

ELECTION REVIEW CONSULTATION

SUMMARY OF RESPONSES AND CHANGES AGREED FOLLOWING THE CONSULTATION

1. Introduction.

The Council Election Consultation ran for 12 weeks from 20 November 2013 to 14 February 2014. The Consultation paper is available [here](#).

The aim of the Consultation was to review the Trust's first elections in 2012 and identify any changes that could strengthen the planning and running of future elections.

The Consultation was widely publicised in November 2013 in a release to the press, an announcement in Boaters Update which goes to all boaters, on social media, and on the Trust website. All Council, Partnership and Advisory Group members were also contacted. These steps were repeated in January 2014.

25 responses were received. The list of respondents is presented in **Table 1**.

2. Steps following the Consultation.

The Council considered the responses for the Consultation at the meeting on 26 March 2014.

The Appointments Committee subsequently reviewed responses and recommended revisions to the [Trust Rules](#) agreed by the Council on 24 September 2014.

The Appointments Committee will draw on the responses to the Consultation in drafting the Election Regulations for the elections for the next Council. These will be published early in 2015.

3. Main points raised by those responding to the Consultation.

The following extract from a paper considered by Council in March 2014, summarises the main points made on each issue.

ISSUE 1: NOMINATION RULES FOR ELECTION CANDIDATES

Option 1 - revised nomination requirements for candidates standing for election: for example, the number of sponsors in the Boater election could be increased from 10 to 20 sponsors, or another figure

Option 2 - no change to nomination requirements

Most responders were in favour of Option 2.

Key points raised by responders:

- 1.1 The high number of candidates is seen as a function of the first election and not necessarily something that will be repeated in future elections.

- 1.2 Several felt that the election had favoured candidates affiliated to a waterway organisation and several were concerned that election arrangements should be fair to all candidates whether affiliated or independent. They argued that increasing the number of sponsors could favour affiliated candidates.
- 1.3 Other suggestions included
- creation of web space for candidates to articulate their priorities, skills and experience in addition to the 150-word manifesto
 - “ask the candidates” online forums and blogs
 - a requirement for explicit confirmation where candidates are serving officers, or stand with support of an association
- 1.4 It was suggested that when nominations have closed and the field of candidates has been published, there should be a period of, say, 7 days when candidates are free to withdraw their nomination before the final list is published.
- 1.5 There were suggestions that elected places on Council could be elected by boating type, for example
- continuous cruiser without home mooring
 - boater with home mooring

Another suggested members should be elected on a regional basis.

ISSUE 2: TIME PLAN

Comments were invited.

There was broad agreement with the overall timeplan and duration at each stage in the 2012 elections.

Key points raised by responders:

- 2.1 We should extend the awareness-raising period before the nominations open.
- 2.2 The election process in its entirety should be run either before or after Christmas to avoid the disruption of the Christmas/New Year break which was not good for canvassing activities.

ISSUE 3: TURNOUT

Comments were invited.

Turnout in 2012 was generally seen as favourable but with a desire to improve in future elections.

Key points raised by responders:

- 3.1 More explanation is needed on what Council does and does not do.
- 3.2 Use text and email to reinforce awareness during the election.

- 3.3 Raise the profile of Council to increase awareness and demonstrate its work so that candidates' skills and experience can be better judged for their role on Council.

ISSUE 4: COMMUNICATIONS AND SUPPORT FOR PROSPECTIVE CANDIDATES AND ELECTORS

Comments were invited.

Key points raised by responders:

- 4.1 We should make greater use of Q&A sheets to support each stage of the election.
- 4.2 Existing elected Council members should provide a report on their experiences during their term of office.
- 4.3 Council members' profile should be raised and the role of Council clarified.
- 4.4 A number of responders questioned if elector details to be made available to candidates (as in national/local elections) but acknowledged difficulties with data protection.

ISSUE 5: ONLINE ELECTION

Option 1 - move to an online election for 2016

Option 2 - no change

There was support for a move to an online election but most wanted to retain a paper-based option to prevent exclusion.

Key points raised by responders:

- 5.1 A paper-based option should be retained but could be elective.
- 5.2 Helpline services must be comprehensive and easy to access – online and by phone.

ISSUE 6: ELECTORAL METHOD

Comments were invited.

Two responders were strongly opposed to Single Transferable Vote as a method of proportional representation. Others accepted the method but were concerned about understanding and the potential for misinformation amongst voters and candidates.

Key points raised by responders:

- 6.1 A clear explanation of the voting method is needed including any implications of using some or all of the available voting preferences.
- 6.2 Helpline services must be comprehensive and easy to access – online and by phone.

6.3 A number referred to the reassurance provided by the involvement of ERS regarded by most as a reputable election management company.

