

THE MAGAZINE OF THE



ISSUE 4/02 - July 2002

BW Licensing/New mooring conditions

STATEMENT FROM COUNCIL

It has been brought to our attention that some members have been made aware of informal discussions that have taken place between NABO and other boating organisations regarding the feasibility of affiliation to achieve a stronger lobby.

While such discussions have taken place, they are only at a formative stage and your Council remains bound to the status and position of NABO under the terms of the present Constitution. Any changes to the Constitution or format of NABO will be decided democratically by YOU, the members, voting at an EGM or the AGM."

IN THIS ISSUE

3	Chairman's Column	James Mason
5	Here We Go Again (Licence Questionnaire)	Graham Freeman
9	Caught in the Web	Webmaster
10	Flow Matters	Stuart Sampson
12	Worried Woman of the Waterways	Dot
14	Rocket Science (GPS)	SS
15	Incident Reporting	Sue Burchett
15	Notices to Mariners	Stephen Peters
16	Editorial	The Editor
< Pull-out - Skippers Guide to theTrent >		
17	Notices	
18	Rivers	
19	Why the Rush (Licencing Consultation)	Sue Burchett
22	Fly on the Wall	A Fly
24	New Conditions for Long Term Moorers	Stephen Peters
27	Cycling	Sue Burchett
28	Letters	Yourselves
31	Council Contacts	

2002 CALENDAR

Council meetings	Copy dates
July 27th	July 27th
Sept 21st	Sept 28th
Nov 9th A.G.M.	
Nov 23rd	t.b.a.

CHAIRMAN'S COLUMN

Hi Everyone!

Its good to be in touch again, I've been quite busy since my last column which was a tad gloomy, what with our battles over the non simplification of the BSS and then the bombshell over the overnight moorings price hike, anyway that's all ongoing and we are still in there negotiating on your behalf.

I have been travelling around the country attending user group meetings with British Waterways from Chester up in the North West down to Gloucester and Sharpness in the South West and London city centre in the South East and some in between ones as well, the reason for this was to see how well the consultation process was working between British Waterways and your NABO Regional Secretaries and other groups of users, and I was pleasantly surprised, the quality of venues, format and content of discussion was I thought very good, the refreshing initiative of Gloucester & Sharpness in allowing the user groups to form their own committee's and set agendas with British waterways attending and taking part was novel and I thought worked very well – top marks, because so many other British waterways user group meetings are too controlled and full of presentation which only allow user groups a chance to discuss things right at the end of the agenda when everyone is ready to go home, never the less it was nice to meet so many enthusiastic people attempting to achieve one thing, a better waterways system for all of us whether boaters, anglers, cyclists or walkers.

My meetings with the Environment



Agency are much less in number but we seem to get much more done in a friendly manner and far less confrontation. The meetings I have with the PLA are probably the easiest of all, they are very happy and eager to consult with no confrontations and a very direct and open approach which makes the process much more pleasant, like my regular meetings with the Royal Yachting Association's Inland Waterways Panel which keeps us all on the same wave length and up to date in the boaters world, as do my meetings with NINF where the Chairmen of the User Groups get a chance to discuss all the current issues concerning the inland waters, canals and rivers, and arrive at some form of consensus on how to tackle the problems

I also attend the PWG meetings in the Houses of Parliament where we get a chance to table questions directly to ministers and senior government officials. All in all this keeps me pretty much on my toes until I go to our own NABO council meetings to explain what I have been up to since our last meeting.

As you will have heard by now British waterways are revising their current licensing system and want it sorted ready to go on their new computer system in the spring of 2003. We feel they are pushing it a bit hard especially as they have already had two goes at revising it in the last few years. But! We are being consulted and user groups will be involved in workshops to help evolve a new system, I am very concerned that

they appear to wish to create a new tier of "continuous cruiser licence" which will be the most expensive licence at the top of the scale - British Waterways are asking should they who travel the most pay the most..... may I remind everyone that your current licence entitles you to travel the whole 2000+ miles of the system as often as you like, and entitles you to moor up wherever you like according to local rules as of right..... if you allow BW to create a new licence tier and charge a higher rate you will be forfeiting your navigation right..... Think!!! When you licence your car you all pay the same, irrespective of the mileage you do in a year and you can park it wherever according to local rules. I think the analogy is very clear. BW will be sending you a questionnaire - beware do not forfeit your existing rights. The most obvious box to tick is the one which say's..."There should be one single navigation license covering all navigation authorities" and ignore the other boxes, otherwise you will end up paying a different license fee for every different waterway you wish to cruise, which would in effect bump the cost of

cruising the network through the roof..... as I say beware.

The boat show/event/gathering season is already upon us and NABO has had its display stand out already at the Canal way Cavalcade at Little Venice, which was a good turn out and reasonable weather, Penton Hook Boats on Show, which was a little wet and windy and the Crick Boat Show, which was an excellent event. I must give BW credit here for a well-organised show - I thought it was excellent, the weather was good and the turn out was high, well done. We will also be at the NIA Birmingham and IWA Huddersfield and many smaller one-day events around the country. To me these shows are very important, they allow us at council to communicate face to face with our members which I think is the only way to find out if we are getting it right or not, personally I enjoy talking to members and prospective members and it also lets everyone else know that NABO is there for you, and on that note I will sign off till our next chatI need a pint

James Mason

THAT SUMMER STOPPAGE (New Junction Canal - 10/6 to 21/7)

Your North East Regional Secretary passed south through the New Junction Canal on the day before the six week stoppage was due to start, and up to the time of writing has spoken to a number of boat crews heading north. **Not one** had heard of the stoppage through BW publicity, and the majority didn't know their intended itinerary was impossible, till she told them.

BW Doncaster had no plans to help inland boats bypass the NJC stoppage (between the Stainforth and Keadby Canal and the Aire and Calder Navigation), the only practical route linking South Yorkshire to the rest of the county. Suggestions of craning or accompaniment round Trent Falls were dismissed as too costly, too complicated as they involved other waterway offices, or too prone to litigation if anything went wrong. However they did promise to post contact details for Strawberry Island Boat Club at Keadby so boaters could tap their expertise. No evidence of this was visible when Carole passed through.

