

Public Question Time

Statement and Questions submitted by Ms Heather Tew

I noted with interest that a proposal was tabled at the Navigation Committee on 5th September by the NSBA and BHBF for a different tolls structure which would see the lower charges for smaller 5 – 6m² boats being retained but with some small/medium sized boats seeing a toll increase well beyond the average percentage, explicitly to reduce the tolls for the larger boats.

I agree and will detail later that there is an argument to reduce the multiplier and tolls for hire boats to assist the tourist industry, however, I cannot see the argument to reduce tolls for the privately owned luxury fleet.

The proposal, matched with the potential 3% increase mentioned in the paper, would mean that the larger private boats would see an overall reduction of 2%, effectively subsidised by significantly higher percentage increases to small/medium mid-range boats with a boat of 10m² seeing a rise of 10%. How can it be appropriate for the 'starter home' of the private fleet to subsidise the private large boats.

I note in the draft minutes of the last meeting that one of your members queried whether the proposed new structure was proportionate for boats in the small/middle range of the spectrum. Certainly it does not look so and I am therefore surprised to note that the NSBA and BHBF have stated that their proposal has received unanimous backing from the Commodores of the NSBA's affiliated clubs. In essence this proposal will require a large majority of small/medium 'starter' boats to pay more, whilst the small minority (the luxury end) will pay less.

Question: Has there been consultation with individual boat owners, it seems hardly credible that the majority would support this proposal. I would suggest that it is unwise to wait for the reaction to next years tolls notice - further consultation at a user level would seem a wise move!

I personally do not think that the current proposal is fair for small/medium craft and the economic case for reducing tolls for larger private craft has not been justified. One way to test whether this movement is required, is to look at the volatility of demand.

Question: What movement there has been in percentage terms of the number of private boats of 10m² and under, and 50m² and over during the last 12 months to illustrate this. My expectation is that in these difficult times it is the smaller boats in decline (despite our fixed low charges at the entry level). If this is the case, it is this

lower end that needs financial incentive if the Broads Authority want to maintain entry/early level boating.

The other area impacted by the current economic state, and therefore needing financial incentive, must surely be the hire craft – whose trade our region relies upon – how does it make sense for a hire boat to pay 2.65 x the toll of a large boat owned privately by the fortunate.

Question: How do our arrangements compare with other waterways' tolls?

The Navigation Committee's response will be reported at the meeting and read out by the Chairman.

Statement from Mike Hoyland - Chairman of the Broads Angling Strategy Group

The Broads Angling Strategy Group would expect small craft of 10 sq metres or smaller to be incentivised through low or zero tolls as supported under the Tolls Guiding Principles & Criteria. If there has to be an increase, then it should be "straight line" or steeper for larger craft. This approach would be directly proportional to the impact of the larger vessels.