



PUBLIC SUPPORT WHITE WATER COURSE PLANS

The public response to proposals for the Tees Barrage's white water course has been really positive with a great amount of interest and over 2,000 hits on a website which outlined the ambitious £3.5m plans to make it one of the best in the world.

A wide range of river users visited the day-long exhibition, where the plans were revealed for the first time, including people who enjoy activities at the barrage, those who worked in the area when it was industrialised as well as interested members of the public.

British Waterways runs the whole Tees Barrage, their senior projects manager Fred Hartley said: "It's really great news for us that the proposals have attracted so much support as the level of design and sustainability is of the highest quality. We're committed to making the white water course one of the top courses in the country, and indeed the world, and in doing so attracting some of the best competitors and canoe enthusiasts from around the world."

Les Southerton, director, Stockton Middlesbrough Initiative (SMI) which promotes the River Tees between the two towns, added: "We are all delighted with the response to these proposals which have the potential to generate a great increase in visitors to the area and bring new investment. They have attracted interest from white water course enthusiasts all over the country, clearly showing the high level of demand for a sports facility of this calibre."

Views expressed about the plans, which include installing four massive 12 metre long by 3 metre diameter Archimedes Screws, to pump the water needed to create guaranteed conditions for water sports, have been very much in favour of the redevelopment.

Comments from white water course enthusiasts in particular include:

"The Tees Barrage will be greatly improved by these plans."

"The white water course does need changing and making the holes/waves deeper would be a good start."

"I have to say this all sounds very good! The screws sound like an excellent idea. I also really like the sound if this big single drop. It all sounds too good to be true!"

"It sounds awesome!"

"Sounds and looks really good. I knew they were proposing to put screw pumps in but, Wow I never thought they would be so big, they will be a tourist attraction on their own. As regards consulting with paddlers, most the Staff at the centre are boaters and indeed some very good ones."

Major funding bids have been made to the Regional Development Agency, One NorthEast and Sport England for nearly £3 million of support. Together with contributions from British Waterways, owners of the barrage, the white water course and the two local authorities of Stockton and Middlesbrough, this would enable the £3.5 million upgrade to proceed. Subject to the funding bids being approved the scheme should be able to start in November of this year and be completed by summer 2009.

The Tees Barrage white water course is one of the proposed Olympic training camps for the 2012 Olympics and was visited by Lord Coe last week.

Key designers for the water course are EDP Design, Newcastle, S&P Architects, Manchester and the Patrick Parsons company in Newcastle upon Tyne.

ENDS

MEDIA CONTACT: Kay Wilson for SMI (0191) 536 0080 mobile 07985 276 973 or Simon Henry, British Waterways (0113) 2816822