

THE MAGAZINE OF THE



President: Bill O'Brien J.P. M.P.

ISSUE 1/04 - February 2004

Diesel Tax/Waterway Dossiers/Mooring Fees

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2004 CALENDAR

| Council meeting | Copy date |
|------------------------|------------------|
| March 6th | March 13th |
| April 24th | May 1st |
| June 5th | June 12th |
| July 17th | July 24th |
| Sept 18th | Sept 25th |
| Nov 13th A.G.M. | |
| Nov 27th | Dec 4th |

CHAIRMAN'S COLUMN



NAYBOW?
NABBOW?

NAHBOW? – No wonder critics think we are in disarray, we don't seem to agree on how to pronounce our acronym. I prefer the first way, it goes with 'sago' (no thanks!) and 'NATO' (don't worry, I don't think we are likely to become the North Atlantic Boating Organisation!)

We are also getting some stick from folks who say we ignore our members, that we are 'anti' everything BW does, and as a result they think nobody takes any notice of what we say.

Firstly, we put a lot of effort into taking notice of our members:

- We make space for readers' letters in this magazine, more than can be said for other organisations' publications.
- We show full contact details and even photos of all our Council members on the back cover, so there is no way they can hide.
- NABO has just two layers, members and Council, so direct contact with the 'policy makers' is just one call or e-mail away.
- We run on-line surveys to get an idea of the views of at least some of the otherwise silent majority

Do stay silent if you have no view, or trust us to share your views, but if we don't live up to your expectations, please don't whinge behind our backs

on chatlines, websites or conspiratorial meetings without the decency to contact your elected representatives directly.

As for being 'anti BW', then, yes, at times we have to be, especially if we have members being wrongly treated. It's our job to be 'anti' anything that is not in the interest of boat owners, but most encounters are not head-on, they are gentle un-newsworthy nudges to make things better for members.

I have heard doubters saying, "I am going back to the IWA". By all means do so, I never left. The IWA promotes waterways and boaters use waterways. (Maybe it is 'in bed' with BW, but it got in first!) However, a charity for preservation and restoration of waterways does not specifically represent the private boater, so there is no 'either/or' about it, be a member of both if you can afford it.

Anyway, thanks to all who are challenging our complacency, albeit by the wrong means. Your new Council is looking at ways to strengthen NABO's position. The Waterway Dossier scheme is already in the pipeline and we have allocated someone to collate other information from our Regional Secretaries. This will give us even more opportunity to indulge in our favourite sport, namely standing up at User Group Meetings and telling one waterway management how other waterways are solving the same problems. BW want their operation to be 'seamless', this is how we can help them do it.

To improve our credibility, we are beginning an overhaul of our policy document to ensure our delegates,

especially yours-truly, are '*all singing from the same hymn sheet*'. Each item, now just a very brief sentence, is to be taken up by whichever member of Council is most involved in the subject and expanded into a proper statement of NABO intent with explanation and justification. These will be offered up to the members for comment before being cast in tablets of stone at a Council meeting. I expect this will take a few months but in the end it will provide a firm base from which any NABO representative can argue should the need arise.

Now, there is one thing we must all agree on, that is that the magic of the waterways must be preserved. We might be a '*small minority sharing a hobby*' in the eyes of a regeneration-hungry Government, but if you think about it, a five-figure number of people have parted with five-figure sums in sterling to enjoy the special quality of life afloat. We are talking hundreds of millions of pounds here, if not over a billion, invested in waterway boats by ordinary folk, not just the rich. NABO is the body that is in the best position to represent these people. They are the ones who stand to lose the most if this magic is destroyed or diluted by over-commercialisation and over-population like other holiday destinations.

'*Visitors will be delighted*' is Robin Evan's catch-phrase, but the question is - should boaters be classed as visitors? We certainly don't mind the prospect of being delighted, but the

general concept of a visitor is one who leaves for home at the end of the day. Generally we don't, we bed down within BW premises, so we are more like residents, totally at the mercy of our landlords, or, as the jargon nerds would have it, we are the section of society with the highest exposure to BW, or whatever authority maintains the waters we happen to be on. Why do we do it? - It has to do with that magic I was talking about. If that goes, we might as well find some naïve individual to buy the boat and go and do something else - in fact that is the prime reason NABO loses members.

Somehow we need to show the Robin Evans's and Alun Michaels's of this world why this magic is worth hundreds of millions of pounds of ordinary folks' money, why feelings can run so high and why we feel it might be under threat. Maybe someone might like to treat the powers-that-be to a week or two living afloat and sampling the magic first hand - any volunteers?

I will leave you with one final thought - I often write my articles to the accompaniment of classical music from a certain commercial radio station and am interrupted by adverts saying, "*So&So, the low cost alternative to BT*". My chain of thought is broken because I keep asking myself why we never hear, "*So&So, the low cost alternative to BW*"

Happy boating

Stuart Sampson

ON COMPLAINTS, CONSULTATIVE COUNCILS AND REGULATORS

Contact for Corporate Level complaints

In the last issue we summarised BW's new Internal Complaints Procedure (ICP) but didn't know to whom you should send your second approach if you don't get satisfaction at 'local' level. We knew where **not** to send it – up the management line. BW now tells us you should send it to the Customer Relations Manager (Eugene Baston) at BW Headquarters who will route it to the appropriate Director.

However, we are still unsure what happens if the complaint concerns Headquarters itself, e.g. craft licensing administration, where we might expect the CRM to handle the first level complaint too. We are also wondering how many of you will be dissatisfied if your 'corporate level' complaint cannot be addressed straight to a Director. We are enquiring.

The National Consultative Council

We mentioned that the N.C.C. is the arbitrator proposed by BW for disputes outside the remit of the Ombudsman. It is also expected to meet and discuss more general issues that are then taken on by its 'Steering Committee' to BW senior management. This process is to replace the present National User Group Meetings.

The IWA opposes this at present, to the extent of threatening to boycott it, unless there are provisions for larger and/or more relevant user groups to have more say, NABO is not in a position to fully support this objection, but it does agree with the IWA that it would be a shame to abandon a tried and tested consultation opportunity.