In e-mail response to these matters, Carole was accused of 'spoiling for a fight' and 'being married to Atilla the Hun'. Your Editor, feels somewhat offended!!

"HERE WE GO AGAIN"

For those of you who may have just returned from holiday on Mars, you will be appalled to hear that BW have initiated a MAJOR review of Craft Licensing conditions. As space is at a premium, I won't waste words in repeating the rationale behind the scheme here as I want to take the opportunity to stimulate debate on this contentious topic !

As we have until mid-August to respond to the consultation, I will use this article to present an alternative perspective on the BW "questions" posed in their consultation document (available on www.britishwaterways.com/site/CraftLicensingConsultation). Please remember it is a questionnaire – written specifically to elicit a particular response ! It's a classic catch-22, answer it to the best of your ability and fall into the trap or ignore it and fall foul of the "well, we gave them the opportunity to comment and they didn't respond" reaction. As the Waterways Ombudsman isn't well placed to respond to problems of this nature, we desperately need REGULATOR (more to come on this topic later !). Anyway, here we go.....

Q1: People who make a lot of use of the waterway network should pay more than those who cruise less frequently ?

If you check BW's Licensing Terms & Conditions you will see that your licence only grants you permission to occupy the bit of water that your boat displaces. Remember, unlike rivers, you have NO right of navigation on the canals under BW control. Apart from physical damage to the infrastructure caused by boats, the operating costs are largely independent of the amount of traffic on the system, staffing levels, back-pumping, routine maintenance are fairly constant throughout the year and have to be funded whether boats move or not. It can be argued that those who cruise extensively throughout the year offset the dredging burden and should be offered a discount and provide the opportunity to create another licence class called "continuous cruising". After all, we are all potential "continuous cruisers" as there is nothing in the licence conditions that stops us using every non-stoppage day to be out and about doing what we enjoy !

Q2: The licence fee should vary according to the size of the boat.

Unless Archimedes got it wrong, a bigger boat displaces more than a small boat – ergo a bigger boat uses LESS water per lock than a smaller boat* and should therefore pay less licence per year as it is less of a drain on the system ! I would also like to see evidence to confirm that those

with larger (private) boats cruise the system more extensively. As hire fleets and timeshare boats are more likely to accumulate more cruising time per year, there are reasonable grounds for charging more for these users (especially as the novice hire crews are more likely to inflict damage to the infrastructure that must be funded from somewhere). Or should this element be funded via insurance in a way comparable to a car knocking over a lamp post ?

Q3: There should be one single navigation licence covering all navigation authorities.

Great in theory but incredibly difficult to implement in practice. Unlike the single tier relationship between cars and roads, the statutes governing the canals and rivers of the UK do not come from a common baseline. As noted above, navigation rights differ, ownership is wide and varied (BW, EA, NT, private etc). Is this question just waiting to be re-worded "Should there be a single navigation authority" ?

Q4: The fee should be related to the amount of network I wish to cruise.

Whilst this may have some merit – how would the navigation authorities police such a scheme? If you were to elect to limit your cruising to a particular area, ie: a waterway region boundary, does this mean that we'd need hundreds more winding holes ? Should such a system rely on integrity or would we need people to check boats "in and out" of regions? It's only one small step from the level of infrastructure imposed by the original canal companies to guard their water supplies, Bring back the Stop Lock and the Toll House I hear you say !

Q5: The licence fee should be related to the length of waterways that my boat is able to access.

Another interesting one – as a 70 footer can't do the whole of the L&L should this size of boat not be eligible for a reduction right now ? If this is viewed from the narrow versus wide-beam perspective, there clearly is a case for a reduced licence for wide-beam boats based on access. I will concede to an access-related reduction for electric boats only on the grounds that support infrastructure isn't system widespread. From another perspective it could be argued that electric boats should pay more than the rest of us as the support / infrastructure costs us all in terms of installation / upkeep and is of zero benefit (unless it could be adapted to provide a meter-paid mains-shore-line ??). I do however fully support the case for reduced fees for non-connected systems (Mon & Brec etc)

Q6: An element of the licence fee should reflect the differences in cost of providing navigation on the waterways that I wish to cruise.

I mulled long and hard over this question and have come to the conclusion that I don't understand it ! I am of the opinion that it is trying to say that certain waterways / regions cost more to operate / maintain than others. If it is aimed at eliminating transit fees on the Anderton Lift by amortising the cost across all licence holders there may be some merit in this option. However, before I sign up to such a proposal, I would need a better appreciation of what my licence fee is used for now !

Call me suspicious, but I don't get a warm feeling about this one. Just bear one thing in mind as you mull this one over for yourselves – BW have mandated that any "new" system MUST generate the SAME level of revenue as the EXISTING system. Lets be practical about this – BW WILL launch Project CLEARWATER on 1 April 2003. (For those of you not in the know, CLEARWATER is a BW project to introduce business-wide improvements to their business and IT systems). If their "new" system is to deliver tangible benefits for us all, we MUST be at the centre of the discussion on this one. So, it's over to you – if you agree, disagree or are indifferent to the proposal (and my views on it) sing out loud NOW. Write, phone, fax or e-mail me as we'll need something to go into bat on YOUR behalf in August. I would also appreciate your views on the need for a Waterways Regulator.

Graham Freeman

* In GF's answer to Q 2 he falls into a well known trap, but I didn't want to interrupt his flow! - but to save you all writing in...

Archimedes was right, but the water displaced by the boat is missing from the water in the lock both when it is empty and when it is full, so the amount the lock uses is still the area of the lock times the rise. As the boat enters the lock it squeezes out its displacement into the lower pound, and when it leaves the lock water enters the 'full' chamber to replace it. *Ed Knowall!*

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As a brief respite from the talk of moorings and licences, we invite you to think of a caption to go with this shot of a well vegetated mud hopper barge on the River Trent!

Advertisement

Caught in the Web?

It still seems there are members having trouble with the website, in particular with the 'members only' material.

