**Islington Visitor Moorings Management Arrangements
meeting minutes**

**Islington Town Hall**

**Tuesday 23 July 2013, 17.00 – 19.30**

**Present**

Robyn Litchfield, *Noel Road resident*

Elizabeth Simpson, *Noel Road resident*

David Gee, *boater*

Andrew Bailes, *boater and representative of London Boaters community group*

Sukky Choongh, *LB Islington*

Cllr Martin Klute, *LB Islington (until 6pm)*

Sorwar Ahmed, *CRT*

Sally Ash, *CRT*

Sian Ferry, *CRT*

**Apologies**

Paul Strudwick, Inland Waterways Association

Roger Squires, Inland Waterways Association

**Meeting Agenda**

* Introductions
* Overview of Moorings Management (with reference to London Assembly investigation)
* Understanding the issues (boating life, cruising, smoke, noise, management)
* Management proposals – what can all parties do to support effective management/considerate behaviour
* Next steps

**Material distributed**

* Large scale map of canal adjacent to Noel Road
* Sample of suggested new signage
* Graph to show estimates of number of single, double and treble berthed boats at Noel Road in 2013

IVM – Islington Visitor Moorings

CCs - Continuous cruisers

**Introduction**

Sorwar chaired the meeting and invited everyone to introduce themselves. Issues regarding noise and pollution at IVM raised by Robyn and Elizabeth.

**Context**

Sally set the context by referring to the evidence CRT compiled for the London Assembly moorings investigation. She outlined the growth in numbers of boats in recent years, and explained the mooring guidance for boats without a home mooring.

**Issues**

Sorwar opens by asking how we can work together to manage the impact of the issue, which is localised at IVM, but also more widespread. Robyn suggests a unique boating licence for London which has specific requirements for boaters. Sally confirms this would require a change in primary legislation to be passed through parliament, which is unlikely and would take many years.

**Action - CRT:** Sally to flag to CRT directors that she currently has no tools to manage capacity that has substantially grown recently.

David outlines the three branches of the problem:

* Structural mooring problem – insufficient space for the number of boats
* Generally boaters should take more responsibility (many are unaware of these issues)
* An anti-social minority

However, there are socio-economic pressures that must be considered. Many people cannot afford any other type of accommodation other than a boat; a solution can only be found if this is appreciated.

**Safety and environment**

Elizabeth asks about engine safety requirements on boats (for those on board and in the vicinity); can a new safety level be put in place to aid the pollution problem? Sukky refers to the review of DEFRA’s ‘Clean Air Act’ which is under review but is a very long way off, and also exempts canals.

Martin outlines the four main issues affecting IVM: Noise, air pollution, anti-social behaviour and length of stay.

David agrees that IVM is popular for CCs and visitors, and that it currently isn’t pleasant and something must be done. A package of solutions is required that doesn’t affect the culture and vibrancy of those who live on the canals but deals with negative issues currently under discussion.

Andrew mentions solar panels for boats which could mean less noise from generators/engines. Cost of approx. £300 for kit and fitting out boat, although this would generally only support 12 volt use and not provide enough power for TVs, fridges etc. Prices could be lowered if panels bought in bulk. London Boaters has explored a bulk buying scheme to bring costs down. Ultimately, the decision for boaters to buy is likely to come down to cost, rather than environment or neighbourhood issues. Also, effectiveness of solar panels depends on the kind of stove and wattage used on individual boat. The price differentials between efficient/quiet equipment and sub-standard equipment are £600 for a good stove (against £300 for a lower quality one) and £12 per bag of smokeless fuel against £8 for traditional coal.

Elizabeth suggests an annual equipment check (taking emissions into account) rather than a boat MOT (Boat Safety Certificate) every four years. Sorwar suggests possibility of green training scheme and support at time of licence renewal.

Martin suggests that wider environment issues are a long term project. Short term priority should be to tackle the issue of the minority of boaters who ignore mooring periods, notices etc.