What about a Regulator?

It is still NABO's official policy to support the setting up of an independent regulator to oversee differences of opinion between users and navigation authorities on any waterway that are outside the remit of the Ombudsman. This was put to BW by our Vice-chairman at the National User Group Meeting in December 2003 and George Greener, Chairman of the BW Board, responded that it would be inappropriate and that boaters would be worse off.

When such a large percentage of boaters took up the offer to sign the NABO petition calling for such a regulator, it would also be inappropriate for NABO to take what he said then at face value, so we offered him the opportunity to expand on his arguments. We thank him for this reply:-

"Thank you for your email about regulation and for your good wishes.

I know that you will have received the notes of the National User Group

have tried to include plenty of detail and, as requested, made sure that you can see who made what contributions. I also know that you have a copy of the report, Indexation of Craft Licence Fees, produced by OXERA Consulting Ltd for British Waterways. I expect you are sharing all this information with your members.

I have little to add to all of this, but to give again the key points:-

The use of a cost index rather than R.P.I. means that while BW is protected from cost increases beyond its control it cannot make arbitrary price increases. The boater therefore has some protection and also benefits from an index derived from a competitive industry. While the cost index will reflect what is driving BW's costs, it is not an easy option for BW.

BW goes further and makes a promise to do better than the cost index and that this will be reflected in the price. This is based on the detailed numbers coming out of the strategic plan and reflects projected improvements in efficiency. The BW Board and management team work together each year, usually over two board meetings, to review the plan and for the Board to accept it. This longer term planning process went through its fourth iteration in the Autumn of 2003. I introduced this process after becoming chairman in July 1999. It is a very significant commitment to promise to do better than an index which already includes growth in productivity.

BW also takes independent advice about the merits of its pricing policy and satisfies itself that it is behaving with the objectivity of a regulator. It is important to remember that the Board of BW is independent of management and that its members are appointed by Ministers.

I can understand that people are a lot more familiar with R.P.I. as an indicator of what might be driving costs and with which prices should conform. But it is not as simple as that. R.P.I. required and indeed gets company specific adjustments, for example in the case of the utility companies, from the regulator. We need to think about what might happen if a management team was negotiating with a regulator about the factors driving costs ahead of R.P.I. and how, in the end, this will be reflected in the price. I leave it to your imagination. It is my strongly held belief that an independent Board, acting like a regulator but intimately involved with the organisation and deeply concerned about the welfare of the users of the amenity, while preserving the balance required by Government policy, will get closer to the best possible price change.

I hope you find this helpful. As you can see it reflects my strong personal belief that, to quote your email, 'boat owners would be better off without a statutory regulator overseeing British Waterways'.

George Greener

We think he is politely saying that boaters signed the petition without being in possession of the full facts. We'll let you be the judge of that - comments please.

IT'S A GAS

Hello,

It has been a while since I last mentioned this, so I thought a reminder might be in order.

DBA is still running its UK national buying scheme for bottled propane. Participation in the scheme is available to DBA members, and to members of NABO and RBOA.

Members of the scheme can buy refills (bottle exchange) for any size of propane cylinder at attractive discounts. For example, the current price for a 19 kg refill is GBP 11.57, delivered.

As a result of further consolidation in the industry, the scheme is now run through Flogas.

To join the scheme, you need to contact Flogas (**0845-050-0056**) and set up a personal account with it. Ensure Flogas makes a note in your account records that you are in the DBA (Barge Association) scheme. Once you have an account, you phone **0800-574574** to place orders. This will connect you to your nearest Flogas depot. When you place an order, be sure to confirm that you are getting the DBA scheme price.

You will need to order at least two bottles each time. The depot will confirm the delivery date. You will be billed by mail.

If you do not have any Flogas (or Supergas, BG, Centrica, or Shell Gas) bottles, you will need to lease at least two from Flogas to get started.

I am DBA's contact with Flogas. If you have any problems with the scheme, please let me know.

Adrian

Advert

2006 - THE END IS NIGH?

Would it be too alarmist to say that the boating way of life will end in 2006 when EU regulations force boaters to use DERV (white diesel) instead of gas oil (dyed diesel)?

The Royal Yachting Association (RYA) predicts that this will almost treble the price at the boatyard pump and, with the support of NABO and the IWA, is mounting a campaign to persuade the Government to preserve the status quo, or at least take some measures to reduce the effects on boat owners. NABO Council has agreed a donation of up to or in the region of £1000 to this cause, and are prepared to go higher if the membership so desires.

However many boaters on the inland system probably use a greater proportion of diesel as their main source of energy for living than the average powerboat owner in the RYA, so NABO could be pressing a special case. Even boats without separate diesel stoves, boilers, cookers and generators, use their engines to charge batteries and heat water, hence so many arguments about running engines on moorings and the introduction of Beta's 'Progen' and many other adaptations to utilise the engine as a 'combined heat and power unit' for living on board.

Does the EU expect the UK Government to tax central heating fuel to holiday homes - or even permanent homes - at road transport rates? That is what it amounts to, unless the usages can be separated and both fuels stored and sold, or cheaper biodiesel can be introduced.

On its website [www.rya.org.uk] the RYA says:-

Join the RYA fight for red diesel

In three years red diesel may no longer be available to recreational boaters. The special exemption that allows the UK to charge lower rates of duty on diesel for private pleasure craft is due to come to an end. The RYA is fighting this and is currently carrying out research that will form the basis of our lobbying efforts. A questionnaire will be available on the RYA stand at the Schrodgers London International Boat Show and on the RYA website as the RYA urges boaters to voice their views.

The European Union has adopted a Directive that restructures the taxation of energy products, including diesel, in order to reduce perceived distortions of competition between Member States.

At present diesel fuel for use in private pleasure craft is subject to duty at 4.22p per litre and to a reduced rate VAT at 5%. The derogation that allows this reduced duty rate is due to expire on 31 December 2006. Red diesel will still be available for commercial use but will not be available to non-commercial users.

There are three scenarios that can happen:-

☺ The current arrangement is maintained.

