

ITEM 4 – Questions and Petitions

Response to questions from Mr Philip Riley

Questions:

Question 1

At the last JMC meeting, the attention of the Committee was drawn to the serious impact on the Navigation that had resulted from the prolonged closures of road and rail bridges in Ash Vale. These closures had resulted in loss of revenue both to the BCA and to the commercial boat operators. The reputation of the canal had also suffered severely. The BCA Director was asked to draw up a clear policy on bridge closures to ensure that the navigation was not impeded by bridge works during the cruising season from Easter to the end of October. The Director agreed to prepare a policy. My question is : Has a policy been prepared and, if so, can the policy please be tabled to the JMC and publicised to the users of the canal?

Question 2

Also at the JMC meeting on 17th October 2008 the Committee was informed about the houses which are being built on pontoons which have replaced some of the houseboats on the Woodham section of the canal. It was suggested to the Committee that these new structures were obstructing the navigation. It was also proposed that the BCA, Runnymede Borough Council and Surrey County Council should, acting in concert, review this situation from a planning, environmental, safety and operational standpoint. It was also pointed out that, as lessors of the moorings, SCC should exercise proper control over the types of structure which are permitted on the canal. Since this question was asked last October, construction has continued and there is no evidence, on the ground, that appropriate enforcement action is being taken. The Committee should also be aware that another former houseboat, moored at Hermitage Bridge in Woking, is now being converted into a two storey house. My question is : In view of the continuing and deteriorating situation with the conversion of houseboats on the canal into houses, what action are the BCA, Runnymede BC and Surrey CC taking to ensure that the navigation is protected, health and safety rules are being observed, planning consent obtained and the conditions of the leases complied with? It should be added that this situation is causing considerable resentment amongst some of the local residents who believe that a coach and horses is being driven through the rules.

Answers:

Question 1: Please see Draft Service Level Plan under policies and actions at the Annexe to the Canal Director's Report at Item 6.

Question 2: Please see Item 7 Basingstoke Canal Structures.