

The Inland Waterways Association **CUTS Campaign**

Branch Briefing Notes No. 6

Briefing Notes for IWA Branches and Corporate Membership Organisations

IWA Members urged to target the Treasury to deliver joined-up thinking on inland waterways funding

John Fletcher, National Chairman, The Inland Waterways Association writes: *"I first became aware that things were going wrong for waterways funding before the National Festival. I know that IWA has a lot of articulate campaigners and with our 60 year track record of campaigning, I had every confidence that we could do something and do it effectively. "My speech at the IWA National Festival was the opportunity to ignite the campaign against the DEFRA spending cuts and see it taken up by the greater waterway movement. "Over the last few months it has been especially pleasing to see the campaign supported by so many waterway organisations working together, and I am especially proud of the very significant contribution by IWA members."*

As this year draws to an end, a brief reflection from John on the CUTS Campaign to date and a round up of activities that will take us well into the New Year. The following notes outline the Campaign Cruise to take the protest directly to the seat of government, the forthcoming Select Committee inquiry and more action every Branch and individual IWA Member can take in order to ensure our dissatisfaction with DEFRA and the funding cuts gets through to every facet of Government. More waterway Early Day Motions have been tabled and we must target directly the holders of the public purse at the Treasury.

Please circulate these notes to your Branch officers and members so they may consider joining the imminent Cruise and continue to campaign by direct communication with MPs. They work for you and MPs are increasingly demonstrating their support for the campaign – we must press on to convince the policy makers. News of more protest activities will follow shortly, meanwhile please keep writing and seeking signatures.

With best wishes for the festive season and a fruitful New Year – do keep campaigning to "Call off the Cuts".

Julie Arnold, for IWA CUTS Campaign

1. Palace of Westminster Campaign Cruise

Full details of the Palace of Westminster Campaign Cruise on Tuesday 16th January 2007 are now on the IWA web site; if you are a boat owner within 'striking' distance of the Thames do please consider attending. St Pancras Cruising Club is leading the cruise; for full details and booking forms go to: www.waterways.org.uk/Events/WestminsterCruise.

2. Select Committee into British Waterways to consider DEFRA's cuts

Early in December the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (EFRA) Committee announced a new inquiry into the work of British Waterways. IWA is gathering evidence and considering the case it will submit to this House of Commons Select Committee. The Committee will examine how BW is working towards creating "an expanded, vibrant, largely self-sufficient waterway network", in the context of the policies set out in Waterways for Tomorrow, the most recent policy review of BW (carried out in 2004–05), and the recent changes in DEFRA's budget. Head Office is working on IWA's submission in readiness for its delivery by Monday 15th January.

All interested parties are invited to make submissions to the Select Committee. IWA corporate members may also wish to consider addressing matters such as “current users of the waterway network and their relationship with BW” and “potential for growth in leisure and freight” on behalf of their organisation. The full terms of reference of the Select Committee and how to make submissions can be found at:
www.parliament.uk/parliamentary_committees/environment__food_and_rural_affairs/efra_pn08_061201.cfm

3. Early Day Motions – Keep MPs Signing to Support the Campaign

As I write Inland Waterways EDM 90 has the highest number of signatures of any EDM in this Parliamentary session and our lobbyist is targeting more MPs to demonstrate their support with a view to achieving over 200 by Christmas.

More waterways EDMs are being laid down to focus attention on regional matters. Please do urge your Branch and individual MPs to support those that concern you, and use them as means to seek further publicity and wider support for the campaign through your local press and regional media, “Life” magazines etc.

Bob Laxton has laid down “Funding of Northern Waterways” EDM 459 and Sir Peter Soulsby tabled EDM 477 “Waterways in the Midlands”. Southern based Des Turner will table another EDM shortly; meanwhile please seek support from your MP for his Environment Agency Funding EDM 235.

Monitor who has signed via website: <http://edmi.parliament.uk/EDMi/Default.aspx>

All in all, as you look through the EDMs, waterways in their many guises appear a lot which is good. Keep the pressure on to get your MP to sign them!

4. Target Treasury to deliver joined-up thinking on waterways funding

Last week’s debate in Parliament demonstrated that many MPs are well aware of the views and concerns of IWA members and not only do they also want DEFRA to call off its funding cuts - they too recognise the need we have identified to seek alternative government funding for inland waterways.

To date DEFRA’s responses to our concerns have been disappointing – almost as ‘unpalatable’ as they describe the grant-in-aid cuts themselves. DEFRA acknowledge British Waterways is doing much for the public benefit, but their tone offers little hope of the likelihood of recognition of this - or of the value of Environment Agency navigations – as they grapple with the pressures of financing the DEFRA family.

‘Waterways for All’ is the IWA campaign slogan that encompasses the belief that our inland waterway network provides benefit and value for the enjoyment and wellbeing of all users - and the nation as a whole. We must now direct our campaign against the cuts in spending on waterways toward those that control the nation’s purse strings: the Treasury.

The Government’s agenda is all about regeneration, improving the environment and encouraging healthy lifestyles and exercise; our MPs acknowledge waterways press all those buttons and more.

