



Summary Output Report

Sharing Towpaths consultation

Consultation undertaken between March and May 2014



Canal &
River Trust

Report published August 2014

CONTENTS

1	INTRODUCTION	3
2	METHOD	3
3	SUMMARY OF INPUT.....	4
3.1	Online Survey	4
3.2	Summary of the Online Survey.....	5
3.2.1	Who responded?	5
3.2.2	The Principles of Towpath Use	9
3.2.3	Sharing the towpath	13
3.2.4	Towpath code	14
3.2.5	Towpath code – promotion	17
3.2.6	Omissions from the Towpath Code	18
3.2.7	Experience	19
3.2.8	Poor experience	20
3.2.9	Reasons for not reporting unpleasant behaviour	21
3.3	Analysis of free text questions Q10, 12,13, 16, & 17	21
3.3.1	Introduction	21
3.3.2	General Context	22
3.3.3	Question 10	22
3.3.4	Question 12	28
3.3.5	Question 13	33
3.3.6	Question 16	35
3.4	Email Responses.....	35
3.5	Regional Workshops.....	38
4	Appendices	48

1 INTRODUCTION

This report summarises the output of the consultation on Sharing Towpaths which was undertaken between March and May 2014 by the Canal & River Trust. It is a factual report on the output and will be used to inform the Trust's policy on Sharing Towpaths which is due to be published in Autumn 2014.

The Trust aims to promote wider enjoyment and access to 2,000 miles of historic waterways and provide better information for visitors to waterways across England and Wales about the Trust's approach to '*better infrastructure, better signage and better behaviour*'.

Through the consultation we have sought a wide range of views from stakeholders, visitors and partners. The online survey received 2,148 respondents on a range of questions and priorities. This was supplemented by feedback gained at a series of workshops with stakeholders and with the Canal & River Trust Council and Advisory Group members.

2 METHOD

The following consultation activities were undertaken:

- a) Online survey (Survey Monkey)
- b) Invitation to send written responses to the consultation email address to sharingtowpaths@canalrivertrust.org.uk
- c) Three regional stakeholders workshops (2 in Birmingham, one in Builth Wells, Wales)
- d) A Workshop session with CRT Council
- e) A Workshop session with the Angling Advisory Group and feedback from the Navigation Advisory Group

3 SUMMARY OF INPUT

3.1 Online Survey

This part of the consultation ran through an online survey, launched in late February 2014.

The URL for the survey was promoted on the Trust's website, through email newsletters, via social media, through third party organisations and via postcards handed to towpath users (in selected locations only).

The consultation closed on the Fri 9th May; 2,148 responses to the online survey were received by this date.

Whilst the consultation process has aimed to collect views from as diverse a range of towpath users as possible it did not set out to be representative of all users nor does it claim to be. Other surveys on behalf of the Trust provide a representative profile of the types of user and these can be used to provide context to the results gathered through this consultation.

Additionally, those questions inviting free text responses have been analysed and this output is contained in section 3.3

A full summary of all the free text responses is also published on the website

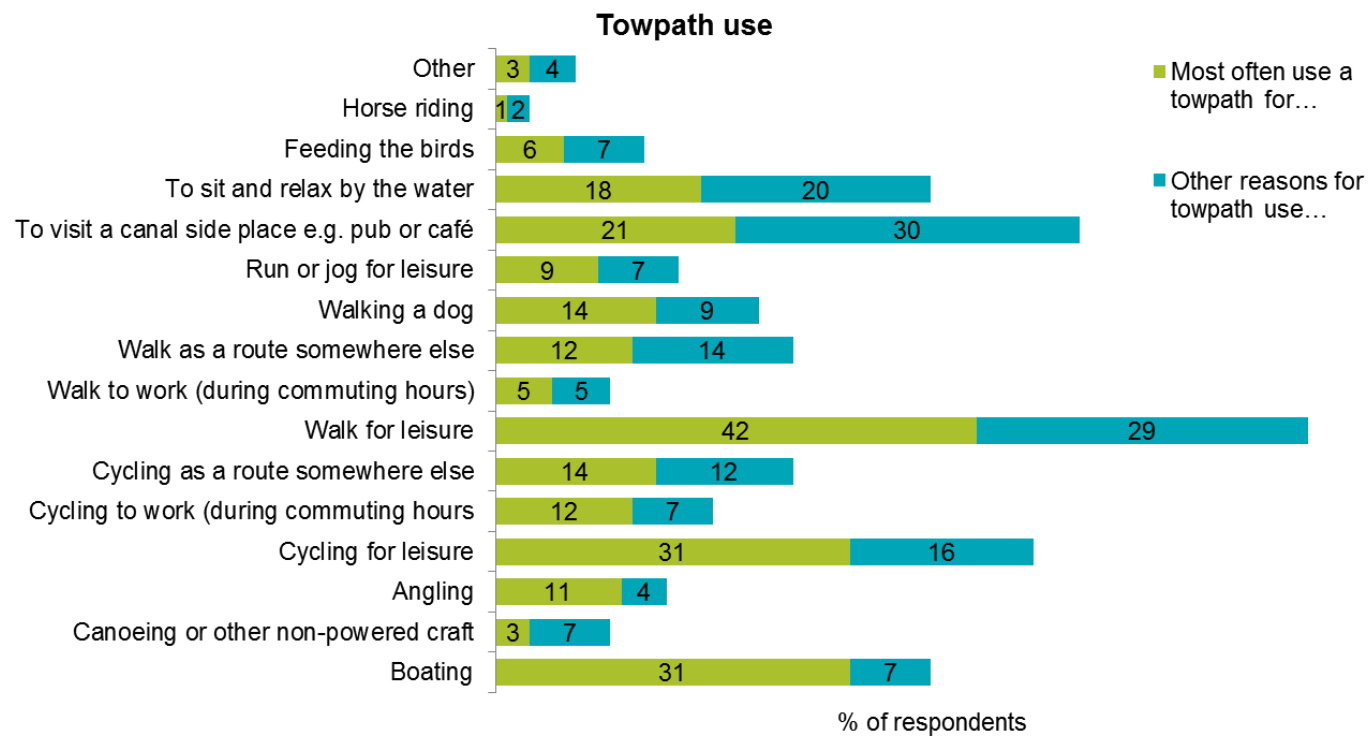
3.2 Summary of the Online Survey responses

3.2.1 Who responded?

3.2.1.1 Towpath Use

Walking for leisure, cycling for leisure and boating were the most common activities amongst respondents.

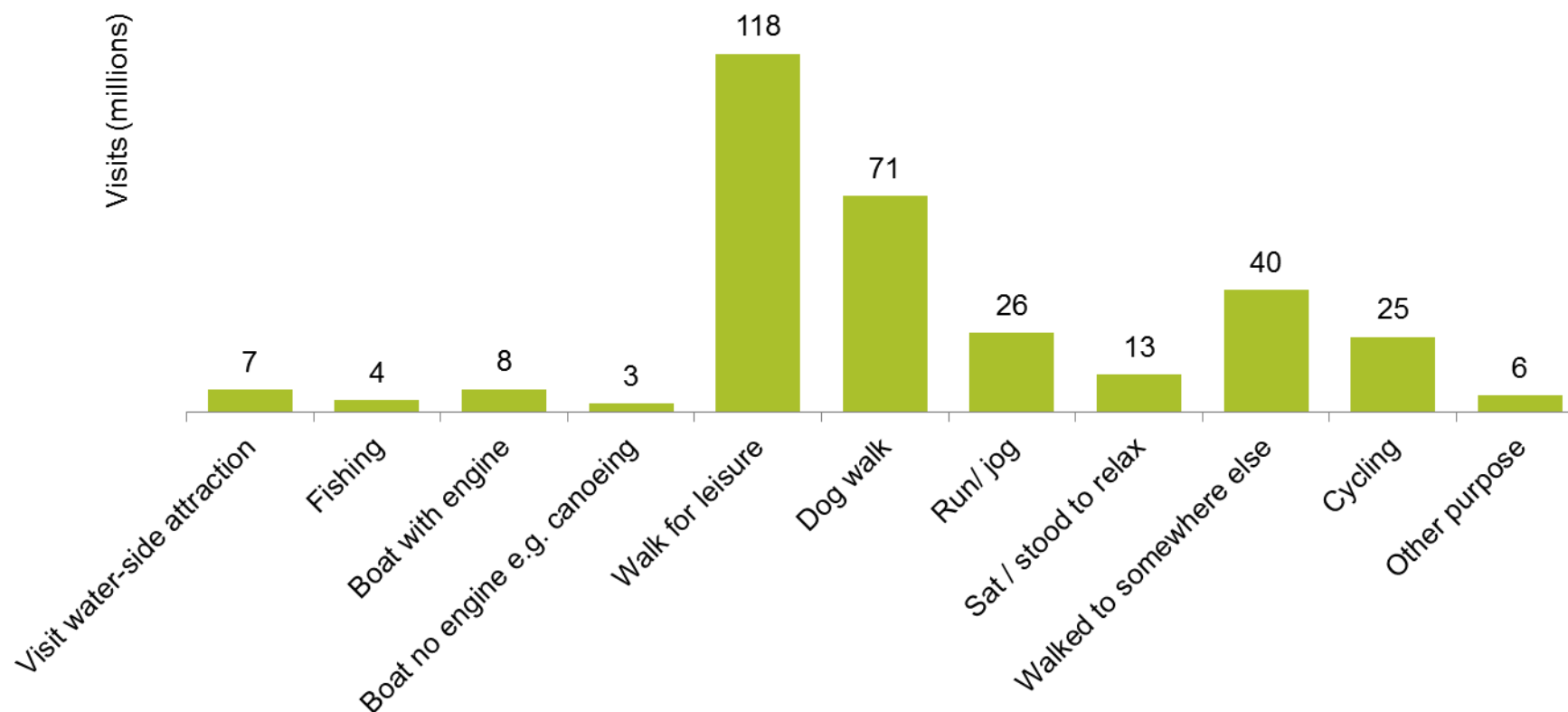
The proportion of boaters, anglers and cyclists is greater than would be seen naturally representing the more engaged users likely to complete the survey. However, there is a good breadth in the activities people are most often likely to take part in, from the active to more passive, and from planned and frequent activities through to perhaps the more spontaneous



3.2.1.2 Benchmarking Towpath Use

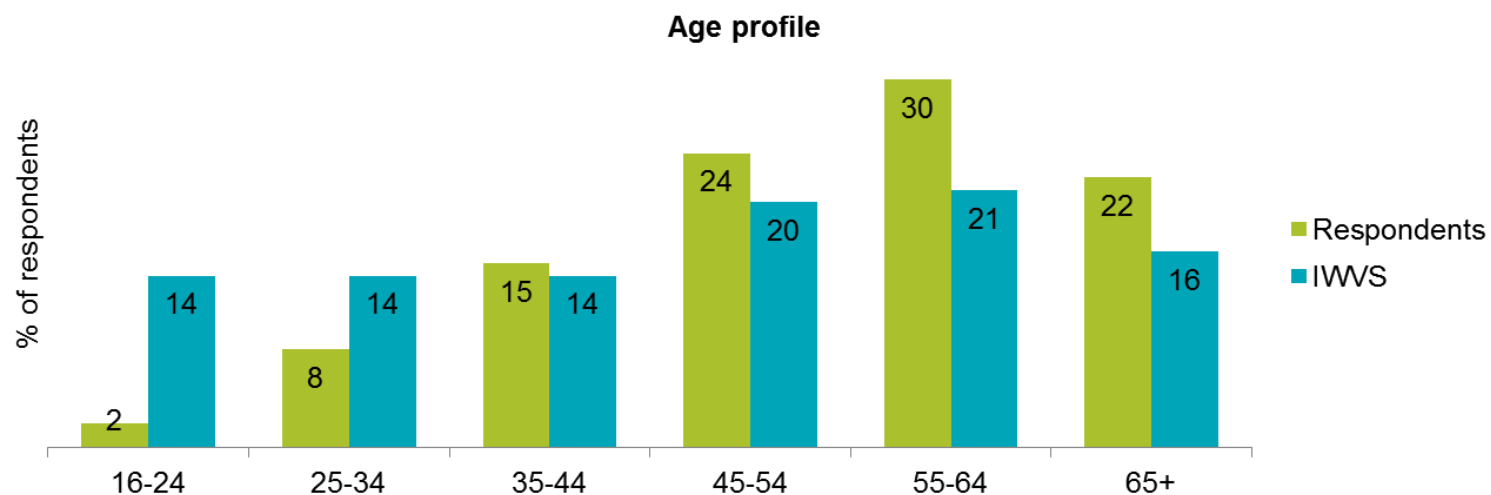
The chart below shows total visits by activity, based on an average across the last three years. Results are taken from the Trust's Inland Waterways Visit Survey (IWVS) conducted by independent market research agency BDRC Continental.

