



DIRECTLY MANAGED MOORINGS:

MOORING SALES CONSULTATION

FEEDBACK REPORT

72 written responses were received. This included responses from four national groups:

- National Association of Boat Owners (NABO)
- Inland Waterways Association (IWA)
- Residential Boat Owners Association (RBOA)
- National Bargee Travellers Association (NBTA)

One consultee submitted 442 names on a petition which called for the consultation to be withdrawn and “...only to re-issue it once it includes an option to measure support for scrapping the policy of allocating vacant moorings to the highest bidder”.

All of the responses have been examined in detail and used to revise and amend the proposals where we felt this was justified.

We have summarised people’s comments into various themes which can be seen overleaf. We then provide a conclusion on the decisions we’ve reached.

Emerging Themes

Judging market price

- Unfair for Trust moorings to be judged against nearby marinas etc. as the facilities there are much better than at Trust sites - view that the Trust sets prices too high / it is not a like for like comparison.
- Some comment that the principle of comparing to market price is okay but it is the practice people have a problem with i.e. how market/guide price is calculated.
- Some felt that the Trust ‘sets the price too high’ and moorings remain vacant because the mooring is not worth what is being asked for. This creates further demand as then available moorings become more scarce and further increases the price.
- Simply setting a guide price distorts the market and makes the price artificially high – spaces were not being taken because the guide price is too high in relation to the facilities available.
- Reserve price should be based on the cost of maintenance.
- There is generally no perceived improvement in the facilities when the cost of the mooring goes up.

“Fairness”

- View that the auction process ‘favours the wealthy’.
- Reserve price as a percentage has, or is perceived to have, gone up over time.
- The calculation used to reach the reserve price isn’t/or is no longer transparent.
- Some confusion over the relationship between the guide price and the cost of renewing an existing mooring, or demand for transparency around this. People are concerned that there renewal price will keep going up.

Existing customers/rewarding loyalty

- The proposals in the consultation favours new boaters/new moorers – the idea of discounts for some moorings or reduced-terms contracts works against those who may be stuck paying more on a three year contract.
- In the same vein, if the mooring price is based on demand, there were comments suggesting existing moorers fear they can almost be priced out of their mooring when they come to renew – the cost of the mooring keeps going up without any increase in the services received.
- Flexible options for existing Trust customers to change sites

Logistics / website

- General support for listing all sites
- Good to be able to pay online
- Attention to the search facility - don’t always know the name of site, should just be able to search by canal or county
- Any opportunity to link with the private sector to list other moorings?
- Improve accuracy of information available about a mooring
- Up to date notifications – almost a waiting list to be told about notifications than feeling an opportunity has been missed as simply didn’t check the site at the right time
- General support for shorter term contracts – although comments suggested the need for reassurance that people could stay for longer, and would not be out-bid on their mooring when it came up for renewal.
- Improve the level of information about an area – if someone doesn’t know an area it can be quite difficult to judge a fair market price
- There seemed to be irritation with moorings staying empty for a while until listed online, and then if no bids, could stay empty again – a situation created by CRT’s own making (i.e.

people thought using waiting lists resulted in quicker allocation of moorings than the auction system does)

- Improve site signage so the limitations of the defined mooring area are clearly visible.

Presence of the Trust

- More on-site presence from the Trust, to deal with problems and enforce rules/T&Cs.
- Relating back to marinas and the like-for-like price comparisons – accessibility, availability and general customer service were thought to be much better at local marinas than at Trust moorings.

Other comments / opportunities

- Transfer of mooring with boat – commonly mentioned by buyers and sellers as something that would be helpful
- One suggestion was to charge for this option – i.e. the buyer/seller pays a premium to keep the mooring
- There were a few comments about moorings being empty in areas where there was pressure on visitor moorings, as noted above. One respondent questioned whether more could not be done to utilise vacant space at visitor moorings to take the pressure off elsewhere – would bring the Trust temporary income at least.
- Wide and narrow beam boats – should pricing be the same?
- Should spaces be measured in imperial or metric?
- Need for clarity over whether the policy to reduce online mooring still stands.
- Some confusion over the ‘buy-now’ option referred to in the consultation with this being interpreted as buying rather than leasing a mooring
- Some suggestion over whether the ‘top of the range’ moorings could go through the auction system and the basic moorings with few facilities (more akin to social housing) could go through in a different way i.e. waiting lists.
- Volunteering - suggested work with moorers and may be other local residents to improve an area
- Underlying issue with continuous cruisers/moorers – whilst independent of the consultation it impacts upon people attitudes to the Trust and mooring provision.
- How does the Trust avoid last second bids securing the mooring?
- Clearer understanding required for how the Trust calculates fees?
- What happens at the end of a customer’s three year contract – i.e. that they don’t re-bid for their mooring
- Why can’t the Trust subsidise moorings?