Firstly, might I just explain the difference between the '*Members*' area and '*Members Only*' documents. When you enter the site by the 'Reception' page you can follow two routes. The one for Visitors leads to all the promotional material that members should know by heart, but following '*Members this way*' you are routed straight to information of direct use to members. However this path is **not denied** to visitors, and, having read all the blurb about NABO, they are welcome to come into the members' area and see what we find important. Keeping the two sides of the site apart is mainly to help the two types of user find their way around.

There are, however, documents on the site that we feel should not be free for all. Even now there is nothing to stop anyone fetching these on to their computer, but to **open** them they need to type in a password. Until there is a need to change this, all documents can be opened using the word "*Branch*" (note - capital "*B*"). As soon as a new password is introduced we will announce it in this magazine, and keep displaying it and older ones at the bottom of the Notice Board.

The 3-digit number in the name of the document refers to the first issue of NABO News in which its password is/was announced, so the password for items with 601 in the name has been in NABO News since issue 6 of 2001. Don't panic about this, just look for the notice that says "601 = Branch" etc. The password stays with the document. When there is a change, only new documents will have the new password.

Yellow slips

Forget these now, we don't need this level of confidentiality on the site now that we can e-mail members with anything sensitive.

The Future

In an ideal world we would like a much more interactive site, perhaps even with secure Credit Card subscription and joining facilities, but we need the income to pay for it - chicken and egg - so go out there and get some more members!

Webmaster

Good News

EA. say in "Recreation on the River Severn, " We will encourage the development of purpose built cycling facilities where appropriate. We will not support dual use of footpaths for cycling."

FLOW MATTERS

Some concern has been raised regarding consistency of the warning gauges on the Aire & Calder and Calder & Hebble Navigations. These are level indicators embedded in the wash walls of the river lock approaches, coloured in bands of green, amber and red to indicate whether the stream conditions are 'safe', 'dubious' or 'impassable' respectively. Why is it that, having just passed one gauge in the green, one can find the next gauge on the same river in the red and forbidding passage? We are told that they are, at present, set with the centre of the amber at an arbitrary 300 mm above some minimum, either 'a summer mean' or something related to the weir crest level.

Although it is a good idea to provide users with some sort of measure of stream conditions, it begs the question as to what they mean. The C&H is unusual in that there is a strong possibility if you set off downstream on a river section 'in the red' you might find flood gates closed against you at the next cut, which can be a considerable inconvenience as they are not passable like flood locks. However what actually matters to your safety is the speed of flow in which you can safely work your boat through whatever hazards the navigation has to offer.

Ideally boaters need to be able to read the maximum flow speed they are likely to encounter from a suitable graduated gauge board, and then be advised what is safe for their type of boat and experience. Graduating the boards, however, will require a study of the weir lengths, channel dimensions where critical manoeuvres are required, and any particular irregularities of flow. No mean task!

NABO gets everywhere - A message from the Vice Chairman

Your vice-chair may have been very quiet recently. This is because I have been getting involved in new projects. It has been mentioned before that I am co-chair of the National Inland Navigation Forum. This has always been a useful "talking shop" for the chairs of user groups. Differing views are discussed with a view to moving forward rather than each group fighting each other. It also helps conquer the divide & rule so loved by BW. This is even more necessary at present as each BW manager seems to have adopted the "I will only speak to one group at a time" approach.

After staying out of the BSS during my term of Chairmanship, leaving it all to the technical team. I am now the user group rep on the Management committee. This means that NABO is represented on the Management, Technical & Advisory committees. There will hopefully be a Rivers rep on the Management committee as soon as the BSS Chairman approves the choice of the user groups.



OCEAN GOING OFFICE? The editor's floating office about to enter Ocean Lock, Goole, having come from Naburn on the Yorkshire Ouse. Shall we go in sideways?

Advertisement

Advertisement

WORRIED WOMAN of the WATERWAYS

Greetings, I don't want to get you depressed but as you know I am the worrying kind. I am concerned about the state of the waterways as they are now and worry what will become of them. Does this relieve you of the burden? When you are cruising along and something happens to upset you, or you meet some difficulty such as - - struggling with this **gate** that is so much out of balance the name 'balance beam' seems a joke. - the top gate is leaking so much you wonder if the lock will ever empty, or the bottom gate is leaking so much you wonder if the lock will ever fill. - that crack in the wing wall seems to be leaking a lot. - this lock looks like a car wash there are so many leaks in the side as the water lowers. You may even begin to think that the whole fabric of the canals is in danger. Do you think 'Oh well mustn't grumble!' If so I do have cause to worry!

Perhaps you think 'Why hasn't anything been done about it?' As you know BW do not often use water transport to get materials, machines or men about the cut or for routine inspections. When did they last see that lock being operated? If you don't tell them anything is wrong, how will they know? Don't worry, if you would hate to be thought to **grumble** then consider it **giving** information. Please make the effort to write. Sometimes you can get hold of freepost postcards that BW print just so you can let them know such things, they want you to tell them. Oh **go** on - have a **grumble** - it will do some **good**!

The use of **generators** on boats is a thing that worries, and frequently bothers, me. I can understand that a wringer or mangle is hard to get hold of these days so a generator is needed to power a spin dryer to do the same job (that's called progress: two machines using energy where one, woman powered, used to do). Why do some folk need generators on at all hours of the day and night? Is it so they can draw the curtains to cut out the lovely sunshine and view, then sit glued to the television as if they were at home? Some idea of getting away from it all! and most inconsiderate to those nearby especially when the noise from the generator goes on late into the night. Do they

know that one of the terms and conditions for the licence is running generators is allowed 8am to 8pm only?

Do you ever listen to **gongoozlers**? This can be real fun and I'm sure you can add your own examples so I shall give just three - 'Now children, you will see the boat sink in the lock.' I hoped not! 'Ooh look, they eat real food!' Of a working boat 'Aye mister! why have you got a soft top on yourn?' We could start a 'Gongoozlers corner' and get some enjoyment, to counteract the troubles they can cause by standing barring your way at just the wrong moment, sitting on the bollard you need to tie to or talking about you as if you are deaf, stupid or not there. I am always pleased to answer questions about boats and canals and like to encourage those around to take an interest. I do so worry about where some ideas come from and what on earth some gongoozlers think we are doing.