**Signage**

David suggests that many boaters may be unaware that the area is sensitive and that they may be causing a nuisance. Andrew says that the boaters’ opinion of, and respect for, CRT/BW signage is low, and many people don’t pay attention, especially if they feel arbitrary rules are being imposed. Robyn gives an example of a boater at IVMwho ignored local signage regarding engine running times. Some discussion about reasonable times for running engines, but no consensus. Martin notes that signage is empowering for those who wish to highlight the rules, but, it needs to be a good sign.

Elizabeth and Robyn point out that current signage isn’t consistent at IVM. Need to be made clearer and to define what is classed as ‘nuisance’. Martin suggests signage at both ends.

Sorwar circulates CRT suggested signage for a ‘Neighbour-friendly zone’. While not specifically intended for IVM, it was a potential model for encouraging considerate behaviour generally. Robyn and Elizabeth say it isn’t strong enough. Robyn reads a mock-up sign that she and Elizabeth have created – it states single berthing only, 5 day stay limit, no return within 6 months, no running generators and no fires – Can this be circulated?

**Action - CRT:** Consistent and specific signage to be considered, but not confirmed until other details are concrete (periods of stay, single/double berth issue). Aiming for new signs by October 2013.

**Periods of stay and mooring space**

Currently seven days. CRT offer to change this and Sally suggests it should be based on staying only a certain amount of days in a month, rather than the ‘no return within’ format.

Sukky outlined previous meeting suggestion of 48-hour stay, three months no return and double mooring in summer only.

Elizabeth comments that seven-day period of stay is fine for both winter and summer; it is clear and easy to remember and less hassle than moving every 48 hours (which may make noise issue worse by creating more coming and going).

Robyn feels five days would be a better period of stay, and if boats travelled longer journeys from ‘a place to a place’ (as required in licence regulations), batteries would be charged more, thus required to be used less once moored. Robyn asked Sally to clarify how far this distance would be in London and was told approximately 2 kilometres.

CRT happy to reconsider periods of stay, but seeks advice from stakeholders on this. No final agreement is concluded.

David and Andrew both have reservations about changing current restrictions, agreeing that effectively managing the situation through wardens or CRT enforcement officers (ie Stacy) would be beneficial.

Sorwar presents figures showing that up to from 1 Jan - 20 July 2013, CRT issued 41 patrol notices, and 40 letters for over-staying at IVM. This only required 5 invoices to be raised, as most warned over-stayers moved on.

Andrew raises the point that boats must be able to move somewhere else – more mooring space is therefore required on the network, creating new ‘mooring centres’.

Both Andrew and David agree more mooring in the area would encourage dispersion. Sukky asks why some areas are not more popular for mooring. David explains that security is an issue, and lack of facilities. Sukky will raise security issues at the Council which will work on improvements.

**Action – CRT/London Boaters:** CRTto arrange a boat trip in the area with interested parties so a joint discussion about suitable additional mooring locations can be had. London Boaters to identify willing boaters to host a trip.

**Action – LB Islington:** Sukky to raise issues of security and work with CRT when alternative mooring locations identified.

**Single/double berth mooring**

IVM residents want single mooring only in this area, all year round. David suggests single mooring in winter would be reasonable. He points out that people having a place to live is an issue, just as the pollution is. Sukky notes that this area is designated for visitor mooring only, and no one should be living there.

David believes any enforcement on single mooring year-round would cause unease among boaters. Unless perhaps there is something to benefit boaters elsewhere to balance the situation out (more moorings nearby?)

Andrew points out that a negotiated solution would ultimately lead to better compliance.

Sorwar tables a graph showing numbers of boats moored at IVM per week in 2013. This was based on actual numbers sighted, and provided an estimate of single/double/triple berthing. 166 individual boats were sighted at IVM. Of a total of 935 sightings, 880 (94%) were continuous cruisers. This suggests that improving mooring capacity elsewhere, and improving information about the advantages of other locations, could make a big impact on visitor moorings.

Robyn points out that another reason for enforcing single mooring is that IVM is one of the few green spaces in a very overcrowded area. It is designated a site for nature conservation and should be a tranquil retreat. Allowing the space to be dominated by double and triple rows of boats is not compatible with this status and is damaging the sensitive ecosystem and the health of visitors as well as local residents.