Total visits made to the Trust's Canals and Rivers - total visits over 12 months based on average across the last three years (2011 – 2013)



3.2.1.3 Respondent demographics

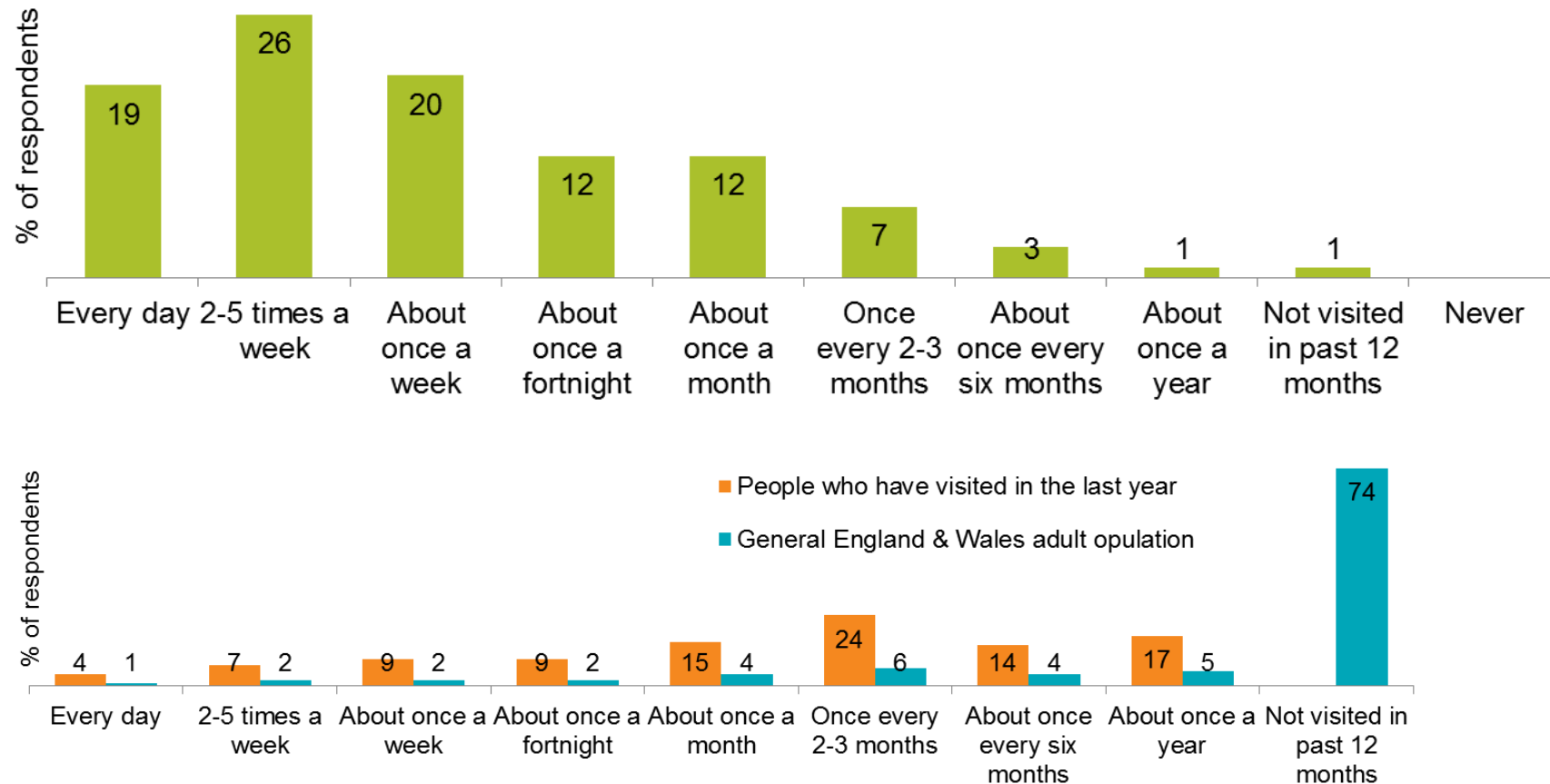
- There is an older male bias amongst respondents than would be expected based on results from the Trust's IWVS which shows provides a representative profile of all users.
- 62% men/22% women (16% non-response)
 - Inland Waterway Visitor Survey (IWVS) 59% men, 41% women
- 11% long term illness/health-problem/disability/infirmity (16% non-response)
 - IWVS – 12% long term illness etc.



3.2.1.4 Respondents – frequency of visiting a canal

As would be expected, respondents to the consultation tend to be more frequent visitors to the canals and rivers than seen generally.

Frequency of visits to canals



3.2.2 The Principles of Towpath Use

The following section shows the results given for Q1 to 9 in the consultation which asked respondents to rate the overall importance of each of the draft principles of towpath use.

The principles that are the least important to general towpath users, with less than 50% of respondents saying they are either important or very important are:

- Routes along canals and rivers will be branded in the names of these historic waterways.
- The tradition of horse boating is part of the heritage of our waterways and improvements made should follow the guidance for horse boating.
Towpaths although built for horses are now predominantly used by people and (except where designated as bridleways) use for horse riding requires specific permission or alternative routes may be developed.

How important to you is the principle that...

Towpaths have established uses in supporting boating, angling, walking and other water-based activities, to be balanced with their role in connecting places.

The Trust and its stakeholders will ensure canal and river environments are safeguarded as havens for people and wildlife.

Towpaths should be free to access for all users who wish to walk, run, fish, cycle etc. and who are committed to behave considerately to other users of the towpaths who are slower or more vulnerable than themselves.

Towpaths should be improved where needed, to accommodate increased visits safely and to improve disabled access. Improvements should benefit a wide range of users and enhance the waterway setting.

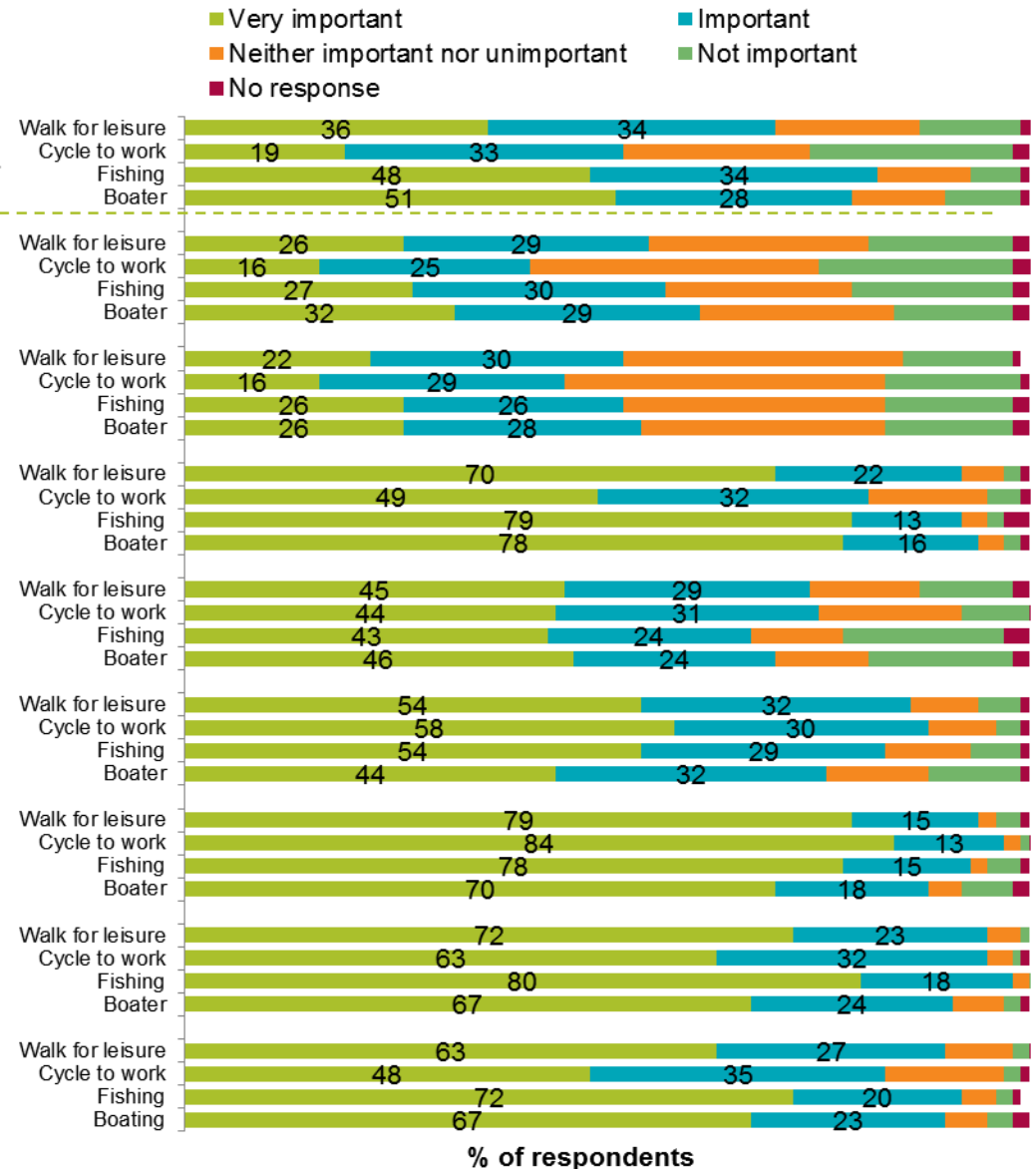
Towpaths should be a distinct category in cycle or other route design standards, recognising their shared use and historic waterside character.

Visitors will continue to recognise they are entering a slower space shared by pedestrians, cyclists, boaters, joggers and anglers.

Routes along canals and rivers will be branded in the names of these historic waterways.

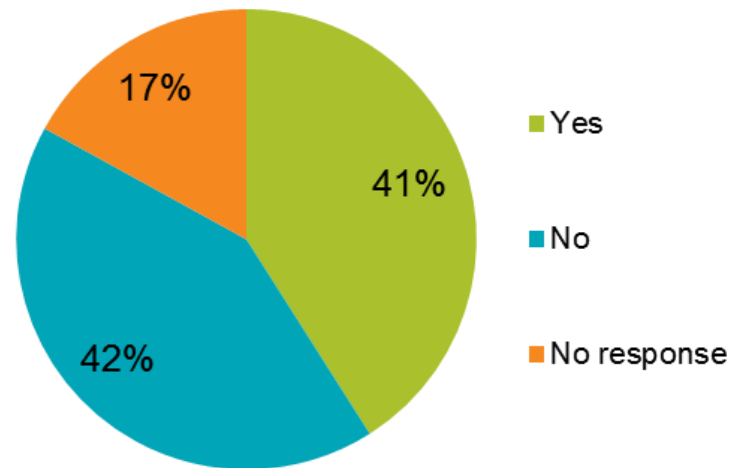
The tradition of horse boating is part of the heritage of our waterways and improvements made should follow the guidance for horse boating. Towpaths although built for horses are now predominantly used by people and (except where designated as bridleways) use for horse riding requires specific permission or alternative routes may be developed.

Where there are concerns over capacity or underlying condition, towpaths will not be promoted as part of a wider route network, but alternative routes along roads will be sought.



3.2.2.1 Perceived omissions from the principles of towpath use

Is anything missing from the nine principles of towpath use?

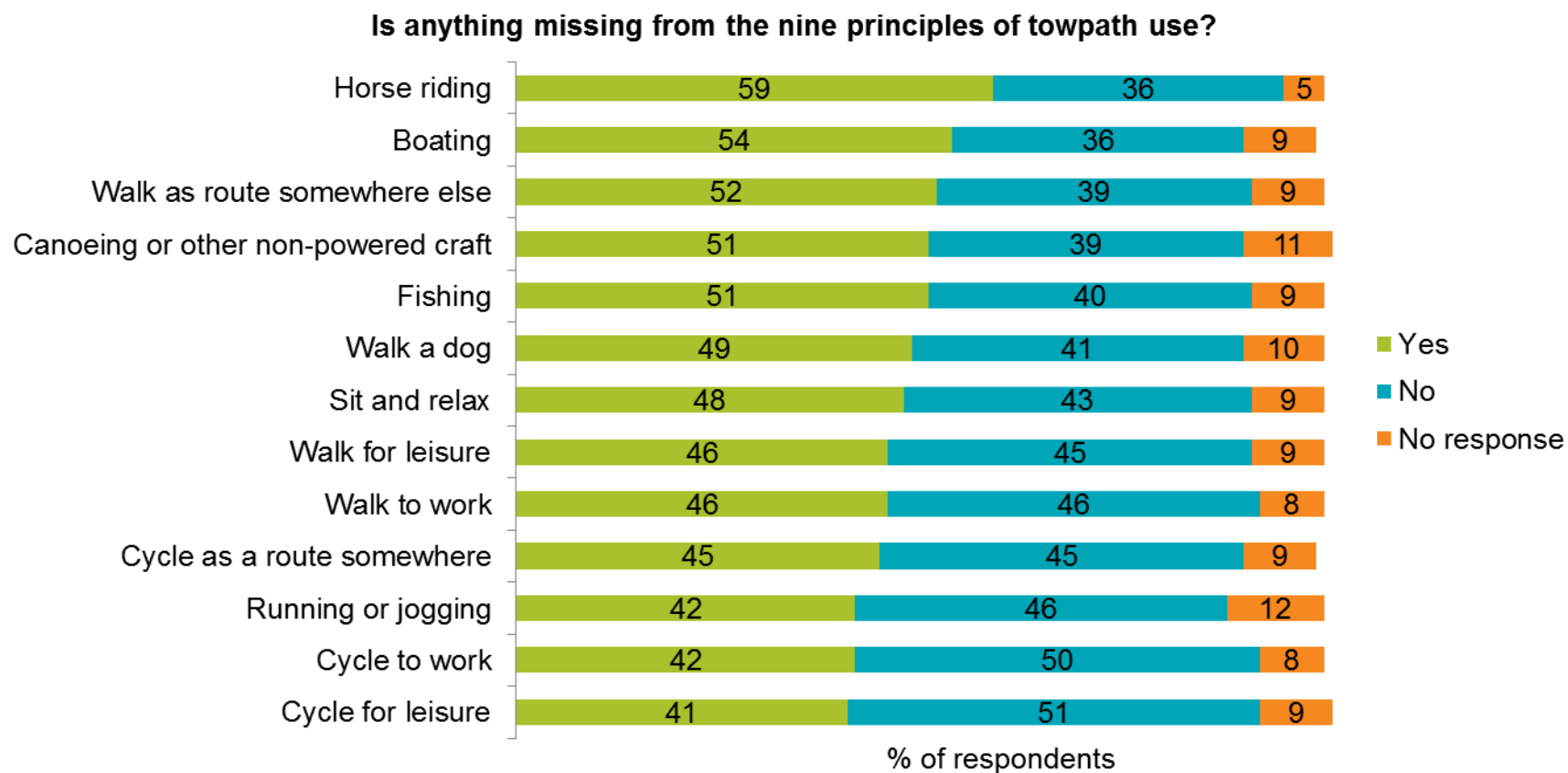


Comments included:

