British Waterways

British Waterways is a public corporation established under the Transport Act 1962, responsible for approximately 3,218 km of inland waterways within its estate (which equates to 51% of all inland waterways in UK)[1] and is sponsored and part funded by DEFRA in England and Wales and by Scottish Government in Scotland.

British Waterways is part funded by Government grant (49%) and from trading income generated from moorings and craft licensing, angling etc; from property development and regeneration activities; and from third party funding. Being a public corporation (is a not-for-dividend organisation, owned by the nation), British Waterways is required by the Government to act commercially but any income generated from any of our activities and all the commercial proceeds from either BW's land sales, or the development profits from BW's joint ventures are reinvested by BW in its core activity of maintaining the waterways, thus reducing the cost to the public purse as well as tackling Government's priority of eliminating the enormous backlog of maintenance as quickly as possible.

British Waterways' estate:

- attracts over 270 million visits per year, contributing to £1.2bn to the visitor economy with the potential for growth to £2bn by 2012. Our waterways and towing paths form part of the open space network and are used for informal recreation and a range of water-based sport;
- forms part of the land drainage and water supply systems and can assist in mitigating flood risk;
- is the third largest historic estate in the country after the Church of England & National Trust;
- includes 800 locally designated nature conservation sites and 100 SSSIs;
- forms an integral part of the sustainable transport network.

Our statutory duties include: navigation, stewardship and trustee of the historic waterway system, an environmental body with duties to safeguard the built and natural environment and landscape character of the waterways and a recreational body with duties to encourage public access to and recreational use of our waterways.

British Waterways is a statutory consultee for planning applications[2] and is a public agency with primary responsibility for physical and community infrastructure (waterway infrastructure), likely to be affected by all scales and types of development. British Waterways only owns 4% of waterside land adjacent to our waterways and thus 96% of waterside land is controlled by third parties.

In addition, British Waterways is required by the Government to be a transport provider for commercial freight, facilitate regeneration in rural and urban areas and be a developer of innovative business opportunities using our land in partnership with the public and private sectors. British Waterways has explored and developed a number of public private partnerships related to our property estate, water transfer and supply (e.g. use of canal water to heat and cool buildings which help to reduce carbon footprints and contribute to on site renewable energy targets), maintenance and telecommunications.

It is in response to this Government requirement to develop innovative business opportunities to utilise our land and to help reduce our dependence on an ever decreasing Government grant, British Waterways has identified the opportunity to develop an advertisement business in partnership with SI Media.

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1 British Waterways' estate includes canals, navigable rivers, docks and 95 reservoirs.

2 The Town & Country Planning (General Development Procedure) (Amendment) Order 1997 Article 10(1) of the 1995 Order - paragraph (za). Local planning anthorities are required to consult BW before granting planning permission for development likely to affect specified inland waterways, reservoirs, canal feeder channels, watercourses, let offs and culverts.

British Waterways takes pride in how we conduct ourselves, develop business relationships and interact with communities at large.

Our Approach

As stated above, British Waterways only owns 4% of waterside land and thus vast majority of existing advertisement hoardings and structures which are situated close to the waterway network are outside of our direct control but these structures still impact on our waterways, our customers and local communities. British Waterways has examined the commercial opportunity of developing an advertisement business to help generate income which will be reinvested into the waterways. British Waterways is working in partnership with the SI Media to identify suitable sites in non sensitive locations.

BW, as landowner has developed a rigorous methodology to assess the merits and sensitivities of each site. We use our in-house specialists (planners, ecologists, engineers, landscape architects, heritage specialists and leisure development managers) to evaluate the appropriateness of a site.

A long list of potential sites for freestanding advertisement structures have been fully evaluated against the following assessment criteria:

- Planning considerations including statutory designations, sensitivity of adjoining land uses, access, etc;
- Heritage, environmental and landscape character and quality considerations;
- Leisure activity and operational considerations.

In addition to evaluating potential constraints and sensitivities, British Waterways has also examined areas of opportunity to enhance the waterway corridor e.g. landscape and habitat improvement and creation (e.g bat boxes into the structures); utilise renewable energy sources where feasible (e.g. integrate wind turbines, etc to power lighting associated with the advertisement); opportunity to introduce or improve signage and interpretation in the area; as well as identify opportunities to integrate boating facilities or facilities for other user groups.

As a result, of this detailed screening and evaluation, British Waterways and SI Media have generated a short list of sites that we believe are suitable for advertisement structures.

Following the screening and evaluation, British Waterways and SI Media have undertaken pre-application consultation with the local authority, and engagement with representatives form the key waterway related stakeholder groups.

In British Waterways' capacity as land owner, we support the submission of this planning application.

British Waterways 2008