

ICU Council
19th February 2007

**Rivers Access Campaign – AMENDMENTS TO NUS NATIONAL
CONFERENCE MOTION 801/804/813/**

*Proposed by Ben Harris
Seconded by Mark Flower*

Conference Further Believes that:

1. That there are many areas within student activities, such as free and unrestricted access to rivers for canoeists, on which NUS can, and should, lead national campaigns.

Conference Resolves that:

1. The activities officer will co-ordinate national campaigns on relevant issues including, but not limited to, campaigning for unrestricted access to Britain's inland waterways.

Passed by ICU Council 19/02/2007

Appendix 1

Motion to Support the Rivers Access Campaign

It is noted that

- 1) Less than 4% of rivers in England and Wales have access rights to the public
- 2) Restricted access to water is a problem for all students, not just canoeists. Swimmers, boaters, gorge walkers, rowers and anyone wishing to participate in watersport are restricted to using rivers that have undisputed access or where restrictive permission has been granted. This means that we have no access to 96% of rivers in England and Wales.
- 3) That the Welsh Canoeing Agency describes how “Access Agreements have been sought for over 50 years. This approach has not delivered. The supply has not been met... ..Legislation is required to enshrine and enhance the right of access to the water, and provide clear roles and responsibilities for user groups in relation to the preservation of the environment”.
- 4) Fishing and Canoeing happily co-exist in Scotland.
- 5) That canoeing has been the most rapidly growing water sport within the last five years.
- 6) That the recent Brighton report (*Putting Pilot Voluntary Canoe Access Agreements in Place*, September 2006 – available online at <http://www.brighton.ac.uk/chelsea/newsevents/canoereport.pdf>) does little to discuss white water, which is above grade 3-4.
- 7) That report W266 from the environment agency found no empirical evidence linking canoeing and damage to spawning grounds and stocks.
- 8) No other country, in which our members have kayaked have the same draconian laws. This includes: Scotland, France, Italy, Switzerland, Germany, Austria, Norway, Sweden, Uganda, British Columbia (Canada) and Kyrgyzstan.
- 9) That the activities of students within clubs and societies are unacceptably restricted by not having a right to roam on water.

We believe:

- 1) That this situation is intolerable.
- 2) That Fishing and Canoeing can happily co-exist south of the Scottish border.
- 3) That negotiated access agreements do not work, and legislation is required to permit access for all unpowered craft over British Inland waterways.
- 4) That the recent Brighton report (*Putting Pilot Voluntary Canoe Access Agreements in Place*, September 2006 – available online at <http://www.brighton.ac.uk/chelsea/newsevents/canoereport.pdf>) is flawed, since it states within the report that if they received no response from the landowner they assumed that access had been granted. The report still concludes that “*Negotiated access agreements alone are unlikely to fully meet the demand and need for canoeable waters...canoeists are disadvantaged by the prevailing patterns of landownership and property rights*”.

It is resolved:

- 1) To lobby the **All-Party Parliamentary Group on Adventure and Recreation in Society** to discuss access, noting that the lack of rivers access

for canoeist falls squarely within their remit which is “*To identify barriers to healthy adventure and recreation and campaign for legal and other means to tackle them; and to promote wider recognition of the contribution of adventure and healthy risk taking in society*”, and further lobby them to determine and implement meaningful changes to the access situation which will improve the rivers access situation whilst providing meaningful feed back. Note that one acceptable solution may be to permit the formation of footpaths within rivers.

- 2) To lobby the **All-party Parliamentary Waterways group** as above. Their remit is to “*To defend the future use and continuance of inland waterways (rivers and canals) in Great Britain.*”
- 3) To lobby the **All-Party Parliamentary Leisure Group** as above. Their remit is to “*inform MPs and peers on issues relevant to the leisure industry*”. Canoe and Kayaking is worth approximately £700 million to the UK (source BCU).
- 4) To lobby the **Sports Caicus Group** as above. This is a closed group consisting of 10 MPs. Their role is to “*raise the political profile of key issues relating to sport and recreation through the parliamentary processes of Questions to Ministers and Early Day and Adjournment Debates in the House of Commons*”.
- 5) To see if anyone is interested in running a marathon in full canoeing kit. The rivers are closed, and as such this is the only canoeing option open to us.
- 6) To organise a demonstration at Westminster, designed to lobby MPs into supporting the Rivers access campaign. If possible this should be on the river Thames, with as many paddlers as possible.
- 7) To support further EDMs within the current parliamentary session which are directly and indisputably supporting the rivers access campaign.

The membership of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Adventure and Recreation in Society is:

Julian Brazier, Derek Wyatt, Lembit Öpik, Lord Rea, Earl of Erroll, Derek Wyatt, Lord Rea, Charles Hendry, Lord Howarth, Frank Dobson, Janet Dean, David Drew, Stephen Hepburn, Jimmy Hood, Christine Russell, Julian Brazier, Tim Boswell, Alistair Burt, Ian Taylor, Jacqui Lait, David Amess, Lembit Öpik, Paul Holmes, Lord Chorley.

The membership of the All-Party Parliamentary Waterways group is:

Bob Laxton, Lynda Waltho, Adrian Bailey, David Kidney, Andrew Miller, Sir Peter Soulsby, Gisela Stuart, Charlotte Atkins, David Drew, David Heyes,, Dominic Grieve, Michael Fabricant, John Randall, Peter Luff, Owen Paterson, Tim Boswell, Sir Patrick Cormack, Lembit Öpik, Lord Beaumont of Whitley, Dr Richard Taylor, Dominic Grieve.

The membership of the All-Party Parliamentary Leisure group is:

Clive Betts, Andy Reed, John Grogan, Chris Bryant, Ben Chapman, Angela C. Smith, Alan Keen Nigel Evans, John Greenway, Baroness Anelay of St Johns Colin Breed, Bob Russell, Lord Fearn, Lord Razzall, Lord Feldman, Lord Brougham and Vaux, Stephen Hammond, John Mann, Linda Gilroy, Stephen Pound.

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The leader of Sports Caicus is Andy Reed MP. The members include Andy Burnham MP, Nigel Evans MP, Clive Betts MP and Jim Knight MP.