

Tesco pay trolley bill

Essex Waterways Ltd, who run the Chelmer & Blackwater Navigation, have cleared the river of shopping trolleys at Heybridge and presented the bill to Tesco. Tesco have paid it, avoiding civil proceedings. Tesco have introduced new procedures to try to keep trolleys out of the river.

Government wishes being ignored

The Inland Waterways Advisory Council's report to Government, *The Inland Waterways of England & Wales in 2007*, carries two key recommendations. The first is that 'Government should establish an inter-departmental committee for the inland waterways of England and Wales. This should be made up of representatives of

those Government departments with lead responsibilities for environmental improvement, regeneration of local economies, heritage, recreation, planning and transport. The purpose of the Committee would be to ensure that Government policy for the inland waterways is carried through by all relevant departments of Government.' This requirement seems to be an acceptance that the Government's wishes are not presently being carried out by their departments.

Are the Brighton access

A year after the launch of the showcase access demonstration projects, prepared by a Brighton University team and promoted enthusiastically by the EA, how are they performing and how much more access has been added? Have they opened the way for England and Wales to have access like the rest of the world? Paddlers International asked Julia Simpson, the EA's head of recreation, navigation and marine, for an update:

Dear Julia

As it is now over a year since the launch of the flagship Brighton University river access schemes at Bungay I wanted to prepare an update on their progress. I understand the positions to be as follows:

River Waveney

The agreement was to fold if anyone used the section of river below that covered by the agreement. I understand that it has now been accepted that this lower section has a public right of navigation as it is tidal and that the signs at the end of the agreement section, saying that canoeing was prohibited downstream, have now been removed. Were these removed by the Environment Agency? If not, by whom and were the EA involved in the decision to remove them? What is the EA's position on this?

River Teme

There has still been no progress and still no agreement for any of the river to be used.

River Mersey

This agreement is operating as proposed.

River Wear

The British Canoe Union have received a solicitor's letter threatening legal action against anyone using a large part of the river covered by the agreement.

The rest of England and Wales

No further water is available at all under this scheme.

Please let me know whether there has been any change on these positions or whether there are any corrections to be made to the information supplied to me.

The EA position

Julia Simpson replied:

Dear Stuart,

As you are aware, we were asked to put these pilots in place by DEFRA, who funded the project. The aim was to facilitate the agreements being put in place and learn from the process. The project finished with the launch in Bungay, which you attended, and we left the agreements in the hands of the landowners who had allowed the access.

On your specific points our comments are as follows:-

The use of the *Waveney* is through the individual agreement of each landowner. Whether they choose to remove their agreement to allow canoes to travel over their land is down to them.

To assist in the management of the canoe trail we put signs in place to inform people that they had reached the end of the section where access has been agreed through the project. Two signs have been removed but we do not know who took them down; it was not the Agency.

There was an agreement in place on the *Teme* at Ludlow at the end of the project. We are aware that further discussions have taken place between paddlers and landowners. We understand that it has been agreed to increase the access in the winter months and reduce it in the summer. This is thought to deliver benefits to all parties.

On the matter of the letter about the *Wear* you will need to take this up with the British Canoe Union because, as you say, this letter has been sent to them.

As for the *rest of England and Wales* and water available 'under this scheme', as I say above, we delivered a project for DEFRA to facilitate agreements on sections of four pilot rivers. We have then shared the understanding gained through the process with anyone who wants to use it via the web. We have no further mandate from DEFRA to deliver more access to rivers.

We are aware of access agreements being put in place on other rivers, as I am sure you are, such as the *Wye* and *Lugg*; in doing so we know some have looked at the information we have provided on the web.

If you have any further questions my lead on this is William Crookshank (william.crookshank@environment-agency.gov).

The Paddlers International response

Dear Julie

Thank you for your letter in which you claim that the access situation is satisfactory. I refer to the pilot projects carried out by Brighton University and launched at Bungay in October 2006:

River Waveney

This 33km agreement was offered in place of the 48km agreement of 2001 set up by local canoeists. The new agreement had approached more landowners but still had not obtained the permission of 6% of them. It was much more restrictive of canoeists and now required them not to use the 3km downstream, a public right of navigation because it is tidal, leaving an impassable gap in the route down the river. Some Environment Agency notices at the top of the tidal section, saying there was no further right of navigation, were quickly taken down. Anglers said that the entire agreement would terminate if any canoeists use the legal navigation section.

River Teme

Despite having been used full length since Roman times and having navigation arches on some bridges, access was requested for only 1.6km. 18 months on, nothing has been achieved.