☺ The rate of minimum duty as specified in the Directive is applied at 21.21p per litre. The reduced VAT rate is then applied at 5%. With a base price of 27.8p per litre, diesel for marine users will cost 51.4p per litre. The fact that the UK charges exceptionally high rates of duty on road fuel means that this diesel will need to be an alternative colour, to distinguish it from “commercial diesel” whilst still discouraging its use in road vehicles.

The cost implications of having a third category for recreational use will mean that scenario 2 is impractical and unlikely to be supported.

☹ The third scenario is that there will be no concessions for recreational boaters and diesel for marine use will instead be grouped with road fuel. At a base price of 27.8p per litre, duty as road fuel at 53.2p per litre and VAT at 17.5% this will take the cost up to 95.2p per litre. This is significantly higher than at roadside pumps due to the costs involved in the logistics, but the differential between roadside and waterside is comparable with the present situation in which roadside petrol is 78p per litre and waterside is 92p per litre.

The RYA believes that the best possible outcome for the recreational boater will be if the current arrangement is maintained and the derogation is retained (scenario 1). If the derogation is not maintained the cost of marine diesel in the UK is likely to be considerably higher than Europe. The impact of such a substantial rise in cost will hit the recreational boater hard.

In 1998 the RYA compiled a report and lobbied Government for the initial derogation and was successful. In January, February and March 2004 the RYA will be researching the impact of a price rise, and compiling a report based on the findings with which again to lobby Government. To do this the RYA needs input from as many people as possible who will be effected.

This leads to a feedback form [on www.rya.org.uk/home/onlineforms/form1] which is the basis for the first form in this issue’s pullout.

Our second form might help us make a case based on the amount of fuel used by its members for ‘domestic energy use’. It would help our case if you could fill in both forms to the best of your ability and send them to us.

We will pass our findings on to the RYA and if appropriate, pursue the case independently too.

**Please fill in the pull out and send to
National Association of Boat Owners
FREEPOST (BM8367),
Birmingham B31 2BR**

BW PRESS RELEASE

BRITISH WATERWAYS TACKLES UNAUTHORISED MOORING AT OXFORD

British Waterways is beginning a drive to combat unauthorised mooring by boats on the Oxford Canal, from Isis Lock at Oxford, past Drinkwater's Lift Bridge up to Kings Bridge (known as the Oxford Mooring Zone) from Monday 12 January 2004. Oxford is a popular destination for visiting and residential boaters and canal moorings have, in recent years, become prone to overcrowding because some boats overstay on moorings or moor in prohibited areas. This discourages short-term visitors and has a detrimental effect on waterway wildlife.

British Waterways' staff will be patrolling the area over the next few months. Any boats mooring in prohibited or restricted areas without the proper authorisation, or overstaying within the Oxford Mooring Zone, will be subject to a charge of £25 per day. The purpose of the charges is to discourage inconsiderate mooring and overstaying and not to raise revenue.

There are four types of moorings in Oxford: 48-hour, 7-day and 14-day visitor moorings and Agenda 21 Residential moorings - the first such established on the waterway network. Agenda 21 is a national and international initiative set up by the United Nations in 1992 to encourage sustainable development and, as interpreted by British Waterways for its canals and rivers, low impact living on the inland waterways.

The Agenda 21 moorings were set up on a pilot basis in January 2001 and 41 boaters signed up to the agreement. These boats are run using energy efficient heating and the community has adopted an environmentally friendly lifestyle.

To complement this sustainable arrangement, several stretches of the Oxford Canal have been designated as conservation areas where boats are not permitted to moor.

Ivor Leach, supervisor on the Oxford Canal, says: *'The Agenda 21 moorings have worked very well at Oxford so far, but we do have concerns about some boats overstaying or mooring in the wrong place. As the scheme is now in its 3rd year, we are able to concentrate resources on ensuring that the whole area is made welcoming for both long and short-term visitors'*.

BW CORRIDOR ISSUES MEETING

This meeting was held at Hatton on January 21st and attended by your chairman. A wide variety of groups were represented, boating, rambling, cycling, the Horse Society etc. by delegates in a wide variety of attire from suits to woollies. Amongst the BW representatives were Eugene Baston, Peter Wade (Safety), and Simon Salem (Communications Director), who did a very convincing impersonation of a competent chairman.

By the end of the meeting we were all a lot more knowledgeable about the RBOA and horse boating. The former through an arranged presentation by Ivor Caplan, the latter by Sue Day, the only private horse boater on the system, who was concerned about the loss of horse drawn trip boats, which were becoming a victim of their own popularity - gongoozlers get in the way! - and also **vegetation...**

It was almost unanimously agreed that growth between the towpath and the water should be kept short. NABO raised this as a matter of safety, both for disembarking and visibility. It seems even the BW environment department will now stand up against English Nature etc. and defend navigational needs. All power to them.

Railings were discussed – DBA objecting to them under bridges on the Lee where they prevent crew getting off for locks, and they snag towlines!

A call was made to design out hiding places for louts, and more escape routes for cyclists and walkers in urban areas. NABO’s item about grid reference stickers was overtaken by events, when in an earlier debate, Peter Wade deplored the confusion amongst emergency services as to how to tell them where your are. BW admitted their promised work on this had fallen foul of re-organisation.

On the whole all concerns were given a good airing, but will anything come of it? SS

BW MOORING FEE INCREASES

We have recently received details of the new fees for permanent BW moorings. This came as a comprehensive list, so we have extracted the following for you.