All agree it is ultimately CRT’s decision to decide mooring rules.

**Action - CRT:** To decide whether rules regarding single/double mooring in this area will change going forward.

**Electric hook-up**

Sally raises previous idea of an electricity bollard on the towpath. Discussed as a potential solution to noise issue.

Sukky says it’s very unlikely there will be grants available for this. Sorwar suggests charities/third sector organisations could apply. CRT may be able to support fund-raising.

General support for electric hook-up. David says this would not eliminate smoke from engines or congestion. In fact, the appeal of a hook-up may make site increasingly popular and could increase the amount of visitors to the area.

Would involve a lot of research before any action and considerable cost. Towpath would need to be dug up, too, to facilitate access to cables.

**Action - CRT:** Ask fundraising team whether this is the kind of project we could put forward.

**IVM boat warden**

Sally raises idea of a warden boat for the area who could recognise boats and create a rapport with boaters, while also offering advice on training. Previous warden Tim in Little Venice cited as a successful example of this.

Andrew suggests that this person should be a boater who has no privileges over other boaters moored in the area (this avoids alienation from favouritism, and encourages boaters who are flouting rules to respect warden who monitors area). The warden would encourage good behaviour, act as a buffer between boaters and CRT and share good practice with boaters.

Idea of ‘rolling’ wardens who are from the boating canal community who move on every month between different visitor mooring sites in London. They’d swap around monthly between the different sites..

Warden’s mooring would potentially be located in the middle of the IVM length to enable them to monitor what’s going on in non-quiet and quiet zones, if these are adopted (see below).

**Action - Andrew:** To suggest the ‘warden’ idea to London Boaters and feedback to CRT. If it is seen as a good idea, once CRT have provided a job spec, Andrew to draft a proposal for LB outline job spec and an indication of the way that we feel candidates might be selected. Subsequently to recommend suitable candidates that may present themselves.

**Action:** If London Boaters willing to support this, **CRT** to produce a clear job specification for the role, based on the draft underway for Stonebridge Waterside Centre. To subsequently monitor how wardens and scheme progress.

**Quiet zone**

Discussed numerous ways of designing mooring regulations so that the most-affected areas are benefitted. Eg. Double mooring at tunnel end of road, single at the other end, boats that fulfil a certain criteria (engine, noise etc) moor in a certain place, allocated visitor mooring spots.

However, all of the above were generally thought to be difficult to implement and regulate. Andrew highlights a ‘Quiet Zone’ introduced by CRT on the Kennet & Avon, which is apparently working well. This was deemed to be the most popular and potentially effective way forward. Sorwar is aware, and is talking to K&A waterway manager this week to discuss.

**Action - CRT:** Sorwar to discuss internally whether a similar ‘Quiet Zone’ scheme in K&A is working and to see whether this model can be replicated.

**Action - David:** To consider how you might word the code of practice so it is engaging/meaningful to boaters.

**IVM gates**

Currently left unlocked (for about two years now), though were previously locked every night. Robyn believes locking gates would improve safety for visitors and residents.

Why was decision made to keep gates open? Sally said this was agreed in a previous meeting with LBI due to the possibility of someone entering towpath through an open gate and then finding the next one locked, which could be unsafe at night. However, CRT are happy to take advice from Islington council on what is most appropriate here. Sukky offers to take issue to Cllr.Klute.

Robyn suggests a trial to see how things go. Perhaps the warden could be responsible for ensuring gates are open/locked if this goes ahead?

**Action – LB Islington:** Sukky to raise the issue of security/personal safety in relation to locking the gates with Cllr.Klute.

**Proposed solutions**

* IVM warden boat
* Quiet zone on part of IVM
* New signage to be in place by October
* Working group to be established by CRT to review future capacity/visitor mooring management issues. CRT to work with all stakeholders on this.

**Next steps**

Once minutes have been circulated among attendees and agreed accurate, please discuss with fellow residents/boaters and pass feedback on within three weeks.

We hope to have an agreement by the beginning of September and a solution in place by the beginning of October.

**Date of next meeting**

It was agreed that a date would be agreed later, once feedback on the proposals had been received from each party.

The meeting closed at 19.30.