Finally, what a worry it is to know that BW have spent so much issuing new **garments** to their operatives with black trousers so they will all roast when there is sunshine.

Hope you are getting some good boating and great weather. Leave they worrying to me, your friend...

WWW Dot

Advertisement

ROCKET SCIENCE?

"Q" would have been proud to have given Bond one of these a decade or so back, but now anyone can have one. The size of a mobile phone, a modern hand-held GPS can pinpoint your position to within a radius of the length of your boat or better anywhere on the planet. Switch it on and see its display come up with 'Tracking satellites' and you can imagine you are in Siberia about to deploy Goldeneye. This is pure gadget freak territory, but it is one of the few ways to measure a boat's speed 'over the bed', you can give highly accurate OS grid references to the emergency services and you may fancy its help for serious navigating on the Tidal Severn.

The Garmin Etrex pictured here also draws your track on a crude map, as the textured line. (In this case the angular black line is its idea of the course of the Trent). If you compare your track with a proper map of the waterway it can give you a good idea how far you have travelled.

Even the simple ones without mapping can display a compass rose, but there are limitations to this, as, when first switched on, it has no idea of direction, only position. Once you start moving it knows your direction by comparing old and new fixes, so if you hold the unit pointing the way you are going, the north pointer will be correct.

Another limitation is that GPS is slow, especially on start up, so, on a boat, it is best to use a cigar lighter adapter so that you won't run down its internal batteries, and switch it on well before casting off.

With the Etrex you can mark or set 'waypoints' and name them, then it will compute direction and distance to any one of them from where you are. This is of course much more useful to walkers in hill fog than canal travellers.

GPS equipment is available from Dixons, Staples etc but for accessories, try Maplins as well.

SS



INCIDENT REPORTING

Incidents involving other towpath users, vandals and boating are not being reported or, if reported, the information isn't being collated. After being told at a "towpath" meeting by a cyclist organisation that cyclists don't cause accidents, incidents need to be reported.

We know there are incidents of Boaters rage, stone throwing, anglers fishing hooks being dangled at eye level. We are all imperfect. We need to know about incidents then we can act. If you witness an incident please give details on the following lines to the BW waterway office and send a copy to Graham Freeman, General Secretary, NABO, 15 Harcourt Way, Hunsbury, Northampton. NN4 8JR .

Date. ... / ... / ... **B.W. Region.**

B. W. Staff Member contacted.

B.W. Response.

Offending Boat Licence No. (if applicable).....

Location of incident.

Additional details.

Name.

Address.

.....

Contact Phone no.

NOTICES TO MARINERS

Are you planning to cruise the River Thames (tidal or non-tidal) this year? If so, you may be interested to know that NABO holds copies of all current Notices to Mariners issued by the Port of London Authority for those of you without access to their website www.portoflondon.co.uk

The notices cover aspects such as emergency closures and works, navigation information, Thames Barrier closure schedule, and special events such as fireworks displays and filming for James Bond epics, which require temporary restrictions on navigation.

We also keep all Port of London publications covering their byelaws, pilotage information (for large ships), general directions and the permanent notices to mariners booklet. The latter contains essential reminders such as the fact that it is mandatory for all vessels over 20m in length to carry VHF radio on board (and to maintain a radio watch on Channel 14) irrespective of the type of vessel. In other words this applies to narrowboats over 20m in length. The only exemption is for narrowboats in transit between Brentford and Teddington Locks when a simple telephone call to the Vessel Traffic Service Centre at Woolwich (Tel 020 8855 0315) before and after your voyage will suffice.

We also hold copies of Environment Agency notices relating to the River Thames under its control, together with notices issued by Bristol City Council for the City Docks and River Avon upstream to Hanham.

Full details from our Rivers Representative.

SP

I normally try to keep away from the headline topic for fear of overkill, and the risk that my views may contradict the official NABO stance, but some people have found my analysis of BW's charging system helpful, so I hope you might too.

I feel that there are three misgivings about it that all stem from the same source. Firstly the recent mooring fee increases are crippling to so many because the percentages apply to such an unnecessarily large part of the overall cost of boating. Secondly there are the boat owners who are paying BW for moorings that BW don't provide because they are on private land, and, thirdly, continuous cruisers seem to be able to 'boat on the cheap'. All this results from BW's divisive insistence in charging for the right to float a boat on their waters **twice**, once in the licence fee and then again, directly or indirectly, through mooring fees. I say 'divisive' because I believe that NABO's apparent support for the right of continuous cruisers to avoid mooring charges sticks in the throat of some prospective members who are paying out for moorings.

So, let's go back to basics and see what navigation authorities can reasonably expect boaters to pay for:-

- **Administration** and publications - self explanatory.
- **Navigation** - the use of the 'track', and services of the staff that work on it where applicable, in order to travel.
- **Boaters' Facilities** - water, sewage and rubbish disposal etc.
- **Waterspace Rental** - the right to float a boat on the authority's water. This is the contraversial one, as it is the the only benefit you get by right from your licence under the present regime, and yet it is also the only 'benefit' you get from an end-of-garden mooring fee (or the charge passed on to you by a private moorings provider).
- **Long-term Mooring (optional)** - Landspace rental. All you should be paying for here is a retainer on a bit of authority-owned bank or jetty where you can tie up and gain land access to your boat. There may be other benefits ashore, such as access to facilities without moving your boat, car parking, security etc., but they have no right to charge you for the water space, as anyone can cruise through it in your absence!

While BW are preparing for Project Clearwater, perhaps they should take a good look at what in the past has muddied the waters by viewing both charges together.

Stuart Sampson

Editor- NABO News, c/o 15 Harcourt Way, Hunsbury, Northampton. NN4 8JR

NOTICES

POST FOR NABO NEWS

Please address postal contributions for the NEXT ISSUE to:-

The Editor
c/o 15 Harcourt Way,
Hunsbury, Northampton.
NN4 8JR

E-mail still-
news.editor@nabo.org.uk

GRAND UNION BOATERS NOTE:-

Lynda Payton has told us Mr Finch is out of jail but not kept his release conditions. If he is still at large please report sightings to her as she is happy to co-ordinate information by e-mail or on 07885-190444.