Present average prices and increases per waterway unit

These new rates are shown as pounds per metre length per year, but, as a handful of moorings are charged per berth, we have assumed a 17 metre boat (about 56 foot) occupies each berth on these to give you this rough guide.

| | | |
|----------------|------|------|
| London | £127 | 0.2% |
| South West | £76 | 4% |
| South East | £64 | 3.6% |
| Wales & Border | £62 | 4.6% |
| Central Shires | £61 | 5.5% |
| East Midlands | £60 | 3.6% |
| West Midlands | £60 | 5.3% |
| North West | £46 | 4.0% |
| Yorkshire | £54 | 4.5% |
| Scotland | £44 | 0% |

| Total numbers of boats affected | |
|---------------------------------|------|
| Down | 49 |
| No change | 909 |
| 0-3% up | 840 |
| 3-5% up | 2038 |
| 5-10% up | 1526 |
| 10%+ up | 290 |

Numbers of boats affected in each waterway unit

| Change | East Mids | South -west | West Mids | Central Shires | South -east | London | Wales & Border | North -east | Yorks | Scotland |
|-----------|-----------|-------------|-----------|----------------|-------------|--------|----------------|-------------|-------|----------|
| Down | 0 | 11 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 5 | 9 | 12 | 12 | 0 |
| no change | 23 | 22 | 44 | 0 | 13 | 557 | 0 | 54 | 147 | 49 |
| 0-3% up | 107 | 184 | 8 | 123 | 142 | 24 | 17 | 38 | 197 | 0 |
| 3-5% up | 220 | 17 | 218 | 388 | 560 | 0 | 374 | 249 | 12 | 0 |
| 5-10% up | 71 | 145 | 103 | 372 | 18 | 0 | 398 | 188 | 231 | 0 |
| 10%+ up | 0 | 59 | 51 | 24 | 0 | 5 | 36 | 96 | 18 | 0 |

WORRIED WOMAN of the WATERWAYS

A Happy New Year to you all. Now, what have I to worry about as I sit here with a plain sheet of paper and a sharp pencil?

You may well ask, but who has done a **Risk Assessment** on the pencil? Who has listed the dangers that lurk once I am let loose with such a weapon? (Could a sharp pencil be mightier than the sword?)

You may think I am being **ridiculous** but that is what it has come to, everything has to undergo risk assessment, even litter pickers, before you can use them to pick up rubbish.

Where will it all end?

More paperwork is created than cleared up. More time is spent implementing all these **rules and regulations** than doing the actual job!

Are you looking forward to a peaceful year on the waterways? Do you plan your **route** carefully or just roam as the mood and conditions allow. I worry about those ill-advised folk who plan to 'do a **ring**' in a given time and spend their holiday **rushing** about trying to keep to a tight schedule leaving no time to relax. They don't seem to realise that the whole point of boating is to leave the **rat race** behind.

If a waterway is **recovered** or **restored**, one expects it to be more or less as it was when first built or as it was before it fell into disuse.

Of course the reasons for canal use has changed, but what a shame it is that all the associated history is often destroyed. Most frequently it is **replaced** with modern housing or amenities and nothing of the original buildings or works is retained. None of it remotely resembles how things used to be, yet many visitors come to the canals to try to recapture the atmosphere and unhurried ways of the past.

Then there is the worry over the **residents** of these canal-side properties. People who go out of their way and pay over the odds to be near the waterway then campaign to change it all once in residence. They don't like boats or boaters and certainly don't want noisy boatyards anywhere near their property. They have even managed to get popular canalside pubs closed down!

You would think that if you moved into an area you would take the trouble to find out what it was like before taking up residence.

Surely it is reasonable to expect that those already there should be able to retain their way of life. The newcomers chose to come there and should fit in with existing conditions.

It seems too often that it is money that rules and not reason. All has to change to accommodate the **rogues** that make a profit by **ruining** the canal heritage.

Have you noticed that on the waterways, if something needs attention or repair, an operative is sent to look at it and write a **report**. That, according to the powers that

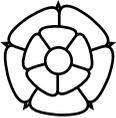
be, is doing something about it. To me, being both picky and the worrying kind, something to **rectify** the problem would be preferable.

Now back to the **rubbish** (Do I ever talk anything else?). Have you noticed how **reluctant** the authorities are to let their employees deal with this. Well maybe they let them deal with it in the offices (what else), but out and about around the system it always seems to be volunteers of one sort or another, (hurrah for WRG!), that organise 'clear ups', 'clean ups', 'litter picks', or the like. It is about ten years since the BW's Clean Up Campaign on the BCN ended. Haven't they noticed just the odd bit of rubbish appearing since then?

The invention of a machine to scoop the rubbish off the surface of the water typifies the present attitude. If it all looks good and increases **revenue**, who cares about the boater ramming into submerged rubble, rusty remains or having **rotting rubbish round their rudder!**

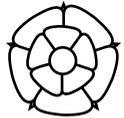
I hope that you can manage a year of boating without **restraint** and **remember** - leave the worrying to me,

your friend Dot



NEWS FROM YORKSHIRE

Carole Sampson - Regional Secretary



It is wintertime, with the whole northern half of the country shut down for stoppages. We pay for a twelve-month licence ! But it has not been an idle time for your Regional Secretaries. In the 'Yorkshire Business Unit', there have been four User Group meetings, at which the new General Manager has introduced himself and the new BW structure, and then attempted to find out what representatives want of future meetings and how they will be organised. Many promises have been given – I wait with baited breath!

Additionally, I had requested two meetings. The first was with Lawrence Morgan, the General Manager of the Yorkshire Waterways Unit. I had various items that I wished to discuss, namely:

1) Moorings, or lack of, on the River Ouse.

As with all rivers, the banks are seldom owned by BW, and so it cannot provide moorings. In spite of approaches to Councils and land-owners, there are still too many boats chasing too few spaces, and the sizeable increase in the hire fleet near York has exacerbated the problem. I suggested that riparian land-owners should be encouraged to provide chargeable moorings, similar to what happens on the Rivers Thames and Nene.

2) Grass cutting/tree trimming on the Leeds and Liverpool Canal.

Cruising the northern waterways last summer, the difference in standards between the west and eastern ends of this canal stood out like a sore thumb. I suggested that it would benefit ALL users if those on land and water could see each other!

Additionally, there is a health & safety issue when a boater steps off a boat onto overgrown banks, and when a bridgehole is so obscured that it cannot be seen.

3) Duckweed

I expressed concern over the unsightly weed which I had seen for the first time on the Aire & Calder Navigation. It seems that the dry summer had meant a reduction in river levels, which meant that there wasn't enough water flowing over the by-washes to flush the weed away. Hopefully, rain will cure the problem.