- Ensuring the needs of boaters primarily and also anglers are given sufficient priority – they are paying customers.
- Greater emphasis on curbing the speed of some cyclists
- Great consideration given to horse-riding
- Consideration given to those who live along or adjacent to the canal
- No reference at present to open water swimming
- Fundamental to the principle of use was that no one should obstruct the towpath other than for very short periods e.g. when mooring a boat.
- Some people suggested that the principles and subsequently any practical manifestation of this into a code of conduct should distinguish between the different types of environment and user – e.g. a set of principles for urban versus rural paths, responsibilities of each activity types.
- Whilst historic name emerged as less important over, some felt the maintenance of local canal character and heritage was missing from the principles.
- Whilst the draft principles used in the consultation refer to 'towpath improvements where needed' some respondents commented that the principles should go further and include reference to how the Trust decides which areas are priorities for improvement.
- Waterways should be seen as a network and areas of development should not be looked in isolation.
- Too little reference to water safety and this should be more explicit, both for personal safety and also not endangering others.
- More mention of biodiversity and the development and protection of flora and fauna along the towpath.
- Greater recognition in the principles of the public health benefits waterways can bring, both to mental and physical health.
- Consider the level of consistency or conflict with principles of towpath use established by other navigation authorities or relevant waterway groups.
- The language used by respondents in the section should be noted here. Many respondents referred to 'commitments by the Trust to...' suggesting some people want to see these principles move more towards a definitive policy on towpath management.

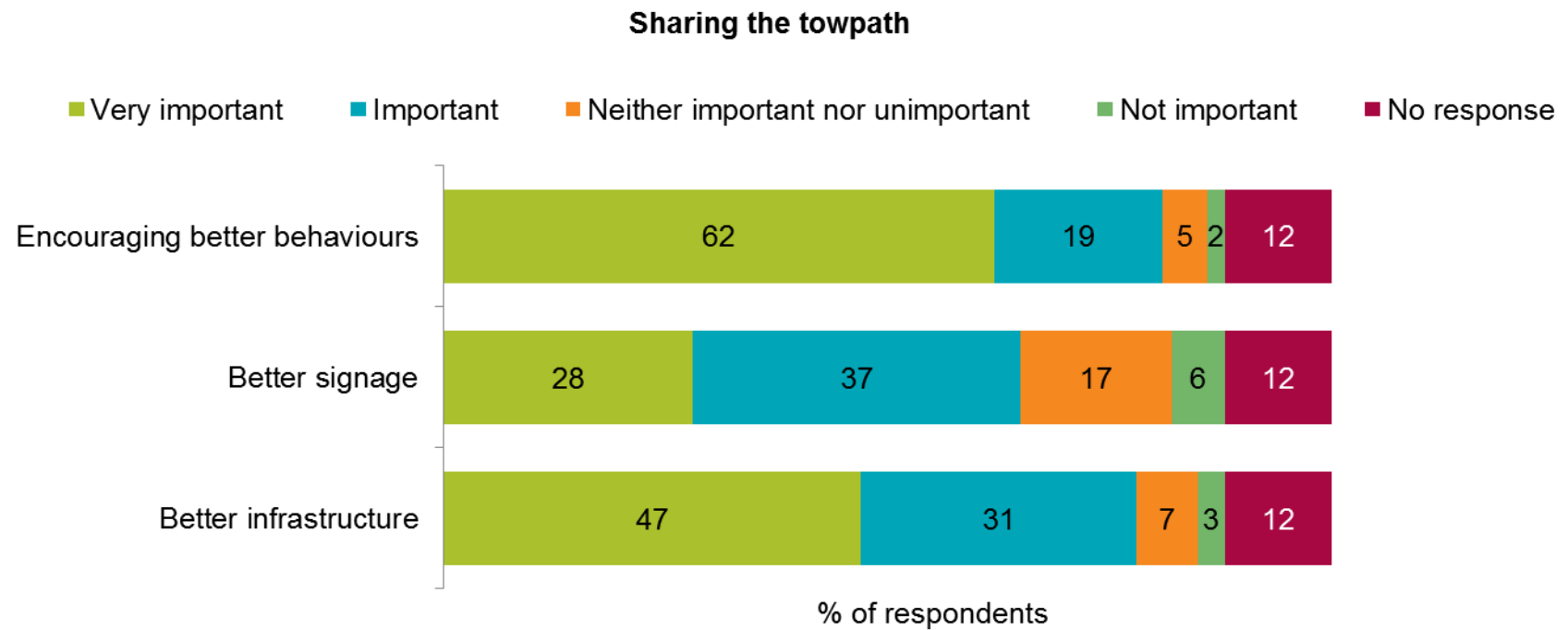
3.2.2.2 Perceived omissions from the principles of towpath use – by activity

Horse riders and boaters are the most likely to think there is something missing from the nine principles of towpath use. Cyclists, joggers and those walking to work are the most likely to believe there are no omissions for the nine principles



3.2.3 Sharing the towpath

When asked about what the Canal & River Trust could do to encourage better sharing, respondents believed it was most important for the Trust to try and encourage better behaviour, followed by providing better infrastructure and finally better signage.

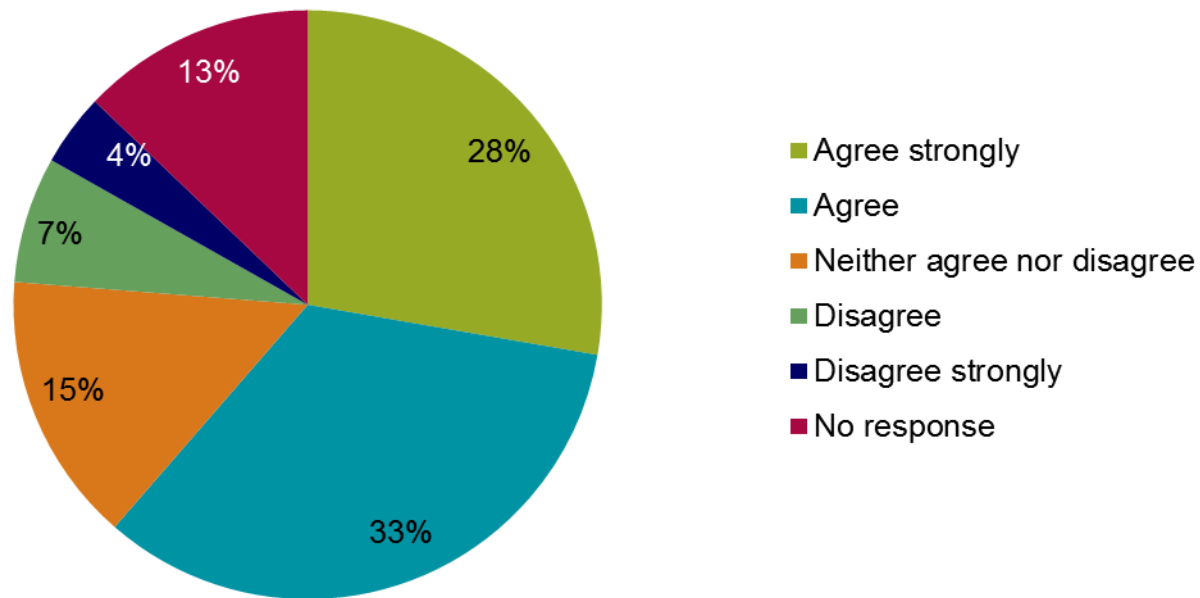


Q. 11 The Canal & River Trust has summarised the things it can do for towpath sharing. How important do you see each of these components?

3.2.4 Towpath code

3.2.4.1 Most people think a Towpath Code will improve behaviour – 61% agree that it will, 11% disagree

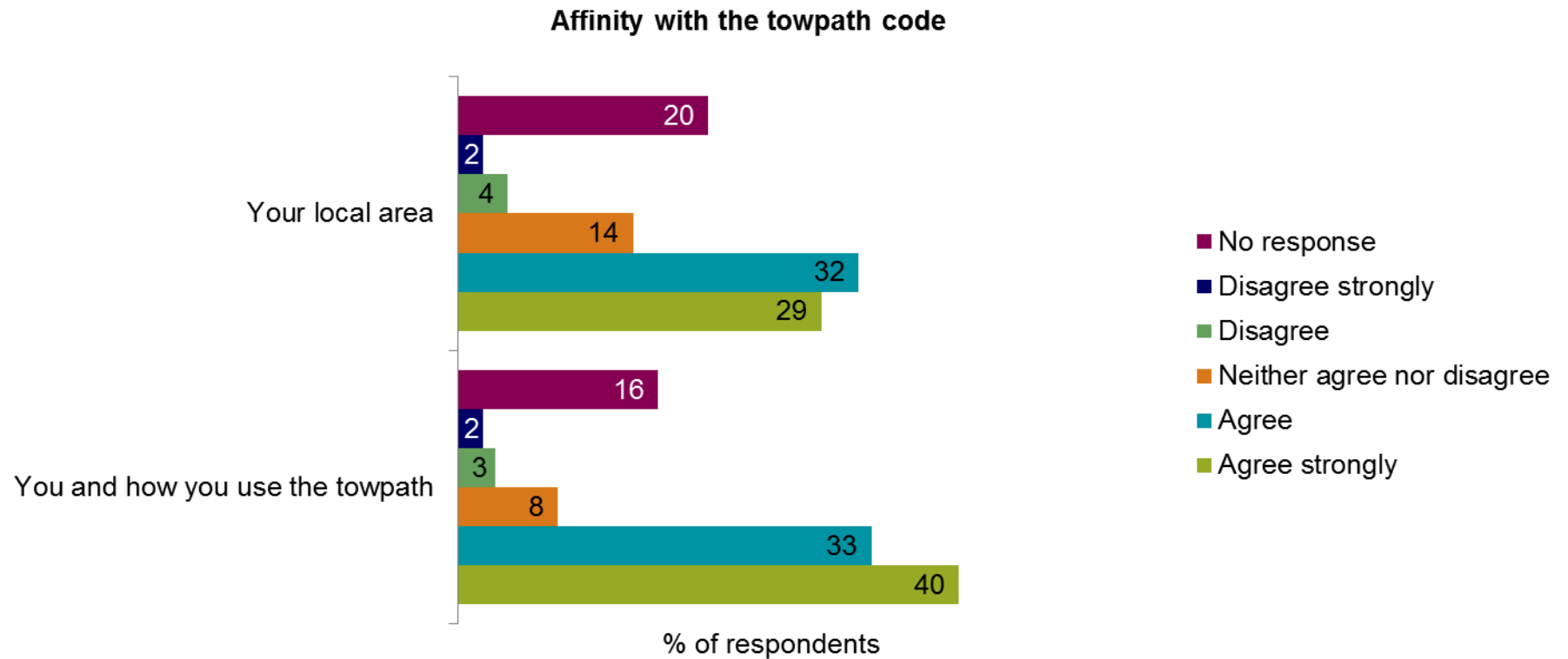
Level of agreement that a Towpath Code will improve behaviour



Q14. Some visitors have said that displaying clear guidelines on expected behaviours when sharing towpaths can encourage better behaviour.

