA's views on the provision of boaters' facilities, including minimum standards, please refer to [IWA Policy on the Provision of Boaters' Facilities](#).

Further information on other topics briefly touched here can be found in the following briefing notes and policy documents:

- [Standards for Construction, Restoration and maintenance of Inland Waterways](#)
- [Mooring Policy on Navigable Waterways](#)
- [Towpaths Policy](#)