4) Standedge Tunnel

Two members had expressed concern over the coordination of manpower at each end of the tunnel, now that the tunnel itself has been moved from the Northwest into Yorkshire, whilst the escorted passage westwards remains with the Northwest Unit. This led to a general discussion about lack of moorings, particularly at the eastern end of the Huddersfield Canal, about the bottom being too near the top, and the reduction in the number of passages per week since reopening.

5) The redevelopment of Leeds Canal Basin.

I pointed out the financial advantage to BW to retain at least one of the dry docks in a usable condition for the benefit of all boaters. At present, we have to risk the vagaries of the River Aire to use a private dry dock in Castleford, which is far from ideal. There are two BW-owned dry docks at the other end of the canal, but nothing east of the Pennines. I was given no assurances, I felt that this is low on the priority list, the most important factor being to generate funds.

All in all, I came away feeling that the meeting had been extremely useful. I was told that it had been timely, in that discussions were taking place at that very time about future projects and expenditure.

The second meeting was with the Customer Services Manager, to discuss the use of seasonal lock-keepers on the Leeds & Liverpool. Several members have reported varying standards of capability across the system, and I myself had experienced a serious problem last summer. Generally, having lock-keepers on all the staircase locks (introduced since the Gargrave tragedy) made the trip feel like being on a production line - let's get the customers up and away from the area as soon as possible. I pointed out that all boaters like working locks, or they wouldn't boat, and perhaps the staff should be available for advice and only offer assistance. I suggested that it is the skipper of the vessel who is in charge of a boat AT ALL TIMES, never a lock-keeper, although anyone would happily delegate that responsibility to Barry on the 5-rise, for example. I suggested that information boards, like those beside the 3-rise in Chester, would help boaters cope with the staircase locks, as well as being of enormous interest to the gongoozlers who immediately appear lockside whenever a boat is about to ascend or descend. I was told that a training scheme is being developed, and BW staff will have to pass in various categories, such as lock operation, grass cutting, water management, strimming, and so on. I will not be cruising the L & L myself this year, so I would be pleased if members could let me know if things are satisfactory.

Again, I felt that the meeting had been constructive and worthwhile, and I hope that at least some of my suggestions will bear fruit.

NOTICES

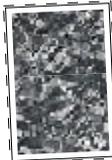
POST FOR NABO NEWS

For issue 2/04 please send contributions to

48 Old Lane, Bramhope,
Leeds LS16 9AZ

E-mail -

news.editor@nabo.org.uk



Having trouble getting a BSS examiner?

Contact Graham Watts
graham.watts@britishwaterways.co.uk

or log into the BSS website on:-
www.boatsafetyscheme.com

or try the Association of Boat Safety Examiners website:- www.abse.org.uk

This has been posted because NABO has had reports of difficulty. Next issue we hope to bring you a possible solution – an article explaining how you could become an examiner yourself

HELP STILL NEEDED

Editor for NABO News

BSS Rep to help Trevor

Req. Rep for Doncaster

Req. Rep for Border Counties

Req. Rep for Worcestershire

Membership Relations &
Recruiting Officer

Please support BW

(It reads the same with your specs on!)
George Greener is asking for whatever support boaters can give to justify the virtue of projects like the Milton Keynes-Bedford Link where the benefits to 'land lubbers' may not be immediately obvious.

PASSWORDS

Any guidance papers tables still protected will open with password 'Branch' (Capital B)

The members-only website section has a **new password**, which has been sent out to on-line members via the members' bulletin list. This is because many copies of NABO News have been given out at events with the old password in them.

If you have not been given the new word please e-mail:
webmaster@nabo.org.uk with your name and membership number to be given the password, and, if you want, to be put onto the bulletin list.

Waterway Dossiers – A New NABO Approach

Your Council has agreed to start implementing Waterway Dossiers. This major initiative, eventually covering every waterway in detail, is aimed at addressing several key issues facing NABO. Making it work will need active participation of local members, first in London but soon in all regions, so here's your chance to get more involved.

How The Dossiers Will Work.

A Dossier will be maintained for each waterway. Pound by pound (including the pound's downhill lock) it will contain a note for each item needing attention (missing or broken equipment, overhanging trees, shallows, etc.). There will also be a section discussing each issue common to several pounds.

Each Dossier will be run by a Dossier Manager, a local member appointed by the regional secretary. Other members, Length Monitors, will be responsible for lengths of the waterway, preferably each dealing with a length he walks or cruises reasonably often. The local Length Monitors will be recruited by the Dossier Manager. Each Length Monitor will travel his length periodically noticing any issues or progress, and will give update information to the Dossier Manager. The Dossier Manager will immediately incorporate updates into the Dossier, to keep it as current as possible.

NABO members in general, both local and visiting, will be encouraged to report to the Association any issues they become aware of when they travel a waterway. This information will be passed to the relevant Dossier Manager, and be used to update the Dossier.

Twice a year, the Dossier Managers in each region will meet as a group with their regional secretary, to review current issues in the Dossiers, to note any trends that need to be addressed by NABO nationally, and to identify where NABO policy might need to be created or amended. The secretary will report the results of these meetings to the Council.

Once a year, the regional secretary will meet with the local navigation management to go over the Dossiers, to get the management to acknowledge the issues in the Dossiers, to agree remedies, and to commit to a schedule for implementing them. These commitments will be noted in the Dossiers.

The Council will extract common themes and items of national concern from the Dossiers and the regional secretaries' reports, and will form or update national policies accordingly.

All the Dossiers will be posted on the NABO web site.

Why Bother?

The Dossiers will produce the following benefits:

- **Making NABO more proactive.**

NABO is too often being seen as negative and aggressive. The BW Chief Executive has even said this is leading BW to give less weight to NABO's views.

To counter this, NABO must identify topics needing attention in advance, before they become national issues, and bring forward positive suggestions for resolving them.

The input of the Dossier to the Council, validated on field observations and member suggestions, will provide an effective way of doing this.