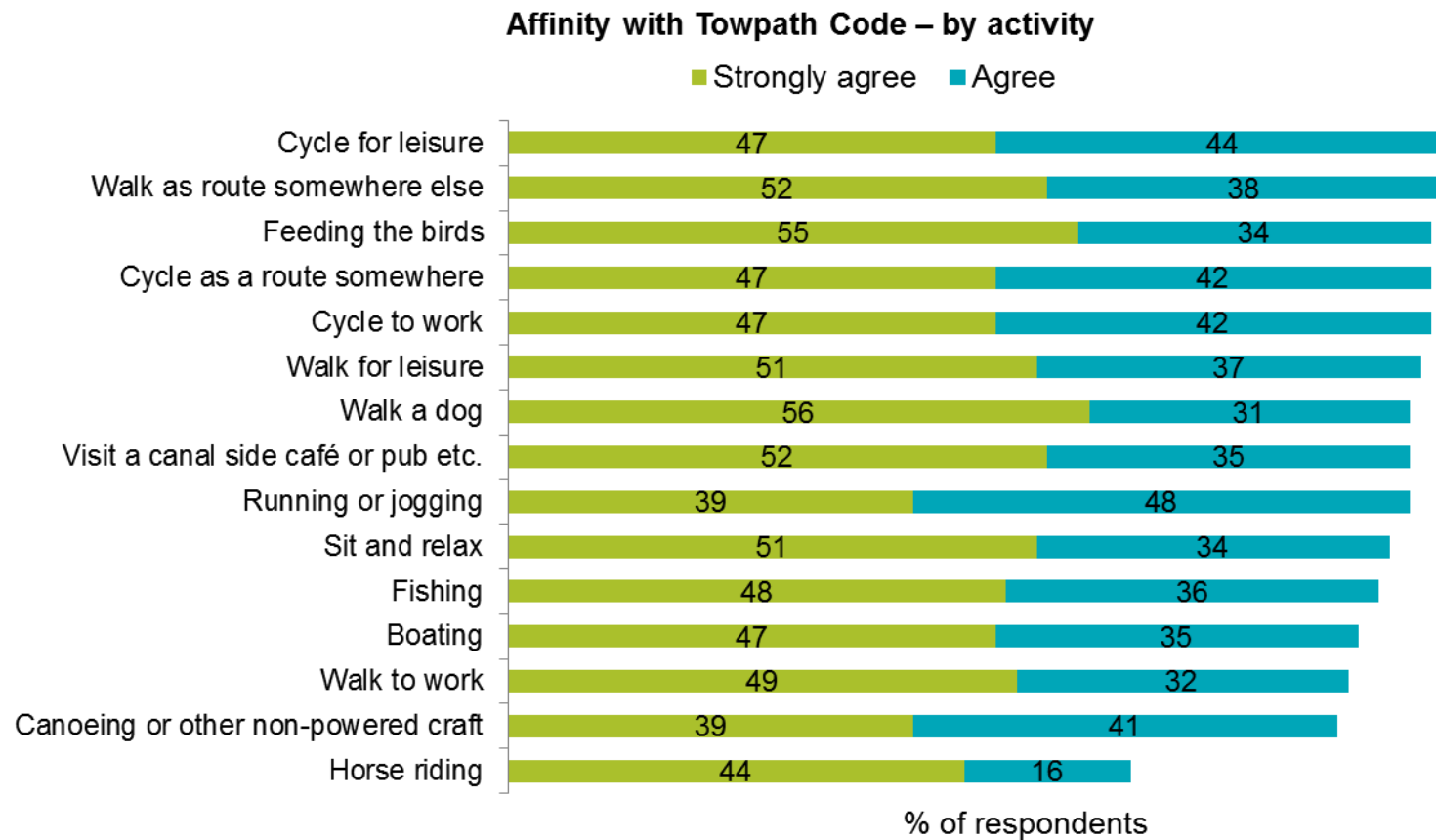
To what extent do you agree or disagree that such a Towpath Code will improve your visitor experience?

3.2.4.2 The majority of people feel the towpath code relates to them, how they use the towpath and their local area



Q18. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the Towpath Code relates to: a. your local area; b. you and how you use the towpath?

3.2.4.3 When considering the range of activities asked in Q15, the majority of people agree that the proposed towpath code relates to them and how they use their activity – over 80% of respondents agree or strongly agree for all activities other than horse riding.

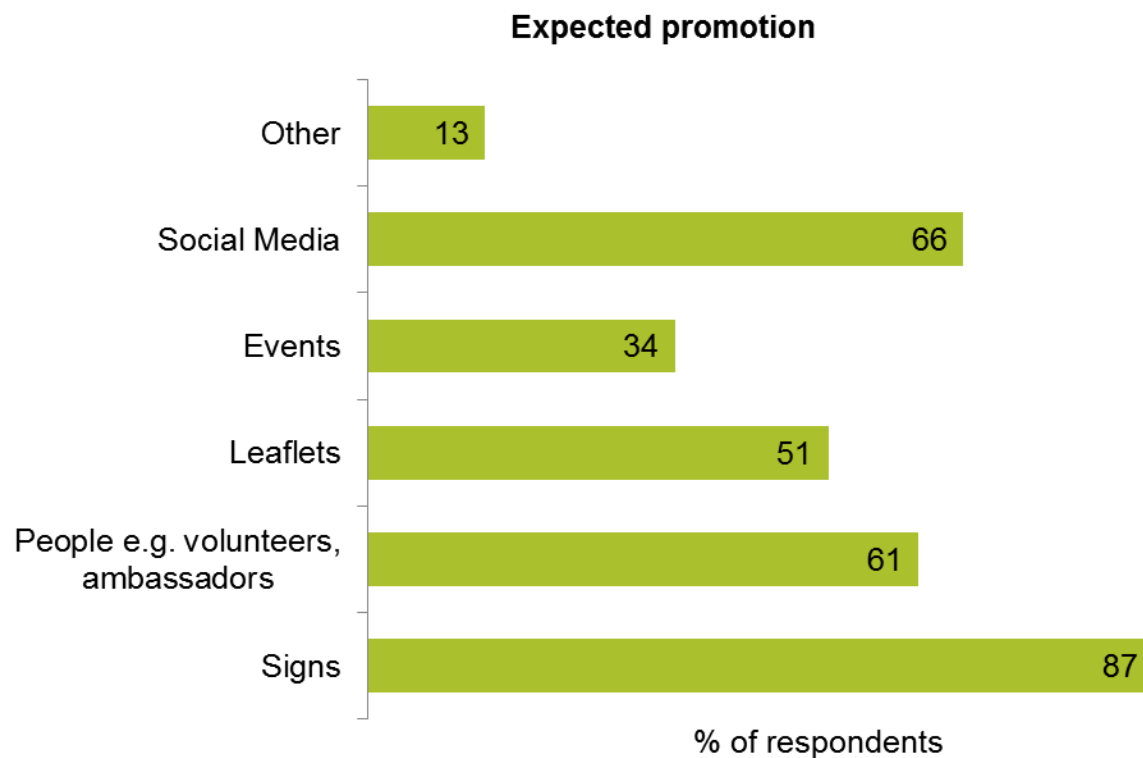


Q18. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the Towpath Code relates to you and how you use the towpath?

3.2.5 Towpath code – promotion

Although respondents placed greater emphasis on the Canal & River Trust encouraging behaviour change and improving infrastructure when considering improving towpath sharing, when it comes to promotion of the Towpath Code the most common suggestion was signage.

Social media emerges the second most expected route, although this may reflect how the consultation was promoted



Q.19 How would you expect the code of conduct to be promoted? Please tick as many as apply

3.2.6 Omissions from the Towpath Code

1. Boats and boaters - Many boaters, as well as other users, commented that there was little reference to either boats or boating in the draft towpath code of conduct. This was perceived to reflect a lack of consideration for the needs of boaters and also a lack of guidance for how boaters and other users should share the towpath together.

2. Anglers and Angling - Similar to boats and boating, there seemed to be some surprise that there wasn't more specific reference to anglers. Worth noting too, it was suggested by one angler that when certain groups feel they are excluded or over-looked this only exacerbates feelings of division and prevents cohesion.

3. Cyclists - As mentioned elsewhere, the main comments relating to cycling were about speed and the need for cyclists to either slow down or to move off the towpath, although this perhaps relates to more to certain locations and times of day. Suggested omissions included:

- A speed limit should be set, as for boats, and simply having a campaign of 'drop your pace' wasn't enough.
- Cyclists should use lights if cycling after dark on the towpath, just as they should on the road
- Greater clarity over when, where, why cyclists should dismount, but this also needs to be realistic.
- Again the need for all bikes to be fitted with a bell was mentioned here.

4. Horses - Comments relating to allowing horse riding along towpaths and as such guidance for this should be included in a towpath code of conduct.

5. Dogs - Some believed the guidance should specify short leads for dogs at all times and it should be explicit that dog mess should be bagged and taken home or disposed of in a proper bin.

6. Wildlife - Greater emphasis on the need for people to pay greater consideration to the natural habitat of the waterways and not disturbing wildlife, especially during the nesting season.

7. Residents - Some comments related to the need to respect the privacy and space of people living along the towpath.

8. Swimming - It was noted that there was no reference to swimming in the towpath code of conduct, both the dangers of this or whether it was permissible in any location.

10. Passing others - A frequent comment from many was that there should be some clear guidance on both passing and over-taking others, e.g. passing on the left.

11. Enforcement - Some suggested that a code of conduct was of little value if it was not policed and therefore should also include information about its enforcement.

12. Against the code - A minority of respondents seemed to be against the publication of behaviour code. This tended to be because they thought it would be ineffective or because they did not like the prescriptive approach to acceptable behaviour

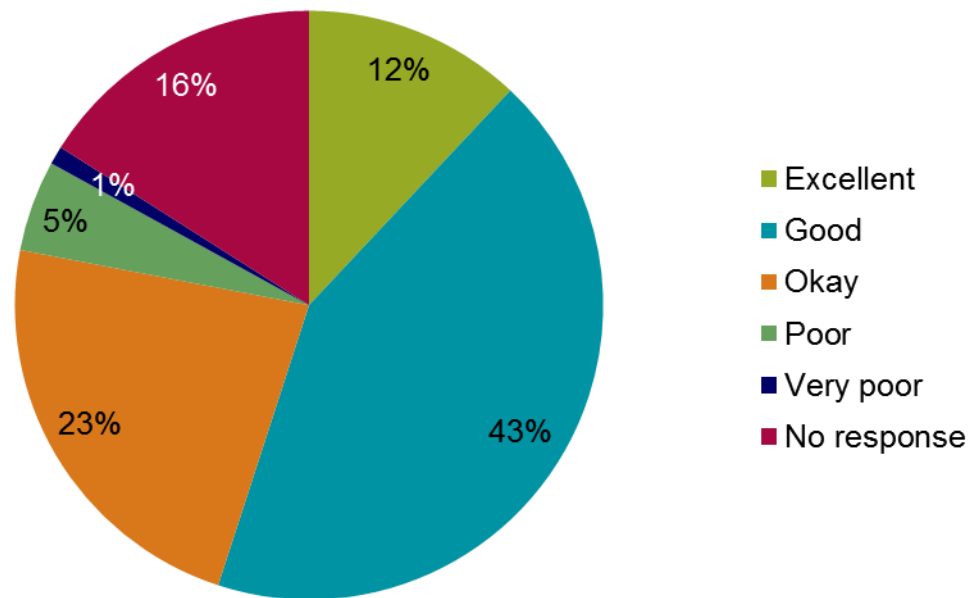
3.2.7 Experience

On the whole, respondents' experience when visiting/using a towpath were positive.

55% said they were excellent or good and only 6% said they were poor or very poor.

These figures reflect other research by the Trust, where 85% of towpath visitors/users rather their overall enjoyment as good or excellent, and the same proportion said they were definitely or probably likely to recommend a visit to others

Experience when visiting/using a towpath



Q20. There are around 300 million visits to the 2,000 miles of towpaths each year in England & Wales. Please tell us about your towpath experience. Is your experience mainly:

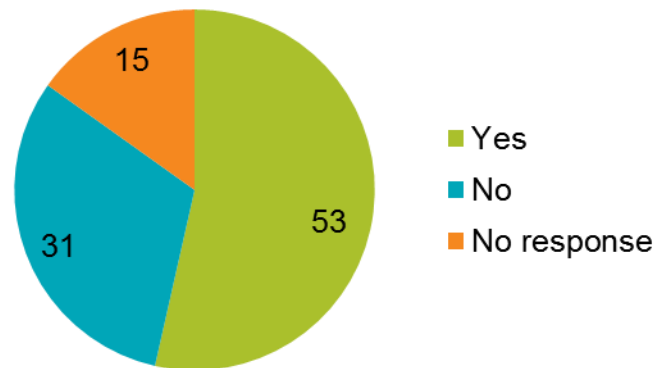
3.2.8 Poor experience

Although only 6% of respondents rated their overall experience along towpaths as poor or very poor, 53% still said they had experience unpleasant behaviour from another towpath visitor

For 41%, this unpleasantness was just once or rarely; 45% said it was occasionally. Of greater concern however, 14% said they experienced frequently unpleasant behaviour from another towpath visitor and 0.5% said this was always.

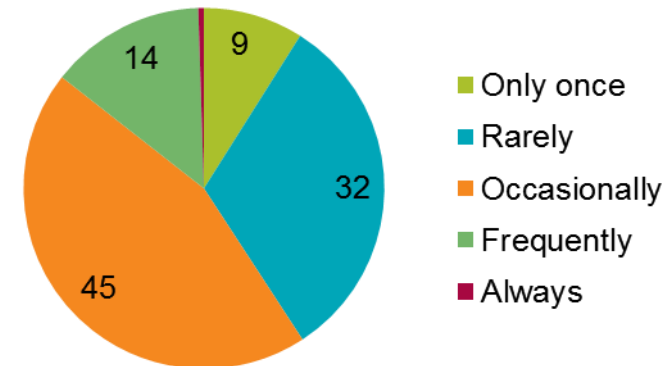
14% of those who had experience unpleasant behaviour had reported this to the police or the Trust

Experiencing unpleasantness



Q21. Have you ever had an unpleasant experience with another towpath visitor?

