

Questions for CRT 10 April 2024

Sent 25 March 2024

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this session, FBW appreciates this and believes it will be helpful in supporting our common desire to see the waterways funded at a level which enables them to be properly maintained.

FBW members were asked to submit questions of which many were in similar areas. The final list of questions provided to CRT has brought the questions submitted by FBW members together in terms of common themes. The questions have been divided into three broad categories Value, Current Strategy and Future Plans.

If at the end of the session there is any time left, there may be a few further questions.

Value

Question 1

Outsourcing is clearly an important part of the CRT business. How is this managed and controlled in terms of

- a) The high level process for entering into contracts.
- b) The process for overseeing and signing off each piece of work.
- c) Timescales.
- d) Quality control process.
- e) Contract rewards or penalties relating to the quality of the work. Who is financially responsible for unsatisfactory work?
- f) How you track and report response times to reports of failure and completing repairs (this applies to outsourced and in house work).
- g) How much delays in dealing with failures add to the cost, and what strategy does CRT have in place to improve its reactive maintenance going forward?

Question 2

Does the CRT consider the expenditure on wellbeing (new signage, advertising, new logo etc.) has been worthwhile and how has the assessment been made? How much has been spent since 2012 in this area and what are the plans for expenditure in this area going forward?

Current Strategy

Question 3

Generating additional funds is obviously a high priority going forward. Previous efforts to raise funds from the general public have not been perceived as successful. What plans are in place to achieve success? In particular

- a) What are the targets for future years?
- b) What are the Key Performance Indicators that will be used to assess progress?
- c) Do the plans include the selling of significant heritage assets?
- d) What further potential is there to increase income from current commercial arrangements (water transfer, telecom cables etc.)?
- e) Has consideration been given to using similar approaches to other large charities such as lotteries, credit cards, charity shops and what other steps is CRT taking to identify new options to maximise its income going forward?
- f) Sponsorship
- g) Has CRT had any discussions with government (local and /or central) in regard to potentially securing Section 106 funds from developers and if not, would it consider doing so?
- h) How much additional income is expected from the boat licence increases and what reduction in the number of boats has been allowed for in arriving at this figure?
- i) Have these plans changed significantly over the last two years and how has government reacted to your revised plans to generate additional income?
- j) What help or advice has government provided on generating additional income?

Question 4

The detailed Asset Management Strategy published on CRT's website covers the period 2017 to 2021 and states it was last updated in June 2018. Is there an Asset Management Strategy for the period since then that sets out the equivalent data on asset condition, including the consequence of failure grade for each principal asset and how expenditure is currently being prioritised (as was made available in the strategy for the period 2017-2021) and, if not, why not? Please can CRT make available whatever current asset management strategy it is working to?

What are the specific pressures on expenditure and the consequential environmental impact and what ability or need is there to reduce or increase expenditure in the following areas:

- a) Reservoirs
- b) Dredging
- c) Major infrastructure works
- d) General operational costs – management costs etc?

Question 5

The use of the inland waterways appears to be changing significantly. The lock movements report for 2023 shows a reduction overall of nearly 22% compared to 2017, with double digit reductions in all regions and nearly 35% in London & South East.

Does CRT consider there is a change in use and if so

- a) What do you believe is the cause?
- b) How does this affect the future particularly in terms of the financial position?
- c) What plans and discussions are CRT having or planning to have with stakeholders in developing plans for the future allowing for the change of use?

Question 6

Customer satisfaction levels have shown decreasing levels in recent years at a time of

- a) Significantly increased costs for users
- b) Reducing availability of the system (e.g. longer stoppages, delays in repairs being made). This is borne out by usage figures (e.g. based on an analysis by an FBW member - Leeds Liverpool Canal only open throughout for 118 days in 2023 against 220 days in 2016 and the number of unplanned stoppages being 26 in 2023 against 4 in 2016 – This was based on research using CRT data. Could you confirm or otherwise the accuracy of this analysis?)
- c) Reduction in facilities.
- d) Increasing financial pressure on CRT.

What action is CRT taking in these challenging times to improve satisfaction levels and thus protect income from customers and the environment.

Future Plans

Question 7

In terms of political work

- a) What work has been and is being done with UK's political parties, including individual parliamentarians, to convey the seriousness of the position facing Britain's inland waterways to justify additional public funding?
- b) Closing waterways does not mean that all costs cease to be incurred. Has the irreducible cost of preserving public safety been calculated and explained to government and other parliamentarians?
- c) Does Defra understand that closing waterways would be more expensive than keeping them open? (A lesson that government learnt in the 1960s but may not understand now).

Question 8

Is there a Plan for 2027 onwards and which of the following options are being considered. How detailed is it?

- a) Returning the CRT waterways to government control.
- b) Closures of waterways.
- c) Alternative sources of funding.
- d) Other please detail.
- e) How much additional funding do you believe is required?

Question 9

It is important to appreciate that businesses need to make long term decisions. What basis would be used to determine waterways that might be closed?

- a) Current use
- b) Running costs
- c) Inability to meet repair costs (e.g. serious breach)
- d) Cost of closure
- e) What consultations would take place
- f) Whether there would be liabilities to repay (e.g. lottery funding)
- g) Environmental impact

Question 10

Restoration societies would be severely hit by closures and they need to understand what closure means. Using the Chesterfield Canal as an example

- a) Could you give a picture of what closure would involve?
- b) Would the decision be subject to an annual review?
- c) Would all the boats have to go?
- d) Might it be a partial closure, such as keeping the 16 locks open to Shireoaks Marina but locking off the 23 locks to the summit pound?
- e) Would there be any monitoring of the infrastructure, or would it just be left to rot?
- f) Would any of the towpaths be closed?

What future support does CRT intend to provide for restoration?