- **Better NABO policy.**

NABO's policy base is weak. In fact, there is no policy in a number of key areas. This means that members have no guidance as to NABO's views in these areas, and no authority for speaking on NABO's behalf concerning them. Also, unfortunately, most of the policies that do exist are far too brief, with little or no justification for the positions NABO is taking. This makes them difficult for members to justify in discussion with others, and not very credible to the bodies NABO is trying to influence.

The Dossiers will provide early evidence of areas where new or amended policy is needed, and suggest stances or solutions and reasons for adopting them. NABO can then make or amend its policies ahead of the game, and it will have good material for justifying them.

Better and more comprehensive policy will let NABO respond much more quickly and effectively to many issues that arise, as it will no longer have to develop its position from scratch each time or to give a hurried response without sufficient forethought.

- **Better contact with local waterway management**

The Dossier process will result in more regular and meaningful discussions with local waterway management. This, especially if the local management agrees to action on specific issues, will improve NABO's credibility and its relationship with the navigation authority.

- **Involving local members**

Many members' only real involvement with the Association at present is reading NABO News. This is a serious weakness, as members are little encouraged to remain with the Association, or to contribute to it (with ideas or effort). As a result, the few currently active members (mostly Councillors) are overworked, and NABO can't do as much as it should. This discourages members from coming forward as Council candidates.

The Dossiers will activate many more members. It will familiarise them with waterway issues, and with how the Association works. It will encourage them to take other roles in NABO, if not as Councillors perhaps helping to develop policy..



• **Better lobbying.**

The Dossier approach will allow NABO to be a leader in bringing forward both local and national issues. This will improve its profile and image with waterway users, navigation authorities, and its members. It will also attract more members.

Getting started.

The following steps will get the Dossiers going:

- Initially the Chairman will liaise with the London secretary regarding setting up the scheme, and the format and procedures for a pilot introduction in the London region have been agreed.
- The London Secretary (your scribe) will recruit and brief a Dossier Member for each waterway in the region. Volunteers are welcome.
- The Dossier Members will work with the London Secretary to recruit and brief the Length Monitors (again, volunteers are welcome) and to create the Dossiers. A target date for completing this recruitment is 2004 May 1, and for drafting the first version of each Dossier 2004 June 1, allowing the initial local observation needed to take place (with luck) in pleasant spring weather.
- The Dossier updating and reporting procedures will start, and the first meetings with local waterway management will be scheduled. The target for this is 2004 June 1.
- Council will monitor how the scheme works out in London, and will amend it if necessary for introduction in all other regions by the end of 2004.

Conclusion

The growth of NABO and its role in the waterways scene strongly suggests that the Association should review how it operates. A more structured and proactive approach, activating a significantly higher proportion of members than at present, appears necessary. These changes can resolve a number of other issues facing NABO, including a negative image, weak or late responses to issues, and attracting and keeping more members.

The Dossiers are aimed at doing all this. However, they will work only if NABO's members support the idea.

Isn't this just the sort of thing you joined NABO to get involved with? Don't wait for your local secretary to ask for your help. Phone him or her and offer it. Why not now?

Adrian Stott



RIVERS



Anglian Rivers

The Environment Agency has announced that lock extension works at St Neot's Lock on the River Great Ouse have had to be postponed due to problems encountered during recent improvement works. This lock (by the paper mills) has been known as a bottleneck on the river system for many years and the EA is planning to lengthen the chamber, but following the failure of parts of the lock wall, they have had to carry out emergency demolition and piling works. The situation will be reviewed before the planned works are resumed.

Meanwhile, the EA is continuing to improve the River Nene. Further electrification of manually operated guillotine lock gates is planned - to date eighteen of the thirty-eight locks with the vertical lower gates have been fitted with electrical gear boxes. Five of the remaining locks have double pointing doors and a sixth, Lower Wellingborough, will be converted later this year. Seven more locks will be electrified over the next year or so, providing power companies can reach agreement to install supplies across adjacent land.

The Agency has installed an innovative "winding wheel" at Perio Lock, near Fotheringay to replace the manual winding handle. It reports that there has been positive reaction from boaters and if it proves successful more wheels will be fitted to guillotine gates, where appropriate.



Photo courtesy of EA

New Name for Anglian waterway link

The scheme formerly known as the Cathedral Cities Link now has a new title - The Fens Waterways Link. (Presumably it is considered to be more meaningful.) This is a major proposal put forward by the EA to link Lincoln, Peterborough, Ely and Cambridge (all cathedral cities) by improving existing rivers and drains.

New navigation guides published for EA rivers

The EA has published a set of new guides covering its navigable rivers. Starting on the Thames, a series of pamphlets have been produced covering the non-tidal river from Lechlade to Teddington. If you want to obtain them they are known as "out and about" guides and can be had from the EA office in Reading or at lock sites.

Also, newly published are guides to the Medway, Nene, Great Ouse, Welland, Glen and Ancholme - available from the relevant EA regional offices.



Lydney Harbour regeneration scheme makes progress

The EA controls the historic harbour at Lydney (just across the tidal river Severn from Sharpness) which has fallen into disrepair over recent years. After obtaining funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund and local councils, Phase One should be completed in the spring of 2004. It is known that BW have been involved in plans for the harbour (which would make an ideal coastal marina) but the EA says it is still seeking a third party to develop the harbour and to generate income for its future upkeep.

Latest from the Thames

The River Thames Alliance is a new partnership promoted by the Environment Agency to manage and safeguard the future of the non-tidal river controlled by the EA. It is hoped that the concerted efforts of the EA and local authorities and stakeholders will halt the decline of the river and co-ordinate the rejuvenation of the river. Boating activity has seen a sharp decline since the 1960's and many hire bases and boatyards have been forced to close. Jobs have been lost and investment in the infrastructure has faltered. Improvements to the river will be used as a catalyst to co-ordinate river front development and protect wharves and mooring places, regenerate old industrial and mineral working sites, improve access to the river and facilities, and generally promote the river as an economic asset. The initiative has our support.

Is your old address on this list?