The new Ombudsman's report is out and makes interesting reading. I suggest everyone gets a copy. SB

ANOTHER 'IN SEASON' STOPPAGE

The River Severn will be impassable between Stourport and Worcester between September 15th and October 18th due to closure of Lincombe Lock for essential maintenance. Work will begin there on September 9th.

Also work is starting at Naburn on the Yorks Ouse in October. Ring 01904 728229 to check passage arrangements.

EVENTS

Forms are available from Ann Berry
35 WOODLAND ROAD, SELSEY, WEST
SUSSEX, PO20 0AL. annmberry@hotmail.com
NABO have stands at:-

- **Reading Waterfest** June 22nd
- **N.I.A Birmingham** 17th - 22nd July
- **Newbury** 28th July
- **Huddersfield**, National Waterways Festival - August Bank Holiday

Please visit - or even help!!

Password for website guidance leaflets & mooring tables = **Branch** (capital B)

Message from MEMBERSHIP SEC.

Just to tell you all that I am away (Boating!) from Tuesday 25 June until the beginning of August - precise date not known.

I shall be carrying a print out of membership details so if anyone wants to make an urgent enquiry please ring my mobile either on:-

07703 599529 or
07968 070312 RD



RIVERS



A SHOT IN THE FOOT?

In the times when the term 'boater' applied as much to the hat as the wearer, when gentlemen wore shirt collars over striped blazers and when mahogany glowed richly from under a thick layer of yacht varnish, penning through a lock was usually blessed with an atmosphere of a garden party hosted by a convivial lock-keeper. Now that the varnish has been replaced by gel coat, boaters wear denim and craft are more akin to giants' turbocharged training shoes, one might expect the social skills of the lock-keepers to have gone too. This may be true on some rivers, but on the Trent there are still lock-keepers who take pride in welcoming their customers, and in so doing achieve much more for BW's public image than any number of signs and glossy leaflets. In fact, with the benefit of VHF Radio they can extend the voice of friendship to anywhere on the river, so definitely taking the lead from their counterparts on the Thames.

We have heard, however, that this all might be under threat. All over the country, it appears, navigation authorities are selling off lock-keepers' dwellings. Unless the lock-keepers can afford to mortgage them on what seems to be a dwindling wage, there is no guarantee that the new occupant will not fence it, and its garden, from the lock and destroy the whole ambience that makes a day out on the river so charming, leaving the lock-keepers to commute to some crude hut – assuming they are willing to stay in the job at all.

Self-operation may be acceptable to the long-distance canal traveller, but even they find the service offered on the Trent a welcome change. Out of hours and in the winter, when the purpose of boating is to get somewhere, no problem, but not when there is a lock full of boats enjoying a day out on the river.

Ironically it might be those skippers not on holiday that will salvage the situation, if Nottingham becomes an inland port once more.

MAJOR DEVELOPMENT ANNOUNCED FOR DIGLIS BASIN

After decades of dereliction blighting the Diglis Basin area where the Worcester & Birmingham Canal meets the river Severn at Worcester, a major new scheme has been announced.

British Waterways in association with Bryant Homes have submitted plans for 550 new homes, offices, restaurant, public house, etc. to Worcester City Council for the canal basin and riverside, including improved pedestrian and cycling provision.

NABO has been represented at consultation meetings with the developers and when we have more information on how the scheme will impact on boating activities we shall let you know.

WHY THE RUSH?

British Waterways are keeping us all working overtime. First the Moorings Matrix is scrapped as it meant they couldn't charge what they felt like and there is now no appeal. Then because they have a new computer, the licencing is being changed. I thought computers were supposed to be the slave of the people not the reason for changing things in a hurry and this is being brought in in a hurry.

The meeting to discuss waterway matters was scheduled for 16th May. The agenda arrived on 11th May with the comment on licencing: - a paper to follow. This I duly received by email on the 13th May. As you can see from the following timetable we were meant to respond to this with no consultation with our committees let alone our members.

Timetable

These are quite fundamental proposals and the target timetable for successful synchronisation with Project Clearwater and new licence system software means that we will need to move forward with detailed development work swiftly.

The Clearwater target is April 1 2003 for new licence software. It would therefore be sensible to set this as the implementation date for the new fees, and to move the annual review date to April 1 annually thereafter. Fees payable for Jan 1 – March 31 2003 would remain at 2002 levels.

We are allowing a total consultation period of 5 months to reach firm decisions. This period will be divided into phases as outlined below:

Fee structure principle:

16 May Indicative responses presented verbally at meeting

16 June Written comments from user groups

21 June Conclusion on fee structure principle

There will be a trade-off between allowing longer consultation periods involving fewer revisions and shorter consultation periods with more revisions. Your views on this choice will be noted.

How is that for a nice piece of blackmail?

After protests the timetable has been amended

16th May to 31st August- debate on principles.

From mid June onwards BW will also start to model various numerical options and feed these to us for information.

BW will reach a final conclusion on the principles in early September

Modeling of numerical models will continue

BW need final comments on the numerical models by 14th October

The new licence structure & prices will apply to licences renewable from 1st April 2003

British Waterways know that the summer is when most of us are cruising and there is no reason this couldn't have been put forward before. We have also asked that IWAAC do a review of licencing. Although they have to be consulted by British Waterways on this, they are also volunteers, so they are going to be under pressure. Also British Waterways are supposed to liaise with the Environment Agency to bring in an integrated licencing system. The Environment Agency have been working on their licencing system for some time and now they are supposed to rush something as fundamental as this through

I have taken extracts out of the consultation paper to give you the reasons for the change

Current system

1.1.... Theoretically the fee structure involves no less than 1123 fee categories! In practice, there are many fewer, but this is the impression generated by the set of fee sheets issued to would-be new boaters. The fee payable or licence type required, varies according to:

- (a) type of use: "private pleasure", "houseboat", "cargo or workboat", "hire", "multi-user"
- (b) boat size: for most licence types, 19 length categories, 12 for others, and a cool 816 for Gold Licences (because EA charges are based on length x beam).
- (c) time period: there are 3 and 6 month options for some types in addition to the 12 month norm plus short term licences ... also available for most use types.
- (d) Geographic extent of access: 'canal + river' licence: rivers only and the Gold licence...