Frequency of unpleasant experiences



Q22. If you answered yes above (Q21), how often has this happened?

3.2.9 Reasons for not reporting unpleasant behaviour

- There are more serious crimes for the police to deal with
- It would be a waste of resources
- Only minor - no injuries; not a crime just rude; just frustrating
- Could be dealt with alone / Dealt with it at the time
- Unaware of to whom to report the problem/who has jurisdiction
- Used to use BW's Visitor Reporting Cards but unaware whether the Trust operate the same system
- Belief that nothing will be done or can be done, either by the police or by the Trust
- Expectation that the same problem regularly occurs elsewhere / to the people – contributing to the belief that no action will be taken
- Difficulty in reporting when no witnesses, evidence or miles from the nearest town.
- Difficulty in identifying the person causing the problem
- Just wanted to leave the scene / did not want to inflame the situation further by taking photos for evidence or trying to get contact details for the person at fault

3.3 Analysis of free text questions Q10, 12, 13, 16, & 17

3.3.1 Introduction

This section reports the main free-text questions included in the Sharing Towpath Consultation (Q10, 12, 13, 16 and 17). These questions ask respondents about any omissions from both the principles and draft towpath code and also the additional areas of responsibility and action on the part of the Canal & River Trust and towpath visitors to reduce conflict and encourage sharing of the available space. This section accompanies the quantitative research report above which shows levels of agreement with and support for the proposed set of principles of towpath use and draft towpath code.

Of the 2,148 people who responded to the consultation, around 1,500 gave additional comments through one or more of these free-text questions. The number of people responding to each question is given at the relevant stage in the report. As a qualitative report, this paper does not set out to provide a count of the number of people who share a particular view but rather focuses the breadth and richness of the comments made. Approximations of the number of similar comments are given however, to provide some context of the magnitude of a particular point of view, but these should be seen as indicative rather than absolute numbers. Some issues are repeated through more than one question. Where this occurs, the area is discussed in detail once under the most relevant question and the issue is only summarised in subsequent questions. In these instances, when reporting the number of respondents who have raised a specific point every effort has been made to count a respondent only once even if they have repeated the same comment at more than one question.

3.3.2 General Context

This section provides a general overview of how many of the respondents perceive issues of conflict on the towpath and consequently their underlying attitudes when responding to this consultation.

- Although it is known there is conflict amongst users along some stretches of towpath, many respondents said they never see 'bad' sharing and don't think there is a problem relating to how people share the towpath.

"Most visitors are well behaved and suggesting that they are not is offensive."

- The problems experienced on some stretches of towpath were seen as an unfortunate and widespread problem of modern society and not unique to towpaths and waterways – respondents believed that some people simply see the 'individual' as more important than 'society' and do not want to share anything but rather put their own needs first.
- Many respondents felt that it should be remembered that the problem is nearly always unsociable behaviour, rather than any specific activity itself. For example, whilst some people said all cycling should be banned from the towpath, on the whole most felt any problems related to a minority of cyclists travelling too fast. In the same vein, there was also recognition that the people who are behaving without due consideration for others are unlikely to respond to soft tactics; many respondents accepted the challenge the Trust faces in trying to encourage better sharing.

"Encouraging better behaviour simply doesn't work – it never has. There are always inconsiderate users and we live in a very selfish society now, people are no longer interested in helping others or sharing."

- Some respondents requested that the consultation should not be dominated by any single issue group and that no single activity group should be either blamed for causing a problem or thinking they have priority over others. A minority believed the Trust's policies should emphasise equality amongst all towpath users rather than referring to one group having priority.

"Be respectful of everybody's right to enjoy these lovely paths. The more people use them the safer they become for all to enjoy."

3.3.3 Question 10 - Do you think there is anything missing that should be included as part of the principles [of shared towpath use]? & 17 - Do you think there is anything missing from the Towpath Code?

Just under half of the sample responded to these two questions about omissions from either the principles of use or the draft towpath code. There was considerable overlap between the comments made at these two questions. The responses have therefore been combined and are reported below. This section first discusses omissions relating to specific activities before moving on to both physical and strategic aspects of how the Trust manages the waterways.

3.3.3.1 Cycling and Cyclists

One of the most common themes throughout respondents' feedback was the need for better control over 'speeding' cyclists and that the principles and towpath code should encompass this. Approximately a third of those providing comments at one of the free-text questions identified cycling or cyclists as a problem area. Some respondents would be happy to ban all cyclists from the towpath but the majority accepted that it was predominantly those using the towpath as a fast commuter route or referred to as 'Lycra-clad' that caused the problem and also that the issues were far more prevalent in certain areas/certain times of day.

"The biggest concern is cyclists, the network is a fantastic off-road cycle way but it should be for touring and not used as a race-track. Speed is an issue."

Whilst respondents saw a towpath code as being a starting point to reduce this problem, further suggestions were made to help implement and reinforce a code as discussed below.

- Cycling permits – around one in ten of those commenting suggested cyclists should be required to have some form of licence or permit to use the towpath. The drivers behind this varied:
 - It should be displayed clearly so other users are able to identify and report bad behaviour.
 - It gives the Trust an opportunity to ensure cyclists 'sign-up' to a towpath code.
 - Some respondents thought that there should be a charge for the cycling permit – when boaters and anglers pay (directly or indirectly) respondents did not see why cyclists should be an exception, especially when they are considered to cause considerable wear-and-tear to the towpath.
 - A condition of the licence/permit, and stipulated in a towpath code, should be that any bicycle using the towpath is fitted with a bell.
 - A further condition of the licence/permit, suggested by a small minority, was that all cyclists should have third-party liability insurance, although others questioned whether this was feasible and enforceable.
- Apply a speed limit – suggested by around one in twenty of those commenting. The reasons for and suggested implications of this were as follows:
 - If there is a speed limit for boaters there should/could be a speed limit for cyclists.
 - It would help ensure the safety of other users.
 - Clear signage would be required, and importantly, should be positioned at the right height for cyclists.
 - A speed limit would somehow need to be enforced to make it credible.
 - Erect barriers and chicanes forcing cyclists to slow down and keep to a safe speed.
- The Trust should aim to develop better relationships with cycling clubs:

- The primary objective behind this was as a credible channel to reach cyclists and ensure they are aware of, understand and commit to following the towpath code.
- The Trust should recruit a cycling liaison officer:
 - Again, the objective being to engage cyclists and ensure they follow the towpath code.
- It should be noted that the opposing view existed, that there should be less control over cycling and more improvements such as towpath widening to encourage greater use by cyclists, especially in urban areas. Whilst strong, this view was shared by a minority of respondents to the consultation.

3.3.3.2 Boaters and Boating

Around one in five commented that there was insufficient reference to either boats or boating, especially in the draft towpath code. This was perceived to reflect a lack of consideration for the needs of boaters, lack of guidance for how boaters and other users should share the towpath together and a failure to acknowledge what some respondents believed was the priority of boaters over other users.

Frequent comments from boaters about how other people should behave around them included:

- Boaters should have priority, discussed in more detail below.
- More practically, boaters may need extra space or time when mooring and can't always move out of the way; other users should be aware of this and be patient.
- With reference to angling specifically, boaters frequently commented that people shouldn't fish at either lock landings or from visitor moorings as they cause an obstruction and are a safety hazard.

The two most common drivers of the view that boats and boating should have priority were:

- Boaters pay to use the waterways and should therefore have priority over the users/visitors who make no direct payment.
- The view that waterways were built for boats and as such boats and boaters are part of the heritage and essential fabric of the waterway environment and should be a priority in any code relating to waterway use and behaviour. A small minority said that other people used the waterways/towpath 'by invitation only' and not by right.

"It is absolutely fundamental to recognise that the prime users of towpaths are boaters, who contribute around a quarter of CRT's annual income. There must be recognition in the Towpath Code of the need for other users to respect boaters and their needs. The needs of boaters should also be paramount in future towpath improvements."

“The first part of the code should stress that the towpath is for the use of boat crews and mooring of boats. If this is stated at the very top then people will realise that they are guests invited into the waterway environment and hopefully this will set the tone for the rest of the document.”

- The most common issue raised by non-boaters related to the need for more guidance and control to discourage boaters from obstructing the towpath for others with mooring pins, ropes or their own belongings.

3.3.3.3 Anglers and Angling

Similar to boats and boating, some anglers felt that they pay to use the towpath (either through an angling club or directly to the Trust) and should therefore be given greater priority.

Additional areas suggested for inclusion in the towpath code were:

- The issue of fish theft and the need for greater efforts to both raise the profile of the problem as well as greater emphasis on prevention and policing.
- Non-anglers felt there should be guidance to prevent anglers from obstructing the towpath with rods and poles. Many anglers felt that other towpath users need to be more patient as it sometimes could be difficult to move rods and poles quickly, especially out of the way of cyclists approaching at speed.
- As mentioned in the context of boaters, there was a perceived need for greater guidance over where anglers could fish.

3.3.3.4 Dogs and Dog Owners

Although dogs and dog walking were included in the draft towpath code some people suggested changes or suggested clarification of the current draft. Around one in five of those commenting discussed dogs, with dog mess the main problem followed by the appropriate use of different types of leads.

Whilst respondents ultimately blamed the dog's owners, many respondents believed the Trust should do more to reduce the problem of dog fouling, and particularly throwing dog mess into the canal or leaving bags on trees. Dog waste bins at access points were frequently suggested so too on-the-spot fines. The majority of those respondents commenting believed the proposed towpath code should be explicit that dog fouling is unacceptable.

There were mixed feelings about the use of leads for dogs. Dogs off the lead or on a retractable lead were considered to represent a significant safety risk on busy towpaths but many thought the problem was not as great or disappeared entirely on quiet towpaths and therefore the towpath code should include provision for different environments. Other people thought any dogs not on a lead could be intimidating or problematic, including those belonging to people on moored boats allowed to run freely on the towpath, and so believed the code should stipulate that all dogs should be on a lead.

3.3.3.5 Horse riding

There were a small number of comments (less than 5% of those commenting) about permitting horse riding along towpaths and providing guidance for this in a towpath code. One suggested consequence of allowing horse riding was that it will naturally reduce the overall speed of use.

3.3.3.6 Swimming

It was noted by a minority (less than 5% of those commenting) that there was no reference to swimming in the towpath code, both the dangers of this or whether it was permissible in any location.

3.3.3.7 Residents

Some comments related to the need for the code to encourage people to respect the privacy and space of people living along the towpath, whether boaters or people living in adjacent properties.

3.3.3.8 Biodiversity

A minority of respondents felt there should be more mention of biodiversity in the principles and the development and protection of flora and fauna along the towpath.

There were some comments relating to the need for the code to give greater attention to the natural habitat of the waterways and not disturbing wildlife, especially during the nesting season.

3.3.3.9 Health and Wellbeing

It was suggested by a small number of respondents that there should be greater recognition in the principles of the public health benefits waterways can bring, both to mental and physical health, and how these benefits can be promoted.

3.3.3.10 Enforcement

Around one in ten questioned how the towpath code would be enforced or suggested that it was of little value if not policed properly. Many of these respondents therefore suggested the code should also include information about its enforcement.

3.3.3.11 Safety

It was suggested by a few that there was too little reference to water safety in the principles or draft code and this should be more explicit, both in the context of personal safety and also ensuring someone's actions do not endanger others.

3.3.3.12 Anti-social behaviour

A further, broad area some people felt was missing from the principles was a commitment from the Trust to reduce/prevent anti-social behaviour. The two main areas here:

- The more general prevention of vandalism, graffiti and litter, and removing or repairing damage if it occurred;

- The more specific area was the removal of the long-term, illegally moored boats, where the actions of the owners effectively made the towpath a 'no-go' area for other users.

3.3.3.13 Access

A small minority suggested that the towpath should not be looked at in isolation and the principles should also include the provision of car parking and condition of access points. Respondents commented that most people used other paths/lanes/cut-throughs to reach an access point or needed to park their car somewhere and it was a lack of available car parking or anti-social behaviour along adjoining paths that made visiting a towpath problematic.

3.3.3.14 Addressing local needs

Again, a small minority of respondents believed the principles should include a commitment from the Trust to maintain towpaths at a level suitable for local use (less than 5% of those commenting). Furthermore, some suggested that the principles and subsequently any practical manifestation of these into a towpath code should distinguish between the different types of locations and users – e.g. a set of principles for urban versus rural paths, responsibilities of each activity type.

3.3.3.15 Identifying priorities

Whilst the draft principles referred to 'towpath improvements where needed' a few respondents commented that the principles should go further and include the criteria the Trust uses when deciding which areas are in fact priorities for improvement.

3.3.3.16 Network, not isolated stretches

A few comments discussed the need for the principles to consider the waterways as a national network. Respondents suggested that areas of development should not be looked in isolation; even less well-used areas between busier destinations needed to be sufficiently well maintained to allow people to utilise fully the entire network of canal and rivers.

