

**Private Boat Owners Survey 2014**  
Report by Senior Waterways and Recreation Officer

**Summary:** This report provides an update on the work being carried out on the proposed survey of private boat owners. This exercise is one of this year's strategic priorities and consideration is given to the scope and costs of the proposed survey. The views of the Committee are sought on both. The report also provides members with the recommendations of the Private Boat Owners Survey Steering Group on the proposals.

## **1 Introduction**

- 1.1 At its meeting on 5 September the Navigation Committee considered a proposal to conduct a statistically representative sample survey of private boat owners to provide a reliable evidence base for future policy making. Reference was also made to a second phase involving local residents and visitors. Members welcomed the project and supported the proposal subject to further detailed methodology and costs being presented. The survey has since been identified as one of the Authority's key priorities for this year with a view to establishing an "evidence base for future tolls and management decisions".
- 1.2 At its meeting on 27 February the Committee was provided with a presentation on a sample analysis using the ACORN classification system and a copy of the brief for the work. The report concluded that "having taken initial advice, officers consider that a professionally designed and executed survey is the most appropriate way of proceeding with this project." Indications were that the costs of engaging an external company to carry out the survey and provide "trustworthy, reliable and objective data which would be of value to the Authority and its stakeholders" would be in the order of £17,000 to £25,000.
- 1.3 The Committee supported the concept of the survey but recommended that the Authority carry out further research into what work could be done for less cost, suggesting an indicative price of £10,000. This report summarises the information from the proposals received, considers the scope of the survey and the minimum cost necessary to provide the robust evidence base for future decision making and gives the recommendations of the Steering Group on the proposals.

## **2 Evaluation of the Proposals**

- 2.1 Six companies were invited to submit proposals. Four companies provided proposals, of which 3 were substantive and addressed the research brief fully. One was a schematic response via email. The proposals were evaluated against the following criteria: overall cost, cost per respondent, the quality of the submission and statistical validity of the outputs from the survey.
- 2.2 *Insight Track* a Norwich-based company, scored highest against these criteria providing the best value for money at a cost of £22,957. The proposal offers a sample of size of 1,100, the highest; and at the lowest overall cost.
- 2.3 The research since the discussion in February has shown that this order of cost is the minimum amount necessary to meet the project's task of creating a robust evidence base for decision making.
- 2.4 The topics for the survey will need to be focused on the key issues around the setting of navigation charges to fit into the proposed 15-20 minute question schedule. It is suggested it focus on issues such as:
- What proportion of the costs of keeping a boat /boats on the Broads is attributable to the toll?
  - How does the toll charge affect private boat owners' decision-making to keep a boat on the Broads?
  - What information do private boat owners have about how toll levels are set?
  - Do they support the current system or would they prefer to see changes?
  - What information do private boat owners have about how the money raised from the tolls is allocated for expenditure?
  - Do they support the current allocation of expenditure or would they prefer to see changes?

## **3 Recommendations of the Steering Group**

- 3.1 The Steering Group met to consider the proposals put forward by the four companies who responded to the research brief on the 19 of May. The group also received a presentation by *Insight Track* on its recommended approach to the survey and the costs and merits of the various options in its submission.
- 3.2 The Group accepted that the research needs to be undertaken on a statistically representative sample of Broads' boat owners in order to be able to offer sufficient data for confident analysis purposes. The Group also recognised that it would not be possible to get the proposed survey carried out for the £10,000 already budgeted.
- 3.3 Having considered the presentation by *Insight Track* the Group made the following recommendations:

- (i) That the survey should be undertaken by an independent professional market research company in order to ensure objectivity.
- (ii) That the *Insight Track* submission provided the best value and approach with 600 telephone interviews followed by an online survey being the optimum sample size. The group discounted *Insight Track's* alternative proposal of 400 telephone interviews as it felt that this would not provide statistically robust data and limit the ability to drill down into sub data sets e.g. by boat size, type and location.
- (iii) That the survey should be 15-20 minutes in length and focus on the costs and benefits of keeping a boat on the Broads and provision of services.
- (iv) That the *Insight Track* proposal for 600 telephone interviews followed by an online survey was the recommendation of the group.

#### **4 Financial Implications**

- 4.1 £35,000 of navigation expenditure was allocated to the Project Pot last year but not spent because of the difficulty in progressing a mooring project. Officers are recommending that rather than carrying this money forward, it be added to reserves and that £12,957 of those reserves should be added to the £10,000 already allocated to the project pot for 2014/15 for the survey. This will leave reserves around £22,043 higher than originally anticipated and provide for the survey.

#### **5 Conclusions**

- 5.1 In light of: firstly, the fact that the further research undertaken has indicated that a statistically representative survey of private boat owners will cost at a minimum around £23,000; and, secondly, the supportive recommendations of the Steering Group, officers are of the view that the *Insight Track* proposal should be accepted and the necessary financial provision made. The Committee's views are sought.
- 5.2 If the Committee support this proposal officers will commission *Insight Track* to carry out the survey work in mid-June.

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| Background Papers      | Report to previous information       |
| Author                 | Adrian Clarke                        |
| Date of Report         | 21 May 2014                          |
| Broads Plan Objectives | TR2 - Strategic Priority for 2014/15 |
| Appendices             | None                                 |