1.2. As well as appearing overly complicated..., the main shortcomings of the current system relate to enforceability. ... some of the enforcers' difficulties arguably result from the design of the licensing system and supporting terms and conditions. For example:

- (a) "Bogus" continuous cruisers: people who do not have a permanent mooring and breach our bylaws concerning length of stay at visitor mooring sites. Also people mooring long term on unapproved sites.
- (b) We do not currently require proof of identity, or a reliable contact address for licence applicants. A result of this anomaly is that it's sometimes impossible to instigate successful enforcement action.

Proposals

1.3. Proof of identity and a reliable contact address should be required for all customers. Credit references required for direct debit mandates. Applicants must be over 18.

1.4. We should differentiate between licences for individuals and businesses. Terms and conditions should reflect this.

(a) The licence should be simply understood as giving the right to float on our waterways. Trading regulations would be more efficiently dealt with through a trading agreement with the boat operator.(see full document for trading proposals)..

1.5. Houseboat certificates should only be issued to genuinely static vessels. The issue of residency is much more relevant to moorings management and should not be an issue for licensing.

1.6. The main drivers for licence price variations should be:

(a) **size of boat:** but we should drastically reduce the number of length categories and introduce a 'beam' factor. The main reasons for retaining some elements of pricing according to size are:

- the practical difficulties of implementing a change involving complete removal of this factor - there would be unacceptably large numbers of losers and winners
- likelihood of sharing locks
- a marketing case for an attractive entry-level rate to encourage new boaters

The ultimate target could comprise as few as three categories, but this would need to be phased in over say, five years.

Initially we would recommend adoption of just 6 length categories, perhaps using the existing short term licence structure, plus a premium factor for craft with a beam over 2.13 m.

(b) **Duration** of licence: we recommend a relative reduction in the price for short term access combined with a restriction on the number of such licences that an owner could purchase during a year... to increase visiting craft and new market entrants.

(c) **intensity of use:** extensive use indicated by continuous cruising/occupancy, commercial hiring, multi-user arrangements etc. should pay a premium

(d) extent of **geographic access:** craft using only isolated stretches... should pay less than those with full access. Consider increasing the number of geographic zones, possibly implemented via card readers at zone boundaries.

(e) **Policy objectives** such as encouraging new entrants to boating, use of electric power, encouraging use of less popular areas. We could also consider verifiable **user concessions** – dependent on introducing proof of identity requirement. For example, we might consider a lower rate for loyal senior customers – 10+ years or more licensed continuously with no payment defaults and over 60 years old.

(f) The fee structure should be simplified to define a single baseline fee for the most popular size/type of craft. In the following trial example, the baseline is a privately owned pleasure craft over 12 m long with a registered permanent mooring, licensed for 12 months. Note all these figures are hypothetical. If basic principles are agreed, we will construct simulation model with aim of calculating rates that will protect total revenue and reflect policy objectives. Nor is the list definitive – additional criteria may be added as work proceeds on the scheme.

Criteria Baseline fee to be multiplied by:

(a) Size

1. Boat is between 7 and 12 m long 0.8 2. Boat is less than 7 m long 0.6

(b) Duration

3. Licence period 6 months only 0.85 4. Licence period 3 months only 0.6

(c) Intensity of use

5. Holiday hire or timeshare 2.5 6. day hire only 1.5

7. Boat has no BW approved mooring or cruises continuously 2.5

(d) Geographic access

8. Cruising area restricted to rivers 0.60 9. Gold licence 1.25

10. Cruising area is restricted to isolated stretches. 0.5

(f) Policy objectives

11. Hire boat not ETC accredited 1.1 12. Licence not renewed promptly 1.1

13. Boat has permanently fitted inboard electric motor 0.75

The effect of multiple criteria would be cumulative – eg a 10 m boat licensing for 6 months wishing to cruise rivers only would pay £baseline x 0.8 x 0.85 x 0.6. So, if the baseline were say, £500, the fee payable would be £204. This procedure would also ensure continued compliance with Section 4 of the 1983 Act relating to river registrations.

The full document is accessible via our web site. We would like your comments. My view is that the cost of boating must equate to the cost of a caravan or motor home. At the moment, it seems boating is to be the recreation of the wealthy and British Waterways has forgotten all about social inclusion.

FLY ON THE WALL



at Council

Another Council Meeting to keep my eyes on for you and another new face to introduce to you - this belongs to Caie G who will take over the London area representation from Helen Gardner, who is moving North. There is also a new Regional Secretary for the South - Paul Herbert, who also sent a report.

Council is still waiting hopefully for an offer to take up the post of East Anglian Regional Secretary. If you think you may be able to help but have doubts, why not talk to a member of Council and maybe attend a meeting to decide whether you can help ?

Do you know YOUR Regional Secretary? Do make use of them?

The main area of discussion at the meeting was whether NABO should become an umbrella organisation on behalf of smaller groups who want to use NABO's "clout" in representation and lobbying. Your opinion will be sought via the

Website and NABO News - the stronger NABO is, the more it can do.

Welcome to new members recruited at recent shows - don't forget to do some recruiting yourselves !

BW are surging ahead with various proposals without, in Council's opinion, proper consultation - isn't it about time that we had a Regulator (how about OFCUT ?)

Licensing policy seems to be on the drawing board again. Council approved the suggestion that a couple of members represent you on this subject at a Licensing User Group committee. BW want to simplify licences as much as possible. Suggestions include the abolishment of the Residential Boat Licence in favour of higher mooring charges and the introduction of a standard fee for all other licences. It's interesting to note that the simplification could apparently coincide with the introduction of computer records. Would a course in computer literacy not be cheaper and upset fewer people ? An article in this edition gives you the chance to comment.

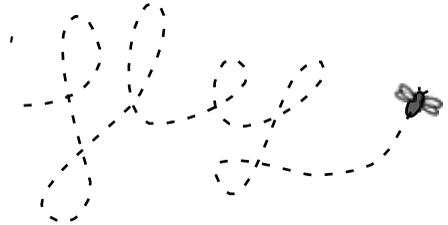
BW are also suggesting that they run a Poste Restante type operation and "track" canal use of boats by their licence numbers - could make a

boater feel a bit twitchy ! It appears that the proposal to annually BSS certify part-finished boats seems to have sunk, as it deserves to!