ISSUE 7: RULE RELATING TO ELIGIBILITY TO VOTE IN MORE THAN ONE ELECTION

Option 1 – multiple vote option – change the rules so that electors can vote in **all** elections where they meet eligibility criteria – for example, a boater who also owns a boating business would be able to vote in both elections. When elections are set-up for Volunteers and Friends of the Trust, or any other elections, he or she would also be able to vote in these as well, if the criteria to vote are met.

Option 2 – single nominated vote option – the rules would be changed to require that individuals who meet the eligibility criteria in more than one election to nominate **one** election in which they wish to vote. This would be done well in advance of the election day.

Most responders were in favour of Option 1.

Key points raised by responders:

7.1 Clarification needed on whether a candidate can stand in more than one election.

ISSUE 8: RULE RELATING TO MULTIPLE BOATS REGISTERED WITH ONE OWNER

Option 1 - one vote per boat – we could change the rules so that votes are allocated on the basis of the numbers of boats owned per customer. Thus a private owner of a boat and butty would have 2 votes.

Option 2 - no change – continue to allocate one vote per customer irrespective of the number of boats owned.

There was no clear preference between options.

Key points raised by responders:

8.1 This is an issue that affects a minority of boaters.

ISSUE 9: RULE RELATING TO BOATS IN JOINT OWNERSHIP

Option 1 – we could change the rules so that the first **two** persons named on the boat licence with the Trust are each allocated a vote. If ownership is shared by more than two people, only the first two named on the licence would have a vote.

Option 2 – no change – continue to allocate one vote per customer irrespective of the number of owners.

Most responders had a preference for Option 2.

Key points raised by responders:

9.1 Option 1 is administratively complicated.

ISSUE 10: BOATING BUSINESS ELECTION

Comments were invited.

There was general agreement with current arrangements.

Key points raised by responders:

- 10.1 One responder was concerned that officers or employees of a trade association or individuals that represent the interests of boating businesses but do not have a contractual arrangement with the Trust, are eligible to stand for election (but not vote).
- 10.2 The disparity in one vote allocated whether the business is a large marina operator or a small part-time trading boat was noted.
- 10.3 There were some concerns about the definition of 'boating business' with suggestions that there should be a distinction between land-based businesses (marinas, chandleries, hirers) and boats trading with a licence in the allocation of seats on Council.

ISSUE 11: BOATERS ELIGIBILITY TO VOTE

Option 1 – revised voting eligibility criteria for boaters – we could change the rules so that to be eligible to vote boaters must hold a valid boat licence on the 1st day of July in the year prior to the election. This can be a 3, 6, or 12-month licence.

Option 2 – no change – to be eligible to vote, boaters must hold a 12-month boat licence valid on the day nominations close.

There was no clear preference between the options.

Key points raised by responders:

- 11.1 Some saw the complexity of including short-term licence holders as a barrier.
- 11.2 Others pointed to the level of commitment made by a 12-month licence holder and the simplicity of this as justification for no change.
- 11.3 Others felt that short-term licence holders should have a voice.

ISSUE 12: EXCLUSIONS

Comments were invited.

There was general agreement with the proposed strengthened arrangements for exclusion where licence holders are in arrears or breach of contract with the Trust.

Key points raised by responders:

- 12.1 Whilst there was support for the principle, there were concerns about the definitions of arrears and breach of contract.

Discussion at the Council Meeting and Next Steps

The Council meeting will provide an opportunity to draw any further feedback in discussions.

The Appointments Committee will review the responses and feedback from Council and may seek further advice on any technical issues.

The Appointments Committee will make recommendations to Trustees, and Council will be asked to sign-off on any recommendations in September 2014.

Any changes agreed by Council will apply to the next round of elections for the new Council which will be in place in March 2016.

TABLE 1: Table of those responding to the Consultation

Name	Affiliation
Alan Fincher	Boater
Alan Wildman	Chair, Residential Boat Owners Association
Baddie the Pirate	Boater
Chris Hawkesworth	Member, NE Waterways Partnership
David Gibson	Ramblers Association and Council Member
Derek Milner	Boater
George Eycott	Volunteer
Ian McCarthy	Boater
Jim Matthias	Member, West Midlands Waterways Partnership
John Dodwell	Trustee
Keith Byatt	Boater and Volunteer
Marty Seymour	Boater
Mike Annan	Chair, Navigation Advisory Group (Licensing & Moorings Sub-Group), Boater
Mike Todd	Boater
Nicole Ioannou	Milton Keynes Play Association
Nigel Parkinson	Unaffiliated boater
Nigel Stevens	Shire Cruisers, Member M&P Waterways Partnership and Council Member
Pamela Smith	National Bargee Travellers Association
Peter Brown	Council Member
Peter Ponting	Boater
Richard Hall	Boater
Stephen Peters	National Association of Boat Owners
Susan Stephens	Member, NW Waterways Partnership
Tony Hales	Chair, Trustees and Council
Wendy Hodkinson	Boater

Roger Hanbury
Head of Governance Services
February 2015