

# The water way to take traffic off busy roads

**F**OR bosses fed up seeing their costs pushed up by road congestion, it may be time to take the plunge and go by water.

Canals once carried more than 30 million tons of freight a year. But now leisure is king, with 10 million people using them annually for boating and fishing.

Of the 45,000 craft registered on inland waterways, less than five per cent are commercial carriers. British Waterways says 3.5 per cent of all road freight – a million lorry journeys a year – could be carried by water, but businesses are not aware of this.

Andrew Burge, chairman of the Commercial Boat Operators Association, says: 'Most firms are unaware of the opportunities for transporting goods by canal, so they do not include them in their planning and strategy.'

At mail order catalogue publisher and supplier N. Brown Group, Eddie Jones ensures that products sent from around the

**By Neil Bromage**

world arrive at its Manchester depot in time to meet customers' orders. He says: 'We haven't considered using canals, but with the improvements being made to the waterways around Manchester, perhaps we should.'

With a major programme of dredging and maintenance now under way on the canals, more and more businesses are realising the potential.

Marks & Spencer turned to the waterways to carry cardboard waste from London to a recycling mill in Birmingham.

M&S produces 25,000 tonnes of it a year, 80 per cent of which is recycled.

Rowland Hill, its environmental affairs manager, says: 'It is not about saving money, but making better use of London's waterways.'

'But it is not without its problems because canal infrastructure, such as loading docks, has disappeared, which makes load-

ing and unloading more difficult.'

The Government offers a range of incentives, including freight facilities grants, to support British Waterways' efforts to overcome many of these problems and get loads off the roads.

These are available to finance the costs incurred by companies switching to or reinvesting in rail or canal freight transport.

■ For more information, visit [www.dtlr.gov.uk](http://www.dtlr.gov.uk)



At the helm: Bargemen's Andrew Burge

## maxim

TOP executives re single most important lesson of their careers. This week: ANTHONY FULLER, chairman of brewery Fuller Smith & Turner.

TRAINING of any vital at all levels should be continuous.

I joined Fuller in the early Sixties. It was insular in its thinking, was never given an opinion on my career path, or training was suggested a route that might be beneficial to the company.

Since then, it has changed many times and shareholders have benefited enormously.

But the process has been speeded up there had been firm direction and if the company had been outward looking, with proper training for young recruits.

## Travel agent really is going places

■ ONLINE travel agency ebookers has reduced losses to £2.6 million from last year's £8.6 million and is on target for profitability next year. Last-minute.com eat your heart out.

■ MON Dieu! The French government has announced that bidding for third-generation (3G) mobile phone licences will finish

## dotcom di@ry

in autumn 2002 – just, er, two years late. Last week, licence prices were cut from £3.1 billion to £387 million – not quite the £22.5 billion raised from the British 3G auctions last year. UK telcos look on with envy.

■ THE Data Protection Act requires companies to tell customers what information holds on them within 40 days of written request, or face a £100 fine. This will be tough on businesses, which can charge up to £10 for supplying such information.

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