Various members of Council felt you may be interested in the number and type of meetings tat we attend on your behalf so you'll be aware of the different aspects of keeping you happy when moored or boating - see the Chairman's column.

You may also have comments pertinent to one or other User Groups - watch out for that article too !

Time to buzz off to a boat myself - byeeee.



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BW PROPOSES NEW TERMS AND CONDITIONS FOR LONG TERM MOORINGS

British Waterways have bombarded us with new problems and new initiatives over recent months – they abandoned the mooring matrix and introduced swingeing increases in mooring charges without proper consultation; then they put forward proposals for changes to the licensing system with the promise that this would not mean increased charges for boaters; and now they have decided to issue new terms and conditions for long term moorings under their control. Full details can be found on the NABO website but for those members who do not have access or any wish to use this modern form of communication the following summary will give you a flavour of the proposals on which NABO must respond by mid August 2002.

The new terms and conditions will replace those currently to be found in section 2 of the "black book" which dates from 1997 and are intended to bring the terms more closely in line with industry practice, notably the standard contract promoted by The Yacht Harbour Association for operators of marinas. The intention is that long-term moorers will be issued with a set of the new terms and conditions along with a schedule specific to the boat, mooring type, etc.; together with supplementary terms for particular sites and a set of "Site Rules". You may well ask whether wording intended for off-line marina moorings are strictly relevant to on-line moorings. Read on and decide for yourselves. Incidentally, a shorter version of these new terms is promised for end-of-garden moorings and other sites where BW is not the site manager. The following are our interpretation of what the new clauses say or mean.

Clause 1 - Allocation of a mooring by BW does not give the customer the right to a particular berth and BW may move your boat to another mooring on the site. This represents no change from the existing terms.

Clause 2 – A new clause. If you use the mooring allocated to you or display the mooring discs you will be deemed to have accepted the terms of the mooring agreement and must pay the prescribed fee.

Clause 3 - You will no longer be permitted to allow someone else to use your mooring for up to 21 days in any 3-month period. You will need to seek written permission from BW. What are the chances that you will obtain it?

Clause 4 - When your mooring agreement terminates you will be expected to vacate the mooring and leave it in a clean and tidy condition.

Clause 5 – A new clause. You will be allowed to keep a small "tender" on the water at the mooring only if you pay an additional charge. This tends to be the case in all inland and coastal marinas.

Clause 6 - Your boat will have to be properly licensed and the discs displayed for the duration of the mooring agreement.

Clause 7 – This new clause will enable specific Site Rules to apply.

Clause 8 - You will be expected to comply with the conditions of any planning permission relating to the site.

Clauses 9 & 10 & 11 – Three closely related clauses which seem to contradict one another. BW will have the right to move your boat to carry out work on or near the mooring having

given you reasonable notice. They will provide an alternative mooring if they need to move your boat and return your boat to its mooring as soon as possible. In some cases they will no longer be required to give 14 days' notice nor will they pay compensation for inconvenience as previously applied.

Clause 13 - You will not be allowed to keep, hang or place anything on the mooring site without agreement nor must you display on the boat or mooring any sign or notice of an offensive nature or commercial nature. So you'd better not display anything critical of BW or any NABO publicity stickers.

Clause 14 - If you alter or deface the mooring in any way, BW will charge for the damage.

Clause 15 - You will only be allowed to keep domestic pets at the mooring, under proper control and not causing nuisance. Better keep your pet tiger or elephant below deck. Rather curiously, the previous requirement to clear up dog mess has now been omitted. This surely needs to be reinstated?

Clause 16 – You and your visitors must not obstruct access ways or car parks with their vehicles. You will be responsible for making sure that their cars are properly taxed, insured and roadworthy!

Clause 17 – You will still have to keep your boat and its immediate area clean and tidy.

Clause 18 – You should continue to let BW know of any defects in your mooring. But they are no longer interested in knowing about defects in the adjoining waterway or premises.

Clause 19 – A new clause. Only works of a minor nature may be undertaken on a boat on a mooring. This is apparently to deal with complaints from neighbours if work is disruptive or if safety or environmental protection is threatened.

Clause 20 – A new clause. Requiring all incidents involving injury or damage to property other than your boat to be reported to BW to help them manage claims.

Clause 21 – You will continue to be responsible for your own actions and those of your crew and visitors in the event of damage or nuisance.

Clause 22 – You must dispose of your rubbish in an appropriate manner. Let us hope that BW will provide the necessary receptacles.

Clause 23 – BW will have your permission to go on your boat, to move it or any gear at their discretion for reasons of safety or to protect the environment. This clause is supposed to replace the one which stated that BW would re-moor your boat if it broke loose.

Clause 24 – You will be responsible for your boat being moored safely and securely and for locking security gates.

Clause 25 – A new clause. You will not be allowed to keep any hazardous material (undefined) on the boat or the mooring except for properly stowed gas and fuel.

Clause 26 – No fires to be lit on the mooring. Written permission will be required for a barbecue.

Clause 27 – BW will not guarantee uninterrupted supply of any services to your mooring.

Clause 28 – A new clause. BW will not be responsible for loss and damage caused by events or circumstances outside their control, or caused by third parties. Your boat insurance is expected to cover you for the failure of historic structures, extreme weather and the actions of others.

Clause 29 – The agreement terminates at the end of the specified period.

Clause 30 – You may terminate the agreement by giving one month's written notice.

Clause 31 – Part refunds of unused mooring fees will now be on a simple pro-rata basis for the unexpired period.

Clause 32 – BW may terminate the agreement not only if your break any of the conditions and do not or cannot rectify the situation, but also if you owe them money for the mooring or a licence.

Clause 33 – BW will tell you if they think you have broken any of the terms and give you the opportunity to put things right.

Clause 34 – If BW is of the opinion that you cannot put things right you will have 14 days to vacate the mooring.