- Position on reserve prices going forward?
- Provide more residential moorings
- Flexible options for existing CRT customers to change sites
- Better information (or links to CRT's main website) for customers who are new to boating
- Non-internet based allocation system still required

CONCLUSION AND DECISIONS

The consultation has provided us with some valuable feedback which will help to shape the way that we price and allocate vacant moorings in the future. We are grateful to all those who took part in the consultation.

As we expect to allocate a much larger proportion of our vacant moorings at fixed prices, we hope this will address people's fear of, or resistance to, the auction system. Auctions will, however, continue to be used for certain vacancies, at least for one auction 'cycle'. If they do not sell within this timeframe, then they will be offered at fixed prices.

Regrettably, we are unable to offer a solution to those who seek home moorings which are priced below the market rate. We do, however, provide a selection of moorings which vary in quality from Basic to Standard to Premium and these are offered at differing prices.

Meeting the increasing demand for moorings in certain parts of the country is a challenge. Any new moorings proposed along the main channel of the canal or river will comply with the on-line moorings policy (which can be seen in Appendix 1).

DECISIONS

- We will apply our best judgment drawing on recent experience of the site and local market in deciding whether a mooring vacancy should be publicised at a fixed price ("buy-it-now") or whether we make use of the auction system.
- The use of auctions to sell a vacant mooring will be retained for when we know there is reasonable demand. We will work through evaluation criteria in more detail with boaters and stakeholder representatives over the coming months.
- As part of our pricing strategy we will consider introducing long term loyalty discounts.
- On pricing for existing customers, we will continue to use market principles so that the price paid aligns with local market rates at the specific point in time.
- We will make prospective buyers more aware of the 'grade' of mooring available, whether it is a basic, standard or premium berth.
- We will prepare a site standard and maintenance specifications document for all mooring sites which will be made available both to existing and prospective customers.

- We will look at removing the notice period for existing Trust customers who have secured another Trust-managed mooring on our network.
- We will consider further whether or not to allow sale of a craft on a mooring with the Trust taking a percentage of the selling price.
- We will seek to integrate registered users of our moorings website with the 'My Trust' registration facility on www.canalrivertrust.org.uk
- We will consider further the ability to promote vacant moorings offered by third parties.

APPENDIX 1: CANAL & RIVER TRUST'S POLICY ON ON-LINE MOORING REDUCTION

1. **New online moorings** are acceptable only if **all** of the following criteria apply

- (a) there is clear excess demand for moorings in the area with no vacancies at comparable Trust-managed or third party managed sites.
- (b) there is no prospect in the short or medium term of new off-line mooring development.
- (c) there is low density of existing on-line moorings in the area
- (d) there are no operational or environmental constraints to online moorings at the proposed location. Constraints include high boat traffic volumes, water availability for navigation, and navigational safety.

2. **Permitted exceptions** to these criteria:

- (i) Visitor moorings suitably located along the towpath or offside
- (ii) A proportion of visitor moorings may be allocated temporarily to boaters requiring a home mooring for winter months only.
- (iii) Moorings for the following types of boats will be permitted along the towpath or on the offside, providing that they bring significant clearly defined benefits to the location, and that there are no operational or environmental constraints as per para. 1(d).
 - Commercial boats and boats providing services for tourists and day visitors (e.g. trip and passenger boats, floating shops and restaurants),
 - Historic/feature boats that have a specific and documented function for adding value to tourism and enjoyment of visitors to the area.
 - Community boats operated for charitable purposes, for which there is no suitable alternative mooring in the area.
- (iv) Permission will normally be granted for just one boat to be moored adjacent to the garden of a private residential property on the offside of the canal providing that there are no operational or environmental constraints as per para. 1(d). This does not apply on the Kennet & Avon Canal which is subject to the provisions of its conservation plan.
- (v) Where there is an acute shortage of moorings and new marinas are under development, temporary additional offside moorings may be approved through the issue of limited period (temporary) mooring permits. These will expire subject to 6 months' notice by the Trust when new off-line moorings become available in the area.
- (vi) The Trust's operational vessels may be moored as required but will be located away from designated visitor moorings and lock landing areas. Where operational vessels need to moor occasionally at visitor moorings in order to use or maintain facilities, their stay time will be limited to the time required for this purpose.
- (vii) Other exceptions may be made if they are specifically stated within the local mooring strategy approved by the Canal & River Trust.

3. The Canal & River Trust will **reduce the number of online, long term moorings** as new offline capacity comes onto the market. This will be done in a ratio of 1:10: one on-line berth will be given up for every ten new berths created off line. Reductions will be made within the geographical market supplied by the new offline marina within 12 months of the opening date of the new site. For the purpose of clarity, we will make the reductions within a 30 mile radius of the new marina berths.
- 3.1 Policy no. 1 above includes provision for some increase in online moorings where there is no prospect of offline investment. These will be in geographically distinct areas and they will not be counted against the 1:10 offset rule applicable elsewhere.
4. Reductions in online moorings will take place primarily through reductions in the number of the Trust's directly managed long term mooring berths. Exceptionally, where legally possible, reductions may be achieved by terminating (subject to notice) or not renewing agreements, for privately owned offside sites.