Bulletins sent to these addresses are being returned undelivered. We will remove them from our list, but if you haven't already, please give us your new one if one of these was yours.

alan@boatsafloat.fsnet.co.uk
alex_e_ward@talk21.com
aroberts@wilfred-smith.co.uk
brookdale@lineone.net
chappellmac@hotmail.com
cometjra@nildram.co.uk
edward.payter@epicmanagement.co.uk
emmaslevin@hotmail.com
eostrealan@aol.com
francoy@care4free.net
graeme@sleeman.demon.co.uk
j.wyrill@hud.ac.uk
jmckay@penpont.demon.co.uk
john.houston@onmail.co.uk
jt@swindonsn1.fsnet.co.uk
ken@boatshare.org.uk

WORCESTERSHIRE WATERWAYS USERS' FORUM

The WWUF is the user consultation forum covering the river Severn from Tewkesbury upstream to Stourport, together with the Worcester & Birmingham Canal within the city limits of Worcester. It is usually well attended by a wide range of interested persons covering boating, environmental issues and a number of leisure pursuits. The administration has traditionally been shared between the City Council and BW.

NABO has participated in the forum over the years but more recently we have found some difficulty in identifying someone to attend on our behalf. If only we had been present at the meeting held last December!

In addition to the ordinary business with updates from BW and Worcester City Council, there was an item of special business questioning the future of the forum and culminating in a vote of no confidence in the chairman (a representative of the local sports body). We only have the minutes of the meeting as a guide to what actually transpired, but it seems that some frank talking and expressions of deeply felt feelings were the order of the day.

There had been dissatisfaction that the forum was failing to be an effective vehicle for its intended purpose - to enable full and proper consultation with BW's customers and users. It emerged that BW had considered withdrawing from their participation in the forum for this very reason but would now reconsider the matter next year. The planned redevelopment of the Diglis Basin area seems to have been one of the issues that members considered to have been inadequately dealt with in the past. The obviously acrimonious meeting ended with the protagonists insisting on their no-confidence motion being put to the vote and the result was 6 in favour and 3 against. The ousted chairman was thanked for his past work and the meeting resolved to meet in Stourport on 11 February 2004 with a review of the constitution being high on the agenda. Not very happy bunnies!

Can we appeal to our members - if anyone is willing and able to attend this forum on behalf of NABO, can you let our General Secretary have your name and we will make sure you get all the information for future meetings.

Stephen Peters

MORE FOR THOSE ON-LINE

AOL - I have been getting mail delivery errors from AOL 'Postmaster' when sending bulletins. It seems other users are sending SPAM from the same distributing 'server' that we use and so the whole thing goes on and off the AOL blacklist due to customer complaints. If you are on AOL and not getting bulletins please complain to them that messages from nabo.org.uk are being blocked en masse. I will keep on at our hosts.

Waterway Dossier 'Forum' - When I get some time I will be setting up a system for you to post waterway condition comments for the dossiers on the website - keep looking, but I shall notify you via a bulletin when it happens. In the meantime, any suggestions would be welcomed. SS

FLY ON THE WALL



at Council

I'm back on a familiar and newly painted wall to see the Council working hard on the things that could interest you and also on their internal logistics, especially now that it's such a small (and of course select) group! Your poor treasurer is unwell and was unable to attend. You're missed Gordon! A fly blown bouquet to you!

Thanks to Nick Atty for offering to go to meetings in Gloucester and to Trevor Rogers for agreeing to continue work on the BSS for NABO. Now to find volunteers to attend meetings in Worcester and Stourbridge. Can you help?

As you probably know by now, if you've been reading your mag, NABO wants you to tell them of any problems you see along the canals and there have been several offers to return to schooldays and become monitors! (of a length of canal). Uniform not required! It was suggested that an easy and fast way

to get your comments would be straight into a web-site with links to each canal. Of course if you haven't access to the web, either temporarily or permanently a line to NABO's FREEPOST address would be as good.

NABO, as a national organisation, gets a lot of information from waterways all over the country and so is in a prime and positive position to contribute at User Group meetings on what's happening and working in other areas. And your reps do say what's what and so give good ideas a national airing

There was of course a discussion on mooring charges. The emphasis this time was on how increases vary in different areas as BW think fit. A seemingly ad hoc arrangement. Why not have a national percentage rise based on existing and accepted variable rates?

Complaints on problems with permanent moorings should perhaps, after the local BW manager, be sent to Eugene Baston, Customer Relations Manager.

Moving from that old chestnut to a new one. Red diesel! Council decided that NABO should support RYA and IWA in their stand against the introduction of tax in 2006.

Especially as the UK hasn't the advantages of cheap mooring and licences as has the rest of Europe. You will be kept posted.

NABO also propose to support and help the IWA and the local navigation authority in their dealings with Centro on navigation issues with the Midland Metro. The main problem is that the tram station at Merry Hill will be built alongside the current moorings. Not only will you lose the view but you'll gain a lot of starting up and stopping noise of the trams. Of course it'll be great for boaters to have easy transport into Birmingham, but the charm of that mooring will be lost. It could become a mere shopping stop. Work has started on the off-side and apparently the contractors are unaware that boaters need notice of canal closures! If you're affected in any way by the contractor's work let Celia or a member of Council know.

Now here's some news! BW is looking for support for projects which boaters like but the public are sceptical about, especially about the cost. Boaters' support would help to justify the cost and the project, e.g. the Milton Keynes link. Your Council will find out the sort of support BW want and will let you know. Meanwhile think of the projects that please you.

Your Council thinks the prospect of seeing you at rallies is pleasing

too. Some of the merry band will be on the stand at Crick in May, Saul in July and the National at Burton-on-Trent in August. No stand but a presence nonetheless at Runcorn on MV Sulaskar, specifically your Chairman and Secretary, also editor and NE secretary, 4 hats on but 2 heads. Maybe one hat will be on a different head by then. Still hoping for an offer for editor!