Clause 35 – If BW thinks you can put things right you will be given 14 days or such longer period as they may agree.

Clause 36 – If you still fail to rectify things you must leave the mooring.

Clause 37 – Finally, BW will charge you and / or move your boat if you break the agreement.

Site Rules

BW intends that it shall have the power to introduce "Site Rules" which will not be inconsistent with the agreement and to amend the rules as they see fit. These rules will set out specific conditions with which you must comply, even if they did not apply when you first acquired the mooring. For instance, BW cites the following:

You must not re-fuel your boat on the mooring without their permission. This might prove to be unworkable in practice. Does it mean you must remove your boat first?

You must not fish from the boat or mooring without their written consent.

You must notify BW of any underwater

obstructions at your mooring. Good – does this mean they will dredge the canal?

You will have to give your contact address and telephone number for when your boat is unattended.

BW will not accept responsibility or liability for any closure or restriction of the use of the mooring.

You will not be allowed to leave anything on the pontoons, jetties, car parks or anywhere else on the site. What? Not even your car or your mooring ropes?

You must not hang washing lines or other paraphernalia (Their wording, not ours!) on any part of the boat. This could prevent you from doing the laundry or hanging fenders from your boat.

You must not display affix or exhibit signs or advertisements on the boat. Not even NABO stickers?

You must not erect any pole mast or wire in connection with telecommunications radio or TV upon the boat except with written consent. This would mean that TV aerials, fixed VHF whip aerials, etc would need consent.

You must ensure that halyards and other rigging are well secured to avoid unnecessary noise. Does your narrowboat have rigging?

BW will have the right to re-let your berth whilst the boat is away from its mooring. This could prove rather difficult when you return to the mooring!

You may not live on your boat. What precisely do they mean by "live"?

Stephen Peters

CYCLING

We recently attended a meeting about towpaths and were given a talk by Sustrans on cycling on the towpath complete with slides. They are very proud of the new towpath surfaces that they are causing to be laid. You know the grey loose dusty stuff and the orange stones. The presenter was surprised that we didn't like them and suggested that having to have our windows closed in summer was a minor inconvenience. I asked what was wrong with a good compacted earth towpath. The answer they are rough and have stones on them.

The cyclists pay no licence (also to the annoyance of anglers) to use these towpaths which in many cases are being altered to suit them. I pointed out that a foot between the canal edge and the towpath was not sufficient for any degree of safety for canal users. British Waterways say they have done risk assessments. They do not pay for a licence because BW can't enforce it. I say nonsense, The canoeists pay, anglers pay and I am sure that if they didn't British Waterways couldn't enforce this either. Where British Waterways own the towpath they could put up a notice saying that a permit is required and tell the cycling clubs & local papers. When several cyclists have been caught the towpath is then closed to cyclists physically if need be. The cyclists would soon get the message. It is grossly unfair that this section of society should flout the rules. Why on earth are we paying?

What has brought this rant on may you ask? The news that the cycling on the towpath at present is just the tip of an iceberg. Sustrans and our Government want cycling to rise: just look at www.sustrans.org for more information.

Sue Burchett

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LETTERS



Carrying on the Cut

Another excellent newsletter!

In the June issue Sadie Dean compares the Continental and UK waterways saying, rightly, that the former are generally much larger than ours. But there is quite a mileage of smallish waterways (peniche size) on the continent where pleasure and commercial use mixes happily, plus of course no-one is advocating a wholesale return of freight traffic to our narrow canals anyway! Broadly speaking it is difficult, even with grants, to operate economically under 100 tonnes capacity.

Having said that there are 'niche' opportunities which can be exploited, even on the smaller waterways, such as on the lock free stretches of the BCN, the Leeds & Liverpool, and some lengths of the Grand Union for example.

Sadie says there are so many pleasure craft on our waterways there is no room for commercial boats. Even assuming she means the narrow canals, it has to be said that congestion really only occurs at the

'honey pot locations' and then only for a few weeks of each year, basically the school holidays - the bank holiday weekends, and the six weeks in July and August. For much of the year the waterways are silent and largely deserted - November to April in particular.

She says the standard of most canals makes full loads difficult if not impossible. My narrow boat carrying friends tell me that, ironically, many of the canals are now in better condition than they were during the last decades of carrying (i.e. the 1950's and 60's) - the Leeds & Liverpool perhaps is an exception, but even then with full pounds and dredging of bridgeholes and silted locations (e.g. where feeders come in) I would think that full loads would again be possible.

She says that there is no incentive for BW to keep the canals open all year as they have the licence money already - no tolls. There is some truth in that, though I believe that waterway managers have to 'bid for funds' based, at least in part, on boat movements. For all but the

Note – Views expressed in readers' letters are not to be taken as those of NABO as a whole

most minor movements, tolls are paid for the carriage of freight, so there is an incentive there.

She says 'BW should do something to facilitate the return of carrying...'. Quite right! BW have just appointed a new Head of Freight (Tony Plews) whose remit, I believe, is to double freight by 2010. Although the emphasis is on the larger waterways, attention is being given to possibilities on all waterways, where carrying is feasible and sustainable, in conjunction with the Commercial Boat Operators Association. Waterway Managers are being told to 'think freight'.

The Government is consulting on extending the Freight Facility Grants regime to include running cost such as tolls and dues and this could be very beneficial for traffics which are 'at the margin'. See: www.shipping.dtlr.gov.uk/consult/fa_mcon/index.htm

David Lowe

Boaters' Liability

In response to 'The Slippery Slope', NN issue 2/02, I raised the matter of who is responsible if someone refuses to vacate a lift bridge and then gets hurt when it is lifted, at a User Group Meeting.

The answer was that BW do not know who is responsible - it would

take a court case to decide. The only advice they could offer is that if any boater sees any individual/s anywhere on the waterway network behaving "in an antisocial manner", then the police should be called.

Carole Sampson (N.E. Reg Sec)

Poste Restante

I have investigated via Postwatch the rumour that Consignia is planning to scrap the free Poste Restante service.

It seems it is just a rumour with no foundation. Consignia say they know nothing about it - and we must believe them.

Perhaps BW spread it so that they could promote a money spinning alternative?

Stephen Peters

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