"There should be a commitment from the Trust to maintain as a network not well maintained sections interspersed with muddy paths."

3.3.3.17 Sustainable transport

There were strong views in relation to towpaths forming part of sustainable transport routes. A majority believed that the principles should make it clear that whilst cycling is permitted, the towpath should not be classed as utilitarian cycling route. Conversely, a minority thought there should be a coordinated policy to establish towpaths as part of national traffic-free network for walkers and cyclists, especially around towns and cities, and that this should form part of the principles.

3.3.3.18 Maintaining Character

Whilst historic name emerged as less important overall in the quantitative part of the consultation, a minority felt the maintenance of local character and heritage was missing from the principles. This applied to both hidden developments such as the installation of telecommunications cables as well as more visible waterside developments.

Relating primarily to cycling, some respondents suggested that marketing and communications for those stretches of towpath forming part of the National Cycle Network or similar should make it clear that the towpath has a unique character and history and is more than just part of a longer cycling route.

3.3.3.19 Consistency with other organisations

Respondents mentioned that the Trust should at least consider the level of consistency or conflict between these principles of towpath use and similar developed by other navigation authorities or relevant waterway groups and interest groups. If there are two sets of rules about behaviour respondents believed this could lead to confusion and the likelihood that one or both sets are ignored.

3.3.3.20 Against a code

Although only a small number (less than 5% of those commenting) it should be noted that a minority of respondents were against the publication of behaviour code. This tended to be either because they thought it would be ineffective or because they did not like the prescriptive approach to specifying 'acceptable' behaviour

"In practice I regret the concept of a published code. Whoever is going to read the code and suddenly awaken to the fact that they should be considerate and share the space because the code says so?"

3.3.4 Question 12 - What else, if anything, do you think the Canal & River Trust should do to encourage better sharing of towpaths?

Just over 1,000 respondents gave comments at this part of the consultation. Greater control over cycling, boaters having priority and the problem of dog mess were again raised here but the comments generally repeated those discussed earlier and so the issues are not reported again. Instead, this section is able to focus on what respondents saw as the wider responsibilities of the Trust in helping encourage greater sharing of the towpath space.

3.3.4.1 Encourage behaviour change

Around one in ten of those commenting at this question believed that underlying the development of a towpath code and principles of towpath use was need for the Trust to encourage behaviour change. People felt there were two parts to this and identified implications of each:

3.3.4.1.1 Change - How people behave in relation to each other

- Use signage and other communications to guide and encourage people.
- Provide guidelines and ensure these are properly policed to provide clarity and meaning.
- Ideally, social-acceptability and peer-pressure should discourage inappropriate and inconsiderate behaviour.

3.3.4.1.2 Change - How people perceive and behave towards the waterways

There was a belief amongst some respondents that well maintained towpaths foster good behaviour, and perhaps more so the reverse, that badly maintained and neglected areas discourage those likely to behave responsibly and instead allow antisocial behaviour to dominate.

Understanding the history of the waterways was thought by some to be in essential if people are to appreciate the constraints placed on modern use and development of the Trust's towpaths. It was believed the Trust has a responsibility to ensure that people recognise the sense of place of the towpath in its own right, rather than just viewing it as a route from A to B.

"People should stop thinking about canals like they [visitors] think about roads and pavements – they're not commuter routes and they're not segregated by different types of user."

For a very small but passionate minority however (less than 2%), the waterways and towpaths were failing to keep pace with modern use and they believed this reinforced differences, not only in how people behave but people's fundamental attitudes towards the towpath.

"Don't you get it? You have all these people desperate to use these fantastic paths, and yet as the use of these paths has changed over the centuries you lot appear to be harking back to 'horse boating'. You need to develop these paths into broad leisure facilities. Their current design has SO much conflict built in it is almost criminal. You are blaming the users for issues that you as a Trust have built in. 3ft wide paths under bridges are just not good enough. It's disgusting. The problem is that your priority is boats and water. The people that use the paths are a secondary concern or have been up to now. You want to change behaviour but without enhancing the quality of the infrastructure. It's so, so short sighted and backward looking."

3.3.4.1.3 Realistic change

Some respondents also felt the Trust needs to be realistic in the extent it may want or be able to change behaviour, questioning:

- Is the relatively constrained built environment of urban towpaths always suitable for full sharing?
- *"Take a sensible approach that not all towpaths are suitable for a full mix of users."*
- How effective can the Trust be in changing behaviour? Some of the problem behaviours, such as general lack of courtesy, were related to society generally and not unique to towpaths.

3.3.4.2 Maintenance

Just fewer than one in ten of those commenting suggested improved maintenance could encourage sharing. The main drivers behind this view were:

As raised earlier, poor upkeep was perceived to allow anti-social behaviour to dominate whilst making towpaths a more attractive environment, where people feel safe, was expected to encourage better behaviour and keep anti-social elements away e.g.

- Clean up graffiti
- Use canal adoptions to improve local areas and develop local pride

It was suggested that improved upkeep by the Trust could make sharing easier e.g.

- Maintain / cut back vegetation (grass and hedges) – don't allow it to become an obstruction and make the problem worse, especially at known pinch points.
- Improve drainage to help prevent muddy paths and puddles that people then have to avoid and make it harder to share.

“Poor examples of sharing are caused by conflicts due to space or poor infrastructure. The Trust should try to fix the route cause (infrastructure) rather than the symptom (bad behaviour).”

3.3.4.3 Infrastructure

Most of the comments relating to infrastructure related to stopping high-speed users (predominantly cyclists) but a minority were also to facilitate use by those who wanted to travel faster.

Towpath surface

- Install speed bumps where there are safety issues e.g. at bridges, entry points - Look at best practice from the Netherlands.
- Changing the surface to either cause people to slow down or to highlight the need to do so.
- Careful consideration of surface material – a good surface is essential but it should suit the activities and it shouldn't be so smooth that it encourages speeding.

There were suggestions that the Trust should look for innovative solutions to change the towpath surface or eliminating blind spots at bridges for example.

- Create passing places
- Making entry points clear so people know they are entering a different environment (not a normal footpath/roadway) and their behaviour may need to change accordingly

“Put gates across towpaths where people enter to show that people are entering a different sort of public place from an alleyway, park or street.”

- Widen the towpath – such as cutting back vegetation, looking at removing obstacles that create bottlenecks or potentially reconfiguring entry points. There were a small number of responses relating to towpath widening, however, that suggested little consideration to how this may be done:

“Design out conflict - 4m wide tarmac paths and widening of paths under bridges. Stop designing in conflict by keeping the paths so narrow.”

- Consider splitting the towpath in areas where feasible and using different surfaces to differentiate. There were probably a similar proportion of people who thought any segregation was a bad idea.
- Access to toilets – other people should be able to have a key for toilets, not just boaters – this would allow sharing of facilities and a feeling of greater equality.
- More benches, art, interpretation, cafés etc. that encourage individuals to stop/slowdown and hence cause a drop in speed more generally.
- More litter bins and dog-poo bins especially at point of entry on to the towpath.
- Install lighting to make it safer and less intimidating and also less appealing to those thinking of using the towpath for antisocial activities.
- Car parks – limited car park facilities at access points was mentioned as a reason why some visitors didn't even get the chance to share the towpath.
- Some questioned if there was more the Trust could do, working with partners and local landowners for example, to use the off-side in some areas to reduce congestion, even if limited to specific activity groups such as angling?

3.3.4.4 Improve communications

There were many suggestions relating to how the Trust could improve or change behaviour based on how it communicates with towpath users and local communities:

- More signs at access points – in general these were perceived to have two main uses:
 - Provide information about a towpath code.
 - Provide information about local routes, circular walks etc. to help people formulate and enjoy their visit.
- It was suggested that ‘boring’ signs stating pedestrians have priority are only like to fuel conflict. Some respondents thought a more impactful alternative was surprising, positive and fun signs such as ‘let’s all enjoy the canal by doing/not doing x or y...’ or using local dialects and themes in signage.
- Develop an App (or Apps) that could:
 - Show a map to help plan the visit.
 - Suggested alternative routes based on known location (through smartphone GPS).

- Highlight points of interest.
 - Allow problems to be reported.
- Promote local waterways and circular walks beyond the traditional waterways press:
 - The aim of this suggestion was to encourage more people to enjoy the waterways. It must be remembered here that many people have not experienced problems relating to too many people trying to share the same stretch of towpath; instead they see it as a good thing for Trust to encourage more people to visit as this will help eradicate more anti-social behaviours from the towpath.
- More advance notice about closures or restrictions to the towpath, whether due to maintenance, competition or events so people know if and when there will be constraints on sharing.

3.3.4.5 Physical presence

- A greater physical presence from the Trust on the towpath was frequently suggested by respondents around one in ten of those commenting. This had three roles:
 - to encourage compliance with the towpath code
 - to enforce the towpath code where people weren't complying
 - to enthuse visitors and engage them with the Trust
- Respondents talked about this presence coming from either or both staff and volunteers.
- For many, the consequence of a greater physical presence from the Trust was better policing of the potential 'code' and ability to penalise and fine people for inappropriate behaviours. The most common target for this was on-the-spot fines for dog fouling.

“Employ volunteer rangers to encourage uptake and adoption of beneficial behaviours when using the canal”

3.3.4.6 Better partnerships

- Organised events
 - There was a belief that the Trust should work carefully with those organising group events to ensure congestion on the towpath is kept to a minimum. Cycling events were the most commonly mentioned, but also other walking groups and angling competitions. The main concern was the obstruction the group presented to other users. It was suggested that if and when group events take place there should be signs placed to warn other users as discussed above and those taking part in the group event should be properly briefed regarding the need to still give-way to other users.
- Local support
 - Active support - some respondents commented that the Trust should encourage and support local people and groups to help look after a stretch of their local canal. This represents an expansion of the current canal adoption model.
 - Local engagement - an additional suggestion made was that the Trust should develop or encourage more local walks in partnership with local parish councils etc. The objective of this was greater engagement with the local canal, appreciation of the sense of place and

potentially greater support for the Trust. The traditional model of 'beating the bounds' was suggested where local people walk the parish boundaries sharing knowledge and history of the place but also praying for protection of the land.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Beating_the_bounds

- Third-party partnerships
 - Although mentioned by only a few respondents, it was noted that whilst external funding for towpath improvements is important the Trust must ensure partners understand that the towpath is more than just a sustainable transport route but a place with its own heritage and environment.

“Prevent national and local authorities from seeking to develop towpath as official cycle routes when there is inadequate space.”

3.3.5 Question 13 - What if anything, do you think visitors should do differently in order to help all visitors share the towpath.

Again, just over 1,000 respondents provided additional comments at this open-ended question. Reducing the speed of cyclists was again one of the main themes mentioned but to avoid repetition it is not reported again. Words like considerate, respect, share and tolerance were mentioned by almost half of those commenting, suggesting that for many, it is the interactions between people that could reduce conflict and improve sharing. Fifteen people said simply visitors should 'smile' at others.

3.3.5.1 Other suggestions for what visitors could do to help improve the towpath environment and reduce conflict included: Keep towpaths clean

- Take litter home
- Clean up after dogs
 - Not hanging bags filled with dog waste on surrounding trees and hedges.
 - Boaters should not allow their dogs to roam freely when moored along the towpath.
- People on moored boats should not leave rubbish on the towpath.

3.3.5.2 Travel at a slower pace

As already noted many believed that cyclists and also joggers should be more aware of the impact of their speed on other people and slow down accordingly. Many cyclists commented however that it can be difficult and dangerous to cycle at a slow pace when pedestrians make it difficult to pass.

3.3.5.3 Follow towpath etiquette

- Walk on the left, takeover on the right or alternative guidance should be given in the towpath code.
- All users should avoid causing an obstruction – whether pedestrians walking in a group, people with pushchairs or wheelchairs, anglers with their kit or boaters with mooring ropes and other belongings.
- Other users should remember that it can sometimes be difficult to hear someone behind you, especially for those hard of hearing. Whilst there was some support for the draft towpath code that stated people should not wear headphones, others thought restricting their use not achievable and unnecessary. Instead they suggested that the guidance should relate to the volume of music being played through the headphones rather than not wearing them at all.

3.3.5.4 Be ‘in the moment’

- Smile, say hello and generally be more polite towards other people.
- Treat people as you would like to be treated.
- Slow down/stop chatting on the phone/listening to music etc. and be aware/think about the environment around you.
- Be aware and mindful of the needs of others.
- Make use of all the senses – the towpath offers lots to hear, see, smell and touch.

“Be increasingly socially aware. Too few people these days make any conscious attempt to absorb what is going on around them and behave considerately.”

3.3.5.5 Residential moorings

Other users should respect that in some places the towpath is someone’s home, particularly their privacy, whether this is a residential mooring, temporary visitor mooring, or property adjacent to the canal.

Many comments related to noise early in the morning and late at night, with frequent reference given to the noise and vibration created by people jogging past moored boats.

Conversely, other people felt that those people who live on their boat should not take up so much of the towpath that it causes an obstruction or that other people feel threatened by their presence.

3.3.6 Question 16 - Thinking about the activities you do along the towpath, is there anything about these activities that you think other visitors should be made aware of in order to encourage safer and more harmonious sharing of towpaths?