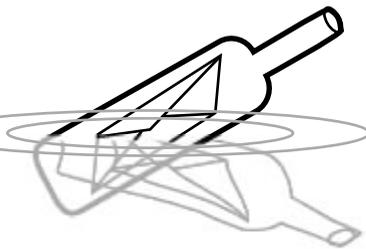
Apart from being pleased to see you there is always the hope of recruiting more members. Of course private boat owners present and past have been the membership until now, but how about the newer type of owner? What do you think of NABO offering associate membership to timesharers, syndicate members and hirers? They can also spend a lot of time boating over many years and may also like the information and opportunity to contribute their ideas and observations along the cut.

Well I've just about the energy to fly off til next time

Byeeeeeee



LETTERS



Council Tax

(This letter has been edited to give the author and subject greater anonymity)

Recently someone I know has been hounded from his boat by the forces of Local Government and now lives in a flat. The issue at stake was the payment/non-payment of council tax, and residential status in a boatyard.

The chap and his wife lived on board a boat, in the process of construction at a boatyard. It was tacitly understood - as it is in many cases - by the management, that as long as mooring fees were paid, and some work was seen to be done, that a blind eye would be turned to living aboard.

All this changed when it came to the notice of an employee of the local Council who worked in the revenue dept. An objection seems to have been taken to this chap living aboard, and evidence was amassed.

The upshot of all this was that he was issued notice to quit by the management, who were put in an impossible position and had to respond. To add insult to injury, the council are considering backdating their demands, and taxing the boat separately as a second home.

The implications of this event are obvious. Council Tax, which was once a minor irritation for house dwellers, has become a major source of revenue

for government. It is an easy tax to collect, and taxpayers can be easily squeezed- they're not going anywhere! However, as the tax burden increases, so does the envy and hostility also increase between those who pay, and those who are seen to be 'getting away with it'.

Boat dwellers face an interesting challenge here because many hundreds, if not thousands, of people live full time on moorings for which there is no planning permission for residential occupation. Increasingly they are being surrounded by housing developments whose residents have mixed views about their boat dwelling neighbours. Some may wonder, "how much more this place might be worth if we could get rid of that lot?" - and it is now socially acceptable to report deviant behaviour to the authorities.

The issue of the so-called Project Clearwater may also have deeper implications than first realised. British Waterways, as you probably know, have implemented a system of CRM (customer resource management), the job of which is to accurately profile each customer with the attributes required by the organisation running the software. The system was most probably bought from SAP, the German software company that supplies Government and

multinationals with similar products. British Waterways will soon have location information on most boats who use their system regularly, as collected by their network of informers and from Patrol Officers. Although this information may be thought to be confidential, there is, in reality, nothing to stop BW and local government sharing this information - they are, after all, both arms of government, and it could be the basis of an effective way to tax a mobile population.

Perhaps NABO could give the above some thought, and perhaps clarify the current position of those living aboard with regard to Council Tax. Bear in mind also, that although the whole issue of Council Tax is up for review, with some pundits suggesting that it may be scrapped, it is unlikely to go away, and that further rises are predicted. This can only exacerbate tensions between payers and non-payers, and with media attention could very easily develop into a witch-hunt.

A Boater

And finally -

What would we all say about promoting associate membership for those who hire or share a boat?

On our travels, we meet a fair number of seasoned boaters who choose the freedom of not having their own boat, and either hire from different bases, or rely on others with shares in their boat to move it to a different location each season. These people may actually cruise longer than some boat owners, and certainly may range further.

Although they may not be interested in our negotiations regarding 'owner things', like moorings and licences, they would certainly be just as concerned about navigation issues as full NABO members are.

How about it?

Stuart Sampson

Advertisement

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Birmingham B31 2BR

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RYA based Diesel Usage Survey

See Page 8 for background

If you have filled in a form like this for the RYA already please tick here
but please fill in at least the **bold** questions for NABO

| | | | |
|---------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Type of boat | a. Motor cruiser | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | b. Auxiliary sailing boat | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | c. Sportsboat/RIB | <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| | d. Canal boat | <input type="checkbox"/> | |

How long is your boat?

What engine(s) does it have? Number **Hp**

Where do you keep it? UK Abroad

How much DIESEL do you use per year? Litres/Gallons
(delete accordingly)

Should boat owners pay the same price for diesel as car owners?
Yes No

If the price of diesel rose by approx. 60p a litre would you :-

| | Yes | Maybe | No |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Try to reduce your fuel consumption | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Try to economise on other boating costs | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Buy a petrol-engine boat next time | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Buy a smaller or less powerful boat | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Buy your fuel outside the UK | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Keep your boat abroad | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Give up boating | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Extra information for NABO

DIESEL USERS ONLY - See Page 8 for background

The object of this is to try to estimate how much diesel you use for propelling your boat and how much for heating and cabin power.

We will try to assess the consumption from knowing the make and model of your equipment, but if you can dig out your handbook and give us its consumption too (saying if it is in Gallons/hour or Litres/hour), it would help us for those who can't.

Propulsion

Please name your engine

If you know, what is its quoted consumption?

Either - How many hours per year do you spend under way:-

on canals? on rivers?

Or - How far do you normally cruise in a year?

Cabin power & heating

Please estimate how many hours a year you use the following, and either give its rated consumption and/or type

| | Hours | Type and/or consumption |
|----------------------------|----------------------|-------------------------|
| Diesel Generator | <input type="text"/> | <input type="text"/> |
| Diesel Stove/range | <input type="text"/> | <input type="text"/> |
| Diesel Water heater/Boiler | <input type="text"/> | <input type="text"/> |
| Diesel anything else | <input type="text"/> | <input type="text"/> |

Do you have a calorifier?

How long on average does it take your engine to charge batteries and/or heat water when not on the move?

How many days a year do you run your engine enough to charge and heat water, including days on the move and days moored up?

If you have any additional sources of power that may reduce your diesel consumption, e.g solar panels, do you have any idea how much you save?

If red diesel was available separately for cabin use, how easy would it be to adapt your boat to use it (i.e. separate tanks, breathers, fillers, piping etc.)?

Easy Tricky Difficult Impossible

Please return to:- National Association of Boat Owners
FREEPOST (BM8367), Birmingham B31 2BR