Canal restoration and waterway regeneration create considerable benefits; through BW a £60 million grant in aid has triggered and catalysed £6 billion of social and economic investment. The direct and indirect downstream activities and spin offs are immense. Loss of funding is already leading to a decline in waterway network maintenance and a reduction in the proactive capacity for restoration and regeneration. Equally troubling is the potential this

could also result in a loss of confidence, with waterway regeneration schemes and communities put at risk.

There is also a risk of a continuing downward spiral. There are indications that BW's grant in the next financial year will be reduced significantly again from its new lower base level of £55.4 million. DEFRA have not denied the threat of a further 5 per cent cut every year – leading to the prospect of cuts totalling £50 million over the next five years.

Just as benefits can have a positive multiplier effect, the consequences of funding losses will be further multiplied. The lost funding would have been used by BW to lever in at least as much again from Europe, local and regional government, charitable organisations and the lottery. And future funding will not be attracted if there is a risk of failure to maintain that which has already been invested in.

The benefits and valuable outputs delivered by canals and rivers range widely across Government policies and Departments: Department of Trade and Industry, Department for Communities and Local Government, Department for Transport, Department for Culture, Media and Sport, Department for Education and Skills, Department of Health, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

These cross-cutting benefits were recognised by the Government in 1999 in “Unlocking the Potential” and in 2000 by “Waterways for Tomorrow”. We must ask Government to once again recognise the value of waterways across Departments and implore the Treasury to seek a cross-Department solution that reverses the cuts in funding made by DEFRA and sustains the ongoing maintenance and development of the inland waterways network in a joined up manner.

What Branches and Individual Members can do next:

- Write again to your MP
- Thank them for their contribution to the campaign to date. Especially thank those, listed below, who participated in the Sir Peter Soulsby's “British Waterways” debate on 6 December 2006.
- (Would Branch Chairman specifically please write on behalf of their Branch to thank your participating MPs if you have not already done so.)
- Ask them to write to John Healey, Financial Secretary to the Treasury in the run up to the Comprehensive Spending Review, and urge him to:
 1. Recognise the improvements and investments that have been made in recent years by both BW and EA and the wide ranging cross-Government benefits created.
 2. Restore the cuts in funding from this year's budget using the Strategic Reserve.
 3. Review the way waterways are funded. IWA also request due consideration is given to the cost of having multiple navigation authorities, and the segregated manner in which DEFRA overseas EA waterways.
 4. Resolve to ensure the certainty of long term funding of the waterways currently managed by BW and by EA.
- Illustrate the existing and potential benefits of waterways in your MP's constituency. Describe the risk these are at and potential loss if not fully realised. Ask for assurance that government funding will be forthcoming to ensure these benefits will not be lost.

Relate your constituency illustrations to some of the cross-Department benefits of inland waterways at national level, including:

- 2,000 mile long linear nationwide park with 300 million visitors each year
- More than 2,700 historic listed building and structures
- A focus for rural and urban communities alike, with waterway-related partnerships forging many strong community links

- A local arena for sport and healthy living in a green environment
- Wide accessibility, providing 'access for all' in many areas and facilitating participation by those with special needs in many group and independent activities
- BW directly engaged in £6 billion worth of regeneration projects
- Waterways attract and facilitate further development, regeneration and investment
- Provision directly of work within the marine and tourism industries and the sustaining of employment in the waterways' hinterland
- Untapped potential for freight carriage building on initiatives to date

“British Waterways” debate on 6 December 2006, secured by Sir Peter Soulsby

Participating Members:

1. Sir Peter Soulsby (Leicester, South) (Lab)
2. Mr. Michael Ancram (Devizes) (Con)
3. Charlotte Atkins (Staffordshire, Moorlands) (Lab)
4. Paul Rowen (Rochdale) (LD)
5. Andrew Miller (Ellesmere Port and Neston) (Lab)
6. Tony Baldry (Banbury) (Con)
7. Mr. Bob Laxton (Derby, North) (Lab)
8. Mr. Owen Paterson (North Shropshire) (Con)
9. Mr. David Drew (Stroud) (Lab/Co-op)
10. Mr. James Gray (North Wiltshire) (Con)
11. Lynda Waltho (Stourbridge) (Lab)
12. Lynne Jones (Birmingham, Selly Oak) (Lab)
13. David Heyes (Ashton-under-Lyne) (Lab)
14. Mr. Roger Williams (Brecon and Radnorshire) (LD)
15. Bill Wiggin (Leominster) (Con)
16. The Minister for Local Environment, Marine and Animal Welfare (Mr. Ben Bradshaw)

Interventions, to Sir Peter Soulsby:

1. Lembit Öpik (Montgomeryshire) (LD)
2. David Taylor (North-West Leicestershire) (Lab/Co-op)
3. Mr. Edward Garnier (Harborough) (Con)
4. Mr. Michael Wills (North Swindon) (Lab)
5. Bob Spink (Castle Point) (Con)
6. Mr. Philip Hollobone (Kettering) (Con)

Interventions to others:

1. Mr. Richard Benyon (Newbury) (Con)

There was an exceptionally high attendance for the debate, with the number of participants and interventions potentially a record for a one and a half hour debate. The Minister acknowledged the attendance “shows that it is a matter of great interest not only to those who use our inland waterways but to all who are involved in their restoration and heritage.”

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