As before, just over 1,000 respondents commented at this question. Most of the comments given at this question reflect and reinforce those given elsewhere. The most commonly occurring themes with respect to what other users should be more aware of were:

- From boaters - People should be patient and allow boaters space when mooring their boat – it can be a complex and slow process.
- From anglers - People should be patient with anglers – angling equipment can sometimes be cumbersome and slow to move even when anglers are trying to do it quickly. There was also frequent comment about the expense of angling equipment and the potential for damage by inconsiderate towpath users.
- From predominantly cyclists and joggers - Pedestrians should be aware of their surroundings and allow others to pass and not cause obstructions by walking two or three abreast and taking up the entire towpath.

“I think there should be more emphasis on the rules that apply to pedestrians as well. Unfortunately, once a group of users are told they have priority they may not read the rest and believe they don’t have to be considerate of others.”

- About cyclists – the need to slow down
- Generally - for people to understand and respect the heritage of the waterways and the specific sense of place the waterways offer.

3.4 Email Responses

The Trust received 71 email responses to sharing.towpaths@canalrivertrust.org.uk. Of these respondents, 20 identified as horse riders, 4 as boaters, 2 as walkers and 2 as anglers. Other respondents include Canoe England, Waterway Partnership Members, local authority officers and the Disabled Ramblers. The emails were all free text and did not respond to specific questions.

There are a lot of similarities with the key themes raised in the on-line survey, as shown in the summary below:

Benefits of towpaths:

- Recreation and leisure
- Health and well-being
- Exercise
- Quiet off-road routes
- Sustainable transport

Boating:

- More awareness of boaters needs, specifically at: locks, swing bridges, moorings, water points
- Boaters should be first in hierarchy of priority, especially when mooring
- Pay license fees unlike other groups (apart from anglers)
- Some boaters belongings encroaching on towpath/ tatty boats
- Shouldn't let mooring lines lie across towpath and do more to highlight mooring spikes
- Need to introduce new mooring locations when improving towpaths (make sure it benefits all users)
- No reference to non-powered craft. Non-powered craft may cause temporary obstruction around lock landings

Cyclists:

- Speed of some cyclists, not all, is an issue
- Some refuse to wait and presume they have priority
- Lack of warning

Pedestrians:

- Some people get in the way at locks and landings, swing bridges
- Should not block or obstruct the towpath
- Should have priority
- Danger of wearing headphones

Horses and horse riding:

- Towpaths were originally used by horses
- Very little evidence of shared use resulting in conflict (perception versus reality)
- Roads are dangerous
- Accessible - many people with disabilities ride
- Safe, pleasant, off-road environment
- Shouldn't be omitted from this process

Anglers

- Sometimes obstruct the towpath. Danger of fishing around locks and mooring locations
- Some anglers leave litter e.g. bait
- Pay a license

Dogs and dog owners:

- Dog fouling and owners not cleaning up, disposing of dog waste properly
- Dogs off leads- dangerous, particularly in busy areas
- Irresponsible owners

Infrastructure and environment:

- Different types of surfacing better for specific users e.g. tarmac can encourage high speeds
- Impact of different uses on surfaces e.g. cycling, horse riding
- Set minimum width for shared use/ increase width of towpath
- Cobbles can be dangerous
- Increase number of accesses
- Barriers- whilst can prevent motorbikes and speeding cyclists it limits accessibility
- Manage vegetation
- Litter and cleanliness should be dealt with

Signage:

- Used to show speed restrictions
- Too much signage adds clutter
- Difficult to enforce e.g. speed limits

3.5 Regional Workshops

Workshops with stakeholders, Canal & River Trust Council members and Advisory Groups provided more detailed suggestions for text changes in the policy and code. The smaller face-to-face groups enabled the wording and emphasis of the draft 'Principles' and 'Towpath Code' to be considered in some detail.

Workshop feedback is summarised under the three main question headings below:

- a. The trust has summarised the things that it can do for towpath sharing as being – “***better infrastructure, better signage and encouraging better behaviours***”. Do you agree with these and what else can we do or others do?
- b. Consider the “***Principles***” in the draft policy and identify the 3 most important by rank order. Additionally, consider any issues not fully covered in the document
- c. The draft “**Towpath Code**” supported by the “Share the Space” campaign is based on those agreed with stakeholders and now being used on the London Waterway. Please consider the Code, including any improvements or omissions that may be required for local use.

A). The trust has summarised the things that it can do for towpath sharing as being – “**better infrastructure, better signage and encouraging better behaviours**”.

Do you agree with these and what else can we do or others do?

Existing	Workshop 1 – Birmingham 21 st March 2014	Workshop 2 – Birmingham 22 nd April 2014	Workshop 3 – Builth Wells 30 th April 2014
N/A for this session	<p><u>Better infrastructure</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Consider that busy towpaths will self-regulate to some degree and in some cases ‘improvement’ may not be necessary 2. Consider designing in / forcing interactions e.g. narrowing towpath where appropriate 3. Develop a forward plan / strategy to maximise opportunities for future funding streams 4. Utilise heritage / conservation materials e.g. cobble setts, but avoid creating trapping hazards for bike or wheelchair wheels e.g. offset rows of cobbles <p><u>Better signage</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Emphasise sharing and its benefits to all 	<p><u>Better infrastructure</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. More information on quality of routes/places before you visit 2. Appropriate vs. better 3. Improve implementation / results / outcomes. <p><u>Better signage</u></p> <p>Use other techniques to signify change in behaviour required, such as changing towpath width/ surfacing, example given of how in West Midlands we have painted the edge of a bridge white to highlight the hazard rather than sign. Need to explain hazards to visitors who are not familiar.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Quality of information / content 2. Integrate with established systems. 3. Avoid too much “Do not” type signage, support for positive reinforcement signage as per the 	<p><u>Better infrastructure</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ideally sealed surfaces or well compacted and NOT muddy 2. Optimise the available width 3. Retain quieter zones versus just accommodating growth / commuting to preserve character 4. Motorbike barriers – necessary evil? 5. Careful use of chicanes. <p><u>Signage</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Compare with the work of VSCG – Visitor Safety in the Countryside Agency – which provides advice or different settings. 2. Need intuitive use of symbols – market tested 3. Use of green background fits well with the existing mountain bike category for easy routes including towpaths

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Use a light touch, not too many 3. Like use of softer messages to cyclists and others 4. Reinforce positive behaviours e.g. considerate boaters do this ..., considerate anglers do such and such .. 5. Good to have signs to point to on site when needed 6. Be careful that signs don't become a source of conflict – easy to understand <p><u>Better behaviour</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. References to byelaws must be relevant or may confuse people 2. Important to understand different user needs and behaviours – demystify how anglers, boaters etc. use the towpath to raise awareness 3. Empower users so that behaviours continue to improve over time, accepting it will never be perfect 4. Promote behavioural expectations to key groups not just individuals – engagement with national & local groups 	<p>“Thanks for slowing down” example.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Not possible to address every pinch point so consider signage at entry points to the towpaths. 5. Trust has to take the responsibility for dealing with areas of over signage – example being Saul Junction. 6. AWCC (Association of Waterway Cruising Clubs) has recognised the change in use of towpaths and now focuses on encouraging members to “share” the space. <p><u>Better behaviours</u></p> <p>Volunteers can help promote better behaviours.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Highlighting access & enjoyment through events 2. Positive attitude is often reflected, smile, talk, be friendly. <p>But how do we engage the troubled minority? ...</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Start young through education / explorers 	<p><u>Behaviour</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Recognise canals as a place of residence more explicitly – living on boats 2. Consider the interaction with moorings 3. Focus on common sense vs. complex messages that are second nature or they won't work 4. Dog walking may need a separate supplementary code / mini guide and should be on short leads.
--	--	--	---

	<p>5. Co-existence of events can be challenging e.g. boating vs angling matches – needs better management / communications / possible temporary restrictions</p> <p>6. Use diverse and new channels of communications</p>	<p>4. Welcome stations can support</p> <p>5. Becoming more local with communities could encourage greater local ownership and policing.</p> <p>6. Post welcoming signage at entry points to the network</p> <p>7. Make use of symbol / or picture signage (mountain bike code example)</p> <p>8. Trust has no easy way of recording incidents of bad behaviour</p> <p>9. Some poor behaviour is driven by ignorance of the issues relating to towpaths.</p> <p>10. Individuals responsibility for actions</p> <p>11. How can our network of experienced users support us?</p>	
--	---	---	--

B). Consider the “*Principles*” in the draft policy and identify the 3 most important by rank order. Additionally, consider any issues not fully covered in the document

Existing	Workshop 1 – Birmingham 21 st March 2014	Workshop 2 – Birmingham 22 nd April 2014	Workshop 3 – Built Wells 30 th April 2014
1. Towpaths have established uses in supporting boating, angling, walking and other water-based activities, to be balanced with their role in connecting places.	Replace ‘uses’ with leisure spaces and add cycling, horse boating to the list	Mention cycling as use. Towpaths not for commuter cycling – need for limits and prioritising established uses.	Replace ‘have established uses in supporting’ with ‘always support’
2. The Trust and its stakeholders will ensure canal and river environments are safeguarded as havens for people and wildlife.	‘havens for people & wildlife’ may be clumsy or misunderstood – simplify	Beef up to promote greater use.	Introduce ‘transforming places and enriching lives’
3. Towpaths should be free to access for all users who wish to walk, run, fish, cycle etc. and who are committed to behave considerately to other users of the towpaths who are slower or more vulnerable than themselves.		Free to ‘enjoy’.	Add ‘responsibly’ after ‘considerately’.
4. Towpaths should be improved where needed, to accommodate increased visits safely and to improve disabled access. Improvements should benefit a wide range of users and enhance the waterway setting.		Define requirements of ‘need’, e.g. demand-led?, but preserve quieter zones too.	Replace ‘Towpaths should’ with ‘Towpaths will’.

5. Towpaths should be a distinct category in cycle or other route design standards, recognising their shared use and historic waterside character.	Need a simpler / clearer explanation		Remove 'cycle or other'
6. Visitors will continue to recognise they are entering a slower space shared by pedestrians, cyclists, boaters, joggers and anglers.	Use stronger terms – e.g. be made aware / advised vs 'continue to recognise'	Visitors 'should recognise'.	Replace 'continue to' with 'will be encouraged to'. At the end, add 'and mobility impaired and always follow the towpath Code'.
7. Routes along canals and rivers will be branded in the names of these historic waterways.		Branding to be inclusive of local place e.g. River Nene.	Suggested reword as: 'Signage along canals and rivers will be sensitively designed and installed recognising the historic importance of waterways.'
8. The tradition of horse boating is part of the heritage of our waterways and improvements made should follow the guidance for horse boating. Towpaths although built for horses are now predominantly used by people and (except where designated as bridleways) use for horse riding requires specific permission or alternative routes may be developed.	CRT is the important brand vs the waterway	Too long.	Considered too long and the Trust needs to be much clearer on its position.

9. Where there are concerns over capacity or underlying condition, towpaths will not be promoted as part of a wider route network, but alternative routes along roads will be sought.	Alternative routes 'along roads' - should also add 'along adjoining rivers and linear parks'	Add .. 'continue to secure canal funding'. Replace 'roads' with other paths – e.g. in parks.	Rephrase the sentence to be more positive: e.g. 'National or regional trails will be considered on towpaths but having regards to underlying condition / preserving character of waterways.'
---	--	---	--

1. **Gaps / Priorities:** enjoyment; integration with locality / legibility; multi-functional; rural / urban; heritage & environment; design – form follows function – design guide review; safety and security; recognition of established use; free to access; considerate behaviour; slower space; alternative routes

C). The draft “**Towpath Code**” supported by the “Share the Space” campaign is based on those agreed with stakeholders and now being used on the London Waterway.

Please consider the Code, including any improvements or omissions that may be required for local use.

Existing	Workshop 1 – Birmingham 21 st March 2014	Workshop 2 – Birmingham 22 nd April 2014	Workshop 3 – Builth Wells 30 th April 2014
1. Share the space - consider other people and the local environment whenever you're on a towpath. Remember some people may move less predictably, for example young children or those with visual or mobility impairments.	Strong support for 'Share the space, Drop your pace' as first 2 elements of the Code The Towpath Code is useful way to clarify expected behaviours	Additionally, have an upbeat preamble to the Code focussing on enjoyment and welcome. Possibly shorten / remove second sentence.	
2. Drop your pace - considerate sharing of the limited towpath space is the key. Jogging and cycling are welcome, but drop your pace in good time and let people know you are approaching by ringing a bell or politely calling out before waiting to pass slowly.	demonstrate how everyone can make a difference the Code empowers people towards better behaviour and promotes conditions for a pleasant experience.	Possibly shorten / remove second sentence.	
3. Pedestrians have priority - towpaths are shared spaces where pedestrians have priority and vehicles, except bicycles and mobility aids, are generally excluded.	use of 'pedestrian priority' may lead to tendency to have a rank list of priorities - complex to achieve - consider replacing with 'slowest people' to reinforce the strong Principle of 'entering a slower space'	A good founding element of the Code. Simplify as two sentences.	

4. Be courteous to others – a smile can go a long way. Abusive or threatening behaviour is not acceptable and should be reported to the Police.	on literature / signs and supporting digital info – provide a complaints response ‘if you see a serious breach of this code, we’d like to hear from you’ – to assist with monitoring	‘be courteous’ important but place in context with 2 & 3. Very important to thank others when allowing space to pass. (c.f. Two Tings: <i>ting your bell twice, pass slowly, be nice.</i>)	Remove second sentence relating to Police.
5. Follow signs and obey local bye-laws - they are there for the safety of everyone. Cyclists should dismount where required and use common sense in busy or restricted areas, recognising that pedestrians have priority.	too many points / possibly too rules based	Remove reference to ‘bye laws’.	Remove reference to ‘bye laws’.
6. Give way to oncoming people beneath bridges whether they are on foot or bike and be extra careful at bends and entrances where visibility is limited.	too cycling focused – not the only growing use demonstrate how everyone can make a difference	Delete this one.	Delete this one.
7. Give way and use common sense when travelling in large groups , especially if you are running or cycling.	too cycling focused – not the only growing use demonstrate how everyone can make a difference	Expand to all places / scenarios?	Combine with others under a point on Common sense and being aware e.g. ‘Be aware, take care’.
8. Avoid wearing headphones as this makes you less aware of your surroundings , possible hazards and others sharing the same space.	consider a suite of messages based on users – e.g. highlight good behaviours	Combine with others under a point on Common sense and being aware.	Combine with others under a point on Common sense and being aware.

9. Keep dogs under control ideally using a short lead on busy towpaths and clean-up after them. Dog fouling is unpleasant for other towpath users and is a health hazard.	consider a suite of messages based on users – e.g. highlight good behaviours	Combine with others under a point on Common sense and being aware. Litter & dog fouling need supplementary guides.	Combine with others under a point on Common sense and being aware.
10. At all times, keep children close to you and encourage them to learn and follow the Towpath Code.	consider a suite of messages based on users – e.g. highlight good behaviours	Be less restrictive, allow to explore.	Combine with others under a point on Common sense and being aware.

Gaps / Priorities: condense; don't obstruct the path (mooring lines / hose pipes / anglers rods); close gates in rural areas; advice on competitive events to avoid conflict of interest with Code and fund raising etc.

4 Appendices

Appendix 1 – Sharing Towpaths Consultation Document (March 2014)

Appendix 2 – Regional Workshop Agenda (typical)

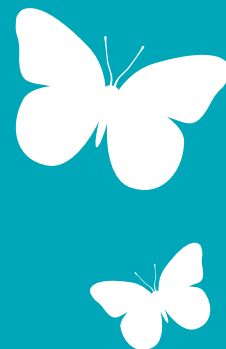
Appendix 3 – List of Regional Workshop Attendees

Appendix 1

Sharing Towpaths Consultation Document (March 2014)

Sharing Towpaths

A consultation on towpath use for the Canal & River Trust



The Canal & River Trust is consulting with stakeholders, local authorities, communities and partners in order to put together a National Towpath Use Policy. The aim of the policy is to improve the experience for those who use towpaths in England and Wales. We aim to attract more visitors to regularly use and enjoy the waterways and to encourage shared, safe use of towpaths.

In an age where life is increasingly fast-paced, and every day stresses can wear us down, it's important to find the time to slow down.

Whether it's a short lunchtime stroll, jogging, a cycle ride, canoeing, angling or boating, the towpaths have a wide range of users and with 50% of the population of England and Wales living within 5 miles of a Trust waterway, so many more people could benefit from the calm the water brings.

This paper sets out the Trust's proposed approach to towpath management to ensure they are shared spaces where a range of activities can be enjoyed, with all parties respecting each other's use.



Canal &
River Trust

Purpose



The production of a national towpath use policy which will:

- be clear on the Trust's approach to managing safer sharing of towpaths
- set out what the Trust will do
- set out what visitors can do

The Policy will also help guide partners and funders on some of the challenges faced by the Trust and the expectations of our visitors.

Above all, the Policy is a form of social contract or memorandum between the Trust as guardian of a historic network on the one hand, and everyone who uses and enjoys it on the other; a shared commitment to conserve and improve all it offers now and for the future.

Towpath Funding Trends

Over the last 10 years there has been significant funding available for improvements of towpaths. Local Authorities, Local Sustainable Transport Fund, Sustrans, Wales and other Government funding has recognised the value and accessibility that improved towpaths offer. More recently the Cycle Ambition Fund and, in London, the Mayor of London's Cycling Vision have offered additional investment for towpaths.



All of this means that whilst there is a significant funding opportunity for improved towpaths, funded programmes present challenges to ensure investment continues to deliver benefits for everyone, particularly the majority of visitors who are pedestrians.

In simple terms, any funding should deliver **better towpaths for everyone** and improvements to increase towpath use should not be at the expense of the quality of the towpath experience but with a clear aim of increasing betterment over time.

The Trust's Approach



The Trust is in a position to provide leadership on policies and practice related to 'shared use' paths. Some of our work is of continuing interest to many other organisations, including local authorities and parks that experience similar challenges in managing safe sharing of paths.

The policy will underpin our management measures, reflecting experiences around the country.

Principles

1. Towpaths have established uses in supporting boating, angling, walking and other water-based activities, to be balanced with their role in connecting places.
2. The Trust and its stakeholders will ensure canal and river environments are safeguarded as havens for people and wildlife.
3. Towpaths should be free to access for all users who wish to walk, run, fish, cycle etc. and who are committed to behave considerately to other users of the towpaths who are slower or more vulnerable than themselves.
4. Towpaths should be improved where needed, to accommodate increased visits safely and to improve disabled access. Improvements should benefit a wide range of users and enhance the waterway setting.
5. Towpaths should be a distinct category in cycle or other route design standards, recognising their shared use and historic waterside character.
6. Visitors will continue to recognise they are entering a slower space shared by pedestrians, cyclists, boaters, joggers and anglers.
7. Routes along canals and rivers will be branded in the names of these historic waterways.
8. The tradition of horse boating is part of the heritage of our waterways and improvements made should follow the guidance for horse boating. Towpaths although built for horses are now predominantly used by people and (except where designated as bridleways) use for horse riding requires specific permission or alternative routes may be developed.
9. Where there are concerns over capacity or underlying condition, towpaths will not be promoted as part of a wider route network, but alternative routes along roads will be sought.

What the Trust will do

The Trust will work in partnership with local authorities and local communities to improve and promote the use of its towpaths for a wide range of users.

- Deliver surface improvements in line with our Towpath Guidance Document including the design of towpaths to encourage safe shared use.
- Consider the effects of such improvements (risk reviews)
- Provide information for visitors on the condition of our towpaths, including identifying those which are surfaced and are therefore more suitable for mobility vehicles, pushchairs and cycling.
- Encourage local communities to work with us to maintain towpaths and through that local ownership encourage others to respect them and treat them with care.
- Reclaim towpath width for safer shared use where practical and appropriate.
- Manage vegetation and improve verges where appropriate, recognising also the environmental and wildlife benefits that this provides.
- Review and research the best practice for towpath design and shared use.

- Review towpath use where there is evidence of conflict and if required:
 - ⇒ act to protect the slowest moving users first
 - ⇒ make use of our campaigns (e.g. Share the Space, Drop your Pace)
 - ⇒ introduce additional signage
 - ⇒ aim to provide a visible presence through volunteering to encourage improved behaviours
 - ⇒ introduce physical measures with the aim as not to inconvenience
- Conduct surveys, and /or focus groups relevant to sharing of towpaths.
- Share findings with others.



We will be clear on behaviours expected of those using towpaths

- Publish and promote a Towpath Code intended to encourage responsible behaviour and reduce negative behaviour.
- Develop shared use signage – ‘pedestrian priority’, ‘thanks for slowing down’.
- Encourage events led by rangers and or volunteers to help reinforce considerate behaviour.
- Encourage adoption of our towpaths by local communities or businesses.

Work with partners to enhance the towpath environment for visitors

- Liaise with key interest groups.
- Work with local authorities and the Police.
- Promote alternative routes around the busiest towpaths.
- Consider joint enforcement of anti-social behaviour.

What visitors can do

- Be aware of the shared nature of towpaths
- Be considerate of others and acknowledge other users courteously
- Keep towpaths clear for other users

A proposed Towpath Code:

Share the space - consider other people and the local environment whenever you're on a towpath. Remember some people may move less predictably, for example young children or those with visual or mobility impairments.

Drop your pace - considerate sharing of the limited towpath space is the key. Jogging and cycling are welcome, but drop your pace in good time and let people know you are approaching by ringing a bell or politely calling out before waiting to pass slowly.

Pedestrians have priority - towpaths are shared spaces where pedestrians have priority and vehicles, except bicycles and mobility aids, are generally excluded.

Be courteous to others – a smile can go a long way. Abusive or threatening behaviour is not acceptable and should be reported to the Police.

Follow signs and obey local bye-laws - they are there for the safety of everyone. Cyclists should dismount where required and use common sense in busy or restricted areas, recognising that pedestrians have priority.

Give way to oncoming people beneath bridges whether they are on foot or bike and be extra careful at bends and entrances where visibility is limited.

Give way and use common sense when travelling in large groups, especially if you are running or cycling.

Avoid wearing headphones as this makes you less aware of your surroundings, possible hazards and others sharing the same space.

Keep dogs under control ideally using a short lead on busy towpaths and clean-up after them. Dog fouling is unpleasant for other towpath users and is a health hazard.

At all times, keep children close to you and encourage them to learn and follow the Towpath Code



We would like to hear your feedback on our proposals

**Tell Us
What You
Think**

- Do you experience problems on your local towpath?
- What additional priorities should we address in our code of conduct?
- What behaviours should we seek to encourage?
- How should we encourage better sharing of towpaths?
- Should we adopt the same approach in all areas, urban and rural?
- How should we balance the needs of busy communities with capacity of the towpaths in those areas?

Please send us your feedback:

Participate in our website survey or email us with your views:

sharingtowpaths@canalrivertrust.org.uk



Get involved

Become a friend of the Canal & River Trust

There are many ways you can make a difference to your local canal or river.

You could join our Friendship scheme by giving a monthly donation. Or you could simply make a one-off donation and help ensure that our inland waterways remain a valued part of our local landscapes now and forever.

Visit • Donate • Volunteer

canalrivertrust.org.uk

Appendix 2

Sharing Towpaths Workshop

10.00AM – 3.00PM ON 22ND APRIL 2014

THE BOND COMPANY, 180-182 FAZELEY ST, BIRMINGHAM, B5 5SE

10.00 – 10.30	Arrival and Coffee	
10.30 – 10.45	Welcome and workshop introduction	Julie Sharman
10.45 – 11.00	Presentation to set the scene for discussions	Tav Kazmi
11.00 – 11.30	What do you think? <i>'Post it' or Flip chart session in groups to gather views from our participants</i>	All
11.30 -12.15	Workshop session 1 The Trust has summarised the things it can do for towpath sharing as being – 'better infrastructure, better signage and encouraging better behaviours' . <i>Do you agree with these and what else can we or others do?</i>	All
12.15 – 12.30	Interim survey results	JS
12.30 – 13.30:	Lunch and Networking	
13.30 – 14.00	Workshop session 2 Consider the 'Principles' in the draft policy and identify the 3 most important by rank order. Additionally, consider any issues not fully covered in the document	All
14.00 - 14.30	Workshop Session 3 The draft 'Towpath Code' supported by the 'Share the Space' campaign are based on those agreed with stakeholders and now being used on the London Waterway. Please consider the Code, including any improvements or omissions that may be required for local use.	All
14.30 - 15.00	Summary and next steps	

Appendix 3

List of Regional Workshop Attendees

21st March 2014 - The Bond Co. Birmingham

Mike Carter	Navigation Advisory Group
Huw Davies	Sustrans
Vaughan Welch	Inland Waterways Association
Steve Stamp	North Wales and Borders Partnership
Dianne Hurst	North East Partnership

22nd April 2014 - The Bond Co. Birmingham

David Gibson	The Ramblers
Michael Hunt	United Kingdom Athletics
Jackie Brennan	British Cycling
Paul Le Blique	AWCC -NAG moorings/licensing sub group
Simon Newell	River Nene Regional Park
Colin Palmer	IMBA-UK
David Early	Oxfordshire County Council
Lois Francis	S Wales and Severn Partnership

30th April 2014 - Builth Wells

Bough, Rebecca	Ramblers Cymru
Smith, Gwyn	Sustrans Cymru
Jeremy Morgan Frost	Inland Fisheries
Liddy, David	NRW
Dingle, Rob	Powys County Council
Stafford - Tolley, Mark	Powys County Council
Jones, Anthea	Powys County Council
Ball, Richard	Brecon Beacons National Park
Pack, Laura	Neath Port Talbot
Rosenfield, Jean	Welsh Local Access Forum
Henry, David	Swansea Canal Society
Martin Davies	Swansea Canal Society
Francis, Captain Roger	Mon & Brec Canal Society
Dianne Spencer	Trail Jesters
Davies, Sharon	Trail Jesters
Dr Ruth Hall	All Wales Partnership
Robert Pearce	South Wales & Severn Partnership
Mike Scott Archer	Local Access Forum
Thom Hadfield	Visit Wales
Jo king	Association of Heads of Outdoor Education Centres